AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

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The major goal of this exploratory project is to examine the process of leadership development in master's-degreed social workers who are currently leading nonprofit human service agencies. How did they learn to lead, and what were the stages in their journey to become the CEO of an agency? This exploratory process has resulted in a qualitative research project, relying on personal interviews to collect the information. Eighteen MSWs currently employed as chief executive officers of nonprofits within the state of Michigan were selected for the interviewing process. These nonprofit executives were interviewed and their stories documented.

In order to glean this leadership information, I developed an open-ended interview question format, using the concepts of Bernard Bass–transformational leadership (2006), the Hartford Foundation leadership training model (Annual Report, 2008), and ethical theories developed from the literature. My basic premises are that leadership skills can be acquired and that they are measureable, learnable, and teachable. The interview processes allowed the subjects' journeys to be recorded and analyzed.

The major findings for this project indicate that leadership development evolves over a lifetime, often starting in childhood. Analysis of the data resulted in the development of a time continuum of themes, which taken together allow us to see how the leadership process may have developed for these leaders. Each interviewee related childhood and young adulthood experiences that seemed to be significant; these experiences together seem to paint a picture of an incubator for leadership, a setting of the stage for leadership development.

Mentors, religion, ethics, politics, and family—all are important variables that have helped to form the leadership abilities of these subjects. The early leadership development period seems to have included more mentoring support for these budding leaders, as well as ongoing training through both supervisory experiences and the performance of clinical work. Based on their reports, ethics remain important and continue to develop throughout this period. Not infrequently the subjects' actual MSW training, which they described as valuable, occurred during this time frame. The subjects also seem to have developed a personal drive to lead during this critical period. All of these factors have combined to effect the maturing of their leadership.

The maturity theme melds the utilization of external leadership support with increased skill development, allowing a leadership style to emerge. Support during this mature period comes again in the form of mentoring, which merges with peer networking to form a support system that is developed and sought out by the leader. While training remains important, it comes now in ways that go beyond the MSW degree. Frequently these leaders have become self-described lifelong learners. Skill development seems to happen simultaneously; these CEOS report having developed the abilities to multitask, fundraise, utilize ethics in decision making, and develop and support staff to reinforce agency mission through mentoring and coaching.

These leaders often lend their personal leadership styles and abilities to help other organizations or community collaboratives succeed as well. Their role has become more comfortable and natural over time. Indeed, the reports of these subjects seem to exemplify that leadership develops over a lifetime. By carefully recording and analyzing these personal histories, I believe that I have garnered information that may inform the field of social work on educational concepts and methods of teaching leadership for social work students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Leadership in America is receiving a great deal of attention. Today's economic and political environment has Americans demanding effective leadership, and world events, which challenge the fabric of every society, have American citizens demanding decisive action from their leaders, who feel compelled to act, often within the context of whirlwind change. This same social and political environment has impacted the business climate in the United States. Over the past decade many U.S.businesses have faced tough economic conditions, including increased competition from overseas companies, resulting in declining revenues and market shares. The changing world of business has given rise to increased demands on executive leaders. Not only are business leaders being called to be more effective in a difficult and ever-changing environment, but business ethics have also become more important to society. This changing business and economic environment has also impacted the world of nonprofits, both in the United States and abroad.

Over the past decade in particular nonprofit agencies have indeed been impacted by this changing business and economic climate (Wuenschel, 2006, Jaskyte & Dressler, 2005).Successful nonprofits are being forced to compete in a changing business environment, which is exemplified by continually shrinking resources coupled with an ever increasing demand for services. As the resources for nonprofits continue to decrease, the need for excellent leadership comes increasingly to the fore. This expanding need for effective leadership has put tremendous pressure on nonprofits to find administrators who can be consistently creative and innovative within a highly competitive environment. Traditionally the social work profession has provided executive and managerial leadership to these community-based human service nonprofits (see definitions later in this chapter for a description) (Mirabella & Wish, 2000).

Using current leadership theories and models, this chapter will highlight and examine how the leadership of current master's-degreed social workers may help nonprofits become more effective organizations.

This dissertation examines the process of leadership development in master's-degreed social workers who are currently leading nonprofit human service agencies. How did they learn to lead, and what were the stages in their journey to become the CEO of an agency? This exploratory process has resulted in a qualitative research project, relying on personal interviews to collect the information. The interview process allowed me to record and analyze the subjects' personal, oral history of how they became leaders of nonprofit agencies. By sharing detail from their stories, I hope to promote a better understanding of how MSWs become leaders. Collectively, these personal histories may provide us with clues and new ideas about leadership development in the field of social work.

In order to glean this leadership information, I developed an open-ended interview question format, using the concepts of Bernard Bass–transformational leadership (2006) and the Hartford Foundation leadership training model (Annual Report, 2008). (See Appendix A for Hartford permission to cite and use their leadership concepts in this research.)My basic premises are that leadership skills can be acquired and that they are measureable, learnable, and teachable, and the key characteristics for new leaders that I have identified are the heart, desire, and ability to lead. I will present the leadership models that have formed the basis for the interviewing process, both guiding and framing it. In addition, I will explore the critical issue of ethics in leadership within the social work profession.

I begin this introductory chapter with an overview of the context and background of nonprofit leadership. This contextual setting will provide linkages to the project problem

statement, the research question, and the statement of purpose for this exploratory study. I include as well a discussion of the research approach, as well as of my perceptions and initial assumptions. Finally, I will summarize in this chapter the proposed rationale for and significance of this exploratory project and will define key terminology.

Nonprofit leadership: content and background

The need for nonprofit leaders is growing annually (Nesoff, 2007). The number of nonprofits in the United States continues to rise, with a broad-based variety of new nonprofits being developed and launched each year. Additionally, the current executive leaders of nonprofits continue to age. As these sitting CEOs begin to retire, there will be an increased need for new leaders to assume their posts. This crisis has been cited by several leading think tank organizations, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the national United Way (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005). Nonprofit leaders will be needed in record numbers in the coming years.

The graying of America is well documented, and these same aging issues will face nonprofits in the coming years. The end of the decade culminating in 2020 will see a tremendous turnover in executive leadership overall in America (Kunrether, 2005; Nesoff, 2007). It is not unusual for these retiring executives to have long-term tenure in their organizations. Their departure is made more difficult by the lack of retirement benefits and financial security needed for them to retire comfortably (Kunrether). As a result these executives tend to stay on the job longer, negatively affecting the transition to this leadership role on the part of younger leaders. As the current executives leading nonprofits do begin to retire, there will be an increased need to train and develop their younger replacements.

Using a series of four monographs, the Casey Foundation outlined the coming wave of change, as well as the need for new generations to assume leadership (i.e., Generation X and Generation Y, identified as the Baby Boom echo) (Teegarden, 2004). The leadership study supported by the Casey Foundation developed several recommendations worth considering. These recommendations, which sound familiar, include the use of current, seasoned leaders to mentor their younger counterparts; the provision of ample opportunity for these younger leaders to lead; a concerted effort to recruit and retain younger workers; and a search for innovative ways for Baby Boomers who are leaders in the for-profit sector to reduce their work hours in order to function in the nonprofit sector (Teegarden). (A high percentage of retiring executives contemplate remaining in the work force after leaving more demanding positions.) These suggestions from the Casey Foundation are accompanied by working documents for governing bodies of nonprofits that will help with executive director transitions. The depth and breadth of the research and resources committed by the Casey Foundation signify the importance of the leadership crisis that is predicted to materialize within the next ten years.

The Hartford Foundation (Annual Report, 2008) offers a model of leadership training that provides additional support of nonprofit leadership training. This model will be reviewed in more detail in Chapter 2. The Hartford Foundation believes that leaders need special support and nurturing in conjunction with specific training. Basic premises are that leadership skills can be acquired and that they are measureable, learnable, and teachable. Key characteristics for new leaders are identified as the heart, desire, and ability to lead.

As noted earlier, another significant trend affecting nonprofit leadership is the continuing growth in the number and size of nonprofits. Over the past 25 years the growth in this sector has more than doubled, to a total of 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States (Smith,

2000). As a direct result of this proliferation, nonprofits currently employ 10 million people and utilize 6 million fulltime-equivalent volunteers (Smith). According to the Michigan Nonprofit Association, nonprofits in Michigan have a $108 billion annual impact on the economy (Slowik, 2009). The number of nonprofits in Michigan has soared by 25 percent since 1997; this equates to 10,000 new nonprofits, up 14 percent since 2001 (Slowik). Collectively, nonprofits employ 440,000 people in Michigan (Slowik). In Kent County alone, nonprofits employ 33,068 people and add $10.6 billion to the local economy. This growth signifies that nonprofits are an important part of the economy, both nationally and locally. The leadership void will continue to be felt throughout the growing nonprofit sector. These identified trends highlight the increased need for executive leadership.

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2005), in 2004 more than 55 percent of the executives of nonprofits were 50 years of age or older. This report predicts that somewhere between 50 and 80 percent of leaders of nonprofits are expected to vacate their positions within the current decade. This tremendous turnover in executives, combined with the exponential growth of nonprofits, will lead to an increased demand for and change in leadership for nonprofits (Wuenshel, 2006; Smith, 2000). A 2004 survey of nonprofits sponsored by the Casey Foundation yielded a wealth of information regarding nonprofit executive directors, nonprofit leadership, and the coming turnover in executive leadership in nonprofits. The data regarding the depth and breadth of executive director transitions comes from this foundation's research.

It is clear that the ten-year period culminating in 2020 will continue to see a tremendous turnover in executive leadership for nonprofits in America (Kunrether, 2005). Interestingly, the Casey Foundation research has found that women already lead small nonprofits in larger numbers than anticipated; women leaders accounted for 58 percent of respondents to the study.

As has been seen in most research, these women earn substantially less than their male counterparts, a disparity augmented by the fact that nonprofits in general are able to pay significantly less than other types of organizations (Casey Foundation; Johnson Center, 2008).

The already identified need for more executive leaders will bode well for social workers, offering new employment possibilities. However, social workers who aspire to leadership are competing with individuals holding several other educational degrees, including those of MBA, MPA, and MPH, as well as credentials from other nonprofit management degree programs. When the MSW degree is compared with the competition in terms of actual training for leadership, it can be perceived as lacking in terms of the broader skills set required to provide executive leadership for a nonprofit agency (Rimer, 1987; Faherty, 1987; Hoefer, 1993; Hoefer, 2003; Patti, 2003; Perlmutter, 2006; Nesoff, 2007). This may lead to applicants with MSW degrees being selected less frequently for leadership roles (Wuenschel, 2006).

Support for the development of leaders in social work has been identified as an area needing attention. Many of the authors in the field of social work have pointed out that the social work profession has not placed a high enough focus on training future leaders (Patti, 2003; Wuenshel, 2006; McNutt, 1995). According to these critics, leadership development and training within the field of social work have languished behind those of other fields of education, as well as the needs of communities (Patti; Wuenshel; McNutt). Leadership has been identified as an area requiring concentration by both the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2009) and the National Association of Deans and Directors of Social Work Schools (NADD, 2009), the national leaders for social work education.

Both the CSWE and NADD websites (2009) report that social work leadership is an important focus of attention within their organizations. CSWE, in fact, lists leadership

development as one of its strategic goals. However, both CSWE and NADD currently focus their energies in this area on leadership in education and research, as well as on obtaining more leadership positions within organizations of higher learning (colleges and universities). This targeted leadership focus stems from the developmental role both organizations play in educational programming for students at all levels. Indeed, research in social work at universities will lead to best-practice models when working with clients and families—important work for both organizations.

Since 1952, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has been the national leader for social work training and education. Over the years, CSWE's focus on leadership training has ebbed and flowed. When originally formed as an organization, the Council had a clear focus on both leadership training and curriculum. However, over the years the spotlight on leadership training has become more diffused, as leadership/administration educational tracks have often been combined with the macro-practice areas of community organization and policy practice. This de-emphasis on leadership training has led to dramatic declines in the scope of that training, as well as in the number of students pursuing leadership education (Patti, 2003; Wuenschel, 2006). In fact, the number of students in quest of a Master's Degree in Social Work with an administration concentration had shrunk during the six-year period just prior to 2006 to about three percent of all social work students on a master's degree track, or to about 1000 students nationwide (Wuenschel).

According to its website (2009) the National Association of Deans and Directors focuses its efforts and attention on developing social work leadership, with leadership listed as the number one strategic planning goal identified by this organization. However, this overarching goal focuses on the development of social work leadership in university and college hierarchy

rather than leadership in social work within community organizations. A more recent secondary focus for this association has been the development of leadership roles in the area of child welfare—a predominate sphere of service for the field of social work. This organization has developed considerable knowledge and skill in this dynamic area of change in the social work field. While this is indeed a worthy focus, it may not meet the more global need for training for social work leadership within organizations. NADD works closely with the CSWE in developing education and training programs for universities and colleges. As such, its support for ongoing mentoring, training internships, and curriculum development may prove beneficial for leadership development in the field of social work.

It is my contention that the MSW degree is a viable source for nonprofit leadership in America. Social workers traditionally have felt that we are in the best position to lead human service nonprofits for two reasons. First, many human service nonprofit leadership positions require clinical social work knowledge, and the Master's Degree in Social Work gives administrators a distinct practice background for making decisions that impact the well-being of clients. It is frequently the case that social workers who become administrators have been trained in clinical social work practice and have come up through the ranks within a given nonprofit social work agency. In the process, these social workers are acquiring the in-depth program knowledge needed to maintain strong and efficient clinical programs. While this skill is essential to creating and maintaining effective human service organizations, however, this same reality may lead to a view that social workers are inadequately trained in administrative management skills (Nesoff, 2007).I would contend that at the same time social workers are learning these practice skills, they are often acquiring overall agency administration skills as well. This is not always readily apparent to those from outside the field.

The second reason social workers feel uniquely qualified to lead human service nonprofits has to do with the value system or core of ethics built into both the MSW curriculum and social work practice. The ethics developed by the field of social work have become an intrinsic part of the social work curriculum and are in itself superior preparation for leadership (Hoefer, 2003). Core leadership values centering on ethics and advocacy are almost exclusive to the social work training regimen, value system, and set of beliefs.

These two distinctive skills sets and belief systems (practice knowledge in conjunction with core ethical leadership values) are integrated into the social work curriculum and internalized by aspiring social workers from the ground up. It is important to reiterate here that these ethical values are not generally included in the regular course work for other professional fields (Mirabella & Wish). As has been noted, however, while this renders social workers unique in preparation for clinical field work, the question arises whether it is enough of strength to set apart the MSW degree from other professional administration degrees in terms of providing the groundwork for positions of leadership. Generally the answer from those outside the field has been no (Hoefer, 2003; Patti, 2000). The argument ensues that the MSW degree may not provide sufficient course work targeted to the areas of nonprofit management skills, knowledge, and leadership.

Problem statement

As we have seen, a review of the contextual issues in nonprofit leadership clearly shows that more leaders will be needed that have the training, values, and heart to lead. The growth in the number of nonprofits, the aging of current leaders of nonprofits, and the identified need to focus on leadership training by the field of social work all highlight the issues and need for effective leadership training. The above reported background and context for nonprofit

leadership leads to the question, how master's-prepared social workers can learn to lead nonprofit organizations.

The research questions and statement of purpose

How do social workers who become executive leaders attain this position and learn to lead? This research question highlights and frames the purpose of this study: to explore the journeys and personal development stories of master's-degreed social workers who have become chief executive officers of nonprofit organizations. Although many MSW graduates may not have been trained for executive leadership, a number of them have become executive leaders. How they developed the desire to lead, became leaders, and learned to lead will be explored in this study of current nonprofit CEOs.

Thus this exploratory study hopes to ferret out the nuances of leadership from current CEO leaders of nonprofits. It is my hope that the study will reinforce the importance of promoting leadership training in social work. Thus, developing concepts in both social work leadership and educational leadership training for the social work profession are hoped-for results of this study. A strong focus on leadership education is needed if the social work profession is to provide leaders for the next several decades.

Research approach

This is a qualitative research project, relying on personal interviews to collect the information. Eighteen nonprofit executives were interviewed and their personal stories recorded. The interview processes allowed me to record and analyze the subjects' journeys, highlighting the ways in which these leaders learned and developed their leadership skills and probing in an effort to better understand the intricacies of their unique career paths to leadership. Through these stories I hoped to teased out what training was helpful, lessons learned along the way, the

executives' reasons for becoming leaders, and styles of leadership that were useful in the process. By carefully recording and analyzing these personal histories, information was collected that may inform the field of social work on educational concepts and methods of teaching leadership for social work students.

In order to glean this information, I have developed an open-ended interview question format, using the concepts of Bernard Bass–transformational leadership (2006) and the Hartford Foundation leadership training model (Annual Report, 2008). My basic premises are that leadership skills can be acquired and that they are measureable, learnable, and teachable, and I am identifying the key characteristics for new leaders as the heart, desire, and ability to lead. I will present these leadership models, which form the basis of the interviewing process, guiding and framing it. I will also include and explore the use of ethics in leadership, which is so critical to the social work profession.

A criterion sampling of 18 MSWs currently employed as chief executive officers of nonprofits within the state of Michigan was selected for the interviewing process. The size of the nonprofit was not considered in the selection process. Selection of the executives was developed utilizing the association membership lists from local United Ways in Michigan and other membership organizations within the state, as well as by referral from interviewees who recommended others for the project. Credentials and contact information were obtained by searching the respective nonprofit agency's web site.

Once I had developed the list of potential executive directors, I emailed or contacted each of them personally to determine their willingness to participate in the survey, confirm that they have an MSW degree, and explain the scope and purpose of the research project. I assured the executive directors that their confidentiality would be maintained and that the data would be

presented in an aggregate format. In keeping with the IRB proposal and approval, each participant signed an informed consent form prior to the interview, which I am keeping on file. Once an executive director agreed to participate, I set up a mutually agreeable location and time to conduct the interview, which took about one and one-half hours.

The coding and analysis of the interview material led to the development of leadership concepts and categories that have been refined on an ongoing basis, as guided by the theoretical/conceptual framework. A second coder assisted in the interview analysis, helping to verify the reliability of the conclusions. The inter-rater reliability was measured and is reported.

Assumptions

Based on my own experience as the CEO of a nonprofit, I made three basic assumptions in conducting this exploratory study. These assumptions centered around gender, size of organization, and the respective universities where the subjects obtained their MSW degrees.

The first assumption is that this research would not focus on gender differences in leadership style unless issues or concepts were identified by the subjects. While gender differences have been identified by some researchers in the study of leadership, the limited scope and number of leadership subjects in this study did not lend itself to developing significant findings in this area.

The second assumption is that the size and scope of the organization would not in any meaningful way affect the outcome of the subject's inclusion in this study. Neither the size nor the geographic area in which the organization provides services was considered as a variable affecting the research findings. This exploratory study was about the journey of the CEOs and did not focus specifically on the skills sets they have developed in contrast to those of other CEOs. Some would maintain, for example, that leading a small nonprofit is as difficult as

directing a large one. This in itself could be the focus of an interesting study. Additionally, the small number of subjects included in this study precludes the development of significant findings in this regard.

The third assumption is that a Master's Degree in Social Work attained from any one institution may be considered comparable to the same degree obtained elsewhere. Neither the Master's in Social Work training programs nor the schools from which they were earned would be evaluated or compared from one subject to another. The issue would be noted only if the subject mentioned this topic as significant during the interview process. All of the subjects have attended a school of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). This CSWE accreditation leads me to assume that the programs were similar in their educational requirements and provided similar social work curricula. I viewed the schools attended as similar enough to consider all of the MSWs as having received similar training.

The researcher

During the four-year period at the end of which this research was conducted, I served as the CEO of a nonprofit in West Michigan. Prior to this CEO position, I had held a similar position in a nonprofit in Southeast Michigan for fourteen years. This extensive leadership experience has afforded me both practical and theoretical experience in nonprofit leadership—experience that has helped me to develop and frame the project.

I am aware that these same job experiences could be construed as liabilities, conceivably causing me to employ some judgmental bias while developing the interview questions, conducting the interviews, and analyzing the data. In light of that potential pitfall, I have remained deliberately committed to the self-reflection and self-critique needed to conduct responsible research. This reflection and self-analysis have occurred not only on a mental level

but also in challenges from colleagues and in dialogue with the PhD committee chair and members. Additionally, the use of a second coder helped to foster self-reflection and improve the reliability of the conclusions.

Rationale and significance

Traditionally, nonprofit human service agencies have relied on the social work field to help provide leadership for these organizations. It is my desire to continue and improve on this historical tradition and my hope that this exploratory study will add to the body of knowledge that already exists regarding executive leadership in the field of social work.

This study considered the career paths of current MSW leaders to ascertain how these individuals attained their professional goal of leading a nonprofit. Specifically, when did they decide to become nonprofit leaders, and how did they acquire the necessary skills? In addition, less quantifiable skills such as visionary leadership, communication and empathy with followers, creative and innovative problem solving, and the development of followers to their highest potential were also studied to determine the depth and breadth of these competencies, as manifested in their leadership styles. If these skills are present, how were they acquired? Specific knowledge and advice were elicited from these leaders that may help to develop educational programs and training for social workers desiring to lead nonprofits.

Definitions of key terminology used in this study

Executive Director / President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO): This terminology is used either of the highest ranking paid position for the nonprofit or of the top official leader for the organization. For this study these terms are used interchangeably.

MSW: Master's Degree in Social Work: In this study all MSW subjects have obtained a degree from a Council on Social Work Education accredited program.

Human service nonprofits: These organizations are described as agencies providing human services to communities or organizations funding services to agencies providing human services to communities. These nonprofits are classified under the Internal Revenue Code as 501 (c) (3) as charities with tax exempt status and contributions to them are tax deductible.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

While the concepts of leadership have been formally studied for several recent decades (Bass & Stodgdill, 1990; Yukl, 2007; Jackson & Parry, 2008), the earliest writings in human history already speak of the leadership of prophets, chiefs, and kings (Bass, 1990). Throughout human history people have had an interest in learning more about leadership. At times our attempts at learning are scientific and research-focused, but just as often these efforts to learn more about leadership are prompted by the leaders themselves, past or present. We learn from them by way of listening to their personal experiences and examination of what has or has not been effective. How do we train successful leaders? What works? These questions help frame the literature review underlying this exploratory project—specifically, How do social workers who become executive leaders attain this position and learn to lead?

Successful leaders have an ability to "hold two opposing ideas at once. And then, without panicking or simply settling for one alternative or the other, they're able to creatively resolve the tension between those two ideas by generating a new one that contains elements of the others but is superior to both" (Martin, 2007, p. 62). Successful leaders are able to maintain a sense of confidence in their ability to lead while in the process of formulating such a new idea. This projection of confidence is fully as important as making the right decisions—decisions that result in solving problems.

The list of qualities identified in great leaders in extensive. Charismatic, visionary, authentic, confident, and able to lead by example are just a few that have been recognized (Yukl, 2007). How do we identify the leaders who can both think creatively and bring to bear all of the other necessary attributes and leadership skills? Can we teach these skills? Are leaders born with

innate abilities and qualities? Are the leadership skills needed by nonprofit businesses different from those of for-profit businesses? Where does the field of social work fit into this leadership puzzle? While I may not be able to answer all of these questions, this dissertation will attempt to review current theories and research in these areas and to develop possible answers posed both by the literature and subsequently through this research project. It is my hope that these answers may help to inform the social work profession by addressing the question of how we educate social workers to become leaders. To help us better understand social work leadership, we must first briefly explore our past history and exemplar leaders. We begin with Jane Addams and her phenomenal accomplishments.

Jane Addams

Jane Addams still holds the distinction of having been the most renowned social worker in the world (Alonso, 1995; Alonso, 2004; Sullivan, 1993; Franklin, 1986). As a Nobel laureate and prizewinner, she trained the world's spotlight on her work with the most vulnerable members of American society in the early 1890s. In the process of developing the settlement house service, Addams inspired others to assist her, and she was instrumental in developing leadership qualities in many of those around her. At the same time Addams was finding her own path, she was teaching and mentoring others in what she had already learned.

Jane Addams's leadership drew many followers to Hull House as she willingly shared her knowledge and energy. Her strong advocacy beliefs, which she turned into calls for action, inspired others to follow her lead. As a direct result many other young women in those early years became leaders, bringing their inherent leadership abilities to bear upon the social justice movement. Not only, then, did Addams focus her energy upon changing the American response to poverty and injustice, but she also forged a path for aspiring young leaders to follow. She

shared her unique leadership abilities by providing her followers with mentorship and a continual growth challenge within the safe environment of Hull House.

Addams, encouraged by her family to continue her formal education following high school, attended Rockford Seminary for young women, where she was an excellent student, already then exhibiting strong leadership traits. After her graduation her parents sent her on a tour of Europe. Addams desired a vocation, but her parents felt that she should instead marry. During this trip she became both mentally and physically ill, and when shortly after her return from Europe, Addams' father died, she became increasingly depressed. During this period she also was treated for a back ailment that rendered her immobile for about one year. During her convalescence Addams had ample time to contemplate her future life (Stebner, 1997).

While in London during the course of a second trip to the continent, Addams discovered the settlement house concept. After some consideration she and her friend Ellen Starr Gates cooperated to open Hull House. Addams, along with Gates, became the founder, leader, and program developer of the project, acting all the while as a fundraiser. Accepted into Chicago society, she was able to obtain ample funding from benefactors. The generous patrons of Chicago, in fact, donated most of what she needed. Money being no obstacle, within its first few years of operation Hull House was already providing medical care, childcare, and legal aid. Immigrant services included education in English, vocational skills, art, and drama (Addams, 1999).

When the severe depression of 1893 hit the country, Hull House was assisting more than 2,000 people on a weekly basis (Women in History, 2007). Addams, not content to merely address the immediate needs of the poor and vulnerable, began directing her efforts toward ferreting out and then seeking to alleviate the causes of poverty and of the oppression of the

immigrant population in particular. She became an advocate for legal and policy changes, both for the state of Illinois and for the federal government. Economic and social justice reforms became paramount on her agenda, and she began to tackle the big questions surrounding child labor practices, industrial safety, immigrant exploitation, women's rights, the lack of adequate schooling for children, and workers' rights, becoming an active proponent for labor unions. During the period from 1893 to 1911 Addams became a nationally known leader and social justice advocate.

During this period of prominence, however, Addams came under increasing attack for her political views. Her support of controversial issues, such as labor reform and women's rights, often precipitated personal attacks from the public. Later, her vocal opposition to WWI and her support of the peace movement further damaged her image. Addams's support of the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP earned her even more severe criticism from a public that had formerly held her in high regard (Women in History, 2007). Still, shortly before her death in 1935, Addams went on to win the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize, signifying the restoration of her reputation as a social justice advocate and resurgence in her societal standing. In fact, thousands attended her funeral at Hull House (Women in History, 2007).

This short account of the life of Jane Addams provides a glimpse into her tremendous drive and intelligence. Hull House was well run and flourishing throughout her tenure. Not only did it grow in size and in diversity of services offered, but it continued to be a career magnet for some of the brightest young women in the country, many of whom took up residence at Hull House. While living there, these young women developed their future vocations and improved their own skills as leaders at local, state, and national levels.

The roster of other such notable women includes Florence Kelley, Julia Lathrop, Alice Hamilton, and Sophonisba Breckinridge, all of whom developed skills that thrust them into the forefront of leadership during their lifetimes. It is significant that the single common denominator influencing all of these female leaders was Jane Addams and Hull House (National Women's History Museum, 2007). What was it about Addams that inspired these women to risk their status in society to take up the mantle of leadership? Jane Addams was not only a transformational leader but one who led by example.

What we can learn

This brief glimpse of Jane Addams and her leadership legacy inspires us to look ahead to the continued development of leadership within the field of social work. Addams was a self-taught leader who became the CEO of a nonprofit she founded and then developed into a thriving agency serving thousands.

Jane Addams chose to be a social work leader (or perhaps it may legitimately be stated that the field chose her!) during an era when females had limited choices. Addams focused upon helping others when that idea was new and suspect to society. By opening Hull House, Addams remained true to her personal values and ethics of helping the poor and most vulnerable. She also embarked upon a course of prominent leadership within the young field of social work. Her unique leadership ability became readily apparent in numerous ways: Addams organized services at Hull House, proved to be a strong fundraiser, mentored other young women and men to become leaders in their own right, and developed and advocated strong views regarding social justice issues. Her leadership was multifaceted, as well as national (and ultimately international) in focus. Jane Addams's leadership was a springboard for her becoming one of the best-known and most highly revered female leaders of her time.

Nonprofit leadership per se has its roots solidly in the field of social work; the social work values of ethical thought and action have driven nonprofit administration for decades. Social work's emphasis on the value of social justice and equality has also had a profound impact upon continuing development within the social work field itself. And Jane Addams, one of our nation's (and the world's) earliest leaders in this arena, had a profound impact not only on the field of social work itself but upon its continuing growth and long-term course. By opening Hull House, Addams made a clear statement about how she thought our society's most vulnerable population might most effectively be helped. She remained a strong voice for social justice issues even when this stance cost her in popularity and positive regard. Her leadership legacy inspires us to continue our search for answers—specific to of this dissertation, how did MSWs who became CEOs learn to lead?

Literature review: theory overview

As we have seen, leadership is a broad topic that has been studied for many decades. The popularity and fascination with this subject are exemplified by the hundreds of books and theories on leadership that are available. The necessary narrowing of focus for this research project afforded me the opportunity to search broadly for possible leadership theories that have been rigorously tested; according each of the particular models legitimacy based on the amount of research performed using that theory. Utilizing the Michigan State University library's search capabilities allowed me to conduct broad literature search, using such search tools as ProQuest to explore the concept of leadership.

Ultimately, it seemed evident to me that the transformational leadership model developed and published by Bernard Bass and Bruce J. Avolio (1995) offered the most universally tested and developed model of leadership to date. This, then, became the basic theory framing my

knowledge and the beginning of the development of a research project on social work leadership in nonprofits.

During the course of discussion with my social work committee members, the recommendation was made that I also investigated the John Hartford model of leadership training. This examination led me to identify with the Hartford training model concepts and to recognize their usefulness in exploring the leadership development of the research subjects. This model of training employed the best-practice techniques previously identified in the transformational literature and reported in the transformational research.

Important in the transformational leadership model is the use of ethics in a leader's actions. The concept of ethics, while not as explicit in the Hartford paradigm, would seem to be implied there, so I made the choice to employ the concepts and theory around ethics in this study as well, using all three of these models and theories in framing this exploratory study of leadership development in social work. Transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006), the Hartford Foundation leadership training model, and ethics in leadership, then, combine to form the foundational concepts utilized in this exploratory research project.

This literature review will focus on these three concepts or models of leadership description, development, and training. This combined conceptual framework helped me to design the research methodology, process, and data collection instruments used in this project. In addition, these concepts helped to develop the semi-structured interview guide that gleaned the informational data resulting from the interviews with 18 nonprofit CEOs. This conceptual framework also provided a structural method to organize the project findings, analysis, and interpretation.

Transformational leadership

In this focused literature review I will provide an overview of leadership development, focusing in particular on the transformational leadership model developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce J. Avolio (1995) and further refined by Bass and Ronald Riggio (2006). I will also include a subsequent review of the current research using this theory. This literature review regarding the transformational leadership model will highlight the knowledge that has developed regarding best practices/concepts in training programs for executive leadership—information I used to develop questions for the interviewing process.

The quality of visionary leadership is as much an art as it is a science. While visionary/ charismatic leadership may be difficult to describe or quantify, it is recognizable by nearly everyone when it is encountered. The study of transformational leadership is a more recent development. The introduction of this term/philosophy is credited to Robert House (1976), whose concepts were fleshed out two years later in *Leadership* (1979) by James MacGregor Burns. Bernard Bass, a later scholar of transformational leadership, further refined the theory, writing prolifically on the subject. Prior to the study of transformational leadership, most leadership theory and study had focused on the traditional, top-down leadership style.

In *Transformational Leadership* (Bass & Riggio, 2006), Bass identified four personal qualities that describe a transformational leader: idealized influence (charismatic behavior), inspirational motivational behavior, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. While at first glance the descriptors “charismatic” and “inspirational” may seem synonymous, they are, in fact, quite distinct in Bass’s paradigm. However, as Bass points out, the combination of idealized influence and charismatic and inspirational qualities naturally occurs in most

effective leaders (Bass & Riggio). Following are definitions of these personal qualities as Bass delineates them:

Idealized influence provides followers with a clear sense of purpose that is energizing; it is a role model for ethical conduct that builds identification with the leader and his/her articulated vision.

Inspirational motivation stimulates those around by providing meaning and challenges; this approach displays enthusiasm and optimism.

Intellectual stimulation encourages followers to question the "tried and true" ways of solving problems, as well as the methods used in the past to improve upon them.

Individualized consideration focuses on understanding the needs of each follower and works continuously to encourage and enable all followers to develop to their fullest potential.

Followers, while likely to identify themselves on a feeling level with the charismatic leader, are provided meaning and challenge by the inspirational leader (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leadership characterized by intellectual stimulation inspires innovation in followers by allowing and/or encouraging questions, reframing of issues, and new approaches to problems. Leaders who are sensitive to the quality of individualized consideration pay attention to individual followers. This one-on-one coaching and mentoring style helps followers feel valued and encouraged to develop to their highest potential (Bass & Riggio).

Bass goes on to define leadership qualities that are transactional, as opposed to transformational, in nature. While reversion to the transactional style of leadership is sometimes necessary, it should remain the exception. Bass identifies two principal components of the transactional leadership style: contingent reward and management by exception (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Definitions in Bass's terminology:

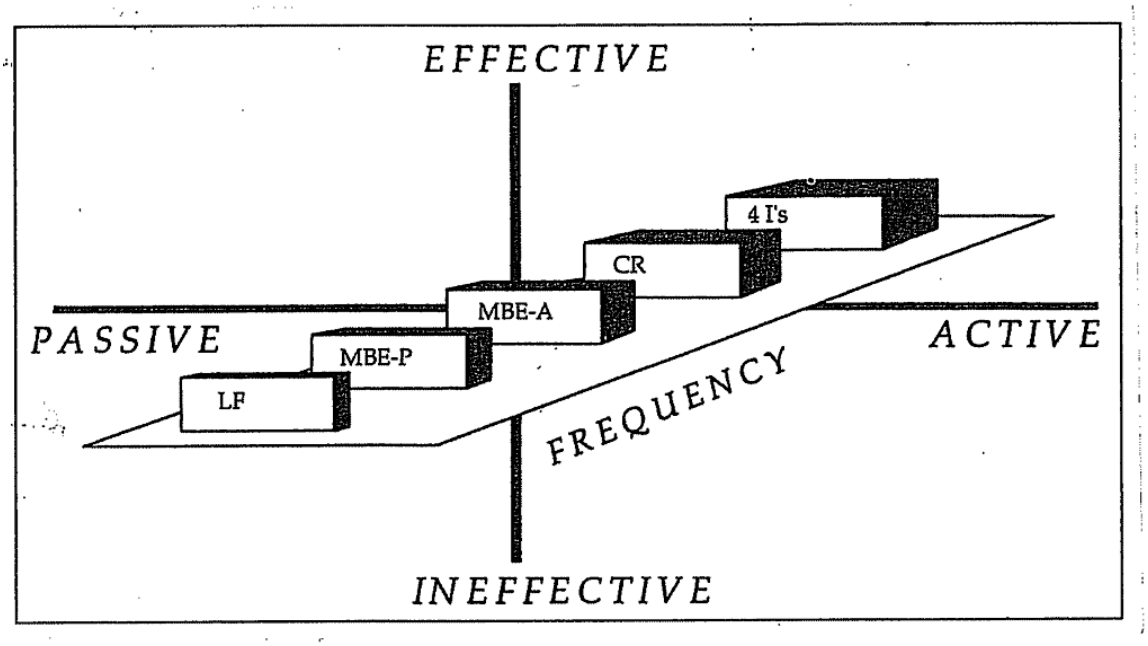
Contingent reward refers to positive, constructive interaction involving directed consultative or negotiated agreements between leaders and followers. This component clarifies what is expected from followers, as well as what they will receive if they meet expected levels of performance.

Active management by exception focuses on monitoring task execution for any problems that might arise and correcting those problems to maintain current performance levels. Management by exception (MBE) can be either passive or active. Active MBE techniques allow the leader to monitor followers for deviation from necessary or desired outcomes in their work—an approach that involves waiting for the mistake to occur and then taking corrective action. This kind of reward/discipline system has long been a factor in management theory. As Bass points out, however, the most current management models, identified under the umbrella of Total Quality Management, have their roots in both the transformational and the transactional leadership styles and theories (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Another leadership style identified by Bass and Avolio (1999) is the laissez-faire approach. Laissez-faire leadership is best described by what it is not; its principal characteristic is a lack of leadership or an inactive decision-making style. Not surprisingly identified as the least effective style of leadership, this approach results in decisions not being made at all, delayed action, and the avoidance of responsibility by leaders (Bass &Avolio, 1995). The optimal profile for a leader, concludes Bass, includes components of all of the above-described styles, with the passive approaches coming into play infrequently, if at all (Bass & Riggio, 2006).See Figure 2.1 below (Bass & Riggio, p.9).

Figure 2.1

Transformational leadership model



Transformational leadership theory, as defined and fleshed out by Bass in 1985, is the most researched leadership theory to date (Yukl, 2007). The multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass used behavioral descriptors as the basis for developing the leadership behaviors described above. Other researchers have used the questionnaire as a tool for their own studies, developing modifications as necessary to suit their needs (Yukl). These modifications have, unfortunately, had a negative impact upon the effectiveness of the questionnaire as a valid leadership measurement device (Yukl). Research on transformational leadership, Yukl argues, should focus on identifying the components of transformational leadership as independent variables, capable of being measured separately. These measurements need to be distinctly quantifiable and completely accounted for by the MLQ tool (Yukl).

Another area of interest in the literature on transformational leadership is the influence of followers on the transformational leader's behavior. Transformational leadership theory describes followers evaluating leaders in terms of the relative presence or absence of transformational/transactional leadership qualities. The results indicate that in order for followers to improve their role performance and degree of satisfaction with the leader, they must be both empowered and enabled to trust that leader. Early findings indicate that empowerment leads to follower-improved organizational performance and that leader trust allows for greater job satisfaction (Bartram & Casimir, 2007).

Leaders with a positive self-concept are viewed as more motivated to meet the behavioral expectations of their followers (Sosik, Potosky, & Jung, 2002), a factor frequently resulting in leaders gaining follower support for their vision. Not all leaders are able to develop this atmosphere of trust and empowerment (Bartram & Casimir, 2007; Sosik, Potosky, & Jung), but in instances where the model works this aspect of transformational leadership theory has helped to distinguish the approach as an integrated and robust leadership theory (Yukl, 2007).

Transformational leadership and current research

Transformational leadership theory and its direct relationship to an organization's performance are well documented (Boerner, Eisenbeiss, & Griesser, 2007). This relationship is defined by such factors as followers' trust in the leader, agreement on core values, group cohesion, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation. Stated in slightly different terms, transformational leadership directly affects the organizational culture and employee level of performance (Xenikou & Dimosi, 2006)—performance being defined as the followers' willingness to act beyond role expectation. Other employee-related variables linked by these researchers to a higher level of performance include involvement, participation, consistency,

normative integration, adaptability, and internalization of the company mission (Xenikou & Dimosi).

Organizations led by transformational leaders value innovation, self-actualization, and teamwork, all characteristics that both prepare and allow staff to accept change with a more positive attitude (Aarons, 2006). The ability to help agency staff accept the inevitability of change in the nonprofit business world is a critical leadership requirement (Boerner, Eisenbeiss, &Griesser, 2007). Indeed, continual improvement in organizational performance is more necessary than ever before in today's economic climate.

Transformational leaders focus on employees by fostering an organizational culture that is hospitable and conducive to creativity, problem solving, risk taking, and experimentation (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Gellis, 2001; Bartram & Casimir, 2007). Strengthening the common identity of the organization improves the employees' citizenship performance—their willingness to work for the greater good—while employee trust and agreement with organizational values in turn enhance group cohesion, leading to improved job satisfaction and self-efficacy for staff (Boerner, Eisenbeiss, & Griesser, 2007).

Transformational leaders focus upon strategic thinking, creating and promoting a culture that is open and amenable to organizational change. The transformational leader integrates creative insight with persistence and energy, all the while maintaining sensitivity to the needs of employees and other stakeholders (Bass &Avolio, 1999; Menefee, 1997). An example of how transformational leadership works may be seen during organizational change or in the cultural improvement process. Transformational leaders will help shape the desired culture of the organization by writing, talking, and encouraging the new culture. The transformational leader will reward behavior that is congruent with the desired behavior and culture. New staff brought

into the organization will be aligned with the new culture's mission and vision (Bass &Riggio, 2006), while current staff will be rewarded when they display performance that fits the new desired organizational cultural.

An easily disregarded stumbling block to successfully integrating a new culture is a leader's lack of respect for the past culture (Bass &Avolio, 1999), which has undoubtedly enjoyed a measure of buy-in from conscientious employees who may be concerned about lack of continuity or suspicious about loss of integrity if they perceive the possibility of change for the sake of change. The preexisting cultural values of trusting employees, these authors caution, should be maintained when developing a new culture (Bass &Avolio, 1999). Respect for the former culture during the process of creating a new culture is a positive example of transformational strategic action (Menefee, 1997). A strategic action plan promotes an environment that begins to recognize and support the need for cultural change. During this transitional phase, the effective transformational leader reinforces innovative efforts that fit the new vision for the organization (Bass & Avolio).Using a mixture of transformational and transactional leadership components, such a leader promotes the new vision, thereby fostering both change and growth.

Leaders who embrace the transformational leadership style do not just happen according to Bass and Riggio (2006). The process of the development of a transformational leader can be somewhat predicted through the process of analyzing and reviewing their childhood. Bass cites his own work and the work of other researchers when reporting this bio data information (Bass and Riggio).Bass and Riggio (2006) report that their unpublished findings show that parents help to shape their children as leaders by showing interest in their moral and educational development. Such parents model higher moral standards and show interest in their children's

successful life experiences, particularly as they relate to their school performance. They help their children become leaders when they encourage them to accept and successfully negotiate challenges. Early life experiences of leaders tend to include engagement in religious activities, childhood leadership opportunities, and a parental display of confidence in their abilities and encouragement to make the most of those abilities. Research has also shown that successful transformational leaders liked school, wanted from an early age to help others, and assisted others in a supportive way (e.g., encouraged others to talk about themselves).

Recent studies are exploring the softer side of the picture—the "emotional intelligence" of the transformational leader (Brown, Bryant, & Reilly, 2006; Kupers & Weibler, 2006). Followers are helped to function at a more optimal level organizationally when they are allowed to glimpse the emotional side of a leader (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006). Emotions are seen to be integral to the context of an organization and to the process of change. Leaders who are empathic see themselves as transformational (Barbuto & Burbach); emotional intelligence, in its turn, reinforces the transformational approach in leaders.

While emotional intelligence is an asset for transformational leaders, understanding and managing one's own emotions is also critical, particularly during periods of high anxiety due to organizational flux and resultant uncertainty. Emotional control on the part of the leader will help followers be more comfortable with system and cultural change (Kupers & Weibler, 2006). When using emotional intelligence, the quality of the leader's interpersonal skill is critical. The better the leader's competence in one-on-one communication, the more successfully that leader can utilize the skills/techniques of individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence (Barbuto & Burback, 2006). Conversely, a leader who displays no emotion

whatsoever is apt to be viewed as less authentic and therefore less effective (Barbuto & Burback).

As research continues, more information about emotional intelligence is coming to light. Such research explores the area of leadership skills, moving beyond research into the process of developing quality leadership (Brown, Bryant, & Reilly, 2006). Individual leadership capability or skill is just now becoming a focus of attention. While not all studies point to clear relationships between emotional intelligence and transformational skills (Brown, Bryant, & Reilly), this new development in transformational leadership study and research bears watching.

While transformational leadership is widely viewed as the desired leadership style, transactional leadership skills, defined by Bass and Riggio (2006) such as contingent reward and managing by exception, are also considered valuable tools. The research finds the use of contingent reward to be the more constructive of the two techniques. In fact, Gellis (2001) found a strong positive correlation between each of the five transformational factors and the contingent reward factor. Awareness and leveraging of this relationship is helpful in maintaining employee satisfaction with a leader (Gellis). It is important in the study of leadership to view the full range of leadership skills. In fact, Bass (1985) points out that the facility in transformational leadership builds upon transactional skills (Gellis).

Best practice

At the end of the day, research findings related to the effects of transformational leadership upon the attitudes and behaviors of followers is encouraging. Leaders who focus on empowering their staff have more effective organizations (Bartram & Casimir, 2007). Fostering employee initiative and innovation leads to employees being better able to cope with organizational change and uncertainty (Bartram & Casimir). Empowerment leads to staff self-

perceptions of being more confident and competent, and followers flourish in an environment they feel they can, to some degree, control (Bartram & Casimir). Overall, an employee's self-efficacy leads beyond improved satisfaction to heightened performance, which in turn positively impacts organizational performance. This empowerment factor also leads to employee trust in the leader, again promoting increased job satisfaction. Trustworthiness through leadership competence is a necessary component leading to staff organizational commitment (Bartram & Casimir).See Figure 2.2, below.

Figure 2.2

Model for follower and organizational effectiveness using transformational leadership

Transformational actions	***plus***	follower beliefs	***lead to***	improved performance
Empowering staff	***plus***	acceptance of change	***lead to***	sense of control
Fostering staff initiative	***plus***	increased self-confidence	***lead to***	work performance
Encouraging innovation	***plus***	improved self-efficacy	***lead to***	organizational fit

The emphasis in the transformational leadership model of power being imbedded in the leader has caused some researchers to question whether there is room for discord in this model. Yukl (2007), Kupers and Weiber (2006), and Tourish (2008) are among those who express concern that debate, disagreement, and resistance are intrinsically discouraged under this paradigm. Such employee reactions may be viewed by those who espouse this leadership style as negative behaviors that need to be overcome. These researchers further criticize the theory by positing that transformational leadership can be boiled down to a few easily acquired skills

(Tourish). Others consider the theory lacking in terms of its ability to measure the full range of leadership skills, techniques, and emotions (Kupers and Weiber; Yukl).

While the positive employee actions and beliefs that have been documented make transformational leadership an attractive and powerful tool, it may be argued that a culture allowing employee questioning and debate about the organization and its leadership leads, in its own right, to strong organizational performance. An environment in which followers are permitted and even encouraged to question and debate organizational actions and issues can enhance innovation and risk taking by staff, as well as strengthen employee self-efficacy, self-confidence, and, ultimately, alignment with organizational goals (Boerner, Eisenbeiss, & Griesser, 2007).

Setting aside the issue of followers' ability to question the organization, the overall leadership qualities, actions, and techniques described and documented in the transformational leadership research are conclusive, and the overwhelming body of research points to clear benefits from adherence to this model. The leadership techniques described by Bass plainly do help followers to develop leadership trust and to function above expected organizational citizenship norms (Bass&Riggio, 2006). Bass &Avolio (1993) summarize these leadership characteristics as creative insight, persistent energy, intuition, and sensitivity to the needs of others.

The transformational research emphasizes techniques for helping managers learn and develop a transformational style of leadership. Mentoring, coaching, and modeling are frequently mentioned as practices that help budding leaders become comfortable with their leadership development and personal style, allowing them to develop a skill set incorporating more of the transformational qualities. The mentoring process allows the new leader to utilize the mentor as a

sounding board for ideas on how to become a more effective leader, allowing the developing leader to internalize the process of leadership into his or her sense of self.

Credibility and integrity are cornerstones of effective leadership, resulting in follower trust and enhanced job satisfaction. Good leaders have an integrated sense of self that is independent of the social context of the organization and that encourages a balance between vision and values, on the one hand, and follower dissent and creative input on the other (Tourish, 2008). The leader so described is transformational when possible and transactional when necessary. Such an effective and trusted leader has leveraged a strong ethical foundation and developed it into an integrated, mature leadership style.

Ethics in leadership

Nonprofits more frequently than for-profit businesses are influenced by their mission statements, which often spell out the values deemed important for the organization, as developed by those most dedicated to it—its leaders and boards of directors. These values become ethics that frame the actions of and decisions made by its directors. Ethics in leadership are important for all businesses but particularly influential in the business and leadership of nonprofits.

The one area that remains unique to social work in general—and hence deserves recognition by those involved in leader selection for social work nonprofits—is the focus on ethics within the field. The National Association of Social Workers' (NASW, 1999) code of ethics is the standard for the ethical performance of employment duties. Even when involved in other, nonpaid roles, such as volunteering, social workers are expected to adhere to these ethical principles. Ethics can be defined as the professional rules of conduct (Meacham, 2007) that govern the workers' behavior while functioning in a social work role. Other fields of nonprofit leadership training do not have the same well-defined codes of conduct.

These ethical standards are based on the core values we embrace as social workers: service, social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. These central values and ethical principles lay the foundation for social works' ethical NASW standards, which outline best practices within the field: commitment to clients, informed consent, and competence, among others. In addition, they outline standards of ethical personal behavior, influencing such areas as conflicts of interest, sexual relationships with clients, and physical contact with clients. Finally, the standards outline behavioral expectations regarding advocacy for clients, support of colleagues, supervisory relationships, and the like.

While these standards are comprehensive in their outline of expected ethical behavior by individual direct service workers (NASW, 2003), they are much less inclusive in terms of the expected behaviors of the organization as a whole or of its leadership. One document that does begin to outline organizational ethics is the Code of Ethics Developed by Catholic Charities, USA (CCUSA, 1997). While some of the ethical standards outlined in this document are explicitly religious in nature, many can be adapted to non-Catholic or otherwise nonreligious organizations. The underlying values in this document are similar to those delineated by the NASW. For example, social justice, service to others, advocacy, freedom, a mission-driven approach, self-determination, and the intrinsic value of the human being are some of the values espoused by both documents (CCUSA; NASW). While not identical in verbiage, the two are remarkably similar in intent.

An organization's values, which represent its expected actions, are in both documents further developed into the ethical principles underlying those expected behaviors. The standards identify high-quality, consistent performance for the organization as it carries out its mission.

This mission-driven focus applies to service to individuals, families, or community groups, and the ethical behavior is expected of individuals at whatever level within the organization, from members of the board of directors to leaders to staff at whatever level of accountability all the way down to volunteers. Taken together, the combined standards from NASW and CCUSA form a solid foundation for leadership ethics.

Ethics in leadership may be defined as the unique melding of individual ethics and the values and ethics of the organization within which leaders perform their duties. This intersection of individual ethics and organizational values and ethics forms a distinctive marriage. Ethics and values from the two sources need to function in congruence if the leader is to be seen as ethical (Holland & Cook, 1983).

While the leader's "fit" within the organization's unique work environment is critical to the development of effective organizational leadership, most organizations have neither formulated an association code that offers guidance nor compiled formal, written guidelines concerning the agency's values and actions (Jurkiewicz & Massey, 1998). No matter how unintentionally, this leaves the agency leader(s) and board of directors in the role of developers of organizational ethics and values (Holland & Cook, 1983).In addition, this deficit leaves the organization vulnerable to changes in direction based upon the turnover of decision-making persons.

While the NASW code of ethics is clear in its direction and useful for the performance of a social worker's routine employment responsibilities, the principles do not always help social workers resolve ethical dilemmas (Hartwell 2006; Freud & Krug, 2002), which most frequently occur when the appropriate course of action is not readily apparent. To complicate the situation, the underlying beliefs and core values held by individual social workers inevitably come into

play in ethical decision making (Meacham, 2007).The organization's culture and its fit with the social workers personal beliefs may help with the individual social worker's decision making process and capabilities. The interplay of the worker's ethics and values and that of the organization may make the decisions less of a dilemma for the worker.

It is not unusual for a worker to be faced with seemingly "win-lose" options, either or any of which will harm one client more than another. In such a situation, a decision may be reached by determining the more vulnerable population (i.e., children vs. adults). Dialogue regarding the case situation will also help the social worker become more comfortable in making the tough choices. This dialogue can be with the client, with other social workers, and/or with supervisors (Dabby, et al., 2008). Current laws may provide additional information to help the worker move beyond the impasse. The organizational culture and fit for the social worker will provide support in the decision making process.

Such ethical dilemmas or difficult decisions generally involve a mixture of the two basic models for ethical decision making: teleology and deontology (Hartwell, 2006; Meacham, 2007). Teleologists by definition attempt to make decisions based upon the foreseeable consequences (Hartwell). Utilitarianism uses these expected outcomes as a measuring stick and then determines the maximum good that can be achieved by one choice over another; i.e., will this decision benefit the greatest number of people?(Meacham). Deontology, on the other hand, maintains that decisions in and of themselves are inherently right or wrong. These two theories reflect the difference between considerations of outcome and focus upon process in decision-making. For deontologists, the process of arriving at a decision is as valuable as the decision itself (Hartwell).

This further emphasizes the need for congruence between the worker's ethic and that of the organization. Should this correspondence fail to exist, the agency will be at risk on a daily basis, since workers in the direct service arena make most of the ethical decisions on the agency's behalf. The value of the NASW code of ethics and the need for systematic instruction on that code for budding social workers cannot be overemphasized (Reamer, 1998).What then is the role of the organization's leadership?

At a higher level, the ethics and value systems of the leader and those of the organization must also be in congruence if the leader is to serve the organization well and professionally. The interpretation of the external authority for an agency is the joint accountability of the leader(s) and the board of directors (Holland & Cook, 1983). This interpretation constitutes the basis for the agency's very existence and leads to the development of its mission and vision—the underpinnings of any nonprofit agency.

The professional orientations, however, go beyond ethics and values to include such areas as accountability, financial know-how, technological proficiency, competence, and overall effectiveness within the leadership role (Berman, 1999). In particular, the ability to develop and promote a vision for the organization is often demanded of nonprofit leaders. This vision is heavily influenced by the ethics and values of the organization, to which an effective nonprofit leader must offer ongoing adherence. Again, this speaks to the absolute necessity of melding a leader's values and ethics with those of the organization. When this congruence is missing or compromised, an organization is at risk of employing an unauthentic leader (Bass & Riggio, 2006)—one who is, for example, more focused upon personal gain than upon the greater organizational good (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Jurkiewicz & Massey, 1998; Hardina, 2004). The

effectiveness of an organizational leader is directly related to the ethical decision making of that leader (Jurkiewicz & Massey).

Research findings within the fields of ethics and leadership offer several best-practice models for leadership effectiveness. Leaders can promote ethical behavior in their employees by offering clear communication regarding such behavior, by modeling it, and by focusing upon promotion of the organizational agenda above their own personal (leadership) agenda (Brown, 2005; Brown, 2006). Leaders with a strong personal commitment to organizational ethics are viewed by followers (employees) as competent.

The socialized, charismatic leader both conveys and exemplifies ethical behavior and values (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This, in turn, motivates employees to display fewer unethical behaviors, and both staff (followers) and leaders become more congruent with the values of the organization. Leaders who display honesty, fairness, consideration, and employee respect, along with a willingness to give employees a voice in organizational actions, will be more successful in creating an ethical organization (Brown & Treviño; Cha & Edmundson, 2006). When leaders model transparency, promote a fair working environment, and demonstrate concern for employees, research shows that followers respond positively.

Modeling behavior is itself a best practice (Brown & Treviño, 2006). The social learning process helps employers become aware of ethical standards and promotes reinforcement of ethical employee behavior (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison 2005). When leaders are seen as ethical, the norms and values of the organization will promote ethical behavior at every level. The promotion of ethics is also improved when leaders foster clear communication with employees (Brown, 2005). Reinforcement of ethical behavior facilitates more ethical behavior, causing it to

become the norm. Leaders do well, then, to reward ethical conduct and to discipline a staff that fails to practice consistent principled conduct (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison).

Ethical behavior on the part of leaders results in their being perceived by followers as both effective and legitimate. Leaders who treat followers/employees fairly and with consideration reinforce ethical behavior in their staff (Brown, 2005), with the positive side effect that the employees become more likely to report issues to the leaders. In this scenario followers exert extra effort at work and are willing to go above and beyond the call of duty in their performance (Brown; Bass & Riggio, 2006). As a result of the ethical job environment, followers experience a social exchange for their work performance, resulting in a sense of satisfaction and validation that goes beyond the expected economic or monetary exchange (Brown, 2006). Research also shows that when the moral intensity of the environment is high, the leader's involvement and influence are more impactful.

The benefits of ethical, moral-value driven leadership (which I advocate to be a significant area in which MSWs have an edge, whether or not this is always understood or recognized by those responsible for leadership selection) mirror those espoused by both the charismatic and transformational leadership models. Without ethics, charismatic leadership becomes narcissistic in nature (Yukl, 2006), resulting in the leader promoting personal advancement rather than overall organizational good. Leaders who are unethical and self-focused are considered under the transformational model to be inauthentic (Bass& Riggio, 2006), and the overall good of the organization is neither developed nor promoted under their direction. Research continues to "provide compelling empirical evidence that executives preferring principled ethical reasoning are more likely to be effective" (Jurkiewicz and Massey, 1998, p. 181).

Social workers are routinely trained in values, ethics, and the principles behind them. Most are drawn to the field of social work in the first place by the unique combination of a desire to help others and a personal belief system that promotes both service and ethical behavior. Ethics training helps prepare social workers to become ethical clinicians. This same ethical training can be useful to social workers who will eventually rise to leadership positions at whatever level within their organizations. Ethics is a fundamental quality of effective leadership, and the social work profession uniquely prepares the future leader for this aspect of direction.

The Hartford Foundation leadership model: an outline for action

The field of social work in founded on the mission and values of enhancing human wellbeing and helping to meet the basic human needs of all people particularly those who are, vulnerable by helping them function successfully in our communities(NASW, 2008). Communicating and accomplishing our commitment to this goal of helping others will become the responsibility for future social workers. Leadership education is an invaluable tool to attaining these goals (Patti, 2003).Without providing education within the ranks in the area of leadership qualities, we force our colleagues to struggle to find their own path. We as educators owe it to those within the field to develop and mentor our students to make leadership development a clear path newly trained social workers may choose to follow. Such a task requires a paradigm of leadership that goes beyond a mere transactional relationship between educator and student (Bass, 1985).The Hartford Foundation (Annual Report, 2008) offers a model of leadership training and support that they report has been successful. The foundation believes that leaders need special support and nurturing as well as specific training. Basic premises are that leadership skills can be acquired and that they are measureable, learnable, and

teachable. Key characteristics for new leaders are identified as the heart, desire, and ability to lead.

The Hartford Foundation (2008) focuses its leadership development efforts upon supporting and training social workers, nurses, and physicians who are treating the elderly and their families. Its members have felt that this focus will greatly improve organizational response to the elderly and develop organizations that are innovative and responsive to the care needs of clients and their communities. The Hartford Foundation (Hartford) has developed a model that identifies four key components in the preparation of future leaders: formal training, mentoring, peer networking, and "answering the call."

Formal training is provided in the area of leadership or administration. The specific components of the training include focus upon personnel, finance, developing and maintaining budgets, fundraising, and strategic planning (Hartford, 2008). While these areas are labeled "foundational," this training model acknowledges that there is additional leadership attributes needed in order to be successful. Leaders must demonstrate a desire to lead the charge in an organization by being innovative, by functioning as a change agent or catalyst, by being a team player, and by manifesting willingness to promote organizational learning. Interpersonal communication, creative risk-taking, self-knowledge, the ability to inspire others, and strategic vision are other significant attributes to be developed and nurtured (Bass & Riggio).

Mentoring is another key component identified as critical to developing successful leaders (Bass &Riggio; Hartford Foundation). Through the mentoring process, knowledge and expertise are shared and networking and goal formulation are developed. Mentors offer the newly developing leaders credibility, the sharing of ideas, growth opportunities, and assistance in

career development. It is important to do everything possible to ensure in advance a good match between mentor and mentee.

Peer networking refers to a supportive process identified to assist colleagues by sharing ideas, providing feedback, building self-confidence, and facilitating contact with helpful resources. This process prevents the isolation often felt by leaders as they make the risky and challenging decisions that are necessary to promote change. Hartford provides the structure to promote networking opportunities.

The final—and perhaps the most important—key component is dubbed "answering the call" (Hartford, 2008). Leaders self-select and answer the question, who is going to act? Effective leaders are those who are willing to run the risk of taking action—of doing something. During the course of leading the organization they use their creative talents and instincts to the benefit of others. The Hartford Foundation model could become the outline for action in the schools of social work, if we are open to being innovative, creative, and willing to lead.

Summary and conceptual framework

This exploratory research project is aimed at determining how MSW social workers have become leaders of nonprofits and how they have learned to lead. By interviewing MSW Cosmic hope to glean information that might help other social workers become leaders. Using the three reviewed theories and their concepts about leadership, the interview process focused on exploring and garnering a working knowledge of leadership development in 18 nonprofit MSW CEOs.

The paradigms of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995), the Hartford Foundation training model (2008), and ethics in social work leadership, melded together, form the background information leading me to the development of the semi-structured interview

guide, data collection tools, project methodology and process, and categories for data analysis that is detailed in Chapter 3. Together these models and their concepts offer a unique framework for delving into the personal stories of MSWs who have become leaders of nonprofits. How they became leaders, the tools and techniques they used, and any help and encouragement they may have received along the way—all were gleaned from the subject interviews by using these models and concepts of leadership as a basis for questions and concept development. We now turn to the methodology chapter and how the interviews were used to develop the data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research project is an exploratory study designed to interview MSWs who have become CEOs of nonprofits in the hope of learning from their journeys how they became leaders, helpful tools/techniques discovered by the subjects, and lessons they may have learned. Through the processing of interviewing 18 MSW Cosmic have been able to glean this information and have gone on to explore, categorize, and analyze the data for themes that allowed for the explorations of similarities and differences in their leadership journeys.

This methodology chapter will include information regarding the research processes and steps taken to complete this exploratory leadership project. The following areas will be presented: rationale for qualitative approach, description of the research sample, information / data to be collected, research design, data collection method, analysis and synthesis of data, ethical considerations, validity of study coding and design, and a summary of the research process. We begin with the discussion of the use of the qualitative approach in this project.

Rationale for research design

The aim of this study was to glean, catalog, and analyze information by documenting the journeys of social work leaders. This multi-case study of 18 leaders was small by design, allowing for careful documentation of each interviewee's journey to leadership.

This project was designed according to the social constructivism theory (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), which allows the researcher to explore a problem by placing the research within the social context of the subject's life or journey. The social context allows for the careful consideration of the subject's personal culture, family of origin, personal learning style, etc., as part of the process of collecting the information needed to inform and develop the research data.

Qualitative research allows for the exploration of subjects and data within the context of society, culture, and social processes over time and space (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). This process enhances the ability of the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the information presented by the subjects while in their own environments, permitting the research to proceed in a flexible and responsive manner and allowing the researcher to make sense of the observations and go on to develop conclusions leading to more observations and generalizations from the data. This process develops a rich, in-depth picture of social phenomena—quite different from the results of a quantitative research process of the same events. Making sense of the ongoing qualitative research process is fully as important as the end product or results. In short, qualitative research allows the researcher to record the subtleties and nuances of the data collection process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

This multi-case study design relied on the process of interviewing to record and analyzes personal accounts of the ways in which particular leaders learned and honed their craft, resulting in an enhanced understanding of the intricacies of their unique career paths to leadership. By carefully recording and analyzing their personal histories, information was gleaned that may inform the field of social work on possible educational concepts and methods of learning for future social work leaders.

A carefully crafted survey could have been developed to collect data. However, a survey would not have captured the details and nuances of lessons learned by these leaders as effectively as one-on-one, in-depth interviews. The interview process allowed the interviewer to ask and record information regarding the details of each executive's personal experiences, to probe in order to clarify concepts and issues during the dialogue, and to record the contexts of the experiences. The executives' reasons for becoming leaders, the lessons they have learned

along the way and their personal experience of effective methods for becoming leaders and functioning within that role were more readily gleaned through the interview process. This detail would have been largely absent from the results of surveys, which by their nature cannot capture the more in-depth information we seek to learn about leadership formation, nor would a survey format have allowed these leaders to use their own words. Thus the data are enriched by their voices, and I would contend that the richness of the data developed from the in-person interviews will result in the discovery of information that may be valuable to the field of social work and its future training of leaders.

The research sample

A criterion sampling method (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) was used to select the subjects for this exploratory project. All were master's-degreed social work graduates (MSWs) and current chief executive officers of nonprofits located within the state of Michigan. The purposeful selection process allowed for a degree of commonality that facilitated meaningful analysis of similarities and differences within the group.

Locating criteria-specific subjects involved a process of scanning agency membership lists of statewide advocacy/membership groups for human service nonprofits, as well as of considering self-referrals and identifying executives known me from my social work associations or referred by others to me.

Executives meeting the criteria listed above were then contacted by email, phone, or in person to request their participation in the study(see sample email, Appendix B).The emails outlined in general the study process and goal, confirmed the criteria necessary for inclusion in the project, presented a brief descriptive outline of the process (i.e., interview lasting from 1 to

1.5 hours, held at a time and location convenient for subject), mentioned the recording and transcribing of the interview, and assured confidentiality.

Subjects meeting the criteria sampling guidelines were selected for inclusion in this project on a “first-come” basis (with the exception that I deliberately sought an even mix of men and women).The informed consent form was emailed to prospective participants for review prior to scheduling of the interview meeting. All subjects signed the IRB-approved informed consent document (see Appendix C) before the interview was conducted to indicate that they had agreed to be included in the project. Once the initial project review was completed and the subject had agreed to participate, the interview was scheduled.

Although all of the participants met the above listed criteria, there were inevitable differences in the ages of the subjects, MSW schools attended, the length time the subjects had been in their CEO positions, etc. These differences were analyzed for potential impact on the data as the coding and exploration of the interviews took place and will be reported in Chapter 4, the results section. As previously mentioned the MSW School attended by the subjects was not considered for analysis in this project.

Demographic information on subjects

All subjects were asked to fill out a basic demographic questionnaire (see leadership survey/questionnaire, Appendix D), generally at the beginning of the interview process. Occasionally, due to considerations regarding the CEO’s schedule, the demographic information was gathered after the interview via subsequent emails or phone calls or by having the subject enter the information directly into the survey monkey (after signing the informed consent form). This baseline information gathered from each subject will be summarized.

Semi-structured interviews were completed with all 18 subjects. Table 3.1, to follow, displays a summary of the characteristics of the respondents. As mentioned, the sample was split evenly between men and women; I specifically sought this balance in the hope of reporting gender issues evenly.

The subjects tended to be older, their ages ranging from 46 to 68.Two were between the ages of 46 and 50, 4 between 51 and 55, 6 between 56 and 60, 5 between 61 and 65, and 1 older than 65.

A majority participants had received their MSWs from Michigan universities, with graduation dates ranging from 1971 to 2007.One subject had attended Grand Valley State University, 2 Michigan State, 6 the University of Michigan, 5 Wayne State, and 3 Western Michigan University. One subject obtained their degree outside of Michigan. All but 2 completed their MSW more than15 years ago. One subject completed the MSW before 1970, 4 between 1971 and 1975, 7 between 1976 and 1980, 3 between 1981 and 1985, and 1 between 1991 and 1995.One subject graduated in 2007.Thus the sample was comprised primarily of individuals who have been out of school and in the workforce for some time. Three subjects also indicated that they hold other degrees, and 9 reported other training outside the MSW degree, including the Harvard executive program and grant writing.

Table 3.1
Summary of sample demographics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage of Sample
Gender		
Male	9	50
Female	9	50

Table 3.1 (cont.d).

Age		
46–50	2	11.1
51–55	4	22.2
56–60	6	33.3
61–65	5	27.8
65 and Older	1	5.6
MSW School		
Grand Valley State	1	5.6
Michigan State	2	11.1
University of Michigan	6	33.3
Wayne State	5	27.8
Western Michigan	3	16.7
Outside of Michigan	1	5.6
Year of Graduation (MSW)		
1966–1970	1	5.6
1971–1975	4	22.2
1976–1980	7	38.9
1981–1985	3	16.7
1986–1990	0	0.0
1991–1995	1	5.6
Since 1995	2	11.1

Note: N = 18.

Information collected

In documenting the leadership journeys of the 18 Michigan-based CEOs of nonprofits in the social work arena, the interview questions focused on the contexts of their stories. These contexts included the demographic information about the subjects and their agencies, their perceptions of their leadership journeys, and information about their leadership experiences based on the three theoretical models used to inform the conceptual framework for the questions.

The transformational leadership model (Bass and Riggio, 2006), the Hartford Foundation model for leadership training (Annual Report, 2008), and the ethics theoretical model were used to develop the semi-structured interview questions or guidelines. These contexts helped me to develop and frame the analysis of the information gathered in this project.

Agency contextual information

The agencies represented by these CEOs varied by revenue size, number of employees, geographic service area, location where service was provided, main office location, number of additional locations, sources of funding, service provision, and affiliation. Table 3.2summarizes the kinds of organizations the subjects in the sample were leading. As stated, all of the subjects are located in Michigan, and their respective locations cover an approximate range of 150 miles and encompass three major urban areas (Grand Rapids, Lansing, and greater metropolitan Detroit), as well as several smaller, more rural areas (these locations are not mentioned in the interest of maintaining confidentiality for these subjects and their agencies.)

The variance in size of agency is also seen in the revenues. The agencies represented a range of revenue from under $1 million to over $50 million. Only 1 subject directs a nonprofit with annual revenues of less than$1 million. Two are CEOs of organizations with $1 to $2 million in annual revenue, 4 are CEOs of agencies with $2 to $3 million, 1is a CEO of a nonprofit with $5 to $10 million, 5 are CEOs of an agency with $10 to $15 million, 2 are CEO's of organizations with $15 to $20 million, and 2 are CEOs of agencies with higher revenues. The sources of this revenue are listed as predominately governmental funding; while the revenues come primarily from state government, in some cases it also includes federal dollars. Other revenue sources are cited as private fundraising dollars and private insurance, including Medicare, Medicaid, HMOs, etc.

There is also a considerable range in the number of employee employed by the nonprofits from which the subjects were recruited. Eight direct nonprofits with 50 or fewer employees,3agencies with 51–100 employees,4organizations with 101–200 employees,2 nonprofits with 201–500 employees, and 1 comes from a larger agency with over 500 staff.

The geographic coverage of the subject agencies varies as well, from serving a single county to statewide jurisdiction. The regions represented include larger urban counties, such as Wayne and Oakland Counties, as well as smaller, rural areas like Shiawassee and Mecosta Counties. At the same time, each agency tends to have only 1 or a few offices around the state. Nine subjects represent organizations with only 1 office; 4agencies with 2 offices; 3nonprofits with 3 to 10 offices; and 2 larger, multi-location organizations.

Table 3.2

Summary of nonprofit organizations

Variable	Frequency	Percentage of Sample
Number of Employees		
1–50	8	44.4
51–100	3	16.7
101–200	4	22.2
201–500	2	11.1
Over 500	1	5.6
Agency Revenue		
Under $1 Million	1	5.6
$1–2 Million	2	11.1
$2–3 Million	4	22.2
$3–5 Million	1	5.6
$5–10 Million	5	27.8
$10–15 Million	1	5.6
$15–20 Million	2	11.1
Over $20 Million	2	11.1

Table 3.2 (cont'd).

Number of Locations		
1	9	50
2	4	22.2
3-10	3	16.7
11–20	0	0.0
21–30	2	11.1

The revenue sources often determine the types of services the agencies provide—which are wide ranging. The nonprofits represented include (1) fundraising-focused agencies (which provide funding to other community agencies for the provision of services); (2) agencies that provide community mental health services for the persistently, chronically mentally ill and/or for clients with developmental disabilities; (3) organizations that offer outpatient behavioral / mental health services (including substance abuse services); (4) child welfare agencies (providing foster care, adoption, in-home family preservation services, and residential housing for children); (5) nonprofits offering housing improvement /sustainability/poverty prevention services; and (6) organizations specializing in elder care (including end-of-life support).

Affiliations listed by the subjects also are varied. Most listed state membership groups, national affiliations aligned with their respective religious foundations, and national affiliations due to their service type.

Perceptual and theoretical information gathering

The perceptions of the subjects were the focus of this exploratory study. The information desired from the interviews in this regard focused on how they became leaders, how they learned to lead, and how they developed their skills.

I developed and utilized a semi-structured interview guide to identify and explore leadership concepts presented in the literature, as well as other, related topics introduced by the subjects. The open-ended questions served to guide and frame the interview process, while allowing the interviewer to add impromptu, probing follow-up questions for clarification, detail, and personalization. Throughout the process I guided the subjects to speak to the topic at hand—leadership and its development for them on a personal level.

All answers to the perception and probing theoretical questions were recorded and transcribed for accuracy and to facilitate analysis. I asked the questions in the same basic order, unless the interviewee mentioned a subject and I chose to probe at that opportune moment. Whether or not the sequence was varied in this way, all topics were discussed during the interview with all of the subjects. See Appendix E for the interview guide. The process of the subject interviews are reported in more detail in Chapter 4 under Results.

Overview: research design

Project approval

Once the theoretical framework for this project was chosen, I began a process of discussions with the dissertation committee to develop possible research questions, the conceptual framework, and research design. The next step was the development of the semi-structured interview guideline, based on the theoretical literature models; the demographic questionnaire; and the agency profile (combined into leadership survey, Appendix D). After generating the interview questions, I discussed them with the committee members separately and again in a group context. The next step was to apply for and receive IRB approval for the project (IRB approval letter dated July 2, 2010). which included the informed consent document to be signed by all subjects(see Appendix C), as well as the confidentiality agreement, to be signed by

the assistant/transcriptionist and the secondary coder/statistician (Appendix G). The secondary coder/statistician did not know the subjects' identities or agency information, as the identifying information was first redacted from the transcribed interviews and project information.

Data collection methods

I chose the semi-structured interview process for collecting data for this project because it allowed for the collection of the in-depth information needed to answer the research questions: How do MSWs become leaders of nonprofits, and how do they learn to lead? I developed the interview questions using the theoretical literature models to help frame them. Those questions regarding mentoring, peer networking, training, and the personal decision to become a leader were developed from the Hartford Foundation training model, while the questions regarding ethics and their use were developed from the literature surrounding ethics and transformational leadership. The style of the leadership questions were developed from the transformational leadership model of Bass and Riggio (2006). All questions were open-ended to encourage the most personal and detailed possible response from the subjects.

Once consensus regarding the questions was reached between the dissertation committee and me, and IRB approval for the project was received, I performed a pilot test of the interview instruments and guide. The field test of the interview questions was conducted on two subjects who, while not meeting the current sampling criteria, had been CEOs of nonprofits and possessed a master's degree. The subjects were interviewed in person in their work settings, and their feedback helped to improve both the interview questions and the process. Both of the test subjects had recommendations for improving the project. Among them were suggestions to present a more detailed overview of the project; to spend more time making the interviewee comfortable by encouraging small talk, etc., regarding the project; and to allow the first question

to be open-ended in order to encourage the respondents to relax and relate the details of their own journeys.

As mentioned earlier, interviews using open-ended questions allow for the gleaning of information surrounding the subjects' personal life story, perceptions and demographic information. Subjects are able to tell their stories and develop a personal analysis of their journeys. The subjects were frequently asked to comment retrospectively and reflectively on their life histories as they relate to their leadership journeys, and the interviewer encouraged them to extract meaning from their own experiences.

As outlined earlier, prospective subjects were identified for this project using membership lists of statewide organizations, self-referral, referrals from others, and contacts with colleagues with knowledge of the research project. Once I had identified potential subjects, I contacted each of them by email, phone, or in person. Subsequently, a mutually agreeable interview date, time, and place were established. I asked each subject to complete a personal demographic questionnaire, as well as an agency informational/contextual questionnaire (these questionnaires are combined on the leadership survey; see Appendix D). Demographic questions included the subjects' personal information such as age, race, date of birth, gender, contact information, schools attended and other special training. Agency information collected included number of employees, agency size by revenue, locations/geographic coverage, major funding sources, major services provided and affiliations. All interviews were conducted in private meetings between the interviewee and me, with the interviews recorded to ensure accuracy of reporting. The recordings were transcribed verbatim for coding purposes.

Each interview was conducted at a site mutually agreed upon between the subject and myself. The location was discussed ahead of the interview and determined when the individual

appointment time was set with the subject. Fourteen interviews were held in the office of the subject, 1 in a subject's home at their request, 2 at another agreed-upon site, and 1 in a restaurant (a location selected by the subject).

Data safeguards / confidentiality

Maintaining the confidentiality of the subjects and safeguarding data were paramount considerations during the research process, which allowed for and maintained these safeguards throughout the interview and data analysis. These voluntary subjects needed both to be protected and to be educated about the research process in which they were agreeing to engage. Although there were no anticipated negative consequences for subjects in terms of participation, I made every effort to provide safeguards. Following is a description of these measures as they relate to the data, subject identity, agency information, and personal information.

As stated earlier, all subjects voluntarily signed an informed consent agreement before the interview process commenced and the personal demographic and agency information was collected. Every effort was made to protect the subjects' information and identity by aggregating the data and not sharing data outside the research team. The identity of the agency was also kept confidential throughout the research process.

Subsequent to the pilot interviews, I began to set up and conduct the 18 interviews with the selected subjects. The interviews were conducted from mid-July to mid-November2010.As stated above; all interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy. The assistant/transcriptionist and assistant coder/statistician signed an IRB-approved confidentiality agreement (see Appendix G), consenting to maintain in confidence the interviewees identity and their personal/agency information. As indicated, the assistant/transcriptionist removed the

identity of all the subjects, assigning each a number for identification purposes, so that the second coder /statistician did not know the identity of the interview subjects.

The recorded interviews and transcriptions were downloaded onto an external drive, which was maintained at my office in a locked file drawer (the computer holding the research information is also maintained in my locked office). In addition, per IRB requirements, I maintained in my university office a listing of all research subjects and their confidential ID numbers. After the subject had signed the informed consent form, the assistant/transcriptionist and I inputted the demographic and agency information into an online survey collection site, which was password-protected and guaranteed secure by the site developers. One subject requested to input their own data, after which collected and forwarded this survey information to the second coder for analysis without any identifying information.

Data analysis and synthesis

The initial interview question was open-ended, allowing the subjects the opportunity to tell their story as they remembered it and with their own emphasis on what they deemed to be important. The subjects could begin their story at that point in their life they felt to have been the beginning of their path to leadership. The leadership training model developed by the Hartford Foundation, the ethics concepts and Bass's transformational leadership model were helpful in developing the follow-up interview questions and in categorizing the subjects' answers. The four concepts in the Hartford leadership development model—mentoring, peer networking, formal training, and the call to lead—guided the development of follow-up questions to probe with the subjects the processes they utilized along their path to leadership. The development of the desires and skills leading the interviewees to become the leaders of nonprofits was recorded and categorized, with a focus on the Hartford Foundation leadership training concepts. Answers to

questions about how their career paths developed identified how frequently the four concepts proved helpful to the executives in advancing their leadership skills. In addition, the open-ended questions in the interview guide allowed the respondents to identify other helpful concepts they had acquired along the way.

The interviews recorded each subject's background, motivation for becoming a leader, and personal style of leadership. I asked additional questions regarding the use of ethics in their work, the decision to become a leader, training received beyond the MSW. The leadership style discussion was preceded by my giving the subject the concept definitions for transformational and transactional leadership using the model outlined by Bass and Riggio (2006). See Appendix E for the complete interview guide. I used the open-ended interview format, which allowed the subjects to identify any other concepts, skills, or ideas that had helped them learn to lead. The coding of the interviews afforded me an opportunity to identify similar or divergent themes and ideas throughout their personal journeys.

Coding the interviews

Once the interviews had been transcribed, I began by reading and reviewing the first four interviews (all of which were reviewed several times). During this initial process, I began identifying similar concepts from the interviews and this process lead to the development of preliminary coding categories and definitions. I developed a draft coding scheme, listing the coding labels and developing definitions for the codes, after which she sent them on to the secondary coder for review and discussion. After the assistant coder had also read and coded the first 4 interviews for comparison and discussion, the two coders conferred and discussed the points at which the largest discrepancies had occurred with regard tithe coding/concept labels. It was discovered that one coder was not identifying all of the leadership formation and leadership

style categories. After discussing the reasons for the differences in approach and agreeing on what constituted a mention, the remaining interviews were coded.

Once this initial coding and discussion process was concluded, the coding assistant and I coded the remaining 14 interviews individually and without discussion. The two of us independently read the interviews and coded each variable with either a yes, indicating that the respondent had made reference to a concept, or a no, indicating that the respondent did not. An assessment of the final coding showed a convergence between us as more interviews were completed. That is, by the final interviews the two of us were quite consistent in our choices.

Following the coding, the two coders examined points of disagreement and discussed how to reconcile the discrepancies. The Self-care category turned out to have little relevance across interviews and was dropped. In addition, the coders identified a good deal of overlap among certain other categories and chose to combine the data where appropriate. Specifically, Give-back Mentoring and Coaching were combined into a single Give-back Mentoring variable; Lifelong Learner and Seeking Improvement were combined into a single Lifelong Learner variable; on the job and Community-based Training were combined into a single Training variable; and Outside Social Work and Community Collaboration were combined into a single Outside Activity variable. I then reviewed the remaining discrepancies and recommended to the secondary coder the results of the final review of coding. That is to say that I made a final recommendation to record the category either as a mention or not as a mention, and the secondary coder changed the scoring. The Cohen's kappa was determined based on the initial scoring decisions and were not rerun based on the narrowing down or collapsing of the above variables. The inter-coder reliabilities will be reported later in this methodology section.

The secondary coding assistant helped to ensure the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the project results. As the process of code development has shown, the coding of the interviews was a thoughtful, iterative process, linking threads of similarities and differences. The inter-coder reliability was determined as a result of this research process and will be reported later on in this methodology section. The small number of subjects will limit the generalizability of the project results but may allow for extrapolations to similar situational research.

The coding of the interviews allowed me to begin the process of clustering segments of the interviews into more holistic constructs and themes. As the coding occurred, I began to see themes, similarities, and differences among the subjects' leadership journeys. Based on the information analysis, I was able to begin the process of final-results development of the data presented by the subjects, using the SPSS software results to analyze the information presented. Using SPSS, I was able to report out the number of subjects and the percentage of the subject sample where the specific concept was identified or found in the subject's interview. These results and other project results are presented in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

The subject responses were coded and organized into items that fall into five categories: (1) life experience and leadership formation, (2) training, (3) leadership style, (4) ethics, and (5) other identified concepts. The subcategories under the category of life experiences and influences on the subject's leadership formation include national political context, work life experiences, mentoring, peer networking, and the call to lead or leadership formation. The training category includes subcategories of MSW training and non-MSW training. The leadership style category catalogs leadership concepts, including Bass's transformational leadership model, while the ethics category explores the context of ethics used in leadership and

how ethics are used by subjects. The other/miscellaneous category allows for the cataloging of ideas and concepts presented extemporaneously by the subjects. All of the subcategories include additional concepts that were noted by the subjects. A complete listing and explanation of these categories, subcategories, additional concepts, and descriptors is reported in Figure 3.1 to follow.

Figure 3.1

Interview coding results—final selected variables

Life experience and influence on leadership formation: Subject identifies areas of work / experiences prior to becoming a CEO leader

National political content: Subject cites national events as influencing their decisions to become social workers

Racial Injustice: cites topic as reason

Women's rights: cites topic as reason

Vietnam War: cites topic as reason

Early social work experience

Research: worked as a researcher or research assistant

Teacher/trainer: worked in teaching or training

Community organizing: worked with communities

Clinical: worked in a clinical setting providing social work

Public policy: worked in political arena

Advocacy: worked advocating for others

Mentoring: subject identifies adults in their lives who encouraged them to succeed in life/ to apply themselves

Number of mentors: total number of mentors identified by the subject

Mentors helped: mentors encouraged subject to continue to grow/self-actualize(i.e., go to school, become a leader/ take position, helped support subject in their life experiences)

Figure 3.1 (cont'd).

Mentors early in career: mentors helped/encouraged them early in their career prior to leadership position (i.e., in college or after graduation)

Give-back mentoring: subject mentioned mentoring others

Childhood mentors: subject mentioned that there was someone who mentored them in grade school and/or high school

Peer networking

Have peer networking—yes/no:
Yes: subject reports that they have peers who are helpful to them
No: subject reports that they do not have peers who are helpful to them

Utilizes peer networking regularly: subject regularly utilizes connecting with peers

Seeks out peer networking: subject reports that they seek out peer support

Work—peers are found at work: subject reports that peers are found at work or from work associations

Personal—peers are found in family/friends: subject reports that support comes from family/ personal friends (not work associates or other work-related colleagues)

Leadership formation (call to lead)

Childhood leadership / leadership early in life: subject recalls an experience as a child (0–18) in which she or he led others with a task, goal, or team or school project or in some other way answered the call to become leader

Didn't pick to lead: subject expressed during interview a reluctance to assume a leadership role

Pushed to lead: subject expressed that they we strongly encouraged by others to take on a leadership role

Self-actualization/personal drive to lead: subject reports/identifies their drive to be a leader

Activity outside of social work: uses leadership ability outside of regular work role (i.e., in community processes)

Supervisory: reports being a supervisor earlier in their career

Figure 3.1 (cont'd).

Training

MSW training

Valuable: reports MSW valuable to leadership ability

Policy track: reports having taken social policy track in MSW training

Clinical track: reports having taken clinical track in MSW training

Other training impact: subject reports they had training other than the MSW (i.e., MBA, conferences, etc.)

Had training—Yes/no

Helpful: subject reports that the training was helpful to them

Outside MSW: subject reports other formal degrees (i.e., MBA, PhD)

Selected for program/honor: subject reports they were selected by outside entity for training

Training: received training in the community/on the job

Lifelong learner: subject described a style of learning throughout their lifetime

Leadership style

Lift up staff: reports that they use the components of transformational leadership as described by interviewer

Promote staff / self-actualization: subject reports that they motivate/inspire staff; promote team spirit; and use innovation, creativity, coaching, and mentoring

Transactional: reports that they use rewards/coaching to motivate staff to complete work products or projects

Relate to this business model—yes/no
Yes: relates, reports using concepts
No: reports does not use concept or does not indicate agreement

Name another model—yes/no

Self-doubt/ still learning: reports doubts about leadership ability

Figure 3.1 (cont'd).

Boundaries: reports that boundaries are needed in leadership (i.e., between themselves and staff, board of directors and staff)

Sharing leadership with staff: reports staff are encouraged to share leadership (e.g., organizational decisions) within the community

Maturing leader/comfortable in their own skin: subject reports that they are comfortable with the role of being a leader

Adversaries/utilize: mentions that they have difficult staff, work situations that they have learned from

Ethics

Important—yes/no
Yes: reports important to work
No: reports not important to work performance

Use ethics regularly on the job: subject reports that ethics plays a part in their job performance

Description of ethics: reports what ethics means to them

Part of who they are: describes ethics as second nature, ingrained and part of who they are

Religion: Subject mentions religion as a concept

Yes: subject mentions religion and describes importance

No: subject does not mention religion

Other concepts identified

Multitasking: subject reports or describes the process of multitasking to get the job done

Succession planning: subject mentions the need for planning for leadership change when they leave

Male vs. female leadership: subject mentions male and female differences in leadership styles

Generational issues: subject mentions age differences in leadership as important (younger vs. older leaders and lessons learned)

Figure 3.1 (cont'd).

Fundraising: subject reports that fundraising is an important issue in leadership

Inter-coder reliability

Tables 3.3 through 3.7 show assessments of inter-coder reliabilities for the 18 interviews organized by each of the five thematic groupings. Two statistics are reported in each table. First, the tables show the percentage of the 18 interviews in which the coders were in agreement. Second, the tables display Cohen's kappa, where a score of 1 indicates perfect agreement and a number less than 0 indicates little or no agreement (Cohen, 1960). The kappa measure was developed to take into account agreement due simply to chance, which may make raw percentages of agreement unduly optimistic. At the same time, Cohen's kappa often yields numbers that are unrealistically low (Gwet, 2008), making the statistic overly conservative. Both numbers are presented in order to offer an upper and lower boundary on the level of the agreement. Cohen's kappa Inter-coder reliability scores of .8 and above is considered excellent, .6 to .8 as good correspondence, .4 to .6 as moderately good, .2 to .4 as okay correspondence and anything lower as poor correspondence (Altman, 1991).

The interviews varied considerably in overall length, from 50 minutes to over an hour and a half. Although the interviews were semi-structured, meaning that the questions were set in advance, the answers were not predetermined, and the coders looked for references to each category throughout the interviews. Thus, where disagreements occurred, they were typically found to be the result of one coder missing a short discussion of a concept somewhere within the long transcript other than at the point of the question designed to elicit that kind of information. Given the length of the interviews, it is not surprising that the inter-coder reliabilities are

sometimes low (although they were—with one exception—always above 0). However, the coders were able to reconcile disagreements to produce coding with which both were satisfied.

Table 3.3 shows the inter-coder reliabilities for life experience and leadership formation. There are several subcategories within this table. First, many subjects discussed the national political context during their growing-up years. The agreements were high for these items, with the smallest kappa statistic being .753 for mentions of racial justice, and perfect consensus occurred in the area of women's rights. The kappa was .870 for mentions of Vietnam. Overall, 12 subjects mentioned the political environment in which they grew up as important to life decisions they made.

Agreement was also high for most items related to early social work experience. The lowest kappa (.211) occurred for clinical work, where there were disagreements for 7 of the 18 categories. Agreement was higher for the remaining items, ranging from a kappa of .471 for teaching to a kappa of .870 for experience with public policy.

In the mentoring category, there were numerous disagreements about what constituted a childhood mentor, with kappa suggesting no agreement. The kappa for give-back mentoring was also low at .153, but it was higher for the other two items: early career mentors (.438) and how mentors helped (.640).

In the area of peer networking, agreement was high overall. The kappa could not be computed for two items—yes/no to having and/or utilizing a network—because in each case one coder chose "yes" for every single subject (Cohen's kappa requires variability from both coders). In both cases the coders disagreed on only a single subject. The lowest levels of agreement (kappa = .341) occurred for whether or not peers were found at work.

Finally, for the "call to lead" subcategory, disagreements were highest for the "didn't pick to lead" item (kappa = .065), the "personal drive to lead" item (kappa = .077), and the "activity outside of work" item (kappa = .077). Agreement was high for childhood leadership (kappa = .727) and whether or not subjects had supervised others before becoming a leader (kappa = .640).

Table 3.3

Inter-coder reliabilities for life experience and leadership formation variables

Variable	Percent Agreement	Cohen's Kappa
National political content		
Racial injustice	.89	.753
Women's rights	1.00	1.00
Vietnam War	.94	.870
Early social work experience		
Research	.89	.679
Teaching/trainer	.83	.471
Community organizing	.78	.556
Clinical	.72	.211
Public policy	.94	.870
Advocacy	.78	.507
Mentoring		
Mentors helped	.94	.640
Mentors early in career	.89	.438
Give-back mentoring	.56	.153
Childhood mentors	.56	.000
Peer networking		
Yes, have peer network	.94	NA
Utilizes network regularly	.94	NA
Seek out peer networking	.72	.400
Peers are family/friends	.72	.458
Leadership formation (call to lead)		
Childhood leadership	.89	.727
Didn't pick to Lead	.56	.065
Self-actualization/Personal drive	.56	.077

Table 3.3 (cont'd).

Seeking-improvement/Self-taught	.72	.444
Self-care	.78	.400
Activity outside social work	.56	.077
Supervisory	.94	.640
Supervisory	.94	.640

Note: NA refers to cases where one coder had scored all answers with either "Yes" or "No," which made it impossible to calculate kappa.

Table 3.4 considers coding for the training experiences of the subjects. There was good agreement about coding the value of the Swathe kappa for the value of the MSW was .684, while the codes for the type of MSW training were only slightly lower (.658 for the policy track and .556 for the clinical track).

Coding matched perfectly or near perfectly for other training, the value of that training, and whether the respondent had formal training (i.e., a degree) outside the Swathe lowest agreements were in the area of on-the-job training (kappa = .260), whether the subject was a lifelong learner (kappa = .258), and community training (kappa = .333). The kappa for whether the subject had been selected for an honor was .557.

Table 3.4

Inter-coder reliabilities for training variables

Variable	Percent Agreement	Cohen's Kappa
MSW training		
Valuable	.89	.684
Policy track	.83	.658
Clinical track	.78	.556
Other training impact		
Had other training?	1.00	1.00
Helpful	.94	NA

Table 3.4 (cont'd).

On the job	.67	.260
Outside MSW	.94	NA
Selected for program/honor	.83	.557
Community training	.67	.333
Lifelong learner	.56	.258

Note: NA refers to cases in which one coder had scored all answers either "Yes" or "No," which made it impossible to calculate Kappa

Agreement was somewhat more modest for the next table, which looks at leadership style. The lowest agreement was for the items assessing whether or not the subject shares leadership with staff (kappa = .113), provides external support to the community (kappa = .182), and uses coaching with the staff (kappa = .191). Agreement was a little higher for whether or not the subject recognizes boundaries with staff (kappa = .222), named a leadership paradigm besides the Bass model (kappa = .217), related to the Bass model (kappa = .308), emphasized the transactional component (kappa = .308), emphasized the transformational/lifting up staff component (kappa = .265), expressed self-doubt (.372), or was comfortable in their leadership role (kappa = .333). The highest agreement was for whether or not subjects had dealt with adversarial staff (kappa = .870). This lower level of kappa agreement could be related to the depth of my knowledge about the Bass transformational model compared to that of the second coder. The two of us discussed the differences and were able to resolve them. I am reporting the kappa without alteration.

Table 3.5

Inter-coder reliabilities for leadership style

Variable	Percent Agreement	Cohen's Kappa
Lift up staff	.78	.265
Promote staff/Self-actualization	.89	NA

Table 3.5 (cont'd).

Relate to business model?	.83	.308
Name another model?	.67	.217
Coaching	.56	.191
Community collaborative	.56	.182
Self-doubt/Still learning	.67	.372
Boundaries	.61	.222
Sharing leadership with staff	.61	.113
Maturing/Comfortable in own skin	.67	.333
Adversaries/Utilize	.94	.870

Note: NA refers to cases in which one coder had scored all answers either "Yes" or "No," which made it impossible to calculate kappa.

Agreement was quite high for all components of ethics, as shown in Table 3.6.Agreement was near perfect for the importance of ethics, their regular use on the job, and whether or not subjects offered a description of what ethics means to them. The kappa for the issue of whether the subject said ethics are a part of who they are was .341, and the kappa for whether the subject discussed religion and ethics was .649.

Table 3.6

Inter-coder reliabilities for ethics

Variable	Percent Agreement	Cohen's Kappa
Are ethics important?	.94	NA
Use ethics regularly on job	.94	NA
Description of ethics	.89	NA
Part of who they are	.83	.341
Religion	.83	.649

Note: NA refers to cases where one coder had scored all answers either "Yes" or "No," which made it impossible to calculate Kappa.

Finally, Table 3.7looks at other identified concepts. Agreement was high for subject multitasking (kappa = .723), whether the subject was thinking about succession (.658), and the role of gender in leadership (kappa = .824). Consensus was a bit more modest for discussions of generational issues (kappa = .333) and the role of fundraising (kappa = .366).

Table 3.7

Inter-coder reliabilities for other identified concepts

Variable	Percent Agreement	Cohen's Kappa
Multitasking	.89	.723
Succession planning	.83	.658
Male vs. female leadership	.94	.824
Generational issues	.67	.333
Fundraising	.72	.366

Summary

This chapter provided in summary form a detailed description of the research process and methodology followed in this analysis of social work leadership. The contextual interview process was used to explore with subjects their leadership journey, lessons learned, and "aha" moments they may have experienced and reported. Matching the leadership stories of the 18 MSW CEOs interviewed with the theories of leadership upon which this project is based helped me to begin to develop concepts and themes around the subjects' reported leadership experiences. Information reported by the subjects was compared and contrasted against the leadership literature review used as a basis for this exploratory research project.

The utmost care and consideration were taken to protect the confidentiality of the subjects, and the university IRB staff and the dissertation committee members were consulted

throughout the process to maintain high standards for research protocols and processes. In addition, subjects were treated with care and compassion throughout the interview process. The research development process undertaken for this project was outlined in detail. This process included the review of subject identification and selection, concept/coding development and definition, the coding process, and analysis of the inter-coder reliability. The process for the development of key themes and ideas was also detailed.

Building on the basic literature concepts, I was able to expand these basic concepts by adding common ideas presented by the interviewees as more definitional information was presented by them. As an example, each of the Hartford core concepts of mentoring, peer networking, training and the call to lead became more developed by the addition of definitional terms that helped to expand and enrich the data. Mentoring, too, was further defined as a concept by the addition of five more definitional terms; number of mentors, mentors helped, mentors early in career, give-back mentoring, and childhood mentors. These terms and concepts help me further define the term *mentoring* and what it may have meant to the interviewees. I developed the definitions for these terms from the information gleaned from the interviews. This iterative process allowed for the full richness and detail of the data to be revealed. These results are presented in more detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings and analysis

Introduction

This is a study of 18 MSWs who became CEOs of nonprofits, exploring how they became leaders and learned to lead. I believe that by examining the journeys traveled by these MSWs I may identify similar experiences and themes that will develop concepts allowing the social work profession to better prepare and train future MSWs for leadership roles. In this chapter I will present the key findings developed from the 18 semi-structured interviews that were held over a five-month time frame. Of note are five major conceptual themes, within which I have identified and will report in detail several subcategories/variables. I have also included a presentation of the process for developing these key concepts and their subcategories.

The initial analysis of the first four interviews by me and the secondary coder resulted in the early development of the major concepts, subcategories, and descriptive definitional terms. By carefully reading and analyzing the transcribed interviews, I was able to identify similar terms and information that suggested similar life events experienced by the subjects. The first four major concepts were life experiences and leadership formation, training and its impact, leadership styles and their development, and ethics and leadership. Under the fifth, "other" category, four additional subcategories/themes described by the subjects came to light during the analysis of the interviews. The themes developed utilizing the categories from the literature from Hartford's leadership model, Bass' transformational leadership model, and the concepts from the ethics literature. These literature concepts were then combined with information gleaned from the interview data to form a fuller portrait of how these leaders became leaders.

The concept or theme developmental process is exemplified by the subcategory of mentoring under the categories of life experiences and leadership formation. Mentoring as a

concept is mentioned in the Hartford model of leadership (2006) development, as well as in the transformational leadership model (Bass &Avolio, 1999). However, during the interviews the subjects related additional examples of mentors in childhood or young adulthood. As data was gleaned from the subjects' detailed stories, I developed a more comprehensive definition of mentoring. The mentoring concept became more developed and defined with the addition of childhood mentors, mentors early in career, and give-back mentoring. Thus the subcategory of mentors became a richer concept as the information from the subjects was analyzed and further added to the explanation of the mentoring concept.

Peer networking, also a Hartford concept, provides another example of depth being added to a concept by the interview data. Peer networking, when added to the data from the interviews, also became a more detailed and developed concept. Subjects reported valuing the peer networking and seeking it out as a means of support, often through the work place environment.

National political content is an example of a concept developing solely from the interview data. Twelve of the subjects mentioned that the political environment from their childhood or young adulthood influenced their lives, frequently reporting that they became social workers or developed an interest in helping others as a result of struggles identified in the environment in which they were growing up. Several political phenomena were mentioned and are reported in the data.

The category or theme of life experiences and their influence on leadership formation was formed by grouping variables mentioned by the interviewees that seemed to be linked to their leadership development. The five subcategories of national politics, early social work experience, mentoring, peer networking, and the call to leadership naturally lent themselves to the formation of the overall theme or concept of leadership formation from life experience. Thus,

I grouped all of the above subcategories and their descriptive variables into a single theme of life experience and influence on leadership formation, forming a single theme. I developed the remaining four themed categories of training, leadership styles, ethics, and other additional variables using the literature as a beginning framework and adding subcategories/variables as they developed from the interview data. These variables became apparent as the initial interview analysis was undertaken. The other themed categories seemed to form unique concepts in and of themselves.

The leadership journeys related by the subjects begin to tell a story of how leaders are formed and developed. While the concepts from Bass's transformational leadership (2006), the Hartford leadership development model, and ethical considerations helped develop the basic framework for data analysis, the richness and depth of the data developed more fully when the stories of the subjects were added. I will report detailed information and timelines describing how these MSWs became leaders of nonprofits. The ongoing analysis of the interviews and coding eventually results in a reframing of the themes into those occurring over time and during the course of life events. Subjects seemed to report similar journeys and timelines in terms of when these concepts happened for them. I am now presenting and discuss in more detail the results and theme development.

Table 4.1

Concept development

	Interview	Literature
Life experience and influence on leadership formation		

Table 4.1 (cont'd).

• National political content	x	
Racial injustice	x	
Women's rights	x	
Vietnam War	x	
• Early social work experience		
Research	x	
Teacher/trainer	x	
Community organizing	x	
Clinical	x	
Public policy	x	
Advocacy	x	
• Mentoring	x	x
Number of mentors	x	
Mentors helped	x	
Mentors early in career	x	
Give-back mentoring	x	
Childhood mentors	x	
• Peer networking	x	x
Have peer networking−yes/no	x	x
Utilizes peer networking regularly	x	
Seeks out peer networking	x	
Peers are found at work	x	
Peers are found in family/friends	x	
• Leadership formation (call to lead)	x	x
Childhood / early-in-life leadership	x	x
Didn't pick to lead	x	
Pushed to lead	x	
Personal drive to lead		x
Activity outside of social work/ Supervisory	x	
Training		x
• MSW training		
Valuable	x	
Policy track	x	
Clinical track	x	
• Other training impact		

Table 4.1 (cont'd).

	Had training—Yes/no	x		x
	Helpful	x		
	Outside MSW	x		x
	Selected for program/honor	x		
	Training	x		
	Lifelong learner	x		
Leadership style				
	Lift up staff			x
	Promote staff / self-actualization			x
	Transactional			x
	Relate to this business model−yes/no		x	
	Name another model−yes/no	x		
	Self-doubt / still learning	x		
	Boundaries	x		
	Sharing leadership with staff			x
	Maturing leader/comfortable in own skin	x		
	Adversaries/utilize	x		
Ethics				
	Important−yes/no	x		
	Use ethics regularly on the job	x		x
	Description of ethics			x
	Part of who they are	x		
	Religion	x		
Other concepts identified				
	Multitasking	x		
	Succession planning	x		
	Male vs. female leadership	x		
	Generational issues	x		
	Fundraising	x		

Results—overview

The interview process

In this section I begin to present the journeys of the CEO subjects toward becoming leaders. began the semi-structured interview process in a similar fashion—using open-ended

questions—for all of the interviews. As a way of framing the process and beginning the subject's story, I used similar wording in the leading interview question in all cases. The focus of this initial question was the perceptions of their leadership journeys, as recalled by the subjects. I attempted to help the subjects relax by encouraging them to "tell their story". How did they became a leader and learn to lead? The interview process allowed the subject to begin relating the story of their journey as they perceived it, at the point they saw as the beginning. The subjects related to me specific experiences and details of how they moved through the leadership process, as they experienced it and according to their recollections (see interview guide, Appendix E). Often the answer to this initial question entailed quite a long story, lasting several minutes. The story, told in the subject's own words, was recorded and later analyzed for theme development.

Once a subject had reported "their" initial story as they remembered it, I began to encourage more detail regarding certain theoretical concept areas, based on the literature review and models previously mentioned. For example, I explored with each subject the concepts of mentoring, peer networking, training, and the "call to lead," all identified by the Hartford Foundation (2008) training model. Even if the subject had identified one or more of these concepts in earlier comments, I encouraged additional detail at that point by asking a follow-up question such as "Anything else?"

Ethics were explored in all of the subject interviews. If the subject had already mentioned ethics and how they may have used them, I encouraged further reporting of ethics-related memories by asking a probing, open-ended question. If the subject did not mention ethics in their initial reporting of perceptions, initiated discussion by asked an open-ended question regarding this topic.

Concepts related to transformational leadership (Bass) were also explored in the interview. I began this process by explaining the concepts of transformational leadership from a prepared verbal definition, after which I asked the subject to share whether they used these techniques and, if so, to describe how, when, etc. Follow-up questions helped to clarify how the subject used transformational and transactional concepts on a regular basis in their leadership role. If subjects resonated with the transformation/transactional concepts and definitions, I encouraged them to discuss the role of these approaches in their leadership style. The subject may have mentioned other models of leadership that they also found interesting. Please see the interview guide for a complete detailing of the questions and topics covered (Appendix E).

One area of interest that was not explored in this project relates to leadership style differences between men and women. As indicated in the assumptions for this project, gender differences were not considered or studied as they were simply thought to be beyond the scope of this exploratory project. For this project, an equal number of men and women were interviewed. When exploring the data from the study, I thought that I might find some gender differences in leadership concepts and theme development. However, for this group of subjects, I did not observe any systematic gender related differences. In future studies, a specific question related to leadership and gender should be asked to determine the influence or role gender may have played in the subjects' decision to become an executive leader.

Concept/theme development

I began with concepts presented in the literature and added data gleaned from the interviews to form overarching themes and classes of themes. This iterative process resulted in organizing a subject's life journey into a story of leadership development.

The life experience and influences on leadership formation theme is an example of this developmental/iterative theme development process. I grouped together several concepts from the literature and the interviews to form this larger, more inclusive class/theme concept. As a result I discovered the theme of support, in many cases virtually a lifetime of encouragement, that had helped these CEOs become leaders. For example, these leaders had received support from their mentors early in life, for some already in childhood (before the age of 18 years). Another example of incorporating concepts under a new, overarching and more inclusive theme is that of national political content. Many subjects described the influence of the national political scene on their life choices, reporting that they had been moved to help others based on the profound impact of national events on their lives. Subsequently, these subjects selected social work, a profession clearly based on helping others.

As a result of the process described above, I identified the first category theme of life experiences and influence on leadership formation. The concepts of national political content, early social work experience, mentoring, peer networking, and leadership formation / "call to lead" combined to develop this first category. Only Category 1—life experience and influence on leadership formation—required multiple subcategories to help clarify this theme's results. Other major concept categories not requiring multiple subcategories still have several variables that help to define and enrich their meaning. This refinement allowed me to tease out more valuable, in-depth information and analysis.

The subjects reported several definitional terms/variables less often, and these were dropped as being reported too infrequently to be significant. Various definitional terms/variables were combined with others deemed to be very similar to form a single subcategory with greater significance. The following table, 4.2, includes a revised list of categories, subcategories, and

definitional terms/variables utilized in this findings and analysis section. The definitions used for the variables listed below may be found in Figure 3.1.

Table 4.2

Categories, subcategories, and definitional terms/variables

Categories	**Subcategories**	**Terms/variables**
Life experiences and influence on leadership formation	National political content	Racial injustice Women's rights Vietnam War
	Early social work experience	Research Teacher/trainer Community organizing Clinical Public policy Advocacy
	Mentoring	Number of mentors Mentors were helpful Mentors early in career Give-back mentoring Childhood mentors
	Peer networking	Has peer network Utilizes peer networking regularly Seeks out peer networking Peers found at work Peers found in family/friends
	Leadership formation—call to lead	Childhood leadership Didn't pick to lead Pushed to lead Self-actualization Activity outside of social work Supervisory experience

Table 4.2 (cont'd).

Training and its impact	MSW training	Valuable Policy track Clinical track
	Other training impact	Had training Helpful Outside MSW Selected for program/honor Training Lifelong learner
Leadership styles and their development	Leadership models	Lift up staff Promote staff / self-actualization Transactional Relate to this business model Name another model Self-doubt / still learning Boundaries Sharing leadership with staff Maturing leader Adversaries/utilize
Ethics in leadership		Important to the subject: y/n Use ethics regularly on job Description of ethics Part of who they are Religion
Other		Multitasking Succession planning Male vs. female leadership Fundraising Generational issues

Category 1, early life experiences, seems to have significantly influenced the development of leadership ability. The kinds of life experiences that influenced the subjects'

leadership development included national political exposure, early social work experience, mentoring in early childhood or young adulthood, peer networking experiences, and the call to lead or the decision to pursue leadership. While the concepts of mentoring, peer networking, and the call to lead came from the literature, the other concepts grouped into Category 1 were garnered from the interview data. The many variables that make up this theme were mentioned by the interviewees extemporaneously. As the interview process proceeded, I would ask a probing question to garner more detail.

Training (Category 2) also played a significant role in the development of leadership abilities, and the MSW training was valued by a majority of the participants. Additional training was noted as important in the continuation of leadership development by nearly all participants. This topic was also mentioned specifically in the Hartford training model. The depth of the information that will be presented later in this dissertation was garnered from the interview data. Thus the variables of training outside of the MSW, whether or not that additional training were construed to be helpful, and the self-described lifelong learner concept was all developed from the interview analysis.

Category 3, leadership styles, has one subcategory, leadership models. This subcategory, describing both transformational and transactional concepts, focuses on helping staff interpret agency mission and vision. All subjects described themselves as helping employees to self-actualize by encouraging staff development and by sharing leadership, and a majority of the subjects reported having become increasingly comfortable over time with their leadership roles. This category began with the Bass model of leadership and was fleshed out as the interview data details were gathered.

Ethics (Category 4) was noted by all participants as being very important; it was described by the participants as critical to their job performance and integral to who they are as persons. Religion was mentioned as foundational to ethics by a majority of the participants. This concept also rose to the surface with the literature forming the basic concept. However, the rich detail provided by the interviewees formed a picture of the depth and importance of the theme as the analysis developed.

Several concepts mentioned repeatedly throughout the course of the interviewing process combine to comprise the fifth category of "other." While these variables were not the focus of the questions asked, they rose to the surface as many of the interview subjects described their journeys. These concepts are best described as skills utilized in the performance of leadership duties. Multitasking ability was mentioned by a majority of the subjects, with fundraising coming in a close second. Other concepts identified less often were succession planning and generational issues as these leaders age in their positions.

Findings: the details

In the following section I will report these findings in detail, reporting both the percent and the number of subjects who mentioned the data concepts listed in Table 4.2.

Life experiences and leadership formation: category 1

The category of life experiences and leadership formation encompasses experiences the subjects reported having had prior to becoming leaders. Five subcategories and 24 definitional terms/variables developed under this major concept as the interviews were coded. These subcategories and definitional variables became apparent as the initial analysis was undertaken, and they began to form themselves into concrete subcategories describing early life experiences that influenced the subjects' development toward leadership.

National politics: subcategory 1

The subcategory of national political content can best be described as the influence of national events that occurred during the subjects' earlier lifetimes. Twelve (67 %) of the subjects reported having been influenced by civil rights / racial injustice, women's rights, and/or the Vietnam War. Subjects frequently mentioned more than one of the political/historical events or movements as having influenced them. They cited these events as reasons they became interested in social work and subsequently also in leadership within the field. The following quotes help to capture the recollections of the subjects:

> I think as a kid . . . maybe 13 or 14 years old, the era that I grew up in was one of . . . rapid social change. But, you know, from the beginning inklings of when John Kennedy was assassinated to the fear of what was happening in Vietnam and not really understanding . . . . As a young girl trying to understand all that, I think . . . the things [from] the '60s that really influenced me the most were race relations and the civil rights movement. . . . What [I was] swept away from or into or toward is the fact that all of these events . . . were really capturing my attention [as a very shy child]. . . . I decided to spend my summer volunteering in the inner city school (Subject 4).

> Just before I graduated from high school a teacher approached me and said, "You know, I really think you should think about this church program that is being offered, that is being assembled in this community. . . . I think you would be a good person for it." . . . I had never given that any thought at all. But on the strength of his confidence in me I signed up. . . . And oh, was that an eye opener for me. . . .[T]he pastor made us read the autobiography of Malcolm X before we could go. . . . It was an excellent exposure to

urban problems and race issues, and I came back from that deciding that I didn't want to go into engineering; I wanted to go into sociology (Subject 5).

The subjects who reported that national political events affected their early life decisions all spontaneously mentioned this phenomenon as an influence. That is to say that they voluntarily brought up the subject as they were recounting their leadership journeys. This fact lends emphasis to the finding that national events are important in shaping the lives and decisions of young people. Clearly, a majority of the subjects were impacted by events around them, causing them to become more focused on working in the helping professions. I note here that those subjects who did not mention national events as important may also have found them to be so.

Table 4.3

Frequencies for national political content

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
National political content	12	66.7
Racial injustice	7	38.9
Women's rights	4	22.2
Vietnam War	6	33.3

Early social work experience: subcategory 2

Seventeen (94%) of the subjects reported having performed clinical social work with clients under the subcategory of early social work experience. The settings for this work varied from psychiatric hospitals to child welfare agencies to case work while employed by government officials. Clinical work seemed to be the entry point for these social workers into the workplace. Other areas of employment/experience included research (22%), teaching/training (22%),

community organizing (39%), public policy development (28%), and advocacy work (39%). Clearly it was the clinical social work that drew these budding social workers and later leaders into the field. These early clinical social work experiences became pivotal in the subjects' later decisions to become leaders.

> My first job out of graduate school was working, still in child welfare in foster care, and I went to work for the local Department of Social Services. First I was doing foster care as a case manager, and then I took the position of foster care licensing, so I worked with the recruitment and the licensing of our foster homes (Subject 17).

> Well, I taught school for about a year, and while I was teaching school I had a lot of kids who had issues, and I would go to their home and meet with their parents and discuss things with them, [and] the principal came to me and said, "You know, that's not your job. You are not the social worker. You need to stay in the classroom." And so that is when someone said "You need to become the social worker." So I decided to become the social worker and went to Western and got my degree. I came back and started with the Department of Social Services in the adoption program because then I had a DSS assistantship that paid for me to go to graduate school, which made me have a two-year commitment to them. The good part was [that] I had a job when I came out (Subject 7).

Below is a table listing the variables, with their frequencies and percentages. As the table indicates, overall the experiences were varied, with clinical social work being dominant in the early work experience, even if the subjects also reported other types of work experience. This finding is perhaps to be expected as most MSW programs focus their training on clinical work.

Table 4.4

Frequencies for social work experiences

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Early social work experience		
Research	4	22.2
Teaching/training	4	22.2
Community organizing	7	38.9
Clinical	17	94.4
Public policy	5	27.8
Advocacy	7	38.9

Mentoring: subcategory 3

The subcategory of mentoring developed into several definitional variables that are significant to the findings. The subjects described mentors as adults in their lives who encouraged them to succeed in life / apply themselves. Virtually all of the subjects mentioned having had mentors at some point during their lifetime. (One subject preferred the word *sponsor* to *mentor*. However, this individual's description of a sponsor was very similar to that of a mentor, as I have used it.) These mentors often played a role in early childhood (61%) and early adulthood (89%). Many of the subjects were able to express the importance of the mentoring experience in both their childhood and their early adulthood. A large majority (94%, or 17 of the 18 subjects) felt that the mentoring experience was helpful in terms of their decisions to become leaders, as well as in their leadership development. This mentoring experience also led a majority (78%) of the subjects to provide support to others. The term "give-back mentoring" is defined for the purpose of this dissertation as a subject who has been mentored and who is now in turn mentoring others. Clearly the subjects valued the process for themselves and later developed the

give-back style of leadership/coaching. Examples of related subject reports include the following:

> Well, it is kind of interesting because I started to think again last week about [that]. I'm doing [the] Rotary Strive mentor program and, of course, one of the questions that [comes up] in the orientation for the mentors was "Who are people that have influenced you in your life and have been mentors for you?". . . I think mentoring is a part of leadership development in both directions. . . . [T]here was my first administrator in the first social worker job that I had, right out of college—just as green as you could possibly be—with a history, I might add, [of] doing social service work in child welfare and delinquency. And the administrator said to me, after I had worked there a couple of years, "Um, you need to go to graduate school." "Well, why do I need to do that?" I mean, [that administrator knew] I liked my job. I was happy and young and carefree. "Because you'll always run a risk of being supervised or led by people less competent than yourself, you need to go get this degree." "Well, okay, I'll do that" (Subject 17).

> Up until my senior year, in spring of my senior year, I had no plans to go to college. I had no money, my parents were not well off and had no intentions of it, and a guidance counselor actually came to me and said "You really, really ought to . . . think about this." He and my football coach ganged up on me basically one day. . . , and the guidance counselor was a former marine. His approach to me was not probably what anyone would think would be appropriate today, but it was "When are you going to get off your ass and do something with your life?" And I said, "I'm sixteen years old, for God's sake. What do you mean?" But he had a way, and when I told him that I didn't

have any money . . . he said that shouldn't be a barrier and "Let me work on that if you are interested." And so I said, "That's flattering. I am interested, you know" (Subject 6).

So I had a lot of different mentors . . . , including teachers, who would say "You are a very good student. You really should go to college." [This started when I was] at a very young age, even grade school (Subject 2).

As the subjects shared their stories, many reported that mentors had often seen something in them that they had not recognized in themselves. The encouragement to succeed and grow was very helpful to these budding leaders. This experience was described in terms like "uplifting" and "affirming." The majority of the mentoring recipients recognized that without this affirmation they might not have been successful in their lives and careers. Later, when discussing early leadership opportunities (under the leadership style concept) in the lives of the subjects, the mentoring variable again became important. Below is a table indicating the frequencies and percentages for this variable:

Table 4.5

Frequencies for mentoring

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Mentors helped	17	94.4
Mentors early in career	16	88.9
Give-back mentoring	14	77.8
Childhood mentors	11	61.1

Peer networking: subcategory 4

Peer networking is defined as having colleagues or peers with whom a subject meets and consults on issues, or who are supportive to the subject. A large majority of the subjects reported having peer networks (94%) that they use regularly (94%) and that are often found at work or through broader professional relationships (94%). (One subject who did not report currently using peer networks did recount having benefited from peer support in the past.) This peer networking process was reported by the subjects as being very important to their continuing leadership development, so much so that they judged their significant support system to be instrumental in enabling them to continue performing as an effective leader. Seventy-eight percent of the subjects reported seeking out peer networking experiences. Clearly these subjects found their peers to be integral to their leadership development:

> Oh it's huge! I do a ton of it. In fact, my whole career has been based on that. I really believe in it. For lots of reasons; one is that I learn from folks around and I really don't have my stuff figured out. So I think out loud. . . . Secondly, I really think we are in scary times, which has been going [on] my whole career. You need lots of friends; you need people who hang out with you who will say "What are you thinking about this?" and . . . "What are you going to do?" So I think that is really unique and valuable. It also, you now . . . we have a saying around here that leadership is lonely. And it is! (Subject 13).

> [T]he Federation to me has been . . . incredibly valuable. You know, knowing that I can call other execs on any issue, whether it is HR or union, civil right, policies, licensing… (Subject 9).

> Well, I think it is really important. Extremely important, because you don't want to become isolated and out of touch, and you need to take care of yourself or you don't grow. . . . Yeah, and I think in every job I've had there'[ve] been some people—mostly other women—to bounce off ideas (Subject 10).

Some of the subjects (44%) found peer support in their personal life through friends, family, and/or church relationships. The one subject who was not currently using peers at work did report support from peers in a personal capacity. Several of the subjects reported not only relying on professional peers but also having strong support from a family/friend peer group. The ability to maintain these peer support systems was found to be significant in the findings.

> Yeah—[friend's name] is both a peer, I think, and a really good personal friend. It is really funny because we are not alike. . . . Yeah, you know, I'm not in spite of the fact of my role here. . . on a personal level I am not that social. I don't have a broad group of friends that I interact with, and, interesting, my wife doesn't either. You know, we are very tight knit and close that way (Subject 6).

> Until a couple of years ago I had a really strong support group through church. So I definitely have contact with those folks. . . . I do have a couple close friends and they are helpful to me. . . .One is a direct service worker. . . . He and I exercise together. . . . He is a therapist; he has never been an administrator. He is good to [have around]. Sometimes when I am moaning and complaining about some of my staff or something, in a sense he will be their advocate . . . . [Y]ou know, he can challenge me in a way that I won't let my staff challenge me, and it is good for me" (Subject 14).

Peer networking was readily identified by all subjects, whether the support system is found at work or in the subject's personal life. This concept was defined universally as a support person the leader could talk to who would help them process issues, problems, and ideas. The subjects universally trusted their peers with such confidences. The process also seemed to be a two-way communication exchange, with the peers also trusting in and communicating with the subjects. Below is the table indicating the results for peer networking:

Table 4.6

Frequencies for peer networking

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Peer networking		
Yes, has peer network	17	94.4
Utilizes network regularly	17	94.4
Seeks out peer networking	14	77.8
Peers found at work	17	94.4
Peers are family members/friends	8	44.4

Leadership formation—call to lead: subcategory 5

This subcategory focuses on the individual subject's decision to become a leader. While all of the leadership journeys were unique, many of the participants had experiences and decision points in common. This section will delve into these variables and describe how the subjects decided to take on the mantle of leadership.

Childhood leadership

The childhood leadership variable came into play when a subject recalled an experience from childhood (0–18 years) in which they led others with a task, goal, or school team project, hence answering the call to lead. Sixty-seven percent of the subjects reported having been

leaders in school. Early leadership experiences were described as involvement in student government, sports teams, or other membership groups in high school. Often these leadership opportunities were presented to them by mentors / school personnel who recognized their leadership ability.

> I went to this school. It was located on the grounds of a dead golf course. . . . There was not a single place on the whole campus where a student could go and get a Coke at night, get a cup of coffee, study. There was no student union, no commons, no nothing. I am in school, in college . . . middle of October and we are hanging around the men's dorm and we are moaning and groaning about it, and the dorm parent, a guy named Jim, said "What? Quit your bitchin'. If you want a student union, build one." Three days later we had a committee formed. I [was] chairman of the committee. I built the college's first student union (Subject 3).

> Actually, I mean, I think the call to lead in me goes back a really long way. Ahh, I mean I can go [way back] into grade school and high school, you know? I was student body president in high school, [and] when I was a junior the seniors wanted me as student body president. [I was] captain of the sports teams that I was on. And it's funny, because at the time I really never understood what people saw in me. In fact, I even . . . wondered if I was just more of a sucker because I couldn't say no (Subject 11).

> Well you know, when I went to school, part of it was just really doing well. I mean, I was in student government and I was, you know, on the national honor society and those kinds of things, and I was an A student and, you know, helped other students and tutored other students (Subject 16).

Supervisory experiences

The following quotes highlight the early nature of the call to lead others. Many of the subjects reported early leadership ability, and 17 of the participants reported that they had early in their careers supervised others in their work roles. It is clear that acting in a supervisory capacity can be a training ground in terms of early leadership experience. These early career experiences were described as mid-level management roles and sometimes as team-leader positions, generally in clinical social work settings. Again, mentors come into play in the decisions or opportunities to supervise.

> I had a chance to be mentored by [mentor's name] . . . He was the first person that I would say really made a dramatic impression on me and took an interest in my career and in helping me, you know, move along on the journey. And then, when he left with the child and family agency, he recommended me for a leadership position, and even then I wasn't sure that that was where I was going. Or that that was where I wanted to be. But it still was a small enough agency that I was hands on, the reason I came into the field in the first place (Subject 18).

> I came back to town and spent five years at a rehab hospital as a social worker. I started off as a medical social worker there, and after a year or two they had a chronic pain program and . . . [they] were looking for some leadership for that program. I started as the social worker for the program and then became the director of the program while I was there. . . . So it was a small group of people and it was kind of my first experience with management. And I was doing sort of multi—I did some clinical work as well as administrative work (Subject 15).

Didn’t pick to lead / pushed to lead

The next two variables are very similar in definition and are gradations of the feeling that the subjects were reluctant at times to take on the mantle of leadership. The variable “didn’t pick to lead” is defined as the subject recalling during the interview a reluctance to assume a leadership role. “Pushed to lead” is defined as the subject expressing that they were strongly encouraged by others to take on such a role. These two variables were expressed by 12 (66%) and 11 (61%) of the subjects, respectively. The encouragement of others in these cases helped them become comfortable with the idea that they could indeed become a leader.

> I actually ran away for the call [to lead]. . . . After five years of that I wanted nothing to do with administration. I set an academic course that would prepare me not to have to be a leader. I didn’t take administration, I really didn’t. Well, um, you know—best-laid plans. . . . I am an accidental leader (Subject 3).

> I graduated in 2007 and was in the clinical program and kind of thought that would be the direction that I would go. It really—I didn’t anticipate and never did—being here really thinking that the director [ship] would be an option for me in terms of my career. So when the then executive director decided to leave, um, you know, a few people asked me if I would apply for the job, and I did (Subject 16).

> The former director of Council was leaving, and I had no thought about applying. They went through the search process and offered it to one person, who turned them down. . . . So they decided to post the position again. . . . I had lunch with M. K., and I thought we were having a discussion about community database, and as it turned out she

was recruiting me to apply for the Council position. . . . I got a full court press that I should apply for that position (Subject 1).

A friend of mine who was between jobs was a teacher. . . . He took a job at HRS. We would sit around at night and he would tell me about this new job of his, and I'd say "fascinating." And then he said, "But the place is really in trouble, you now; they are not doing well. They are going to fire their executive director—I know they are—and then they are going to go out of business." And then one night he said to me, "They fired him and they are looking for a new one, and you ought to apply." And I thought *Hmm—you know what? That is social work*. I could still be okay with myself doing that. . . . So I applied and . . . that is how I got into administration (Subject 5).

As these quotes exemplify, many of the CEOs interviewed became leaders in spite of some reluctance or not having chosen to lead. In several cases they described situations of having been in the right place at the right time and having received encouragement to become leaders. This does not, however, detract from their ultimate decisions to become leaders. Clearly others saw something in them that they did not see in themselves. Again, the mentoring aspect was critical for many of the subjects in terms of the successful outcome of becoming a leader. Frequently these early leadership opportunities were presented to the subjects by others who encouraged them to answer the call to leadership.

Self-actualization / personal drive

Fifteen (83%) of the subject CEOs expressed having developed a self-actualized call to leadership or a personal drive to lead. In some cases the subjects reported having felt that they were better suited for leadership than for the clinical social work role. They recounted having determined at some point that they would rather lead so that others could continue to provide

clinical social work services. Early work experiences helped these leaders perceive leadership as a viable role for them in their work lives.

> I almost feel like, personality-wise, . . . I was led into this part because it is just the way I think. But in terms of an actual milestone, where the light went on, I said "You know what I really think is [that] I need to be in a leadership role in my career out there. Probably graduate study, the graduate study program." . . . And I was really convinced at that point that I really, really needed to be in a role where I had some influence (Subject 6).

> I think I probably wasn't as good in clinical. I mean, I liked doing clinical stuff, but I probably wasn't as good as some people at doing that . . . . I don't think I am necessarily the most creative person in the world. I also don't think I'm necessarily the most financially astute person, but I think I've developed and been able to have those skills that can manage both those worlds successfully (Subject 15).

As these leaders have continued to lead they have become more comfortable with their roles and their performance. Later, under the concept of leadership style, I will explore in greater depth the variable of maturing in the leadership role.

Outside leadership

The variable "activity outside of social work" means that the subject uses leadership ability outside of their regular, work-related leadership role. For example, they may use their leadership abilities with community collaboratives or community boards. This may be looked upon as another form of giving back to the community around them. This work is typically

voluntary in nature and different from their usual leadership roles. Twelve of these leaders (66%) reported involvement in outside leadership opportunities.

> I've always been in different leadership positions. . . . Foster grandparents—I was with them. I just thought it was a great concept at [agency name]. . . . I was there for a couple of years, and they said "We'd like you to be president." And I said "I don't have time." . . . So after things settled down with my family, two years later I took it, and I was president for five years. That was a wild board of directors, old-timers and different people in the community. I've taken on different leadership positions that I didn't want to but felt like I needed to (Subject 9).

> About five years ago Michigan was going through one of it's, you know, economic struggles, and lack of support for the public sector was [a problem]. So a number of us were talking about [how] there [was] no voice out there talking about taxes . . . [actually being] a good thing . . . . Believe it or not, that is how we support a sub-society, and we shouldn't be afraid to say that. . . . So four or five years ago I started . . . sort of a movement, and we had a series of town hall meetings about it and put slides together to get that information out. And that is a call to leadership [because] I felt that [there] was a vacuum there (Subject 13).

Giving back to the community seems to be an accepted value within the social work profession. Clearly these leaders also value the kind of giving to the community that may involve advocacy for more vulnerable populations in our society. These leaders are willing to use their leadership talents to help others.

Table 4.7

Frequencies for leadership formation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Leadership formation (call to lead)		
Childhood leadership	12	66.7
Supervisory	17	94.4
Didn't pick to lead	12	66.7
Pushed to lead	11	61.1
Self-actualization / personal drive	15	83.3
Outside leadership / collaboration	12	66.7

Training: category 2

The training concept looks at the educational training the subjects received during their leadership journeys. This category is divided into two subcategories of MSW training and other training beyond the MSW. The MSW training was seen as valuable by 15 (83%) of the subjects. As the interviewees were not directly asked this question, this finding came to light as the interviews were analyzed. Many of the participants felt that the MSW training was an added value in their leadership development and life journeys.

> I think that the MSW in comparison to quite a few other degrees in human services is more open to job possibilities. I mean, I think it is much more flexible than an MBA or masters in counseling or something out of education. Because I think the social work degree is flexible, or at least I found it to be. I mean to go from politics to, you know, nonprofits to doing interpersonal care to fundraising. I mean, it can incorporate all those things, and I've never felt that the education that I had didn't prepare me. I might

have had a lot to learn on the job, but I always felt like the MSW in particular was good groundwork (Subject 10).

> And I happened to have the good fortune of being near what was then considered one of the best schools of social work, but the best school of social work in community organization and policy. Since then I hear that it is considered the best in the country. . . . The fact is they were really wonderful to me (Subject 3).

The next subcategory under the concept of training examined the impact and value of other training beyond the MSW degree. The training may have involved another formal degree or training programs, conferences, and seminars. I asked the subjects a specific question about their use of training. In response, many reported having read books on leadership, an activity I will consider under the lifelong-learner variable for the purposes of this study. Eighteen (100%) of the subjects reported having had training in addition to the MSW; three had earned other educational degrees in addition to the MSW. Ninety-four percent of the subjects voluntarily (with no prompting) mentioned that the training had been helpful, and 78% also reported having received training on the job and/or in the community.

The lifelong-learner concept indicates that these leaders continued to volitionally seek out training, attending seminars and conferences and reading leadership books. Seventy-eight percent of the leaders could be self-described as lifelong learners based on this description. Based on these data we may assert that social work leaders value and use ongoing training and learning. I also note that ongoing training is now mandated for MSWs who wish to keep their license. The subjects would likely report the use of training more often due to these training requirements. Below is the table showing the frequencies and percentages for the training concept:

Table 4.8

Frequencies for training variable

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
MSW training		
Valuable	15	83.3
Policy track	7	38.9
Clinical track	8	44.4
Other training impact		
Yes/No Had other training	18	100
Helpful	17	94.4
On the job / in the community	14	77.8
Outside MSW	18	100
Selected for program/honor	4	22.2
Lifelong learner	14	77.8

Leadership style: category 3

The concept of leadership style is made up of several variables, which became apparent as the interviews were analyzed for similarities and differences. I described the Bass model of leadership (2006) for the subjects during the interviews and then asked whether they could relate to the model and discuss the concepts. The subjects began describing their own leadership styles, usually comparing them to the Bass concepts. Occasionally the subjects would also name another model of leadership they had studied or found to have been helpful. Other concepts or issues in leadership were also identified, and their frequencies and percentages are reported here. If any of these concepts/variables were mentioned elsewhere in the interview, they were reported under this leadership style concept during the interview analysis.

Leadership models

The Bass model of leadership (2006) was described for the subjects, who were asked whether they could relate to this model. Both Bass's transformational concept and the transactional concept were described (Bass, 2006). Eighty-nine percent of the subjects could relate to the Bass model or found that it described their style of leadership. Some indicated that, although they had not previously heard of the model, they were interested in ascribing this label to their current leadership style. The descriptions I provided labeled these two major concepts (transformation and transactional models) and gave the description/definition of each. Sixteen (89%) of the subjects could relate to the Bass transformational concept and found that it did describe their leadership style, while 15 (83%) of the subjects also related to the transactional concept. The transactional variable was identified by reports that the subjects use rewards/coaching to motivate staff to complete work product or project assignments.

> So I think Bass is on target. I mean, it ties in with servant leadership, and they said an optimal leader was a nine. . . . Realizing that you can't get the job done if the people don't feel aligned and empowered and inspired. . . . I think that one is spot on now. We try to use balanced scorecards and other things to enlist them and to get them to support the tasks so that on the transactional side we use operational management and science around that in terms of designing service blueprints (Subject 8).

> Again, I have eight direct reports, and I think [it] sounds like that would be a good reflection of my style, of the way I try to work with them. . . . I think that is my style in terms of inspiring those eight and leading them and helping them to grow and helping them to see the larger mission and also having [a] target. . . . Performance and quality improvement (PQI) is a great program (Subject 9).

Ninety-four and 100 percent of the subjects, respectively, reported that they lift up staff and promote staff self-actualization. These concepts are very similar in definition for this project report: Interviewees report that they motivate/inspire staff, promote team spirit, encourage staff innovation and creativity, coach, and mentor. Eleven leaders (61%) report that they share leadership with staff. This variable is defined as subject reporting that staff is encouraged to share leadership (e.g., organizational decisions, attending community meetings).

> I went and sat down with them, and some of the things that they were struggling with . . . just trying to have a conversation with them that is encouraging them to see it as an opportunity, just trying to lift them up . . . . I said I am here to just appreciate you (Subject 18).

> I would say transforming everyone into having leadership and not being led by the leaders but being led by people in middle management and administrative staff. My biggest thrill is watching staff at a board meeting come and just demonstrate and explain things, and, you know, it was me not uttering a word for over an hour. Gosh, the richness that comes out of people (Subject 4).

> In doing that I found that I let other people shine or continue to shine in their programs, and I learned a little bit about kind of being in the back seat or more of the servant or support (Subject 11).

> Oh, I definitely agree with that, and I think that for years, primarily because of budget constraints, some of that, there can be sometimes a tension between the two. And I think How *do you bridge that or how do you try to be effective from both sides* [transformational and transactional]? is definitely an important question (Subject 14).

As the demographic data indicates, many of these leaders are well into their leadership journeys (16 or 89% are over the age of 50). As the interviews progressed, many talked about how they had become comfortable with the leadership role over time. Fifteen (83%) of the leaders reported being comfortable with their leadership style and role. As the various leadership journeys were reported, it became apparent that this maturity seems to have developed over time.

> My ability to create a sense of safety and calm and to take people where they don't really want to go. It started . . . maybe more recently I've really owned that this is who I am and this is what I must do and this is my gift that I need to use. I owe something to the world, and I don't mean that narcissistically. So this call to leadership—I have embraced it a lot the last several years. [It] haunted me up until then; I just didn't feel like this is completely my own skin. It is now, and what I am doing is who I am (Subject 11).

> How many times—here I am almost 30 years on this job—and I say like I said to someone last night, "As long as I am having fun why shouldn't I go to work!?" (Subject 3).

The leadership style concept and its definitional variables allowed the leaders to describe their own personal styles and to potentially report their successes and challenges. Approximately 33% reported issues or challenges. I have grouped these under the three variables of boundaries, self-doubt, and adversaries. Boundaries issues were described by the leaders as times when they expressed a need to clarify their role with their staff and/or board. This often involved focusing on their unique function at decision-making times. Several remarked that clarity surrounding boundaries and roles at all levels of leadership helps to deflect issues for them as leaders. Self-

doubt was reported by some, who described themselves as still learning lessons about leadership. Some of these leaders also reported lessons learned during the times when they have had to deal with challenging staff or board members. These times were grouped under the "adversaries" variable for the purposes of this study. Below is a complete listing of the frequencies and percentages for the leadership style concept and its variables:

Table 4.9

Frequencies for leadership style

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
Lift up staff	17	94.4
Promote staff self-actualization	18	100
Transactional	15	83.3
Relate to (Bass) business model	16	88.9
Name another model	6	33.3
Self-doubt / still learning	7	38.9
Boundaries	6	33.3
Sharing leadership with staff	11	61.1
Maturing/comfortable in own skin	15	83.3
Adversaries/utilize	6	33.3

Note. N=18.

Ethics: category 4

The ethics concept saw the highest percentage of agreement among the leaders/subjects. The concept was broken down into five variables that described different aspects of ethics and their use. One-hundred percent of the subjects described ethics as being important to them in their role and job performance and indicated that they use ethics regularly in the performance of their duties. On several occasions the question of ethics resulted in lengthy descriptions of how the leader had learned ethics, how ethics are a part of who they are (89%), and how they promote

ethics in their leadership role. Sixty-seven percent cited their religion as a foundation prompting them to use ethics, indicating a direct connection between their religious values and the fact that social work ethics fit for them on a personal level. I did not ask a specific question about religion; mentions of this topic occurred naturally and were impromptu. A large majority of subjects spontaneously described ethics as being a part of their personal makeup.

> I think that [ethics] is an extremely important part of this job, and when I was just working as a the supervisor, the clinical director, you know, I felt it was important for the other staff to be aware, even if they weren't social workers, to be aware of the code of ethics. . . . I would give the code to everybody and make sure that they understood that this is what we're using (Subject 16).

> I think that the foundation . . . I had in the graduate program (definitely some experiences there and in my internship as well) . . . formed where I am now [in] that several things happened. One is [that] when I was more involved in terms of the individuals, families, and the clinical, the ethics were more obvious. I think when one gets into an administrative executive position a lot more gray appears (Subject 1).

> I think [that] as administrators it is real important for us to walk the walk and talk the talk and not just give lip service to what [ethics] is about (Subject 14).

> I'm extremely grounded in my church. So that some of those values that I gained when I was a child—you obviously have to go through a period of time when you examine them before you make them your own. . . . And when you are going to work and you see people with their whole worldly goods in their grocery cart, you have to remember that they are there and your salary is a gift (Subject 12).

Leadership and ethics was the concept within this study on which the respondents were most unanimously positive. The National Association of Social Workers codes of ethics (2008) were frequently mentioned as foundational for these leaders. Also of importance seemed to be the view that ethics are integral to who these leaders are as persons. I asked a question about ethics to all of the interviewees. The other variables listed were gleaned from the interviews as they were analyzed. Below are the frequencies and percentages for the ethics concept and variables:

Table 4.10

Frequencies for ethics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Are ethics important?	18	100
Use ethics regularly on job	18	100
Description of ethics	18	100
Part of who they are	16	88.9
Religion	12	66.7

Note. N=18.

Other identified concepts: category 5

Throughout the interviewing process subjects frequently mentioned topics that appeared during the analysis of the data to be important for the study. Some of these topics did not fall easily into the previously developed concepts, prompting me to develop a category of "other" for these variables, several of which rose to the surface as findings worthy of discussion.

The variable of multitasking developed as these leaders described their work life and leadership challenges. The ability to simultaneously juggle numerous roles and demands was frequently mentioned by these leaders. Thirteen (72%) mentioned a regular need to multitask.

They did not label this factor as such but did describe in detail the process of working on several projects or responsibilities at once.

> I supervised foster care, adoptions, youth employment, foster home licensing, and all the delinquency programs—so I had a lot (Subject 17).

> So from that time I have been doing permanent custody petitions filings, I've been teaching at [the] university, and I've been running the agency (Subject 7).

> I think that is how it started for me. And then getting out of grad school through a succession of small jobs and [I] became the CEO of a very small nonprofit, really cutting my teeth there. I was able to work in everything from clinical work to public relations to advocacy to HR to finance, and that was really critical to me—leading . . . in all those dimensions of the work (Subject 13).

Another frequently mentioned role for these leaders was fundraising. Twelve subjects (67%) mentioned fundraising as a task they are required to perform. While most did not acquire this skill as part of their MSW training, some mentioned having received training on the job. Several expressed that they were tiring of that role as the years went by.

> [G]oing back to thinking about the lessons I had learned from people who were running the agencies was kind of seeking them out in a way of saying *What is it like to run an organization?*.. . I did need to raise money, but I didn't need to raise money to survive (Subject 4).

> I wish I could not do any fundraising at all and just focus on developing the programs (Subject 5).

> I am so stinking sick and tired of fundraising. And you think by now I'd be sort of used to it. . . . I can get money out of a rusty car. I would so much rather be meeting with an architect or another developer (Subject 3).

Many of the leaders reported needing to raise money to help their agencies, and the pressure expressed to raise dollars was universal among this group. This is clearly a skill needed for nonprofit CEO leadership.

A generational variable defined as "subject mentions age difference in leadership important; younger vs. older leaders and lessons learned" was mentioned by 8 subjects (44%). Succession planning, defined as "subject mentioning the need for planning for leadership change when they leave," was also mentioned by 8 subjects (44%). Actually, the two variables were generally indicated in the same context. The current CEO was thinking about who would lead the agency after their retirement. As the demographics show, this is a group of leaders who are aging. Sixteen of the subjects were over 50 years old, and 12 were over 56 years of age. How to prepare both the agency and the younger leaders for leadership transition is prominent in the thoughts of these leaders.

> Did you think that some organization that was well run and doing a terrific job would hire a president or CEO? They would have a succession plan in place, and the board would long ago have figured out how to lead the organization to its next evolution (Subject 8).

> Some other day you and I can have another conversation about the interesting challenges . . . this organization . . . will face when it goes to its next CEO. Because it is very, very clear that the things that I have gone to school and learned, now a lot of it I

don't need to do because we've gotten to the size and specialization. So the person who is my successor will not need to be a licensed builder—no way. Whew, no way. And, we are working real hard on that (Subject 3).

A lot of people my age are frozen in life in the 1970s and the slow rate of change, and I'm—you know, I'm in it and I'm ready for it. That has helped from a leadership prospective. I connect well with the twenty somethings and the thirty somethings. . . . I have a sense of duty that me and you and many [others], we are going to be retiring in the next ten–fifteen years. And it's *What have we done? What have we done?* If we do not prepare awfully fast, this next generation . . . and, you know, we are so busy with our secrets and our tried and true ways of doing things and we get annoyed when staff is on their phone during meetings, and there is a way to build off that energy instead of suppressing it (Subject 11).

These variables were again issues that subjects brought up without being solicited for input. Clearly, several of them are thinking of the coming leadership transition and its impact on their agencies. Below is the table showing the overall frequencies and percentages:

Table 4.11

Frequencies for other identified concepts

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Multitasking	13	72.2
Succession planning	8	44.4
Male vs. female leadership	3	16.7
Generational issues	8	44.4
Fundraising	12	66.7

Note. N=18.

Findings summary

This chapter presents the five major concepts and the eight variables that helped to define and frame those findings, which are organized around the five major concepts that came to light during the course of the interviews. Information and data gleaned from the participants revealed the details of the leadership journeys. I used extensive samples of subject quotations to exemplify and validate the findings. These quotations provide detail and flavor to the points the subjects were making in their responses to the interview questions.

In summary, the major findings for these subject leaders are:

Leadership development:

- Evolves over a lifetime, often starting in childhood.

Early leadership:

- Sixty-seven percent report hands-on leadership experiences, often having occurred during high school and college.

Mentors:

- Ninety-four percent reported that mentors were helpful to them throughout their lifetime, shaping their life choices and preparing them for leadership.

Peer networking:

- Ninety-four percent also reported peer networking as important in guiding and shaping decisions and idea development for these leaders.

Call to lead: Answered the call reluctantly.

- Sixty-seven percent did not choose to be a leader.
- Eighty-three percent did eventually develop a personal drive to lead. Early supervisory experience helped these leaders learn to lead.

Training:

- One-hundred percent of the MSW leaders had received training beyond the MSW, and 83% found this additional training valuable.
- Seventy-eight percent are self-described lifelong learners.

Leadership style:

- One-hundred percent of these leaders report supporting and promoting staff in their job performance, using coaching, mentoring, innovation, and creativity.
- Eighty-three percent use transactional methods to encourage staff to be productive, meet work-related deadlines, and complete projects.
- Eighty-three percent may be described as mature leaders, having a high degree of comfort with their leadership roles.

Ethics:

- One-hundred percent describe ethics as highly important; they use ethics regularly on the job and find them to be an integral part of who they are both personally and in their work lives.

Multitasking and fundraising:

- Seventy-two percent described these as must-have skills; multiple-management skills, or the ability to juggle multiple tasks at once, in particular rose to the surface.

Succession planning

- Forty-four percent report this issue to be important as they age in their roles.

Next we turn to the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the findings.

Analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of findings across time

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal leadership stories of a small sample of MSWs (18) who have become leaders, and its focus was to listen to personal accounts of their leadership journeys and to glean from them information related in particular to how they learned to lead. I had hoped to uncover lessons learned along this journey that would help to inform the field of social work regarding leadership skills and training (and am confident that I have done so). This year-long journey began by selecting CEOs with MSW degrees who were currently leading nonprofits.

This research project employed an in-depth, semi-structured interview process in order to develop the data and concepts presented in this paper. The data were analyzed and coded (by myself and a second coder), resulting in the development of overarching concepts, along with subcategories and variables. I developed the interview questions using the conceptual models of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006), the Hartford Foundation (annual report, 2008) leadership training model for health care professionals, and ethical theories based on the NASW code of ethics and the related literature, as presented in detail in Chapter 2. I purposely formulated the interview questions to be open-ended, allowing the subjects the widest possible latitude for formulating answers. The subjects regularly added more data to their answers by spontaneously including other or additional topics in their responses. This resulted in a rich volume of information to be coded and analyzed. This initial coding resulted in five major conceptual ideas, subcategories, and corresponding variables that help to explain the conceptual data.

The initial analysis of the five data concepts, subcategories, and variables presented earlier in this dissertation was followed up by a second analysis, again looking for common

threads of ideas and concepts volunteered by the subjects as they related their stories. Throughout the process similarities in responses to the questions asked and the experiences related by the subjects were noted. The subjects' explanations and understanding of their experiences were also reviewed for similarities and differences in terms of the literature. Any unexpected connections and themes in the data were also noted. This process resulted in an integration of the data into three general themes that are also based on a timeline concept.

As the integration of the analysis continued, three major concepts organized according tithe time of event occurrence or timeline of events rose to the surface. The developments of these timeline concepts seemed logical, and I have described them as stages of leadership development. The interview data were scanned for concepts that incorporated already discovered or mentioned variables and then tracked the variables in terms of when the subject reported that the event or process had happened for them in terms of their leadership development story (i.e., from early on in their lives up to the present). As an example or the kind of information I was seeking to uncover: At what life stage did mentoring occur for a particular interviewee? For many the response was in childhood and for others young adulthood. Many also reported having had mentors early in their leadership experiences.

Thus, I conceived of a timeline approach to the themed categories. By stepping back and looking at the data from a different perspective I was able to reevaluate the presentation of the themes over time, based on when they happened for the interviewees. I now present the data in the form of a timeline representing stages of leadership development. This new look at the combination of variables along the lines of the stages of leadership development allows for the development of a rich story recounting how these particular leaders learned to lead over time. In other words, I have reorganized the data and information to correspond to a timeline of

occurrence for the interviewees. This reexamination and presentation have allowed for an integrated timeline presentation of the stories and events, as told by the leaders.

This timeline style of reporting and data analysis has lent itself to integration of the data /variables into a cohesive picture of how the subjects developed their leadership abilities. I will now report the information, highlighting common themes and lessons learned over time. I have identified three analytic segments of leadership development: (1) childhood / early adulthood development, (2) early leadership development, and (3) mature leadership development. I will describe these analytic categories, along with group findings from the data as they relate to the analytic category. See table to follow.

Table 4.12

Themes and results over time

Childhood / early adulthood experiences	**Early leadership development**	**Mature leadership development**
National political content	Mentors: early in careers / childhood mentors	Supports: Mentors / peer support
Pushed to lead / didn't pick to lead	Training: MSW training, supervisory experience, clinical experience, ethics training	Training other than MSW: on the job, lifelong learner
Childhood leadership experience, mentors	Developed personal drive to lead	Skills developed: ethics, staff support, fundraising, multitasking ability, give-back mentoring/coaching
Supports: Religion, family		Style developed: Transformational/transactional, comfortable with being a leader, leadership outside of social work
Personal peers: family/friends		Other concepts: Succession planning, generational issues

Childhood/early adult experiences

The concepts listed under early childhood / early adult experiences and their relation to leadership development are interesting and have been reflected in some of the data for this project. Bass and Riggio (2006) report that transformational leaders are formed "to some degree" early in their life when their parents show an interest in their development and early school achievement. According to Bass (2006) the transformational leader is not likely to emerge from either a disadvantaged or a highly privileged background (Bass &Riggio). While the budding leader should be challenged in childhood, the degree of pushing should not be excessive. These ideal preconditions for a transformational leadership style, as reported by Bass (2006), clearly exemplify that what happens in childhood may be important in the development of leadership abilities. The subject leaders in this study frequently reported positive formative experiences in their childhood, high school, and/or college years, even as they may have struggled with other life experiences. Common themes developed as these leaders relayed the details of their personal journeys. Concepts that rose to the surface are childhood leadership experiences and mentors, support of family and peers, exposure to religion, the national political content, and encouragement by others to lead in childhood/young adulthood.

The first, open-ended question I posed in each interview was "How did you become a leader?" Many of the subjects immediately began to speak about their formative years, primarily focusing on their high school years but some reaching further back. Several others began to relate their leadership journeys beginning in undergraduate school. Remarkably, these leaders had overwhelmingly determined that their leadership ability had developed early in their lives. Twelve of the subjects, in fact, specifically mentioned having led school processes in childhood. Examples of such leadership experiences include holding an office in the student government,

being captain of a sports team, or acting as chair of a school-related social group. Early leadership is also reported as common in the Bass/Riggio biographical data (2006).

Another early life experience that influenced these leaders was that of having had mentors in childhood (0–18 years). Eleven of the 18 subjects mentioned this kind of personal guidance. These early mentors helped the future leaders to see something in themselves they might not otherwise have recognized. It is telling that the subjects still remember as adults precisely how their early mentors broadened their horizons. For example, the interviewees frequently reported having been encouraged to go to college or to lead a school group or having been assisted through the mentor‘s intervention in acquiring scholarship money for school. It is significant that I did not directly ask a question related to childhood mentors. The subjects themselves generally revealed the age at which they had become involved with mentoring.

> Well, I guess I always wanted to take a leadership role in whatever I did, at least going back to my adolescent years (Subject 14).

Twelve of the subjects mentioned the national political environment as having helped to shape themselves and their life choices. The political movements most frequently mentioned were the Vietnam War and its protests, the civil rights movement, and the women’s rights movement. The subjects frequently cited these movements as factors that influenced them by expanding their awareness of the world around them. Many fleshed this out to indicate that these movements developed within them a drive to help others, even going on of their own accord to tie in their selection of social work as a profession as a way to meet this internal need later on in life.

> As a young girl trying to understand all that, I think . . . the things [from] the ’60s that really influenced me the most were race relations and the civil rights movement (Subject 4).

Religion was clearly important to many of these subjects, 12 of whom reported having been personally impacted by their faith life. Several cited involvement, either currently or in the past, in social work with a religious affiliation. The development of ethics most likely began for these subjects in early childhood, as they were influenced by their family and religion during their developmental years. Engagement in religious activities is also cited in the literature as important in developing a transformational leadership style later in life (Bass &Riggio).

> I found myself deeply involved in war resistance all through college. But I also by God’s grace felt very committed to my faith in the Lord (Subject 3).

The final common denominator I noted in the reports of these subjects related to the importance of peer networking. Eight interviewees related having found peer support within their family group or in long-term friendships developed in high school or college. Taken together, these components seem to confirm that leadership training actually began early in life for these subjects. We know that childhood development impacts later adult performance and choices. The choice to lead, while usually made later in life, seems to be influenced by early childhood development; in a sense we can state that training for leadership for many of these subjects began in earlier childhood/young adulthood. Lessons learned during these critical periods spontaneously rose to the surface as these subjects related their leadership journeys.

> I’ve got really strong family relationships. (Subject 15).

Early leadership development

Early leadership development and learning seemed to follow a similar process for a majority of the subjects. Outside support of mentors, training, and personal development were three key concept areas. Mentoring support was experienced almost universally by the subjects, 17 of whom reported having had mentors in childhood and young adulthood and 16 having benefited from mentors early in their careers. This variable was described by the subjects as having had colleagues who helped them become prepared for leadership positions. In general, these mentors appear to have been more seasoned leaders still working in the field or workplace, perhaps at higher levels of responsibility than the subjects.

The mentors encouraged the future leaders to prepare themselves for leadership or to accept leadership positions. Eleven of the subjects were pushed or strongly encouraged by their mentors to become leaders, and 12 described themselves as not having chosen leadership roles and responsibilities. This reluctance to become a leader was described as not wanting to be an administrator or a part of administration. Later, though, 15 of these subjects reported having developed a personal drive to lead. These variables, taken collectively, seem to describe early career supports that helped the subjects become more comfortable with leadership roles. Later on their early insecurity about leadership seems to have given way to a more mature sense of self, as a result of which the subjects developed a willingness to risk answering the call to lead.

> He was the first person that I would say really made a dramatic impression on me and took an interest in my career and in helping me, you know, move along [in] the journey (Subject 18).

> I meet [mentor's name] who was the director of Wayne County DSS. . . . And she started talking to me and she was the person who put me on track to move up (Subject 7).

The training aspects of the subjects' leadership journeys seem to have followed a similar path. Fifteen described their MSW training as having been helpful and valuable. This credential seems to have become the entry point into additional leadership responsibilities. Many of the subjects described clinical training during their MSW educational experience; 17 had worked in a clinical setting early in their careers, and another 17 described supervisory experiences earlier in their careers paths. The combination of all of the above seemed to result in the subjects becoming prepared for leadership.

> I can say that I don't think I could be doing a lot of the things that I am doing without having that history—that appreciation I found in really pursuing a (graduate) degree in social work (Subject 4).

Learning about ethics was universal for the subjects, all 18 of whom felt that ethics were important, could describe them, and could explain how they used them. Sixteen of the subjects reported or talked about ethics as though they are an integral part of who they are as a personas mentioned previously, religion seemed to play a role for 12 of the subjects in terms of the development of their ethical standards. Many mentioned that ethics are important when conducting business on behalf of their organizations. As exemplified by this process, it is clear from the experience of these leaders that ethics and the knowledge of how to apply them develop over time.

> I am extremely grounded in my church . . . that I gained when I was a child. You obviously have to go through a period of time when you examine them before you make them your own (Subject 12).

The development of early leadership skills seemed to happen for most, if not all of the subjects, using many of the variable concepts studied. Mentors clearly helped these future leaders to envision themselves in a leadership role. This support of and faith in the subject by others seemed to help them achieve more than they might have done relying solely on their own sense of self-worth or ability. Their ongoing training, from formal education to early clinical/supervisory work experience, also helped prepare these forming leaders for later success. They appear to have developed a personal drive to lead as a result of the combination of these reported experiences. Ethics also seems to have played an important part in developing leadership ability, as reported by 100% of the subjects. The subject leaders seem to have created their own leadership development plans, following many of the best practices reported by the literature.

Mature leadership

As the previous two sections indicate, mature leadership appears to develop over time with training; support from peers/mentors; and, in many cases, family support. This section will describe what appears to be the result of the previously described development process. I am dividing it into discussion of the factors that seem to have helped or supported the subjects' development toward become leaders; the skills they report having developed; and the resulting, self-described style of leadership they have embraced. Finally, I will address the additional concepts the subjects mentioned as important.

Development of mature leadership

Supports/training

Four of the variables studied appear to have facilitated or supported the subjects' further development into mature leaders. I am grouping together in this section peer networking and mentoring because many of the subjects described these concepts as merging in their mature leadership phase. Mentors appear over time to function more as peers; the subject leaders, all of whom ore maturing in their careers, related the vital importance of peers to their continued success and appear to have formed a support network around themselves. Seventeen subjects reported that peers/mentors are important, that they find them in their workplace settings, and that they utilize their support and counsel regularly. It would appear that the subjects rely on their peer networks for discussion of ideas or problems with staffs or boards of directors, as well as of business issues and decisions. This support appears to be of universal value to the subjects.

Ongoing training and education appear to have played a role in the development of these mature leaders, all 18 of whom reported having received training beyond their formal MSW degree and 3 of whom had obtained other degrees in addition to the MSW. Seventeen reported that this additional training was helpful in their job performance. As Bass (2006) reports on the basis of his research, leadership skills can be taught. These leaders likely found that continued education helped them to develop their leadership skills, leading them to describe themselves as lifelong learners. I am defining this term for the purpose of this study as the subject reporting that they have been learning throughout their lifetime. In that 14 of the subjects met this definition, it would appear that their thirst for knowledge was leading these leaders to continue to develop themselves in the leadership area.

> I think in every work situation there was a lot of training going on (Subject 15).

Skill development for mature leadership

The subjects reported having developed skills during their earlier leadership years that they have fine-tuned during their mature leadership phase. A critical skill reported universally is the development of ethics and the ability to effectively use ethics in decision-making. This skill, likely learned over time, seems to be highly valued by the subjects, all of whom report feeling that ethics are important and that they are needed regularly on the job. Every one of the interviewees could describe ethics and reported their use in helping to frame their regular decision making.

> I do believe there is one true north, and you have got to stay on the true north. True north for us is rescuing our children and our families, restoring them (Subject 8).

Eighteen of the subjects self-reported that they try to focus on their staff and promote staff self-actualization and development. The definition of this variable is motivating and inspiring staff and promoting team spirit, innovation, and creativity. Fifteen subjects also reported that they at times also use the transactional model of directing staff. The mix between inspiring and directing staff likely developed as these leaders learned to lead work groups. Fourteen of the subjects reported coaching staff or using give-back mentoring. This often involves the subject mentoring interns from educational settings or assisting younger or less experienced staff members. The willingness of these subjects to continue to use their skills to help others seemed universal.

> I think I am much more a leader than I was in the beginning. In the beginning, I was just kind of passive. It sure is a lot easier when you've got a really strong team around you (Subject 5).

The concept of multitasking was described by 13 of the subjects but was not typically identified as a skill by the interviewees. The universality of multitasking became apparent to me as the subjects reported all of the roles they fulfill throughout their daily work life (sometimes all in one day) while fulfilling their role as CEO. They described, for example, being responsible for human resources issues, writing grants, fundraising, training staff, board meetings, etc. While these leaders alluded to the concept of multitasking, I doubt they recognize it as a skill or even identify it as a daily reality; in their minds they are simply doing their jobs.

> So I was responsible for HR, hiring, training, clinical issues, overseeing the expansion (Subject 9).

Fundraising was reported by 12 of the subjects as a job expectation in their current role. It is likely that these leaders developed this skill on the job, perhaps with the help of outside training. Many reported that they write grants on a regular basis, bid on contracts with government entities, and maintain donor relations. This full range of fundraising skills was often described by these leaders as a burden. The pressure they feel to fundraise likely comes from self-imposed role expectations, compounded by the real need to fund the agency operations. This is a skill that nonprofit CEOs must develop to ensure the continued success of their organizations. Training related to fundraising was universally sought out by these leaders.

> I went to summer symposiums. . . . I took one on grant writing, took one on fiscal management, and took some clinical ones and a supervision one and executive leadership ones (Subject 9).

The above described variables/skills identified by these leaders seemed to have developed over time, eventually becoming second nature to them. They perform their CEO roles,

utilizing these skills as necessary. The nature of the CEO function promotes multitasking, which ultimately results in getting the job done. Fundraising surfaced as a necessary skill, ethics in the performance of their job was universally valued by the subjects, and these skills were complemented by the role of promoting and supporting staff to live out the missions of their agencies. Training was continually sought out by these leaders.

Mature leadership style

During my report on the interview process I have described the concept of transformational leadership, incorporating both components—transformational and transactional—of the Bass model (2006). As Bass has stated, a full-range leadership style includes both transformational and transactional leadership skills (2006). Sixteen of the subjects reported that they related to the transformational component of leadership, and 15 subjects indicated that the transactional leadership component better described their personal style of leadership. In many cases the subjects are using both transformational and transactional styles, as needed on a situational basis. All 18 reported that they promote and support staff and work to develop their staff members' sense of self, and 11 described a sharing of leadership with staff. These mature leaders view these leadership roles as necessary to enable the staff of their nonprofits to continue their work with clients. Fulfillment of this role with staff seems to validate for the leaders the mission and vision of their agencies.

Fifteen of these leaders report becoming increasingly comfortable with their leadership roles over time, with several remarking that they feel added congruence with their leadership abilities as they spend more time in their jobs. Twelve of these leaders report using their leadership skills beyond their on-the-job role; it appears that they are comfortable leading community boards or processes. This level of security in their role appears to have spurred these

leaders over time to lend their talent to help others in the community by leading outside their own organization—a result I am identifying as fulfilling another social work value. Ethics, in fact, seem to permeate the worldview of the leaders who are comfortable in their role. They seem to know how to use ethics to maintain the focus of their agency on its mission and vision. Ethics appears to remain a constant throughout the leadership development process, as exemplified by the quote to follow:

> It's a matter of respect and ultimately if you have a good solid core of ethics you want to demonstrate to people that you respect them and don't compromise things by a conflict of interest . . . it's pretty simple (Subject 4).

Another example of the maturing theme is mirrored in the following subject quote, which though cited earlier seems worthy of repeating:

> My ability to create a sense of safety and calm and to take people where they don't really want to go. It started . . . maybe more recently I've really owned that this is who I am and this is what I must do and this is my gift that I need to use. I owe something to the world, and I don't mean that narcissistically. So this call to leadership—I have embraced it a lot the last several years. [It] haunted me up until then; I just didn't feel like this is completely my own skin. It is now, and what I am doing is who I am (Subject 11).

Other identified concepts

Two other issues developed as the subjects related their leadership journeys. Eight subjects mentioned succession planning and generational leadership issues. As the demographics show, many of these leaders are 50 years of age and older. The subjects report feeling the need to

begin succession planning to help their organizations prepare for leadership transition. As the literature shows, the graying of nonprofit leaders is a consistent concerns for foundations that study and fund nonprofits. The Casey Foundation (2005) began researching this phenomenon in 2002.The statistic reported at that time was that 45% of the leaders of nonprofits would be retiring within the ensuing five years. The time is indeed near when a good many of these leaders will likely retire, and nonprofits need to begin their preparation for this process. Younger leaders, as identified by these subject leaders, will likely need to be prepared to lead these nonprofits.

In summary, the analysis of the data resulted in the development of a time continuum of themes, which taken together allow us to see how the leadership process may have developed for these leaders. Each interviewee related childhood and young adulthood experience that seemed to be significant; these experiences together seem to paint a picture of an incubator for leadership, a setting of the stage for leadership development. Mentors, religion, ethics, politics, and family—all are important variables that have helped to form the leadership abilities of these subjects.

The early leadership development period seems to have included more mentoring support for these budding leaders, as well as ongoing training through both supervisory experiences and the performance of clinical work. Based on their reports, ethics remain important and continue to develop throughout this period. Not infrequently the subjects' actual MSW training, which they described as valuable, occurred during this time frame. The subjects also seem to have developed personal drive to lead during this critical period. All of these factors have resulted in the maturing of their leadership.

The maturity theme melds together the utilization of external leadership support with increased skill development, allowing a style of leadership to emerge. Support during this mature

period comes once again in the form of mentoring, which merges with peer networking to form a support system that is both developed and sought out by the leader. While training remains important, it comes now in ways that are beyond and in addition to the MSW degree. Frequently these leaders have become self-described lifelong learners. Skill development seems to happen simultaneously; these CEOS report having developed the abilities to multitask, fundraise, utilize ethics in decision making, and develop and support staff to reinforce agency mission through mentoring and coaching. These leaders often lend their personal leadership style and abilities to help other organizations or community collaborative succeed as well. Their role has become more comfortable and natural for these leaders. Indeed, the reports of these subjects seem to exemplify that leadership develops over a lifetime.

Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of these findings, possible limitations of this project, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This final chapter begins with a summary and discussion of the findings for this exploratory study, after which I will present the limitations of the research and its implications for study and practice. Finally, I will discuss recommendations for future research, along with a summary statement.

Study summary

In this exploratory study of 18 MSWs who have gone on to become CEOs of nonprofits, I focused on how these CEOs became leaders and learned to lead. Their leadership journeys, collected via a semi-structured interview format, were recorded and later analyzed by myself and a second coder for similarity in concepts and themes. I developed the interview questions using the conceptual models of transformational leadership (Bass &Riggio, 2006), the Hartford Foundation's (2009) leadership training model for health care professionals, and ethical theories based on the NASW code of ethics and related literature. In order to allow the subjects the widest possible latitude for formulating answers, I purposely phrased the interview questions to be open-ended, resulting in a rich pool of information to be coded and analyzed.

As a whole, these theories of leadership and ethics provided a basis for framing the results and analysis of this study. The Hartford (2009) concepts of leadership training mesh well with the transformational leadership (Bass &Riggio, 2006) concepts, and these two leadership models, together with the ethics theories, helped me to configure the foundational knowledge for this exploratory study.

The Hartford Foundation's concepts on training identify four areas of focus for leadership development: training, mentoring, peer networking, and the call to lead (2009). These concepts are defined in detail in Chapter 2. Bass and Riggio (2006) also highlight in their research not

only the helpfulness of mentoring and coaching for young leaders but also the need for ongoing training programs. The goal of these developmental models is to promote self-understanding, awareness, and the full range of leadership actions, which in turn help to support the transformational leadership style. Young leaders who are able to experience this support and training may be more likely to develop into mature leaders. This type of ongoing support and training was experienced by all of the subjects in this research project and seems to have been sought out by them based on their descriptions of their leadership journeys.

In *Transformational Leadership* (Bass &Riggio, 2006), Bass identified four personal qualities that describe a transformational leader: idealized influence (charismatic behavior), inspirational motivational behavior, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These leadership concepts help CEOs to utilize methods of motivating employees to be engaged in creating an effective organization. The methods described by Bass (2006), which help leaders to acquire and adopt a transformational style of leadership, are in line with the Hartford (2009) concepts of mentoring, peer networking, and utilizing formal training. Modeling, coaching, and peer support are common training methods advocated by both of these models/concepts of leadership development.

The formation and use of ethics were uniformly found to be important by the subjects. The ethics concept was reported as valuable by all (100%) of the interviewees, 16 (89%) of whom could describe ethics as being an intrinsic part of whom they are. The transformational leadership model (Bass &Riggio, 2006) highlights the need for and the use of ethics in leadership. Ethics in leadership helps to create “authentic” leaders who engender confidence and trust on the part of their followers (Bass &Riggio), who in turn believe in the ability of the leader to lead an effective organization. The stronger the belief on the part of the employees that their

leader is able to lead a nonprofit agency, the better the chances that the organization will weather the storms all nonprofits face, notably decreasing resources in conjunction with increasing demand for services. The Hartford model (2009), in contrast, does not specifically identify ethics in its literature when describing its training model. Additionally, Hartford does not promote a particular leadership style or theory. Hence I determined that the combination of all three models/concepts was necessary to form the foundational framework for this exploratory study of leadership. All of the above models and information combined to help develop the framework I used to analyze this study's data and results.

The interview data were analyzed and coded, resulting in the development of overarching concepts, supported by various subcategories and variables. I went on to organize the findings and analysis discovered in the careful review and study of the 18 MSW/CEO subject interviews according to five major concepts and related definitional subcategories and variables. This level of detail allowed me to report on the individual subjects' thoughts regarding their overall leadership journeys, exemplified by my extensive use of examples of the subjects' quotations. (In an attempt to build the readers' confidence in the data and to remain faithful to the subjects' perceptions, I opted to report the participants' own words, as they were recorded.)

As the interviews were conducted over time, certain concepts developed that I had not specifically sought out. These concepts were reported spontaneously by the subjects, without prompts from the interview questions. An example of this phenomenon was the unexpected surfacing of the childhood mentors concept. Those subjects (12 or 67%) who did not identify a mentor in childhood may still have had the experience of childhood leadership. Thus the finding that leadership development begins early in life appears to be significant and is worth further contemplation.

My analysis of the data findings resulted in the development of three themes based on timelines of leadership development—themes that group variables and concepts under three primary leadership development stages, which I have labeled childhood/early adulthood experiences, early leadership development, and mature leadership. These themes helped me to organize the story of leadership development for these leaders across time.

Overall, I am convinced that this study has garnered information that may inform the field of social work in terms of promoting leadership development. The historical nature of the subjects' storytelling allowed me to explore, develop, and analyze rich body of data, and the subjects' recollections and perceptions enabled me to draw conclusions that were at times both surprising and enlightening. Particularly notable is that leadership development seems to begin early in life and, when nurtured by the subjects' environment and life circumstances, to blossom into leadership ability and a willingness to accept the responsibility of leadership.

Limitations of the study

This study is limited by several factors, most notably the restrictions inherent in the qualitative methodology design. The thinking/iterative process undertaken by a qualitative researcher can create an increased occurrence of bias in both the research process and the subsequent analysis, against which any such researcher must guard. This was offset to some degree for this study by having a secondary coder assist with confirmation of the data. Bias also may have occurred due to my ongoing relationships and extensive contacts within the Michigan nonprofit arena.

I am currently the CEO of a nonprofit organization. While my level of insight was no doubt helpful for analyzing the research, my position could also, as mentioned, have been a cause for bias, both in the interviewing and in the analysis processes. As the researcher, I was

aware of the potential for interviewer bias and attempted to guard against it. During each interview I attempted to remain professional, refraining from being overly casual or friendly with the subjects, even if I had known them before the beginning of this project. I did allow for an increased level of familiarity after the formal interview and its recording were concluded.

It is possible that some of the interviewees may have been more open to being interviewed by a fellow CEO (and conceivably more candid in their responses) than they might otherwise have been. As suggested earlier, though, the fact that certain of these subjects already knew me may have influenced some of them to answer differently than they might have had they not known me. Their familiarity with me may in fact have caused some interviewees to be more guarded or to present their answers in a more positive way, not wanting me to learn about their leadership struggles. Another clear potential for weakness involves the possibility of my unintentionally having allowed too much of my own preconceived perspective and perceptions—perhaps even based on the subjects' knowledge of me from our prior relationships or an expectation of my agreement as a fellow CEO—to enter the research process.

Another potential problem is that the nature of this interview process, using as it did open-ended and probing questions, may have limited the comparability of the answers. A given question or answer, for example, may have been interpreted differently from the way either I as the researcher or the respondent intended. The resulting data may have lacked definitive information, which would have resulted in limiting its potential for comparison within the larger pool of interviewees' answers. This factor may have limited the amount and hence the value of the research results.

The participants in this study represent a nonrandom sample of CEOs who have an MSW. As is obvious from this narrow focus, the findings of this study are limited to the input

from these 18 participants and cannot be generalized beyond that point. They do, however, raise interesting issues and suggest ideas that could be tested out with other samples.

Another limiting factor beyond the small number of participants may be the narrow focus of the exploratory questions. Still, it is my hope that the research, representing as it does a baseline exploratory study, may lead to a more robust analysis of social work executive leadership in the future.

The concepts and terminology related to the leadership theories that I identified for this project were not commonly known or utilized by the subjects. Unsolicited descriptors used by the interviewees were analyzed and determined by myself and the secondary coder to possibly match concepts found in transformational leadership, ethics, and/or the Hartford concepts. While the questions were not leading, I developed them in the hope that they would elicit descriptions of behavior that matched the identified leadership concepts and language. It is of course conceivable that in my eagerness I at times identified a match where there was none.

This study asked leaders to analyze their own performance. Assessment of the nature and quality of their leadership is thus based solely upon self-identification and articulation of their abilities—not taking into account the perspectives of those they lead. The follower evaluation of the leader for leadership qualities is a basic tenet in the theory of transformational leadership (Bass &Riggio, 2006), so the reporting of skills by the subjects themselves may be biased by their personal views of their leadership ability. In spite of possible limitations, the results of this study may have important implications for practice and future research.

Lessons learned

Were I to have a second opportunity to organize the research process, I would handle two areas in a different way. One is the organization of the questions. During the interview process I

did not attempt to ask all of the questions in the same format or wording or in the same order. While not keeping the questions organized in exactly the same manner from subject to subject allowed me the freedom to respond to the interviewee in a natural way, it also resulted in the topics of the interviews varying in terms of sequence/order. This made the coding more difficult and may have lent to our missing some concepts that were actually present in the text of a given interview, resulting in a lower level of agreement in terms of inter-coder reliabilities. I also would have spent more time in advance discussing the definitions of the coding guideline with the second coder. This precautionary step might also have improved the Cohen kappa scores.

The interview transcripts were read several times in order to enhance the accuracy in terms of identifying the concepts from the coding guidelines. In the future, however, I would read the transcripts one last time to ensure that all of the concepts mentioned had in fact been identified for each interview. As a new researcher I underestimated the amount of time needed to code the transcripts. I also lacked a clear understanding of the impact of failing to note an instance of a concept that should have been caught. The overall strength of the study could have been negatively impacted by a failure to take the necessary time to code carefully. Once the coding was completed, I would also have confirmed the results one last time. In spite of these possible limitations and lessons learned, however, I remain confident that the results of this study may have important implications for practice and future research.

Implications for practice

Leadership for nonprofits has historically been found from within the social work profession. One of the goals of this study was to glean information about how MSWs have developed the competencies needed for leadership of an organization, with the hope of not only continuing this tradition but of improving upon the likelihood of social workers being selected as

leaders. The social work profession has a long history of giving back to others in our communities and organizations through executive leadership, so this study has implications for practice at both interpersonal and organizational levels.

The interpersonal level refers to the personal development of leadership skills for MSWs who aspire to become leaders. We have learned from this small exploratory study that leadership ability and willingness to lead occur when the person with leadership aptitude is given support and coaching, education and training, and an opportunity to practice the art of leading. Leaders develop over time, and the profession of social work would benefit from supporting and enhancing this development process for MSWs who have the potential to become effective leaders. Discussing leadership as a career option for MSW social workers may identify those prospective early leaders who are interested in cultivating and nurturing their leadership abilities.

Training

Identifying MSWs who may wish to become leaders or even supervisors later in their careers may help to expand the pool of social workers willing to lead. The Schools of Social Work already have strong internship or mentoring programs built into their training processes. Currently, all such schools offer two- or three-day a week internships or field work as part of their curricula. The social work students are generally placed in an agency setting where they can learn and practice their craft of helping others and develop practical skills. A leadership training component could be added for social work students who may wish to study administration/leadership and clinical work simultaneously. (This study indicates that clinical training is also important and should not be overlooked.) Such students could be assigned to a field-work placement in an agency that agrees to mentor their leadership or administrative learning, in addition to their clinical learning.

This leadership development component could be enhanced by the addition of more in-depth management seminars that could be held throughout the school year. These seminars could potentially either be online (allowing for distance learning) or in person, depending on the number of students attending or on student preference. Topics covered could include staff clinical issues and supervision, communication, staff performance/evaluation, handling the difficult employee clinical record review, accreditation and regulations, boards of directors and agency governance, etc. The more in-depth training could be coupled with an actual assignment to interview the top executive management at the agencies. The format for the interviews could be similar to the interview tool used for this exploratory research project. The results of the interviewing process could be compiled for ongoing data gathering, resulting in more in-depth research about leadership. Thus interested students would gain some idea of what leadership entails, as well as exposure to actual leadership and administration within an agency. There could also be a research component of compiling the data garnered from this process.

Self-knowledge development

Self-knowledge about leadership and its fit for our own personal style is critical to the successful accomplishment of a leadership role. Knowledge of the CEO or other supervisory role and its demands gives students the opportunity to make an informed choice about leadership and whether or not this is a role they could fulfill. Students' self-knowledge would also be enhanced by taking a self-assessment tool that indicates their leadership skills, as well as areas for growth. There are many reasonably-priced tools the Schools of Social Work could use that would be economical and beneficial to students. Offering an opportunity to discuss the individual results of the tool would enhance and deepen the learning among students. Action plans for student personal growth could also be developed.

Marketing to students

The overall marketing of these student learning opportunities is enhanced by the current social media opportunities. The Schools of Social Work need to respond to the younger generation by increasing the use of these social media tools for marketing leadership educational and development programming to interested students. Using these online tools and chat rooms could exponentially improve the number of students exploring leadership education and development over time. Sample course syllabi and chats could be made available to entice students to explore their interest in social work leadership.

Enhancing Agency CEO involvement

The results of this study indicate that mentoring and exposure to supervision were helpful to these interviewees, who now, in turn, enjoy giving back to others through give-back mentoring. Mentoring and training the next generation of leaders were action points identified by the Annie E. Casey Study (2005) as best practices. The social work profession should be preparing for this challenge. Some schools already offer this kind of administrative placement, although an enhancement recommendation for this strategy would be to increase the number and variety of placements. Enhancing the connection with current CEOs of nonprofits would benefit the Schools of Social Work and help prepare the schools to increase the quality and number of placements. These connections may help to prepare the schools for the challenge of generational change and the increased need for future leaders.

Current Schools of Social Work would benefit from the development of advisory groups, one of which could include current nonprofit CEOs. This group would not only engender more involvement from within the social work CEO community but would also provide an avenue to enhance the training and development of leadership students. This advisory group could notify

the schools of potential placements for students learning leadership skills, in order to ensure that these students would be welcomed into quality placements in settings that would be committed to their growth and development. These same CEOs would provide invaluable feedback about best practices in nonprofits, e.g., developing trends in funding, fundraising, programming, grant writing, staffing issues, training, etc. Even clinical MSWs who are graduating need to have best practice skills that will be of value to the nonprofits for which they wish to work. These same CEOs would keep the schools informed about clinical practice training issues as they develop. As advocates for the Schools of Social Work, the CEOs would promote the overall training and employment of MSWs in all fields of the helping professions, creating a win-win scenario for all concerned.

Another recommendation I would make, given these data, to improve the quality and number of leaders in social work would be to enhance the breadth and depth of the administration course work in the Schools of Social Work. An initial class introducing students to agency administration could be offered to help students further their understanding of how an agency functions. The structure for most agencies is quite similar; this applies even to the larger, public organizations such as community mental health agencies that generally have a board of directors and an agency administrative structure that flows from it. Learning how organizations are structured and funded, as well as the kinds of services they provide, would help even the general MSW student to be prepared for and knowledgeable about agency life, particularly in light of the increasing level and amount of change that is now taking place in organizations. This foundational knowledge might help spark an interest on the part of the new MSW in the possibility of one day taking on a leadership role. Other important knowledge needed by future

leaders might be gained by partnering with schools of business, human resources, nonprofit management, etc.

Educational Partnerships

By partnering with other professional schools, the Schools of Social Work would benefit from specific subject areas that are already developed and provided by these schools. This would not only improve the quality of the subject matter but also lower development and staffing costs. Areas for collaboration could include budgeting, financial analysis; grant writing, human resources best practices, agency governance, regulatory issues focused at agency operations and human resources, etc. This collaboration around areas of expertise would also allow social work schools to offer skill-building classes to the other professional departments. Social work schools, for example, have well-developed programs around ethics, interviewing, collaboration in the community, and team building. This attitude of collaboration could lead to a win-win situation for all involved.

Enhanced educational programs

We have also learned from this small study that these subject leaders learned to lead by finding their own support and training in order to develop their leadership abilities. In essence, they pioneered their own way to leadership. Therefore, another example of how these research findings might inform the field would be the development of a leadership program utilizing the concepts that were uncovered. Education and counsel in the areas of mentoring, coaching, leadership training, ethics education, and decision making could be offered. The value of peer networking could be shared with these leaders-in-training, and the varied demands inherent in the leadership of an organization could be explored and shared during. Discussion and sharing could also incorporate such areas as fundraising skills, ways to inspire staff, the usefulness of

coaching with staff, etc. The concepts presented by Bass and the Hartford Foundation, as well as the principles of ethics discussed in this dissertation, would be invaluable for the basic learning of budding leadership students.

I would propose that this approach involve a combination of training in the Schools of Social Work and in the agency setting, allowing for mentoring and hands-on learning to take place. This programming could be designed as continuing educational training, allowing for the most flexibility in timing for students learning leadership. Thus class schedules would meet students' needs in terms of skill development within the timeframe that would be most helpful to them. While some continuing education programs are already in place, these programs would benefit as well from the enhanced training and development. These classes or training programs could also be made available post MSW practice training.

I believe that training for leadership will be most effective when it constitutes an integration of formal training and practice-setting learning. We have seen that leadership competency develops over time. A mid-level managerial training program would in my opinion be an ideal place for the Schools of Social Work to invest their resources. Training to become a supervisor/manager lays the foundational work for learning to be a higher-level leader later on in life. The manner in which budding managers learn to become leaders of smaller employee groups often predicts success in leadership later on in their careers. This type of learning should be supported and encouraged.

The supportive programming I envision might be several months in length and combine online and in-person training. An online training program for the managers, coupled with on-the-job assignments and mentoring at their job sites, would be ideal. For large agencies, new managers could be involved in a group at the agency formulating its mentor/peer-networking

opportunities. In the case of smaller agencies, several employees from different agencies could join together to form a small group. This basic training would be helpful and supportive not only to the new manager but to the agency as well. The program could also entail advanced levels of training, focusing on additional support and skills development for managers who are accepting more responsibility or increasing their supervisory responsibilities. This would allow for these managers to progress in their skill development and leadership ability over time.

I would caution the Schools of Social Work to develop programs that are highly user friendly for both the manager and the agency. Many managers cannot afford to be away from their desk or off the agency premises for extended periods of time. The formal training should take this time constraint into account during the design phase of the programming. This training and development program would also help to inform and develop social work leadership for the future by nurturing and promoting leadership ability. The integration of the social work school with the agency component would benefit both the school and the agency. The school would provide the training staff and the materials, which would benefit the agency, while the programming feedback by the agency staff (and the CEOs) to the school would allow for continual improvements to the course offering. Thus this partnering would once again be a win-win scenario for all concerned.

As we have seen, the issues of succession planning and generational handoff for nonprofits were mentioned by eight (44%) of the subjects. Succession planning for nonprofits will be a concern as the current leaders retire in record numbers in the coming years (Casey Foundation, 2005). The kind of training program I have described would help to ensure that social workers will be equipped to continue leading nonprofits, as they have in the past.

The selection of candidates for leadership programs could also be based, at least in part, on these conceptual findings. Interviewing applicants with these findings in mind might be helpful for selecting the best candidates for leadership training. For example, information on possible nominees who have had early leadership experiences and found them to be rewarding could be uncovered. Encouraging those who have been leaders earlier in life (prior to their social work training) would also be beneficial to the program selection process. As we have seen, the findings seem to indicate that these early leadership experiences predict later leadership success.

Social workers, like practitioners in many other professions, are in a continual training mode of lifelong learning. Continuing educational requirements lend themselves to training programs that would focus on supervisor education and training. Such courses could be offered more routinely by the Schools of Social Work at varying levels. The levels could encompass foci from new supervisor skills to executive director training programs, and potential programming could utilize the concepts learned from this study, including leadership style development, ethics training and development, mentoring opportunities, peer networking, time and skills development, organizational effectiveness as it relates to leadership, etc. The completion of these courses might be of great value to applicants when applying for increased responsibility in agency leadership roles. I now turn my focus to future research suggestions.

Implications for future research

Since 1900 leadership in general has been one of the most researched and written about topics (Jackson & Parry, 2008; Yukl, 2006). Historically this research has focused on military leadership, but in more recent times the spotlight of study and research has shifted to the business world (Yukl). Since the field of social work has not concentrated its research efforts on the study of leadership, there is room for growth in the future.

While this exploratory study may help to develop new ideas for future research, its small scope prohibits generalization of its results and findings. While a larger, qualitative case study project would be both time consuming and costly, a survey could now be developed, based on these preliminary findings, that would allow for the confirmation of these data across a larger group of MSWs who are CEOs. This survey would be helpful in determining how a larger cross section of MSW CEOs learned to lead, what skills they developed, and what supports they found helpful in learning to lead. This would allow for the generalization of the findings and analysis.

The findings of this study may also help to inform the future training of social workers as leaders. If the leadership training of social workers is in fact to become more of a focus for the field, additional research will certainly be needed. The subjects in this study are mature, most having been leaders for many years. It will be important to continue to study and research not only how a social worker leads but also how a member of a younger generation of social workers can become a leader. It is probable that these budding leaders may acquire and develop leadership skills using quite different methods from those of their predecessors. What best practices will the younger generation of leaders employ as they become proficient in leadership? Will they continue to be people focused?

The role of technology in leadership training could also be explored and researched. The subjects interviewed for this project reported the helpfulness of mentoring, peer networking, training, ethics, etc., for the development of their leadership abilities. Based on the age of these leaders, we can assume that they honed these abilities largely in a face-to-face or classroom setting. Can technology be utilized effectively for the development of the same set of skills and abilities? Would this method of training be effective and helpful to the leader in training? Would the use of technology be dependent upon the age or generation of the person aspiring to acquire

the skill or information? Because the field of social work is so relational, so people focused, does this profession use technology in the same way as others? Should the training for social work be presented in some other way? As the social work profession develops more training programs for leadership, researching the outcomes and success of this training will be critical. Learning what does and does not work will be crucial over time.

This project has explored leadership from the leader's prospective. Boards of directors generally select the next nonprofit leaders or executives. Exploring what boards are expecting in their CEO and adapting training to those expectations will become an important aspect both of research and of practice. We would expect budding leaders to be prepared to meet the expectations of these boards of directors and ready to develop and/or maintain an effective organization. Just as the demands for change are increasing for nonprofits within their environments, boards of directors will also begin expanding their levels of expectation for leadership performance. As nonprofits continue to become more sophisticated in their performance and functioning, their leaders will in their turn be expected to lead the charge in terms of effective implementation of these changes. Researching the expectations of boards of directors for nonprofit leadership would be helpful in training future social work leaders.

In the previous section of this dissertation, in-depth training programs for students of leadership were described. As these students flow through these courses, ongoing monitoring of their leadership growth and learning could be maintained through research and informational gathering tools. These tools might include online survey instruments, as well as focus groups and interviews. Both successful and unsuccessful leadership students would be queried about their experiences. This ongoing flow of information would allow for the rich development of research data that would continue to inform the field regarding what has been working for students and

what has not been helpful. The continual input from students would allow for the continuous improvement of the training and educational programs. The students would learn from their own collective experiences and would then continue to inform the field of social work regarding what they had found to be the best practices. We researchers, along with the students, would begin to understand what leadership means to the younger generations and how to recruit them into it.

As our society and environment change, will the leadership techniques currently in use continue to inspire and enhance staff performance, or will this dynamic change as well? What is important to the new generation of workers? What inspires them to continue their work with vulnerable populations despite shrinking resources? Does the leadership of today motivate the next generation? Generational issues are an excellent opportunity for future focus and research. These issues will impact not only MSW leadership training but MSW practice training as well. Capturing the information regarding training provided by our MSW programs, both the successes and the failures, will lead to continually improving the quality in our training programs and thus help us meet the ever-changing generational issues. This again creates a win-win relationship, as well as a great learning experience for the students and the providers of these ongoing educational programs.

Summary

This study of social work leadership has developed findings that I frankly expected but also many others that took me by surprise. The most unexpected discovery for me was that these leaders really did experience similar, albeit very personal, journeys to leadership. Their stories, told in their own voices, helped me to explore and better understand these unique and yet remarkably comparable journeys. The shared, overarching themes of early leadership experiences, of garnering their own support and help through mentoring and peers, of learning

the craft of leadership and then eventually applying that knowledge to the leadership of a nonprofit organization—these and others became readily apparent to me in the findings and analysis. The data illustrate that these CEOs have developed their own leadership knowledge and style over time by accessing the help they needed and even by creating that help for themselves—in essence, by customizing their personal training programs. It has been a privilege for me to listen in on their stories of perseverance and dedication, not only to the field of social work but also to the nonprofits they lead. Their stories both provide many insights and raise many questions about training future MSWs for leadership positions—putting the future of social work leadership in our hands.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Hartford Foundation permission

Mon, May 10, 2010 at 11:18 AM

Nora O'Brien <nora.obrien@jhartfound.org>
To: "deborah.nykamp@gmail.com" <deborah.nykamp@gmail.com>, "dsanderlin.mccormack@gmail.com" <dsanderlin.mccormack@gmail.com>
Cc: "Francisco J. Doll" <francisco.doll@jhartfound.org>

Dear Ms. Nykamp,

Thank you for contacting us regarding permission to us our leadership concepts and definitions for your research project. You are able to use the concepts as long as you cite the reference.

Best wishes on your research project.

Regards,

Nora OBrien-Suric

Nora OBrien-Suric, M.A.

The John A. Hartford Foundation

Read our blog, **Health AGEnda**:http://www.jhartfound.org/blog

APPENDIX B

Sample email to subjects

From: Deborah Nykamp

Sent: Monday, August 09, 2010 1:32 PM

To: XXXXXXXX

Subject: Question and a favor

Attachments: i035966_6-22-10_APPROVED_informedconsent.pdf

Hi XXX. Hope you are doing well.

I am beginning the research for the completion of my PhD. My project is to interview MSWs who are also CEOs of nonprofit organizations. The goal to is learn how they got to be CEOs and lessons learned.

The interview takes about 1.5 hours and is recorded and then transcribed. It is confidential, of course. It is simply you telling your story.

I would travel to you at your convenience. Hope you will participate. I have included the informed consent form for your review. Please let me know if this will work and if you have any questions. Thanks for considering. Deb

Deborah J. Nykamp
President and CEO
Catholic Charities West Michigan
360 Division St. Suite 3A
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
O: 616.243.9122
F: 616.551.5646
C: 616.295.8556
dnykamp@ccwestmi.org

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent form

THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP IN NONPROFIT AGENCIES

Letter of consent

You are invited to participate in a research study of executive leadership in nonprofit agencies. This research study is conducted by Deborah J. Sanderlin-Nykamp, social work doctorial student, and supervised by Rena Harold, Ph.D. at Michigan State University.

Purpose of the study: This research study is designed to examine the experiences of executive directors and their leadership development as they have become executive leaders in a nonprofit organization. We are asking you to participate in the study because you have a Master's degree in Social Work, and have attained an executive director/president level of leadership in a nonprofit agency. You will be one of approximately 20 MSW executive directors / presidents in this research study.

Explanation of procedures: Participation in the study involves completion of a short demographic data collection sheet and a two-hour interview process. The interviews will be conducted in a setting that is mutually agreeable to the participant and the researcher. Interviews will be recorded for the purpose of accuracy of the information and data analysis.

Risks and Discomforts: Any risk and/or discomfort from this study are anticipated to be minimal.

Benefits: You will not directly benefit from this study. However, the information collected may help to inform the field of social work regarding leadership concepts, knowledge attainment and training techniques, which could potentially lead to future nonprofit leadership training.

Withdrawal without Prejudice: Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. You may choose to not participate or to not answer a particular question. You may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled to. You may ask the researcher any questions at any time.

Confidentiality of information: The findings of this study will not contain identifiable information about you or your agency. The information collected will be confidential and will be aggregated in its reporting and presentation. Quotes will be masked to prevent them from being attributed to a certain individual. Both the individual's and agency information will be

This consent form was approved by the Social Science/Behavioral/Education Institutional Review Board (SIRB) at Michigan State University. Approved 06/26/10 - valid through 06/25/11. This version supersedes all previous versions. IRB # 10-605.

assigned an identification number to maintain confidentiality. Records identifying your identity and the assigned identification number will be kept in a locked drawer at the office of Rena Harold, Ph.D., 252 Baker Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI.

All participants' interviews in this project will be recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, you cannot participate in this research study. The recordings/digital files will be used by researchers at MSU and will be transcribed. Identifiable information about you and your agency will be removed during transcription. The digital files will be secured in a locked drawer at the primary investigator for at least three years after project closes. Only the researchers at MSU and the MSU Institutional Review Board will access the audio recordings and project data.

An effort will be made to disguise your identity by not using your name during the interview. However, total anonymity may not be possible because of the unique experiences and information that you may choose to share during the recording. Information from this research study and recordings will be presented in an aggregate format and quotes / information will not be attributed to you personally. Aggregate information from this study may be shared in a professional journal and/ or at a professional conference. Your confidentiality will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Cost and compensation: You will not receive any money or any other form of compensation for participating in this study.

Questions: If you have any concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury (i.e. physical, psychological, social, financial or otherwise}, please contact Rena Harold, Ph.D., Responsible Project Investigator, School of Social Work, MSU, 252 Baker Hall, East Lansing MI, 48824. Phone: 517.432.3733 or fax: 517.353.3038 or email: haroldr@msu.edu.

You may also contact Deborah Sanderlin-Nykamp, LMSW, Project Investigator School of Social Work, MSU, 252 Baker Hall, East Lansing MI, 48824. Phone: 248.765.2746 or email: deborah.nykamp@gmail.com.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your role and rights as a study participant or would like to register a complaint about this research study, you may contact, anonymously,

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if you wish, the director of MSU's Human Research Protection Program, Phone: 517.355.2180, fax: 517.432.4503, or email: irb@msu.edu or mail: HRPP, 207 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

We appreciate your willingness to participate in the project and look forward to learning from you and your experiences.

Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to *participate in this study.*

Signature, _____ Date

This consent form was approved by the Social Science/Behavioral/Education Institutional Review Board (SIRB) at Michigan State University. Approved 06/26/10 - valid through 06/25/11. This version supersedes all previous versions. IRS # 10-605.

APPENDIX D

Leadership survey/questionnaire

Leadership survey

A. Personal information

You are invited to participate in a research study of executive leadership in nonprofit agencies. This research study is conducted by Deborah J. Sanderlin-Nykamp, social work doctoral student, and supervised by Rena Harold, PhD at Michigan State University.

The findings of this study will not contain identifiable information about you or your agency. The information collected will be confidential and will be aggregated in its reporting and presentation. Quotes will be masked to prevent them from being attributed to a certain individual. Both the individuals and any agency information will be assigned an identification number to maintain confidentiality.

*** 1. Name**

*** 2. Gender**

- ○ Male
- ○ Female

3. Date of birth:

4. Contact information:

Agency:

Address:

Address 2:

City/town:

State:

ZIP:

Cell number:

Email address:

Phone number:

5. Undergraduate school:

6. Year graduated:

7. MSW school attended:

8. Year graduated:

9. Other degrees:

10. Specialized training programs:

B. Agency size

1. **Number of employees:**
   - ○ 1–50
   - ○ 51–100
   - ○ 101–200
   - ○ 201–500
   - ○ more than 500
2. **Agency revenue**
   - ○ under $1,000,000
   - ○ $1,000,000–$2,000,000
   - ○ $2,000,000–$3,000,000
   - ○ $3,000,000–$4,000,000
   - ○ $4,000,000–$5,000,000
   - ○ $5,000,000–$10,000,000
   - ○ $10,000,000–$15,000,000
   - ○ $15,000,000–$20,000,000
   - ○ $20,000,000–$25,000,000
   - ○ $25,000,000–$30,000,000
   - ○ $30,000,000–$35,000,000

○ $35,000,000–$40,000,000

○ $45,000,000–$50,000,000

○ more than $50,000,000

3. **Location of main office**

4. **Number of additional locations:**

5. **Please indicate your agency geographic coverage:**

6. **Please list the 5 major services your agency provides:**

7. **Please list your 5 major funding sources from highest to lowest:**

8. **Please list any affiliations your agency may have (i.e., religious, national organizations, United Way, etc.):**

9. **May I contact you if I need information or clarification in the future?**

○ Yes

○ No

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

Questions and Recording Form

Interviewee code **Date** **Time**

Location (office, public place, etc.)

Purpose of interview:

My goal today is to explore with you your story of how you became an executive director and leader of your organization. By listening to you tell about your journey—your process of leading and becoming a leader—I hope to develop concepts and ideas that will lead to the development of leadership education and training programs for social workers. Your information, as well as your identity and that of your agency, will remain confidential. (Describe my research process for my project. This will encourage them to tell their story, obtain their buy-in to the project, and help them become comfortable with me.)

Interview questions:

Description of leadership roles by interviewees

Please share with me your story of how you ended up in a leadership role. Let's start with your earliest leadership role. Please tell me about that experience. (This could also be the first supervisory role.)

Explore that role and experience. (The invitation to tell their own story encourages the executive to share. Continue on in the exploration of their experiences leading up to the current CEO position, using their timeline of experiences.)

Follow-up topics:

The following are topic areas that will be specifically addressed if the executive does not disclose information about them during the storytelling process. If the information is disclosed during the storytelling, the interviewer will explore that topic during the interview process.

Ethics

We are often faced with decisions we have to make that involve the use of ethics. Can you describe such an experience for me?

How are ethics important to your job?

Describe how ethics impacts your day-to-day work.

Explore leadership style (Transformational vs. transactional, from their perspective)

Explore: Did you at any time develop concepts around your leadership style? Can you describe your style in your own words? Do you use a deliberate framework/model for leadership? How would you describe your style of leadership?

Call to action (Focus on how and why they chose to pursue leadership.)

I have no doubt that all of us chose to pursue leadership for different reasons. Please share with me your reasons for being willing to lead.

Exploration of training, both formal and informal

Did you receive leadership training during your MSW educational process? y/n

Did you receive leadership training other than from the MSW training? y/n

Training through other programs (Explore the training—i.e., number of years, other degrees or formal processes, experiential, on-the-job, etc.)

Mentoring experience

Did or do you have any mentors who have helped you along the way in your leadership journey? y/n

Explore mentoring. Ideas for probing questions:

Who helped you become a nonprofit leader?

How did you locate this individual?

Was this person helpful? y/n

How often did/do you see your mentor?

Peer networking experience

Oftentimes talking to our peers is helpful in this job. Did or do you take advantage of peer networking opportunities? y/n

Explore peer networking. Ideas for potential probes:

Has this person / have these people been helpful? y/n

How have they been helpful?

How many hours per month did/do you spend in peer networking?

APPENDIX F

Confidentiality agreement

The Study of Leadership in Nonprofits Research Project

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

In order to maintain the confidentiality of Leadership in Nonprofits Research Project subjects and agencies' all information, materials and information regarding subjects and the agencies and their operations must not be discussed with anyone outside the Michigan State University (MSU) research team who are authorized to receive confidential information and who are directly involved with the leadership research project.

Research team members and others providing professional services to the research team handling confidential information are responsible for its security. Extreme care must be exercised to ensure that it is safe guarded. All information and /or data storage devices must be kept in a locked drawer at all times.

Information concerning, but not limited to research subjects personal information and information regarding agencies should be regarded as restricted material. Disclosure of this information to unauthorized persons can and will lead to dismissal from this project.

I acknowledge that I am fully aware of my responsibilities to protect the confidential nature of all information pertaining to individuals who are participating, or who have participated in The Study of Leadership in Nonprofit Agencies project. I further recognize that I may not divulge any identifying information to any outside individual or organization without the express, written consent of the individual involved.

I am aware that any violation of confidentiality and/or policies and philosophies may lead to immediate dismissal from this project. Upon termination or resignation or completion of my duties with the Leadership research project, I will promptly deliver to the appropriate team researcher all written and other materials.

This agreement is binding past my tenure with the leadership project and ensures that materials are kept confidential. My signature indicates my willingness to abide by this agreement.

Print Name:_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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