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ABSTRACT

THE STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

by

Patricia Ann Bernard

Chair: Elsie P. Jackson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: THE STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN IN
LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Name of researcher: Patricia Ann Bernard

Name and degree of faculty chair: Elsie P. Jackson, Ph.D.

Date of completion: March 2009

Purpose

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) survey, 60% of employed women cited stress as their most serious problem at work. Working outside the home and balancing a family create conflicts between work and family obligations which become a likely cause of stress for women. While stress may be a problem among working women in general, it seems highly probable that women who function in leadership positions may experience additional stressors. Consequently, this study focused on investigating the stressors of women who currently function in leadership positions and the coping strategies they use to combat stress within corporate America, education, and government agencies.

Method

This study used a mixed-method approach. A survey questionnaire was administered to 67 women at least 20 years old who functioned in leadership positions within corporate America, education, and government. The questionnaire was the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSI-R), which has structured questions on a Likert-type rating scale. The OSI-R contains three categories: (a) Occupational Roles Questionnaires, (b) Personal Strain, and (c) Personal Resources. Data were analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), and Univariate *F* Tests. All decisions on the statistical significance of findings used a criterion alpha level of .05. The qualitative portion was fulfilled by conducting a face-to-face semi-structured interview with 6 women leaders—2 each were from education, corporate America, and government.

Results

This research revealed that women functioning in leadership positions within corporate America, education, and governmental agencies experienced maladaptive levels of vocational personal strain and occupational stressors, which were role ambiguity, role boundary, and role overload. A statistically significant relationship was found between stress and length of service. As the length of time with their respective organizations increased, less occupational stress and personal strain were experienced by the women.

Although prayer and spirituality were not identified as a coping resource on the OSI-R, it appeared throughout the interviews as a means of coping.

Conclusions

Women who hold leadership positions within corporate America, education, and governmental agencies experienced occupational stress in role ambiguity, role boundary, role overload, and vocational strain. Leaders in these areas must support women on issues that generate stress in the work environment.

Andrews University

School of Education

THE STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN
IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Patricia Ann Bernard

March 2009

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THE STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN
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A dissertation
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Patrician Ann Bernard

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Chair: Elsie Jackson, Ph.D.

Dean, School of Education
James Jeffery

Member: Elvin Gabriel, Ph.D.

Member: Naomi Ludman, Ph.D.

External: Mickey Hay, Ph.D.

Date approved

I dedicate this study to my father, Joe Lewis, who has always supported me in my efforts to have a successful career and continue my quest for knowledge. He has been my lifelong mentor, my source of encouragement, and an unwavering advocate of my ability to accomplish my goals. I would also like to commend my three sons— Paris, Julian, and Joseph—for their support and sacrifice of family time. They have accepted the long grueling hours involved in this process, while at home or away, without complaint.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The scientific investigation of stress started over 50 years ago with Hans Selye (1956), and, as of today, no one universal meaning of stress seems to exist. Selye (1956) defined stress in his book, *The Stress of Life*, as the rate of wear and tear on the body. All persons, regardless of their socioeconomic status, occupation, gender, and race, experience some form of stress. Selye's research revealed that the same stress that makes one person ill may be an invigorating experience for another. A major factor to consider is how well one adjusts to life situations. Stress plays a key role in all aspects of modern life and encompasses work, family, and home (McBride-King & Bachmann, 1999; Shields, 2003).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe stress as the relationship between the person and the environment. Stress is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding their resources and posing potential harm. Most stress models have defined stress as objective elements in the environment, which may cause stress. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (2006) research identified that the majority of reasons for work illness is due to stress-related issues. Stress can be a stimulant with positive consequences, "eustress," which motivate, energize, stimulate productivity, and force one

to develop new coping skills. Selye (1974) identified good (eustress) and bad (distress) stresses as follows:

1. Good stresses: Falling in love or getting married, reconciliation after a separation, retiring, having a baby, buying a house, getting promoted, unusual success, graduating, finding new friends, and taking a vacation

2. Bad stresses: Death of a spouse or close relative, divorce, serious illness, losing a job, changing occupations, conflict with spouse, illness of family member or close friend, etc.

This study focuses on investigating the bad stressors, “distress,” associated with occupational and personal strain stressors, experienced by women in their work environments of education, corporate America, and governmental agencies.

Occupational stress has been a topic of significant research for the last two decades. It is one of the main reasons for medical retirements (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1999) defined occupational stress as a harmful physical and emotional response, occurring when the requirements of the job exceed the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker and leads to poor health and on-the-job injuries.

Many times, people view occupational stress and work stress as being the same, when in fact there is a difference. Occupational stress encompasses job characteristics that pose a threat to the individual (French, 1976). Occupational stress focuses primarily on the experience of tension and strain (Fontana & Abouserie, 1993). Occupational strain is a deviation from a normal response that an individual would experience in a given situation (French, 1976).

Work stress and the resulting strain from work are an interaction between the individual and their environment. Work stress is “the nonspecific result of any demand upon the body” (Seyle, 1983, p. 7). Negative outcomes and medical conditions can result from work stress. The negative outcomes can be responsible for low job satisfaction, violence, work injuries, absenteeism, and job turnover (Ghorbani, Watson, & Morris, 2000).

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) survey, 60% of employed women cited stress as their most serious problem at work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). Even though men may face more immediate life-threatening occupational hazards, women appear to be more vulnerable to stress-induced illnesses, which can lead to cardiovascular conditions (heart attacks are the number one killer of women), hypertension, and stroke.

There are many reasons for this dilemma. One is that women are socialized to be caretakers and take on responsibilities that men may not consider. The National Institute for Occupational and Health (NIOSH, 1999) article “Stress at Work” found that gender-specific work stress factors, such as sex discrimination and balancing work and family demands, may have an effect on women workers above and beyond the impact of general job stressors. Working outside the home and balancing a family creates conflicts between work and family obligations, which become a leading cause of stress for women (Cummins, 1990; Piltch, Walsh, Mangione, & Jennings, 1994; Spielberger & Reheiser, 1995).

According to Haynes and Feinleib (1980), the Framingham Heart Study revealed women’s health is jeopardized by stress. Stress further perpetuates conditions such as

depression, heart disease, chronic pain, nervousness, cancer, strokes, and high blood pressure. Deaths from these lifestyle stress-related diseases are increasing among women. Barnett and Hyde (2001) believe that women will suffer more stress-related illnesses as they move into high-pressure jobs and combine work and family roles.

While constant stress may be a problem among women in general, it seems highly probable that women who function in leadership positions within corporate America, education, and governmental agencies may experience additional stressors. It is imperative that these publics understand and generate an awareness of the elements of stress affecting women in leadership. In order to implement preventive measures, they must develop and further enhance existing policies and practices concerning stress-related issues.

Statement of the Problem

The number of women in top positions remains at a bare minimum compared to men worldwide (Adler, 2000). Women today face barriers while competing for, obtaining, and holding leadership positions. Many women possess a desire to make a difference in the direction of their organization, as they integrate work into their lifestyle. According to Catalyst (1998), many women are being driven from traditional organizations, due to blockades to career advancement and poor work environments.

Since expectations of the work environment tend to be structured more appropriately for men, the same work environment experienced by men and women can be more detrimental for women (Gerdes, 1995). As a result, women are reporting high levels of physical, psychological, and behavioral symptoms associated with job stress (Nelson, Hitt, & Quick, 1989). Stressors experienced by women have several effects on

their lives and personal relations. When the effect of stress becomes great and outweighs positive aspects, many women decide to stop working altogether. The loss of high-level women in organizations is a loss of intellectual capital, knowledge, and connections. If this trend continues, it may perpetuate low morale, uncertainty, and a greater role model deficit for women aspiring to move into leadership positions (Donahue, 1998).

The study of occupational and personal strain stressors, as well as coping strategies practiced by women in leadership, has not received due attention from corporate America, education, and government industries. Therefore, I chose to investigate occupational and personal strain stressors, as well as coping strategies that women have employed to achieve success.

Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on investigating the occupational and personal strain stressors of women currently functioning in leadership positions and the coping strategies they use to combat stress within corporate America, education, and governmental agencies.

Research Questions

1. What stressors do women in leadership positions face in their work environments?
2. What coping strategies do women in leadership use in their work environments?
3. Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and government agencies experience the same stressors?

4. Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies utilize the same coping strategies?
5. What is the relationship between the stressors experienced by women in leadership positions and race, age, marital status, number of children, and years of service on the job?
6. What is the relationship between the coping strategies used by women in leadership positions and race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service?

Significance of the Study

Women who hold leadership positions are prone to the same stressors experienced by men. Yet, women are also confronted with potentially unique stressors within their work environment such as discrimination, stereotyping, and isolation. In addition, women must also be concerned with balancing work and family (Repetti, Matthews, & Waldron, 1989).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined the Transaction Theory of stress as an interaction between one's personality, environment, and stimulus. People are influenced by their environments; stress is the degree of fit between a person and their environment. This study is an attempt to understand the fit experienced by women leaders.

Organizations are beginning to look for ways to minimize the loss of women due to work stress. By understanding occupational and personal strain stressors relating to women functioning in leadership positions, management can alter their organization's leadership training programs, recruiting policies, mentoring, promoting, and retention of women leaders.

Minimal research has been conducted on identifying occupational stressors and coping strategies experienced by women in leadership. It is hoped that this study will open doors to a new field to explore. This field is one of assisting women leaders to find a meaningful career and lifestyle within corporate America, education, and governmental agencies. In addition, this investigation should increase awareness, by providing essential information to support women in pursuit of equality in the workplace. It may also assist women in their journey of becoming successful future leaders in whatever type of occupation they choose.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are provided for uniformity. I have developed all definitions to provide clarity for the purpose of this study.

Active coping strategies: Behavioral or psychological responses intended to change the nature of the stressor itself or how one thinks about it.

Avoidant coping strategies: A denial or refusal to deal with the stressor. It entails hoping the situation will go away. Behavioral efforts may include one escaping to avoid being around people, and possibly excessive sleeping. These types of coping strategies lead people into activities such as alcohol use or withdrawal behavior (Holahan & Moos, 1987).

Coping: A person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Coping efforts: Strategies used to mediate primary and secondary appraisals.

Coping resources: During a time of stress, the amount of an individual's endurance, health, intelligence, emotional stability, and social support.

Coping strategies: Strategies used to minimize stress.

Distress: "Bad" or "negative" circumstances to which people must adapt (e.g., death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or a car accident).

Education: The profession of teaching (especially at a school or college or university).

Emotion-focused coping strategies: Efforts to regulate the emotional consequences of stressful or potentially stressful events.

Eustress: "Good" or "positive" things to which people must learn to adapt (e.g., marriage, birth of child, vacation, new job, graduation, finding new friends).

Glass ceiling: Artificial barriers, based on attitude or organizational biases that prevent women or minorities from advancing upward into management-level positions.

Interpersonal strain (IS): Frequent quarrels or excessive dependency on family members, spouses, and friends. (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Leader: A woman who holds a position, supervise, and lead others within their organization and provide guidance.

Leadership: A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. The leader is at the center of group change and activity and embodies the will of the group. From a personality perspective, leadership is a combination of special traits or characteristics that individuals possess and that enable them to include others to accomplish tasks. It is an act or behavior to include things leaders do to bring about change in a group (Bass, 1990).

Leadership position: A highly visible and respected key position held by a woman within her organization.

Length of service: The number of years spent working in a particular organization such as the government, corporate America, or education.

Occupational stress: Stress due to one's occupation.

Occupational Stress Inventory: An instrument developed by Osipow and Spokane (1987) to measure the three dimensions of occupational adjustments—stress, psychological strain, and coping resources—in working adults employed in technical, professional, or managerial fields. It consists of three questionnaires: The Occupational Role Questionnaire (ORQ), the Personal Strain Questionnaire (PSQ), and the Personal Resources Questionnaire (PRQ).

Open-ended questions: A question asked in a manner that forces the respondent to answer in his/her own words instead of giving a yes or no response.

Psychological strain (PSY): According to the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSIR), this identifies whether depression, anxiousness, unhappiness, and/or irritability exist. It may also report minor complaints, bad responses to routine situations, and no sense of humor. Most of all, it will identify how the individual perceives things to be at the workplace (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Responsibility: High levels of responsibility for work performance and subordinates; being responsible for the performance of others and often sought out for leadership to resolve others' problems. The individual may have poor relationships with colleagues. Pressure may manifest from working with angry individuals and/or employees (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Role ambiguity: According to the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSIR), a vague job description which results in a major cause of occupational role stress. The worker lacks clarity of the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of the job. There is also a need for clarification on how one will be evaluated. May also be unclear on how to start new projects and what is required of the worker to accomplish his or her job (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Role boundary: According to the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSIR), conflicting supervisory demands may exist. One may report not having a stake in the enterprise. An unclear sense of authority lines may exist along with having multiple people telling them what to do (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Role insufficiency: According to the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSIR), this indicates a lack of skills required for the job expected to be performed. The worker may report boredom and/or being underused. There may also be a need for recognition and success (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Role overload: According to the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSIR), workers experience unreasonable workload with unsupported resources. They may also work under tight deadlines and may not be trained or competent for the job (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Stress: A mentally or emotionally disruptive or upsetting condition in response to adverse external influences capable of affecting physical health characterized by increased heart rate, rise in blood pressure, muscular tension, irritability, and depression. Seyle (1956) defined stress as being the wear and tear on the body and identified good and bad stress.

Stressors: Sources of stress which include activities, events, or changes that cause stress. They can be real or imagined, positive or negative, good or bad, welcomed or undesired, pleasurable or painful. Various physical, mental, or emotional demands placed upon individuals can lead to the stressors.

Transactional leadership: A leadership model which focuses on the exchanges that occur between leaders and their followers (Burns, 1978). The leader seeks to influence others by exchanging work for wages. The primary focus is on performance outcome to achieve business objectives. It does not consider the worker's need for meaningful work or creativity.

Transformational leadership: A leadership model whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that increases the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Burns, 1978). Leaders who articulate a vision use lateral or non-traditional thinking, encourage individual development, give regular feedback, use participative decision making, and promote a cooperative and trusting work environment, thus providing opportunities for subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. According to Rosner (1990), this type of leadership is associated with women.

Vocational strain: Identifies the attitude toward work including dreading to go to work, boredom, and lack of interest. Concentration problems and absenteeism may be present and errors in work or accidents exist (Osipow & Spokane, 1987).

Workplace stress: Relates to negative outcomes and medical conditions such as low job satisfaction, violence, working injuries, absenteeism, and job turnover.

Conceptual Framework

This research is based on a conceptual framework that addresses how traditional gender role perceptions, socialization of women, stereotyping, lack of role models and mentors, and a paucity of critical information may have contributed to the occupational stress and strain to women in the workplace.

The barriers to advancement for women considered in this research include stereotyping, lack of role models and mentors, isolation of critical information, and lack of experience. All of these factors may contribute to the occupational stress and strain experienced by women in the work environment.

In order to effectively evaluate the stressors that women experience while functioning in leadership, we must understand how socialization of women has played an integral part in the way women lead. Since the 1950s, attitudes towards women's roles, family structures, educational opportunities, and the workplace have shifted dramatically. Yet much has stayed the same in terms of traditional socialization, individual development, structure of schools, and the pathways that youths are expected to take into adulthood.

Today's traditional ideas concerning gender roles continue to influence the socialization and development of women. Society, such as families, media, churches, schools, and peers, plays a key role in molding the images of girls. Young women are faced with the challenge of holding the traditional expectations of being a homemaker, versus taking on multiple work and family roles. Their viewpoint on economic independence will influence whether they will pursue additional education and gain future employment.

Even though society contributes to the development of girls, the mixed messages they often hear can be destructive (American Association of University Women, 1993, 1999; Ornstein, 1994). For example, Williams (1982) described men as active, rational, and competent, while women are characterized as passive, emotional, and compassionate. Men have been generally socialized for leadership roles by being encouraged to use an authoritative style, while women are socialized to offer support and care for people. Tannen (1990) believes that women utilize a democratic leadership style and see themselves as part of a network of connections. Their conversations are used to negotiate and develop relationships. In search of consensus, women communicate collaboratively while seeking verification in order to provide support. To the contrary, men see life as a competition and their mission is to protect their independence. Most men view conversations as opportunities to negotiate with a goal in mind to achieve the upper hand.

Catalyst's (2003) research revealed that even though women in leadership have gained some ground within the last several years, minimal changes have occurred in their attitudes and experiences within the workplace. Five top barriers to advancement have been identified: (a) exclusion from informal networks of communication, (b) gender-based stereotypes, (c) lack of role models, (d) lack of mentoring, and (e) lack of significant general management or line experience. All of these barriers to advancement are stressors for women in the work environment and could very well be an extension of gender socialization.

The first barrier, exclusion from informal networks of communication, could result from gender separation that occurred during childhood experiences. According to Maccoby (1998), the socialization of boys and girls based on their childhood experiences

plays an integral role in how men and women interact on the job. For instance, as we consider how boys and girls separate themselves as they play, this appears to be the same type of behavior transferred to the work environment. Gender separation is often witnessed during social gatherings, lunch breaks, and side bar conversations. Various events, such as golfing and smoke breaks, provide an opportunity for men to socialize across all levels, which exposes them to information required to succeed professionally.

Since men often discuss business strategies during side bars and segregated gatherings, women quite often find themselves isolated from critical information shared. Isolation of information may diminish women's opportunity to be armed with viable information and to obtain the experience required to be competent on the job (Catalyst, 2003). This may account for women lacking the confidence and experience required for upper-management positions.

Gender-based stereotypes are the second barrier identified and can be aligned with the socialization of girls. According to Tannen (1994), girls are socialized to act as if they are not too sure of themselves for fear of being perceived as conceited. Yet boys, on the other hand, are expected to brag and emphasize their accomplishments. In addition, women often receive conflicting messages on various types of behavior and work styles required for advancement.

For instance, women and men have identified aggressiveness and assertiveness as an important attribute for career advancement. Yet men often perceive women negatively when they display aggressive behavior. Therefore, it becomes a double-edged sword for women and can be detrimental to the development of female leaders. As a result, male supervisors sometimes interpret women's hesitancy to be aggressive as a lack of self-

confidence. Since self-confidence is seen as a quality necessary for success in high-level jobs, male perceptions regarding female coworkers may contribute to the stress that women often encounter when faced with competing for promotions (Cook, 1993). This gender difference may account for women not taking credit for their accomplishments at work.

The third and fourth barriers encompass the lack of role models and mentors, which continues to be an obstacle for women in today's society. Role models and mentors assist in developing relationships to help in developing one's experiences and provide a source of advice through coaching and advocacy (Catalyst, 1992). When considering the socialization of girls, Sadker and Sadker (1994) identified the lack of female role models covered in school courses, including textbooks. According to Catalyst (2002), there is a lack of role models and mentors who hold leadership positions, particularly within corporate America.

The lack of women role models and mentors in upper management may be a major factor preventing women from advancing within their organizations. This leads into the fifth barrier faced by women, which is a lack of general management and line experience. During socialization, girls have been led to believe their success is attributed to being pretty, well-mannered, and smart, yet not too smart. Conflicting messages regarding the attainment of necessary skills valued in the workplace, such as leadership assertiveness and math and science proficiency, may be viewed negatively by women, thus preventing them from advancing in the organization (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

When women experience these barriers to advancement they experience work stress. Work stress is related to many negative outcomes, which include medical

conditions, low job satisfaction, violence, work injuries, absenteeism, and job turnover (Ghorbani et al., 2000). As a result of the work stress experienced, women must learn how to employ coping strategies. Coping skills are critical when experiencing stress and refer to the specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

There has been a difference found in the coping styles of men and women (Krajewski & Goffin, 2005). It appears that men and women are exposed to different kinds of stressors, which require different coping strategies. Men and women appraise situations differently based on socialization. Women report a lower sense of personal control over their lives than do men. Due to lack of predictability and control, women may have fewer opportunities for successfully coping. Women's increased vulnerability to psychological distress is the result of lower perceived control and lower self-esteem, along with greater concern for and awareness of others' needs. The degree to which an individual perceives an event as threatening, combined with their perceived ability to cope with an event, is a critical determinant of subsequent distress (Krajewski & Goffin, 2005).

When considering how boys and girls are socialized, several studies have shown that caregivers and teachers are more responsive to the actions of boys than girls. As a result, girls may learn that their behavior has less impact on the environment, which may contribute to a sense of uncontrollability, which places them at a greater risk for anxiety and mood disorders (Korabik & Van Kampen, 1995).

Greater caregiver overprotection may contribute to anxiety by preventing girls from learning effective ways of problem solving and managing distress. It diminishes

opportunities for them to think and act independently. Such overprotection may lead women to underestimate their abilities and develop low self-efficacy. For example, a study on test anxiety revealed women tended to underestimate their actual test performance, whereas men tended to overestimate their performance (Korabik & Van Kampen, 1995).

This type of behavior is often transferred to the workplace, since most women typically hold lower-level jobs which allow for fewer opportunities to engage in problem-solving processes (Korabik & Van Kampen, 1995).

It could be possible that women cope better with stressful situations that demand passive coping. Avoidance can be an effective appropriate approach when one is powerless to impact an event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Research also indicates that most self-reported worriers are women (Conway, Wood, Dugas, & Pushkar, 2003). According to Stavosky and Borkovec (1987), worry is motivated by a fundamental fear of failure and rejection. They propose that women's lower status exposes them to more situations in which potential failure becomes a real possibility. When women experience a discrepancy between their expected goals and perceived reality feelings of uncontrollability and frustration occurs. When these feelings occur women may be prone to worry rather than engage in active problem solving (Bem, 1974).

In summary, the socialization of women has played a significant part in how women lead within corporate America, governmental agencies, and education. Women often face challenges in the workplace not necessarily experienced by men, which may cause undue stress. Challenges are further enhanced with women of color, since they are also confronted with race-related stress. By researching the stressors and coping

strategies employed by women in leadership, this study can assist corporate America, governmental agencies, and education in developing policies and promoting and retaining women in leadership positions.

Delimitations

This study was limited to women located within the state of Michigan who are at least 20 years of age and functioning in leadership positions in corporate America, education, and government.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 sets the stage for this study on the stressors experienced and coping strategies employed by women to successfully master leadership positions. It includes the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, definitions, conceptual framework, delimitations, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature on historical overview of the women's movement, gender and leadership style, theories relevant to stress, occupational and work stress, coping strategies, gender stress and coping, gender and work environment, length of service, significant research and data on stress, and demographic data.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology of the study and research design. It includes the population and sample selection, instrumentation, data collection, and method of analysis.

Chapter 4 contains the findings of the study and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study, a discussion of the results, conclusions, and implications of the findings, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review serves the following purposes: (a) to provide an understanding of the socialization of women and their struggle to overcome barriers to leadership advancement in the workplace, (b) to explore the definition, types, and causes of stress, (c) to provide an understanding of the relationship between stress in the workplace and demographic variables such as age, race, family, and length of time on the job, and (d) to explore coping styles and resources as they relate to workplace stress. The articles and reports presented have been drawn from a variety of sources, including refereed journals, books, dissertations, and the Internet.

Overview of Women's Rights Movement

The socialization of women has played an integral role in how women are viewed as leaders. Since boys have been socialized to take on leadership roles, men are often viewed as leaders just because they are male. As a result, women have experienced years of negative behaviors from men in the workplace. These negative behaviors consist of stereotyping, sexual harassment, and isolation of critical information (Catalyst, 2005). To understand this dilemma, we must review the history of the women's movement.

Women today have benefited from the social and legal changes, resulting from the women's rights movement. Unfortunately, their past struggles and accomplishments have become literally transparent to the younger generation. Since the 1840s, staggering changes have occurred in family life, religion, government, employment, and education for women. These social and legal changes result from the sweat equity from women of the past. The first gathering of women to discuss these issues started with Elizabeth Cady Stanton's tea party of four women. This gathering later evolved into the world's first Women's Rights Convention, which took place in Wesley Chapel in Seneca Falls on July 19 and 20, 1848.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton used the Declaration of Independence as the framework for writing a "Declaration of Sentiments." Stanton related the campaign for women's rights to the American symbol of liberty indicating that men and women are created equal, and she enumerated areas of life in which women were treated unjustly (Stanton, 1889). She matched 18 of them with the number of grievances identified in the Declaration of Independence from England. Specifics included,

1. Married women were legally dead in the eyes of the law.
2. Women were not allowed to vote.
3. Women had to submit to laws in which they had no voice in forming.
4. Married women had no property rights.
5. Husbands possessed legal power and responsibility for their wives and could imprison or beat them with impunity.
6. Divorce and child custody laws favored men and women had no rights.
7. Women paid property taxes yet had no representation in levying of taxes.

8. Many occupations were closed to women and pay inequity existed.
9. Women were banned from professions such as law and medicine.
10. Colleges and universities would not accept women students.
11. Only a few exceptions allowed women to participate in church affairs.
12. Women were stripped of self-confidence and self-respect and were totally dependent on men.

According to National Women's History Project (1998), such unfair treatment was the norm during this time and was even worse for enslaved Black women. Changes have not come about overnight, yet all social and legal changes are contributed to past women's rights movements, which fought to achieve full civil rights in the United States. Some changes have come about slowly and others more dramatically. Fortunately, today the past struggles and accomplishments have become transparent to the younger generation.

Even though Elizabeth Cady Stanton was an educated woman, it took Frederick Douglass, the noted Black abolitionist and affluent orator, to speak up for women and make a difference. Douglass compared women to slaves and argued they had the right to liberty. Douglass defined suffrage as the power to choose rulers and make laws, and the right by which all others are secured. As a result of Douglass's speech the declaration won by a marginal number of votes.

The National Women's History Project (1998) highlighted several women who followed in the footsteps of Stanton. Some of these women are listed below:

1. Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Lucy Stone, pioneer theoreticians of the 19th-century women's rights movement
2. Esther Morris, first woman to hold a judicial position and lead the first successful state campaign for woman suffrage in Wyoming in 1869
3. Abigail Scott Duniway, leader of a successful fight in Oregon and Washington during the early 1900s
4. Ida B. Wells-Barbett and Mary Church Terrell, organizers of thousands of African American women who worked for suffrage for all women
5. Harriot Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Alice Stone Blackwell, Lucy Stone's daughter, who carried on their mothers' legacy
6. Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt, leaders of the National American Woman Suffrage Association during the early 20th century, whose campaign resulted in success.

The most dramatic impact of the women's rights movement over the past few decades has been financial liberation. Over 32 years ago, women could not obtain a bank loan without a male co-signer. Pay inequity consisted of women making 59 cents to every dollar a man made. According to Chao (2001), women still feel undervalued and pay equity is still a problem. In the year 2000, women made approximately 87 cents to every dollar a man made. More specifically, in the year 2000, women technicians earned 81.2%, computer programmers 89.6%, engineers 84.3%, mathematical and computer scientists 85.4%, and natural scientists 72.1% of what their male counterparts earned (Chao, 2001).

The National Women's History Project (1998) found that even though progress has been made, there is still more work to be done. Young women today consider themselves as the third wave confronting issues such as these:

1. Women's reproductive rights
2. Women's enrollment in military academies and service in active combat
3. Women in leadership roles in religious institutions
4. Affirmative action, making up the past to obtain a level playing field
5. The mommy-track (Should businesses accommodate women's family roles?)
6. Pornography (Is it degrading or is it freedom of speech?)
7. Sexual harassment (When does it begin?)
8. Surrogate motherhood (Does a woman have the right to rent out her womb?)
9. Social Security benefits for homemakers and working spouses to eliminate surviving wives from poverty as widows.

Reflecting on the past struggles and victories that women have experienced, an enormous amount has been accomplished; however, more remains to be done. For example, even though women account for over 46% of the total U.S. labor force, only 11.9% of the 11,681 corporate officers in America's top 500 companies are women. In 1998, it was 11.2%. If this pace continues, the number of women on top corporate boards will not equal the number of men until the year 2064 (Evans, 2000). These statistics may support the notion that women are often perceived as not fitting the image of an ideal leader. To further understand this issue, we must review studies that address gender differences in leadership style.

Gender and Work Environment

Catalyst's research (2003) identified the following four top barriers to advancement for women in leadership: (a) stereotypes and preconceptions, (b) career planning and mentoring, (c) work environment, and (d) counterproductive behavior of male co-workers. Throughout the last decade, professional women have entered the workforce at an extraordinary pace. Unfortunately, professional women are more likely than men to experience stereotyping; face biases in performance appraisal, promotion, and salary; and be confronted with serious work/life tradeoffs as they climb the corporate ladder (Auster, 1993).

Women experience discrimination, prejudice, and gender stereotyping in male-dominated organizational structures and climate (Davidson & Fielden, 1999). Sutton and Moore (1985) conducted a survey of executives' attitudes regarding women as leaders in business. They found that the majority of the respondents, regardless of gender, perceived that women had to possess exceptional skills and experiences to be successful in business. More women than men reported having to work harder to rise in the business world, and they were likely to earn less than their male counterparts.

Jamieson (1995) identified the double-bind of leadership as a situation in which a woman cannot win no matter how she performs. A typical double-bind situation for women is being tough and authoritative (like men) in order to be taken seriously. For example, a woman may be perceived in a negative manner if she acts too aggressively. Throughout history, double-binds have been used by those with power to oppress those without power, and most often victims are women (Jamieson, 1995). A double-bind that constantly plagues women is the femininity/competency bind, where acting "feminine" is

associated with incompetence and acting “competent” is associated with masculine traits. When this behavior is adopted by women, it can lead to the conclusion that one must not be “feminine” to be seen or viewed as competent. Double-binds are difficult because they are not verbally expressed but presented in the form of obstacle courses for women to overcome (Jamieson, 1995).

According to Catalyst’s (2003) study, a stereotype regarding women’s roles and abilities is the third most pervasive barrier to advancement cited by women. One-third (33%) of respondents in the study cited the detrimental effects of stereotyping. Over one-half (52%) of women in 1996 cited stereotyping as a barrier. This number decreased to one-third in the 2003 *Women in Catalyst U.S. Corporate Leadership* research (Catalyst, 2003). This is good news and evidence that stereotyping may be decreasing.

According to the 1996 Catalyst survey, women revealed that they realized the need to work harder than male colleagues in order to earn the same levels of respect, trust, and salary. Quite often, women who had risen to top leadership and management positions did so without guidance from a sponsor or mentor. Working hard, with considerable sacrifices in their private lives, was identified and accepted as part of the price for having a career in a field of their interest. Most women who have risen to the top have experienced some form of challenge along the way and may not have been privy to all information required to be successful.

According to Catalyst’s (1998) publication, women are often excluded from informal networks of communication. This has been witnessed as men take smoke breaks, during golf outings, or when they socialize at the bar. These informal gatherings create an opportunity for men to discuss business and resolve issues across all

management levels. Exclusion from informal gatherings where relevant information is exchanged and decisions are made is an example of subtle bias and discrimination.

Human resource practices such as minimal access to management development opportunities, assignments that diminish visibility opportunities which lead to promotions, unfairness in performance appraisal, and biases in selection and recruitment are also forms of subtle biases found in the work environment (Auster, 1989, 1993).

The Catalyst (1998) survey revealed women reported challenges in finding a mentor in the workplace. Many women reported a lack of role models and a forum to exchange information. They expressed a need to discuss difficulties that confront them on a daily basis and assistance in overcoming challenges (Catalyst, 2003). Workplace support would allow them to quickly solve problems as they arise.

Due to lack of role models and mentors in upper management positions, some women feel increased isolation and the likelihood of internalizing failures (Bhatnagar, 1988; Long, 1989). In support of this situation, Kanter (1979) revealed that women in small numbers tend to be isolated and experience hostility, harassment, and discrimination.

Ely (1994) conducted a study of women attorneys in eight large law firms and found that in law firms where women represented a higher proportion of senior positions (38-47%), other women were able to build closer relationships and work productively with senior women. Because men perceive greater levels of workplace support (Piltch et al., 1994) than women, they reported that such support was effective in reducing their felt stress (Geller & Hobfoll, 1994).

In addition to stereotyping, isolation, and lack of role models, women sometimes contend with an additional stressor at work: sexual harassment. Despite it being illegal, sexual harassment is experienced by a sizable proportion of women in the workplace. In male-dominated industries, women have provided many examples of sexual harassment—especially when top managers perpetuate the existence of a hostile environment for women (Catalyst, 1992). For example, Catalyst’s (1992) research revealed that women who worked with older men who possessed minimal experience working with women really did not know how to relate to women. It was hard for men to put aside their gender differences, which surfaced as they attempted to joke around and make ignorant comments. When these types of actions are generated from senior management, it sends a message to the general workforce that women are not necessarily taken seriously as managers. It is most damaging to women when sexual harassment is ignored or perpetuated by top management.

For example, many female engineers viewed sexual harassment as a form of “testing” their endurance by their male subordinates, colleagues, and managers. When female engineers expressed disapproval of verbal comments and harassment, they were criticized by their male coworkers as being overly sensitive; however, many female participants reported that such behavior ceased once they demonstrated they were not affected by the comments (Catalyst, 2003). It would be reasonable to believe that stereotypes and biases would be minimized when more women work in leadership positions within various organizations.

Gender and Leadership Style

Over the past decade, many studies have been published on gender differences in leadership styles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; van Engen & Willemsen, 2002). The typical masculine leaders emphasize achievement of organizational goals, whereas typical feminine leaders emphasize people and relationships (Ashmore, Del Boca, & Wohlers, 1986). In support of this view, it is Rosner's (1990) belief that men tend to identify with "transactional" leadership and view subordinate job performance as a series of transactions, which exchange rewards for services rendered or punishment for inadequate performance. Men, more often than women, tend to use power that comes from formal authority and their position within the organization.

In contrast, many women possess leadership characteristics that are identified with "transformational leadership." Rosner (1990) further stated that this type of leadership provides opportunities for subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal. Rosner (1990) believes this form of leadership is well suited to provide support during chaotic and uncertain times. Many women attribute their power to personal characteristics such as charisma, interpersonal skills, hard work, or personal contacts rather than organizational structure.

Rosner (1990) recognized that men's preferred leadership style is "command and control." Women prefer to work interactively, sharing power and information. When encouraged to identify the perceived differences between themselves and their male colleagues' leadership style, 68% of women agreed there was a difference in how women and men approached their work. The women surveyed associated their style with key

words such as “consensus building” and “cooperation.” Many felt their style was less aggressive than their male colleagues.

The National Foundation for Women Business Owners (1994) study found that women derive success from building relationships with their customers, employees, and having control over their own destiny along with the monetary gain. Men, on the other hand, derive success from the satisfaction of a job well done and achieving desired goals. Thus, women’s leadership approach brings about an environment that is a “web of inclusion” (Gürer, 2001; Helgesen, 1995), while men’s leadership is more likely to encourage hierarchical organizations with a top-down approach.

Research continues to support past evidence that many senior women managers work in environments that are dominated by men. These environments can have an impact on women managers’ leadership styles and stress levels. Quite often, women have found themselves pressured to use a “masculine” style of leadership. Catalyst’s (1996) survey revealed that 74% of women recognized that it is important to their professional success to develop a style comfortable for their male colleagues. The pressure for women to alter their leadership style has been proven to be a substantial challenge for them and may hinder them from moving into upper levels of corporate management (Catalyst, 1996).

However, women are starting to succeed, despite stereotypical characteristics that have been associated with being ‘feminine’ and considered inappropriate as leaders. Rosner (1990), in the article “The Way Women Lead” for the *Harvard Business Review*, identified the second wave of women who are making their way into top management. Female executives who have reached the peak of their professions are starting to

represent a new leadership paradigm. They are drawing from their own attitudes and skills and are not adopting the style and habits proven to be successful for men. Wachs (2001) supports Rosner's belief that women leaders in the past used traditionally masculine leadership traits. These masculine traits consisted of women being domineering, authoritative, and "tough." In contrast to their male counterparts or successful women of the past, these women embrace their femininity and utilize it to their advantage in business.

Wachs (2001) addressed the new approach by reflecting on past practices of copying male leadership styles, which did not steer women into the top jobs of America's leading companies. For example, power dressing and bulging shoulder pads for female executives during the 1980s produced minimal progress for women. Apparently the topic of gender and leadership style has generated much debate. Yet, it has paid off for a few successful women leaders within corporate America, government agencies, and education. Several women today appear to serve as powerful role models for women aspiring to hold visible leadership positions. For example, Condoleezza Rice exemplifies leadership in U.S. Foreign Policy, Oprah Winfrey is important in the entertainment world, Carly Fiorina of Hewlett-Packard serves as a former CEO of a Fortune 500 company, Mary Sue Coleman represents education as President of the University of Michigan, and Hillary Rodman Clinton represents women in politics. Some argue that as this trend continues, women will suffer more stress-related disorders as they move into high-pressure jobs and as they combine work and family roles (Gerdes, 1995).

Occupational and Work Stress

Occupational stress has been a topic of significant research for the last two decades and has become one of the main reasons for medical retirements. Occupational stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job exceed the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker and leads to poor health and injury (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994).

Various occupations generate different levels of work stress. While each profession has unique stressors, teachers and managers experience high levels of work stress (Patton & Goddard, 2003). Work-related stress is increasingly recognized as one of the most serious occupational health hazards, often resulting in employee dissatisfaction, lowered productivity, absenteeism, and turnover (Cummins, 1990; Spielberger & Reheiser, 1995). Work stress is significantly associated with negative psychological outcomes, such as absenteeism, low job satisfaction, and intention to quit.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined work stress as “a rubric consisting of many variables and processes” (p. 11). In addition, Beehr and Newman (1978) defined work stress as a condition in which job-related factors interact with the worker. It changes their psychological or physiological condition to a point that forces them to deviate from normal functioning. Beehr and Newman’s (1978) definition of stress is a person-environment fit, encompassing both individual and workplace stressors. The concept of work stress can be confused with challenge, but these concepts are not the same. Challenge energizes psychologically and physically, and it motivates the worker to learn new skills and master new jobs. When a challenge is met, one may feel relaxed and satisfied. Therefore, challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive

work. In contrast, stress reduces employee well-being and may pose a risk to organizations (Beehr & Newman, 1978).

Work stress is associated with negative outcomes including poor health conditions, low job satisfaction, absenteeism, and job turnover (Ghorbani et al., 2000). It decreases job commitment and performance, as well as increases sick time and workers' compensation claims. Work-related stress is also linked with unconstructive work relations with supervisors, coworkers, and customers. The effect of negative work relations can lead to deteriorating personal relationships (spouse, family, and friends), which is a form of interpersonal strain identified with the OSIR.

The study of work stress and gender differences is increasing as women continue to enter positions traditionally occupied by men. Professional women continue to compete in male-dominated environments and are subject to greater stress, burnout, and ill health than men in those same environments (Goodman, Fields, & Blum, 2003; Narayanan, Menon, & Spector, 1999; Welsh, 1999). Sensitive work issues for women include balancing family and work conflicts, minimal influence and promotional opportunities, discrimination, salary, lack of role models and mentor support from superiors, lack of challenging assignments, less training, and the "good ole boy network" (men feeling more comfortable dealing with men). All of these factors create barriers for women in the workplace and are significantly associated with psychological distress and reduced self-esteem (Apperson, Schmidt, Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2002; Moradi & Subich, 2004).

Consequently, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (1996), for every case of occupational stress involving a male, 1.6 cases involve a female. Women studies

suggest there are gender differences in mental illness as it relates to stress. Women are more likely to experience mental illness as opposed to men due to their multiple social roles (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974; Gove & Geerken, 1983). Lease (1999) supports this concept by reporting professional women continue to be primarily responsible for household chores and childcare. Taking care of children and aging parents continues to be a source of stress for women who work outside the home (Repetti et al., 1989). Wentling (1998) revealed that females experience more role overload and stress than men. A masculine gender role seems to correlate negatively with work stress, while a feminine gender role correlates positively with family stress in Sunick's (1999) study.

In a study conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1999), researchers found that gender-specific work stress factors, such as balancing work and family demands, may have a special effect on women workers. In addition, Long (1995) found that most common gender-related stresses are as follows:

Multiple-role stress: Women are likely to have "multiple-role" stress due to managing multiple roles and responsibilities. Roles include being a mother, wife, professional woman, and caretaker of the home. Wearing multiple hats forces women to choose between competing demands, and they often overextend themselves. When demands are not met, women suffer disappointment and guilt.

Workplace stress: The majority of women in America today work outside the home. Although some women hold high-level positions, many more women have jobs with high demands and low control. Low control can generate a feeling of helplessness, which worsens the physical and emotional effects of stress.

Financial stress: Women on average earn less money than men and have a lower overall standard of living. Consequently, they are subject to inadequate housing, poor access to healthcare, and fear of unexpected expenses. In most cases, women also have fewer opportunities for recreation or to escape from day-to-day stress.

Caregiver stress: Even though some men are taking a more active role in parenting, many women are still likely to be the primary caretakers in the family. Women also become primary caretakers for aging parents and ill family members.

Since these stressors are costly to many organizations, researchers and authors have suggested a wide range of strategies to prevent or decrease the stress that women experience at work (Freedman & Phillips, 1988; Nelson & Hitt, 1992). The suggestions range from individually focused actions to broad-based organizational policy changes (Long, 1995). These include the following:

1. Promote equity in pay and benefits for women
2. Promote benefit programs of special interest to women
3. Eliminate occupational segregation
4. Produce a bias-free job evaluation program
5. Provide equal starting salaries for jobs of equal value
6. Support educational opportunities for women
7. Educate men regarding the importance of sharing responsibilities outside of work
8. Provide parental leave, daycare, and alternative work scheduling
9. Provide more job flexibility to better manage work/home conflicts
10. Promote childcare and eldercare options in the community or the organization

11. Support programs to educate and develop skills among women to manage and control organizational politics.

The various theories concerning stress (Response, Stimulus, and Transaction) will be addressed in the next section. As women react to the onset of stress, they may experience various stages of the Response Theory, including the general adaptation syndrome (alarm, resistance, and exhaustion). As demands and pressures become more frequent, their response to the stressor can be categorized as acute or chronic, which is defined in the Stimulus Theory. Women who have negative perceptions toward their job and work environment may develop psychological and physiological strain, which are associated with the transaction theory.

Theories Relevant to Stress

There are three basic views concerning the definition of stress reviewed in this study: the Response Theory, Stimulus Theory, and Transaction Theory.

Response Theory

The author of the Response Theory is Hans Selye. He views stress as a physiological response to external stimuli. Hans Selye's work, which dates back to 1936, demonstrated that there are three levels of reaction to stress by experimenting with rats. The first reaction to stress is the alarm stage. During the alarm stage bodily responses may be increased heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, metabolic rate, tensed muscles, and perspiring palms and soles. Further exposure to stress leads to the second stage, which is resistance. During this stage the body remains on alert but adapts to the stimuli. If the stress continues, it may lead to the third stage, which is exhaustion. During this

stage, bodily responses continue to occur even during sleep or free time. If this erratic behavior continues, it could eventually lead to death (Selye, 1970).

Theorists who define stress from a response perspective see an imbalance between the requirements to make an adaptive response and the repertoire of the individual. Stress involves a transaction in which resources must be mobilized, imposing a burden on the individual when automatic and sufficient resources and coping response are not available to meet the demand. The stimulus itself may cause some impact damage, but the true consequences of stress arise from the manner in which the individual responds to the presumed danger.

Stimulus Theory

Stimulus theorists believe an individual has a limit that they can endure being stimulated, prior to the onset of stress. Once the individual is stimulated beyond their capacity, then stress is experienced (Cox, 1978). The stimulus concept focuses on situational conditions or events. Stress conceived as a stimulus has been used to describe situations characterized as new, intense, rapidly changing, sudden, or unexpected (e.g., high time pressure, interpersonal conflict at work, or accidents). Stress appears to be an altered state of the individual that arises as a consequence of adaptive failure and not adaptive challenge. Although certain events or situations are potential stress provokers, the stress itself lies on the response side of the equation (Lazarus, 1966). Stress stimuli include such events as failure or the threat of failure, noxious or unpleasant agents in the environment, isolation, bereavement, and rapid social change. The stimulus concept is problematic because not all individuals react in a uniform manner to the same stressor. When stress is viewed only from the vantage point of the stimulus, there is a tendency to

disregard the function of the interpretive meaning of the event. According to Hinkle (1973),

In view of the fact that people react to their life situations or social conditions in terms of the meaning of those situations to them, it is difficult to accept the hypothesis that certain kinds of situations or relationships are inherently stressful and certain others are not. (p. 46)

Most situational conditions or events evoke strain in some individuals.

Transaction Theory

The transactional model by Lazarus is one of the most prominent stress models (Lazarus 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined psychological stress as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well being” (p. 19). It is Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) belief that cognitive appraisal plays a significant role in the stress process. Appraisal processes refer to an individual’s classification and assessment of an encounter with respect to the individual’s well-being. The cognitive appraisal of stress is a two-part process that involves a primary appraisal and a secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal involves the determination of an event as stressful. During primary appraisal, the event or situation can be categorized as irrelevant, beneficial, or stressful. If the event is appraised as stressful, the event is then evaluated as a harm/loss, a threat, or a challenge. A challenge event refers to the potential for growth, mastery, or some form of gain.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), no one can assess the cause of stress by just looking at the nature of the environmental event. Stress is a process involving the interaction of the individuals and their environment. These categories are based mostly

on one's own prior experiences and learning. Also, each of these categories generates different emotional responses. Harm/loss stressors can elicit anger, disgust, sadness, or disappointment. Threatening stressors can produce anxiety, and challenging stressors can produce excitement. This theory helps to integrate both the motivational aspects of stress and the varying emotions that are associated with the experience of stress. Secondary appraisal occurs when the assessment of the event is seen as a threat or challenge. The individuals evaluate their coping resources and options during secondary appraisal.

According to the theory of transactions, stress arises only when a particular transaction is appraised by the person as relevant to his or her well-being. In order for an event to be appraised as a stressor, it must be personally relevant and there must be a perceived mismatch between a situation's demands and one's resources to cope with it.

Types of Stress

No matter what the cause of stress, there are several types, namely acute, episodic stress and chronic stress (Elliot & Eisdorfer, 1982). Each of these stressors has its own characteristics, symptoms, duration, and treatment approaches. Acute stress is the most common form of stress; it comes from recent, past pressures and current and future demands. Acute stress can be thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting. Excessive short-term stress can lead to psychological distress, tension headaches, upset stomach, and other symptoms that may become visible to others. Because it is short term, acute stress does not have enough time to do the extensive damage associated with chronic stress. The most common symptoms of acute stress are listed here:

1. Emotional distress: some combination of anger or irritability, anxiety, and depression—the three stress emotions
2. Muscular problems including tension headache, back pain, jaw pain, and the muscular tensions that lead to pulled muscles and tendon and ligament problems
3. Stomach, gut, and bowel problems such as heartburn, acid stomach, flatulence, diarrhea, constipation, and irritable bowel syndrome
4. Transient over- arousal leads to elevation in blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, dizziness, migraine headaches, cold hands or feet, shortness of breath, and chest pain.

Acute stress can crop up in anyone's life, and it is highly treatable and manageable. Those who suffer from acute stress frequently experience Episodic Acute Stress. These types of people are always in a rush, but are always late. They have a tendency to take on too much and cannot organize the self-inflicted demands and pressures requiring their attention. People experiencing episodic acute stress constantly find themselves pressured. It is common for these people to be over-aroused, short-tempered, irritable, anxious, and tense. They often harbor a lot of nervous energy, lack patience, and are abrupt with a sense of urgency. Their irritability is often mistaken by others as hostility. They are often confused by negative responses and their interpersonal relationships quickly deteriorate. Their work environment becomes a very stressful place.

The next type is chronic stress, which destroys bodies, minds, and lives. This is a daily grinding stress that slowly deteriorates people. Some examples include the stress that is caused by poverty, dysfunctional families, and being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a dreadful job or career. Chronic stress develops when a person feels there

is no way out of a depressed situation. It is the stress of unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly endless periods of time with no hope in sight. Eventually, the individual becomes worn out and gives up searching for solutions (Elliot & Eisdorfer, 1982).

The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get use to it and forget that it exist. As opposed to acute stress, chronic stress is often ignored because it is old, familiar, and sometimes almost comfortable. Chronic stress manifests itself through suicide, violence, heart attack, stroke, and even cancer. Since physical and mental resources are depleted through long-term attrition, the symptoms of chronic stress are difficult to treat and may require extended medical as well as behavioral treatment and stress management (Elliot & Eisdorfer, 1982).

Stress and Demographics

A few studies have been conducted addressing various demographics as they relate to stress. To determine if there is a significant difference in women's level of stress, I chose to focus on age, race, marital status, children, and length of service in this study.

Stress and Age

Women of different age groups may differ in the amount of stress experienced depending on their stage of life. Kenney (2000) believes that middle-aged women (ages 30-45) experience significantly more stressors than older women. In addition, she found that women ages 46 to 66 have healthy personalities and experience fewer stressors.

Young and middle-aged women are the most stressed due to such elements as raising children, spousal demands, and occupational roles.

Ornstein (2000) identified women in their 20s as the “Promise Years,” since prior to the consideration of marriage, they start negotiating and contemplating on how they can balance work-family issues. While many hope for equality in their relationships and the workplace, they witness few role models who “have it all” and conclude it may be a challenge to attain. As a result, some women give up the idea of having a family, while others hold on to their traditional views of motherhood and alter their career choice to become the primary caregivers. Some women give up job opportunities that pay more than their mates, not realizing the impact of their decisions until later down the road. They may have less leverage in the future, as it relates to negotiating the responsibilities of household chores and child-care duties (Ornstein, 2000).

When considering age and marital status, participants within the age ranges of 18 to 35 or over 55 reported less stress than those ages 35 to 55. Women approaching retirement were identified by Ornstein (2000) as experiencing the “Perfect Mother martyrdom.” These women may cause additional stress by micromanaging their family lives, preventing their husbands (even willing ones) from being equal partners in the home. At this point in life, women who were single and child-free seem to grow happier with age.

Stress and Race

Smith, Johal, and Wadsworth (2000) conducted a study with both Whites and non-Whites. The group of non-Whites, however, was very small. Nevertheless, this study revealed that non-White participants reported greater levels of stress than the sample as a

whole. This suggested that it is essential that further research be conducted on occupational stress in non-White groups. The U.S. Surgeon General supports this study by determining that racial and mental health disparities and stress stem from current struggles with racism and discrimination (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Race-related stress is defined as the dynamics of racism that are perceived, taxed, and/or exceeded an existing individual's collective resources or threatens their well-being. It consists of race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment (Harrell, 2000, p. 44). It results from persistent feelings of being overlooked, mistreated, and the hassle of dealing with daily racism stressors. The toxicity stemming from unfair race-based treatment can cause negative emotional reactions and stress (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). "Excessive exposure to such stress can negatively affect mental health. The combined effects of ongoing acute and chronic [racism] perceptions may contribute to psychological and physiological squeals that may be toxic" (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999, p. 807). Ren, Amick, and Williams (1999) found that Blacks' reports associated with racial discrimination were positively related to psychological distress. In support of this theory, in another study Kessler, Mickelson, and Williams (1999) found that the effects of lifetime major discrimination and day-to-day discrimination created major depression and nonspecific psychological distress.

A study based on 1,735 surveys of minority women, in-depth interviews with 300 women, and a 1-year study of 15 companies' diversity programs was conducted in 1997. The report disclosed that minority women make up 10% of the U.S. workforce of 127

million, yet hold only 5% of the total 7.5 million management jobs. They also earn 57 cents for every dollar earned by White male managers. While Whites make up 86% of female managers, Blacks make up just 7%, Hispanics 5%, and Asian-Americans 2.5%. Many minority women managers were unhappy with their opportunity for success (Catalyst, 1999).

According to the Catalyst (2000) census of *Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners*, women of color comprise 1.3% of corporate officers in 400 of the Fortune 500 companies. Women of color who are managers and professionals have described their barriers to advancement as a “concrete ceiling,” highlighting the fact that there is a big difference between the “glass ceiling” and the “concrete ceiling.” The concrete ceiling is difficult to penetrate and women of color cannot even see through it to glimpse the corner office. According to Sheila Wellington, President of Catalyst, a New York-based research organization, it is a challenge to bridge the gap.

The women of color who worked within corporate management participated in a survey conducted by Catalyst. They addressed opportunities and barriers and cited the following top stressors: not having mentors or sponsors, a lack of opportunity for networking with prominent colleagues, a lack of role models to associate with who were within their ethnic and racial group, and their assignments lacked visibility (Catalyst, 2002). In order to improve the mental and physical health of women of color, Catalyst (2002) made the following recommendations:

1. Develop research to address specific health issues faced by women of color
2. Make available continuing medical education emphasizing social and cultural influences on the health of minority women

3. Incorporate social and cultural experiences of women of color into research protocols and treatment regimens
4. Create and implement educational health programs for minority women
5. Create programs to increase the number of women and under-represented minority health-care providers
6. Provide universal health-care coverage.

Catalyst (1999) suggested that in order to capture the talent and loyalty of women of color, companies must increase the sincerity of work environments, publicly commit to diversity, become more inclusive, and emphasize the credibility and authority of women of color. It is essential to develop an environment in which differences in background are not just recognized and accepted, but valued, and performance is measured on productivity and skill.

African American Women and Stress

Since the majority of the women in this study are African American, it is important to address how stress affects them in particular. In general, several studies have indicated African Americans perceive greater amounts of racism-related stress than any other people of color (Utsey, 1999; Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002). African American women holding professional positions also reported significantly lower levels of co-worker support than White professional workers. These findings placed this group of women at risk for health problems (Watts-Jones, 1981).

To understand this dilemma, we must go back in African American history. In general, African Americans have been forced by America's social structure to endure hardships. These hardships were brought on by social factors such as poverty, sexism,

lack of education, segregation, and medical issues (Hill, 1980). In the United States, African Americans are still experiencing these factors on a daily basis (Clark et al., 1999).

Findings from previous studies suggest that both recent and lifetime racism-related events tend to be stressful for African Americans (Danoff-Burg, Perlow, & Swenson, 2004). Essed (1990) and Collins (1991) recognized that Black women are faced with racial and gender discrimination, as well as discrimination based on socioeconomic status. These forms of discrimination may cause stress that may be detrimental to their mental and physical health (Lepore et al., 2006). Cumulative experiences of racism can lead to psychological distress and have been proven to have lasting negative effects on its targets (Utsey et al., 2002).

Historically, African American women have always worked outside the home and by the 1920s, over half of single African American women worked away from home. Due to the historical legacy of slavery, racial segregation, and discrimination based on skin color, race has been a difficult topic to discuss in the workplace. According to Catalyst (1999), African American women cited the following barriers facing them in business:

1. Negative, race-based stereotypes
2. Frequent questioning of their credibility and authority
3. Lack of institutional support
4. Exclusion from informal networks and conflicted relationships with White women.

Even though approximately 75% of Fortune 500 companies have diversity programs, only 33% of the African American women surveyed reported that these programs effectively create supportive environments. Thirty-seven percent of African American women see their opportunities for advancement to senior management positions in their companies declining over time, in contrast to Latinos and Asian women who are more likely to see opportunities slightly increasing (Catalyst, 1999).

The quality of life for African American women is influenced by stress related to racism. They are still plagued with poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, sexual harassment, discrimination, and the ongoing challenge of making ends meet. These working women often experience the highest rate of depression for any racial/ethnic group (Hill, 1980). Research has demonstrated that racial discrimination is associated with depression and psychological distress among Blacks (Brown, Keith, Jackson, & Gary, 2003).

As a result of stress, African American women suffer disproportionately from stress-related diseases such as hypertension and heart disease (Lewis et al., 2006; Williams & Kurina, 2002). They must contend with daily living stressors, much like the general population. Yet, they have the added layers of dealing with racism and gender discrimination. This, in turn, makes the coping styles of Black women in general unique and complicated (Shorter-Gooden, 2004) and often resulting in Black women experiencing negative health effects. However, some Black women cope effectively; therefore, more research is required on Black women who manage to have a healthy quality of life despite the odds.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2006), African American women are more than twice as likely to have cardiovascular disease and 30% more likely to die from it than their White counterparts. They are three more times likely to have diabetes and twice as likely to experience cancer deaths. Additional health issues include a higher vulnerability to hypertension, pneumonia, cirrhosis of the liver, homicide, maternal morbidity, and infant mortality (Darity & Pitt, 1979).

African American women are vital and a growing source of talent. The keys to success cited by African American women in business included exceeding performance expectations, communicating effectively, connecting with mentors, and building positive relationships with managers and colleagues, along with using their cultural backgrounds to enhance job performance (Catalyst, 1999). It is important to note that, despite the odds, some African-American women are succeeding.

Stress and Length of Service

Minimal studies are available linking the number of years women work for an organization to the level of stress experienced. According to Auster (2001), mid-career is the midpoint (approximately 15-20 years into one's professional career). During the mid-year career stage, women begin to feel the effects of gender biases and barriers to advancement as they compete for upper management positions. Unfortunately, once women begin to climb into positions of power and authority, both covert and overt bias tend to become more pronounced.

According to Friedman and Greenhaus (2000), women who reach mid-career and are in dual-career households experience great stress and report struggling with tradeoffs such as juggling the needs of children and high performance expectations.

As women pass the mid-point in their career and possess more experience, they often feel more comfortable in their work environment. Years of experience allow them the time to prove their capabilities. It is also reasonable to believe that the more direct contact and experience individuals have with women leaders, the less likely they will rely on stereotyping. Direct exposure provides individuals within the work environment with the facts required to evaluate women's leadership, talent, and expertise. In addition, Catalyst (2005) respondents who worked in traditionally female occupations, such as human resources, rated women leaders higher in problem-solving effectiveness than men. In contrast, individuals who worked in traditionally male occupations, such as general management, rated women leaders lower on their problem-solving abilities. The bottom line is that women leaders are still at risk. Top managers reporting to women continue to have more stereotypical views of women leaders' abilities than those reporting to men. It may be safe to say, even though women possess years of expertise, self-confidence, and exceed performance expectations, they continue to face stress while functioning in leadership positions.

Coping Strategies

Work-related stress is significantly correlated with negative coping efforts. When faced with stressful situations, people often look for ways to self-medicate and turn to drugs, alcohol, and nicotine abuse. Psychopathology including depression, anxiety, and suicide are results of negative coping (Ghorbani et al., 2000). Many people choose negative coping strategies to relieve the stress and strain. To combat these negative coping efforts, women must learn how to effectively deal with stress.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts, both action-oriented and intra-psychic, which helps the individual to manage taxing demands which exceed their resources” (p. 11). They identified two categories of coping with stress: problem focused and emotion- focused. Problem-focused involves mastering a problem by dealing directly with attempting to change a damaging or threatening relationship between the person and the environment. This category is sometimes called direct action. Emotion focused attempts to regulate emotional reactions, making one feel better without actually resolving the problem. It also includes wishful thinking, acceptance or submission, and emotional disengagement, such as crying. This strategy, sometimes called palliative coping, is usually engaged when the individual realizes the stressor is out of their control and nothing can be done to alleviate it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Gianakos (2000) examined the health-related effects of different coping styles. Problem-focused coping is related to lowered incidents of illness, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization. It is also associated with greater feelings of personal accomplishment and work satisfaction. Conversely, emotion-focused coping is related to greater feelings of depersonalization and self-blame. Wishful thinking is strongly associated with levels of depression, stress, and emotional isolation. The predominance of one type of strategy over another is determined by one’s personal style (since some have greater coping skills than others) and also by the type of stressful event. The stressful event may dictate which of the two coping strategies should be used. For example, one may use problem-focused coping to deal with potential controllable problems, such as

work- or family-related issues. However, when considering physical health problems, the person may be prompted to use emotion-focused coping.

Coping literature has also revealed a distinction between active and avoidant strategies. Active coping strategies are behavioral or psychological responses; they are designed to change the nature of the stressor itself or how one thinks about it. Avoidant coping strategies lead people into activities (such as alcohol use) or mental states (such as withdrawal) that keep them from directly addressing the stressor. Overall, active coping strategies, whether behavioral or emotional, are better ways to deal with stress than an avoidant coping strategy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Avoidant coping strategies appear to be a psychological risk factor promoting adverse responses to stressful life events (Holahan & Moos, 1987).

It is important to understand the difference between coping strategies and coping resources. During the time of stress, an individual's endurance, health, intelligence, emotional stability, and social support will play an active role in the amount of coping resources they possess (Burr & Klein, 1994). Therefore, one must learn to evaluate their situation when faced with a stressful encounter.

Cognitive appraisal is an evaluation process that people use to evaluate a stressful encounter occurring within their environment. In order to determine whether it is relevant to their well-being, there are two types of appraisal. They are primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. During the time of primary appraisal, people evaluate whether they have anything at stake during the encounter (e.g., if there is potential harm or benefits to their self-esteem). In secondary appraisal, people further evaluate, searching for options to overcome or prevent harm (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

According to Karasek's (1979) job strain model, work-related stress exists when high job demands and low job-decision latitude exceeds a worker's coping resources. This leads to passive learning, lowered self-esteem, and minimal coping mechanisms. The coping styles used by workers, such as altering the situation or managing intra-psychic distress (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988), appear to influence the extent to which workers will experience illness, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction with their jobs. Further, research suggests that personal attributes such as gender can also influence work stress (Spielberger & Reheiser, 1995).

Powell's (1998) study on senior executive women and how they cope with difficult work situations found that women coped by using their skills, personality traits, expertise, and problem-solving techniques. Bierema's (1994) study on women coping in a corporate world found that executive women across the board mitigated obstacles or barriers by developing and maintaining their self-confidence. When considering demographics, age was not a factor. However, according to Bets and Fitzgerald (1987), one of the major factors that facilitate women's career development was defined as "home lifestyle" which incorporated women being single, marrying late in life, and having few or no children.

Coping Strategies and African American Women

Minimal research has been conducted on exploring culture-specific coping strategies used by African American women. Previous research has demonstrated that African Americans use various forms of religious and spiritual problem-solving coping when confronting serious personal problems (Ellison & Taylor, 1996) and adversity (Mattis, 2002).

Religious coping and spirituality has been found to be a central coping strategy for African Americans, particularly for women dealing with racism and sexism (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). In response to the potentially stressful situations in the workplace, African Americans may use flexible coping strategies, ranging from confrontation (or more active forms of coping) to withdrawal (or more passive coping behaviors) (Clark, 2004; Feagin, 1991; Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Plummer & Slane, 1996).

According to Pargament and Brant (1998), when African American women perceive institutional racism-related stress to be in existence and beyond their control, they use cognitive/emotional debriefing, spiritual-centered, and collective coping strategies as opposed to the methods of self-directing religious problem-solving. This may be due to the fact that those African American women who perceive being denied their rights (access, restricted, mobility, or privileges) by institutional policies and practices based on race may feel they do not have the personal power or resources to mitigate the stressor. Therefore, they would be less likely to use their own personal (individual) resources as a primary means of addressing institutional racism (Pargament & Brant, 1998).

African American women may opt to rely on collective and spiritual coping resources, such as reaching out and telling others about perceived institutional and cultural racism (Danoff-Burg et al., 2004). They may also adaptively distract themselves from stressors by using a sense of spiritual connection or relying on group-centered activities (Constantine, Wilton, Gainor, & Lewis, 2002). Therefore, less self-reliance and more collective and spiritual support may be used, thereby obtaining for them emotional support and maintaining a sense of spiritual balance and connection to others.

Africultural coping behaviors are defined as behaviors reflecting the values, attitudes, and customs of an African-centered philosophical framework that recognizes spirituality, harmony, balance, collective group orientation, and an emphasis on rituals as core components of the personality structure of people of African descent (Utsey, Adams, & Bolden, 2000). Collective coping represents a strategy that employs the support of friends, family, and community members, and these supportive resources might be readily available in a highly communal cultural group.

Culture-specific coping refers to the ways in which members of a particular cultural heritage draw on a fund of cultural knowledge to assign meaning to a stressful event and to determine available resources for dealing with the stressor (Slavin, Ranier, McCreary, & Gowda, 1991). Utsey et al. (2000) conceptualized and identified Africultural coping as a form of culture-specific coping that comprises four major components:

1. Cognitive/emotional debriefing (i.e., adaptive reactions by African Americans to manage their perceived environmental stressors)
2. Spiritual-centered coping (i.e., coping behaviors based on African Americans' sense of connection with spiritual elements in the universe, and with the Creator)
3. Collective coping (i.e., coping behaviors relying on group-centered activities)
4. Ritual-centered coping (i.e., the use of rituals, such as lighting candles or burning incense to manage a stressful situation).

When considering spirituality, religious problem-solving styles are culture-specific resources reflective of a religious orienting system (e.g., religious beliefs, feelings, and connection to a Higher Power) that can be said to influence the way crises

or stressors are anticipated, interpreted, and managed (Pargament, 1997). A religious orienting system has particular relevance in the African American community, where the Black church historically has been one of the major resources available in the fight against racism (Moore, 1992).

Another culture-specific coping strategy for many African Americans is religious problem-solving. It is a multidimensional phenomenon serving a variety of purposes aligned with individuals' perceptions of the roles of religion and spirituality (e.g., providing meaning, gaining control, comfort, etc.) in their lives, when faced with problems (Pargament et al., 1988; Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000). Religious problem-solving styles represent patterns of coping within a larger spiritual and religious system attributing to locus of responsibility to oneself or a Higher Being in the coping process. For example, a self-directing religious problem-solving style is reflected when people rely on themselves to cope with a problem or situation. Individuals believe by using a deferred religious problem-solving style that a Higher Power or Being will take care of or deal with the problem. Individuals who use collaborative religious problem-solving coping styles believe that they and a Higher Power or Being are collectively responsible for dealing with or resolving a situation or problem.

Overall it appears to be that African American women turn to a collective form of coping as they face stressful issues in their work environment. Many rely on friends, co-workers, and a Higher Power of Being to direct them in making the appropriate decisions to resolve their problems.

Summary of Literature Review

Socialization of women has played a significant part in how women lead today within corporate America, governmental agencies, and education. When developing adult relationships, men and women display behavior developed from childhood experiences. Men have been socialized for leadership roles associated with an authoritative style. On the other hand, women have been socialized to support and to take care of people (Williams, 1982).

As women reflect on past struggles and victories there has been an enormous gain, yet a lot still remains to be accomplished. The women's rights movement sparked a tremendous boost for women financially. Over four decades ago, women could not obtain a bank loan without male consent. Over 32 years ago, women could not obtain a bank loan without a male co-signer. Pay inequity consisted of women making 59 cents to every dollar a man made. According to Chao (2001), women still feel undervalued, and pay equity is still a problem. In the year 2000, women made approximately 87 cents to every dollar a man made. According to Catalyst (1996), women realize the need to work harder than male colleagues in order to earn the same level of respect, trust, and salary.

Typical masculine leaders emphasize achievement of organizational goals, whereas typical feminine leaders emphasize people and relationships (Ashmore et al., 1986). In support of this view, it is Rosner's (1990) belief that men tend to identify with "transactional" leadership and view subordinate job performance as a series of transactions that exchange rewards for services rendered or punishment for inadequate performance. Men, more often than women, tend to use power that comes from formal authority and their position within the organization. In contrast, many women possess

leadership characteristics that are identified with “transformational leadership.” Rosner (1990) further stated that this type of leadership provides opportunities for subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal.

Research continues to support past evidence that many senior women managers work in environments that are dominated by men. These environments can have an impact on women managers’ leadership styles and stress levels. When considering leadership traits, Wachs (2001) noted that women leaders in the past were compelled to use leadership traits that were associated with men who consisted of being tough, authoritative, and domineering.

Catalyst research (2003) identified the following four top barriers to advancement for women in leadership: (a) stereotypes and preconceptions, (b) career planning and monitoring, (c) work environment, and (d) counterproductive behavior of male co-workers. Throughout the last decade, professional women have entered the workforce at an extraordinary pace. Professional women are more likely than men to experience stereotyping, to face biases in performance appraisal, promotion, and salary, and to be confronted with serious work/life tradeoffs as they climb the corporate ladder (Auster, 1993).

Today, women have begun to represent a new leadership style that embraces their femininity, and they are learning to use it to their advantage. Women are slowly starting to serve as powerful role models for those aspiring to hold visible leadership positions. Quite often women have risen to top leadership and management positions without

guidance from a sponsor or mentor and are still challenged when searching for a mentor (Catalyst, 1998).

The work environment can play an integral part in generating stress. Catalyst (2003) research revealed that even though women in leadership have gained some ground within the last 7 years, minimal changes have occurred in their attitudes and experiences in the workplace. Women are continuously plagued with unique stressors versus those that men face. Those unique stressors consist of sexual discrimination, stereotyping, social isolation, and work/home conflicts. Women continue to be excluded from informal gatherings where decisions are made and relevant information is exchanged. As women face the challenges within the workplace, many experience various forms of stress.

There are three basic views concerning concepts of stress: (a) response theory, (b) stimulus theory, and (c) transaction theory. Response theorists define stress as an individual's way of responding to a particular stressor. There are three stages to the response theory. The first is the alarm reaction where the body reacts to the first exposure to a stressor. In the second stage, the individual resists the stimuli and the body repairs any damage caused. The third stage, exhaustion, occurs after the body has been continually exposed to the same stressor and is exhausted from being forced to adapt. The Stimulus theorists believe an individual has a limit to which they can endure stimulation, prior to becoming stressed. Once the individual is stimulated beyond their capacity, then stress is generated (Cox, 1978). The stimulus concept focuses on situational conditions or events. Stress conceived as a stimulus has been used to describe situations characterized as new, intense, rapidly changing, sudden, or unexpected. According to the theory of transactions, stress arises only when a particular transaction is appraised by the person as

relevant to his or her well-being. In order for an event to be appraised as a stressor, it must be personally relevant and there must be a perceived mismatch between a situation's demands and one's resources to cope with it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Elliot and Eisdorfer (1982) classified three major categories of stressors: acute, episodic acute, and chronic. Acute is the most common form of stress and can crop up in anyone's life and is highly treatable and manageable. Episodic Acute Stress is acute stress suffered on a frequent basis. Traits consist of people who are always in a rush but are always late, have a tendency to have too many irons in the fire, and are unorganized. Chronic stress is when people become accustomed to being stressed, and this can be detrimental because the physical and mental resources become depleted through long-term stress symptoms. Chronic stress destroys lives and can often lead to violence, heart attack, stroke, and perhaps even cancer.

Occupational stress has been a topic of significant research for the last two decades and has become one of the main reasons for medical retirements (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). Various occupations generate different levels of work stress. While each profession has unique stressors, teachers and managers experience high levels of work stress (Patton & Goddard, 2003).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), no one can access the cause of stress by just looking at the nature of the environmental event. Stress is a process involving the interaction of the individual with their environment. As women in leadership experience various forms of stress, they must learn coping strategies to survive. Based on Folkman and Lazarus (1980), coping strategies refer to specific efforts, both behavioral and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful

events. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) identified four main forms of coping that people often employ to combat stress: (a) problem solving (meeting problems head on), (b) emotion focused (to regulate emotional penalty), (c) active coping (change how one views stress to accept it), and (d) avoidant coping (refusing to accept stress), which can lead to alcohol or drug abuse.

When considering the impact of the length of service women have in an organization and stressors experienced, women who find themselves at the midpoint of their career (15-20 years) still experience stereotypical views from individuals in the work environment. Top managers who report to women have more stereotypical views of women leader's abilities than those reporting to men. Employees who report to women in masculine fields continue to be more critical of women leaders than those working in feminine fields (Catalyst, 2005).

Women of different age groups may differ in the amount of stress they must contend with depending on their stage of life. Kenney (2000) believes that middle-aged women (ages 30-45) experienced significantly more stressors than older women. When considering age and marital status, participants within the age ranges of 18 to 35 or over 55 reported less stress than those ages 35 to 55.

The women of color addressed opportunities and barriers and cited the following top stressors: not having mentors or sponsors, a lack of networking with prominent colleagues, a lack of role models to associate with who were within their ethnic and racial group, and their assignments lacked visibility (Catalyst, 2002). African American women suffer disproportionately from stress-related diseases such as hypertension and heart disease (Lewis et al., 2006; Williams & Kurina, 2002). They must contend with daily

living stressors, much like the general population. Yet, they have the added layers of dealing with racism and gender discrimination.

African American women are vital and a growing source of talent. The keys to success cited by African American women in business included exceeding performance expectations, communicating effectively, connecting with mentors, building positive relationships with managers and colleagues, along with using their cultural backgrounds to enhance job performance (Catalyst, 1999). It is important to note that despite the odds some African American women are succeeding.

African American women may opt to rely on collective and spiritual coping resources, such as reaching out and telling others about perceived institutional and cultural racism (Danoff-Burg et al., 2004). They may also adaptively distract themselves from stressors by using a sense of spiritual connection or relying on group-centered activities (Constantine et al., 2002). Therefore, less self-reliance and more collective and spiritual support may be used, thereby obtaining for them emotional support and maintaining a sense of spiritual balance and connection to others. These studies aimed to measure and identify the stressors and coping strategies that women experience in leadership. Therefore, there is a great need to continue to study the stressors and coping strategies of women in leadership.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This exploratory study was designed to augment the existing body of knowledge in the general area of women and leadership. Specifically, the study explored stressors experienced and coping strategies used by women who hold leadership positions in corporate America, education, and government agencies.

Research Design

A mixed-method approach was used in this study. The qualitative portion was performed by conducting six face-to-face interviews with women leaders from corporate America, education, and government organizations. The quantitative portion was performed by distributing approximately 150 survey questionnaires, of which 67 were completed and returned. The purpose of utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods was to provide confirmation and completeness. The effort encompassed the combining and relating of various data in order to minimize potential threats to the validity of each. Each source of data may not necessarily validate the others, but each contributes an additional piece of the puzzle and complements the others. Combining the data minimized the opportunity to form a biased opinion, and the validity of the findings was enhanced.

It is important to keep in mind that qualitative or quantitative methods may not guarantee the truth; however, the combination of both methods can provide additional insights. Therefore, I chose both approaches to answer the following research questions:

1. What stressors do women in leadership positions face in their current positions?
2. What coping strategies do women in leadership use in their current positions?
3. Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and government agencies experience the same stressors?
4. Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and government agencies utilize the same coping strategies?
5. What is the relationship between the stressors that women in leadership experience and race, age, family, and length of service?
6. What is the relationship between the coping strategies used by women leaders and race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service?

Sampling Procedures and Selection of Participants

There are two basic types of sampling—probability and non-probability. The difference between non-probability and probability sampling is that non-probability does not involve random selection and probability does. There are two types of non-probability sampling methods: accidental or purposive. Most sampling methods are purposive in nature since the sampling problem is usually approached with a specific plan in mind. According to Merriam (1998), non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative studies, since generalization is not a statistical goal for the researcher.

Therefore, I chose purposive, non-probability sampling to select women leaders who satisfied the purpose of my research.

I selected six women to participate in the qualitative portion. These women (two each) were chosen from three arenas: education, corporate America, and government. This population was chosen because there is much debate on how stress and the working environment affect women in leadership.

To select women to participate in face-to-face semi-structured interviews, I asked for referrals/recommendations from corporate America, education, and government agencies. I contacted potential participants and scheduled appointments to complete a 1-hour semi-structured interview with each one of them. Women who agreed to participate in the interview process of the study consisted of:

1. A president of a university
2. A school administrator
3. A Chief Operating Officer of a non-profit organization
4. A lead engineer from the automotive industry
5. A Michigan State judge
6. A director of a federal government agency.

The selection criteria for the women leaders in this research required they must:

1. Be a woman
2. Work within education, corporate America, or governmental agencies
3. Supervise others
4. Possess a minimum work experience of 2 years
5. Be at least 20 years old.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

In order to satisfy the qualitative portion of this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted. According to Patten (2000), the results found in qualitative research consist of trends or themes that are described in words. Merriam (1998) identified the following main characteristics that relate to all qualitative research:

1. *The researcher was interested in understanding the meaning that women constructed and how they made sense of their world.* A semi-structured interview was used to understand how women functioning in leadership positions experienced and coped with stress in their work environment. The 1-hour semi-structured interview allowed women to share their most inner feelings and thoughts with me, addressing stressors they face on a daily basis. Participants were asked to reflect upon their coping strategies used to keep them on track and successful.

2. *The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.* I sat down with each interviewee and asked her to briefly give a synopsis of her background. The interviewees were also asked to provide formulated demographic information and to answer a standardized set of questions. All interviews were tape recorded to ensure accuracy. Once all interviews were conducted, data were transcribed verbatim and examined. Statements made by each woman were examined by three experts. The experts included a psychologist, an educator, and me, the researcher. We looked for themes that aligned with the OSI-R (occupational stress, psychological strain, and coping resources).

3. *Qualitative research involves fieldwork.* The interview locations represented the field work. The majority of interviews were conducted at the job site.

4. *The research involved primarily inductive research strategies.* Semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted. The experts identified patterns and themes that ran through the narratives. I presented the questions in the same manner for all participants. The goal was to encourage thoughts and allow participants to divulge specific events regarding stressful experiences and coping strategies.

5. *The product of qualitative research is extremely descriptive.* I obtained a personal profile of each participant, a detailed description of the interview and a few biographies.

In summary I explored the world of six women functioning in leadership positions and aligned their comments with the occupational role, personal strain, and personal resource elements identified in the OSIR. To further human understanding, interviews were tape-recorded and verified with participants to ensure accuracy.

Types of Interviews

Interviews may be unstructured, semi-structured, or structured. Unstructured interviews allow the respondent to describe her inner feelings and perceptions about a phenomenon through open-ended questions. There are no predetermined questions used essentially for exploration. On the other hand, a structured interview is one in which the investigator adheres rigidly to predetermined questions. Such an interview is based on the assumption that the respondent shares the same vocabulary as the researcher and those questions are equally meaningful to the respondent (York, 1998).

After reviewing sources of data collection using a qualitative approach, I chose to utilize a semi-structured interview. This approach allowed participants a sense of individuality and the opportunity to share their most inner thoughts and perspective

regarding the topic. An interviewee appreciates the freedom to tell her story in her own way. This type of interview also provided greater insight regarding the participant's viewpoint of the topic.

According to York (1998), semi-structured interviews are halfway between the ends of structured and unstructured interviews. The semi-structured interview consists of predetermined questions with an open-ended format. Predetermined questions should be presented to each subject in the same sequence and manner. I chose to utilize a semi-structured interview in order to minimize time, along with giving each interviewee an opportunity to express her opinion. York (1998) also identified several guidelines one should follow when conducting a semi-structured interview:

1. *Be aware of your own predispositions about the subject under study.* I made a conscious effort not to focus on my personal views and interests. By recognizing my biases, I safeguarded against them. This was accomplished by adhering to predetermined interview questions. All interview questions were presented in the same manner, which minimized and eliminated biases.

2. *Engage the interviewee in the validation of your notes.* Interviews were tape-recorded. I validated and confirmed accuracy of responses by discussing with interviewees prior to finalizing results.

3. *Seek disconfirming evidence of your initial impressions.* I identified themes that were prevalent throughout the interview process and aligned with the OSI-R instrument. The use of predetermined questions prevented the interviewee from picking up on my impressions or opinions.

4. *Engage in note-taking methods that place minimal burden upon your memory.*

I tape-recorded the interview and used shorthand methods as required.

Characteristics of Quantitative Research

According to Patten (2000), a quantitative researcher utilizes instruments to produce data quickly and provide statistics. This methodology requires postulating a hypothesis and testing that hypothesis through data collection and analysis. Quantitative research is a method commonly used in “hard sciences.” Data are generally reported in quantitative terms such as test scores, frequency counts, attendance records, etc. The difference between quantitative research and qualitative research is that qualitative research is done for the purpose of understanding the social phenomena, and quantitative research is done to determine relationships, effects, and causes. For the quantitative aspect of this study, I chose to conduct a survey. The survey instrument selected is the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSI-R).

To support the quantitative portion of the study, 150 surveys divided into bundles of 50 each were distributed to three different organizations during a scheduled group gathering. The organizations consisted of Federally Employed Women (FEW), Metropolitan Girls Scouts of America, and a teacher’s group. The results yielded a total of 67 completed surveys.

Although a distinction is commonly drawn between qualitative and quantitative aspects of scientific investigation, it has been argued the two go hand in hand, which consists of a mixed method. Based on analysis of the history of science, Kuhn (1961) concludes that “large amounts of qualitative work have usually been prerequisite to fruitful quantification in the physical sciences” (p. 162). Qualitative research is often used

to gain a general sense of phenomena and to form theories that can be tested using further quantitative research.

Instrumentation

The introduction to the survey requested demographic information such as race, age, occupation, family, and length of service. The instrument selected is the revised edition of the Occupational Stress Inventory (OSI-R). The OSI-R instrument consists of a structured questionnaire with an objective format that entails a selection of multiple-choice answers. The participant will circle the number that best fits each: (1) rarely or never true, (2) occasionally true, (3) often true, (4) usually true, and (5) true most of the time.

The original OSI was developed primarily for the following reasons:

1. To develop generic measures of occupational stressors across different occupational levels and environments
2. To provide measures for an integrated theoretical model linking sources of stress in the work environment
3. To identify the psychological strains experienced by individuals as a result of work stressors
4. To identify the coping resources available to combat the effect of stressors and alleviate strain.

The revision is an update that provides normative data for both gender and occupation in the following occupation categories: executive, professional, technical, administrative support, public service/safety, and agricultural/production/laborer.

The OSI-R instrument provides a three-dimensional measurement of occupational adjustment that includes three categories: (a) occupational stress, (b) psychological strain, and (c) coping resources. The OSI-R consists of scales that measure specific attributes of the environment or individual. These specific attributes represent important characteristics of each category within occupational adjustment (Osipow & Spokane, 1998).

Section I: Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ)

Section I of the OSI-R survey instrument consists of the Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ) of the survey instrument. This section addressed several stress-inducing work roles in order to measure the domain of occupational stress (McLean, 1974). The participants were asked to circle the number with five responses that best answer the statement. The 60 statements were aligned with one of the following six scales that make up the Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ):

Role Overload (RO): Identifies the workload and the intensity of the workload as increasing, unreasonable, and unsupported by needed resources.

Role Insufficiency (RI): Identifies if there is a poor fit between skills and the job being performed.

Role Ambiguity (RA): Identifies if clarity exists in relation to work to be performed. It also identifies how the individual should be spending her time and how each will be evaluated.

Role Boundary (RB): Identifies if the individual feels there is a conflict between supervisory demands and what must be done. It will also reveal her feeling towards work and if confusion exists regarding the authority lines.

Responsibility (R): Identifies the level of responsibility for the activities and work performance of subordinates. They are concerned that others may not perform well.

They are sought out for leadership and frequently has to respond to others' problems.

Physical Environment (PE): This will identify the levels of noise, moisture, dust, heat, cold, light, poisonous substances, or unpleasant odors that the individual may be exposed to.. These environmental annoyances could be responsible for an erratic work schedule or one feeling personally isolated.

Section II: Personal Strain Questionnaire (PSQ)

The PSQ is composed of four scales with 40 statements. These reflect affective and subjective responses of various types. It identifies the individual who is unable to cope effectively with various stresses in the workplace and/or other settings. The PSQ is classified into four major categories:

Vocational Strain (VS): Identifies the attitude toward work including dreading to go to work, boredom, and lack of interest. Concentration problems and absenteeism may be present and errors in work or accidents may exist.

Psychological Strain (PSY): Identifies if depression, anxiousness, unhappiness, and/or irritability exist. It may also report minor complaints, bad responses to routine situations, and no sense of humor. Most of all, it will identify how the individual perceives things to be at the workplace.

Interpersonal Strain (IS): Identifies the existence of frequent quarrels and excessive dependency on family members, spouses, and friends. The need for isolation or conversely not having enough time to spend with friends may surface.

Physical Strain (PHS): Identifies if there is a concern for health as well as the number of physical symptoms (e.g., colds, heart palpitations, aches and pains, stomach aches, and erratic eating habits). Can lead to unplanned weight change, overuse of alcohol, and disturbances in sleeping patterns.

Section III: Personal Resources Questionnaire (PRQ)

The third section is the PRQ which is comprised of 40 statements with four major categories:

Recreation (RE): Measures the extent to which an individual participates in recreation and leisure/vacation time.

Self-Care (SC): Measures the amount of exercise, sleep, and dietary practice along with relaxation techniques.

Social Support (SS): Measures the extent to which individuals feel support and help from those around them. High scorers may report regular exercise, adequate sleep, good diet, and relaxation techniques.

Rational/Cognitive Coping (RC): Measures the extent to which an individual possesses and uses cognitive skills when faced with work-related stresses. The individual may report having a systematic approach to solving problems. One realizes consequences of choices and the ability to prioritize important elements of problems encountered.

Section IV: Reliability of the Occupational Stress Inventory (OSI-R)

Reliability estimates for this instrument were conducted in two ways. Lombard (1997) analyzed test/retest reliability data by administering the OSI-R to a sample of 62

Air Force cadets over a 2-week period. The second reliability estimate used an internal consistency analysis with a normative sample.

Validity of the Occupational Stress Inventory (OSI-R)

Validity data for the OSI and OSI-R are derived from five principal sources: (a) convergent validity studies, (b) factor analyses, (c) correlation studies of the relationships of the scales to variables of practical and theoretical importance, (d) studies using the scales as outcome measures following stress reduction treatment, and (e) studies of the stress, strain, and coping model employing comparisons of selected criterion groups. Validity studies of the original OSI published through 1987 are available in addition to several recent studies using the OSI-R as further validation of the model. To date, a number of studies have appeared in print along with numerous unpublished studies and dissertations. To compare the two versions, data were collected on a sample of 45 highway patrol cadets using both the OSI and OSI-R (Elam, 1997). The resulting correlations reflected considerable agreement between the two forms. Each of the 17 correlation coefficients was equal to or greater than .63 and all were statistically significant. Overall, 3 correlations were in the .60 to .69 range, 10 in the .70 to .79 range, 3 in the .80 to .89 range, and 1 in the .90 or above range. Since the correlation of items between the OSI and OSI-R is relatively high, this suggests that the two versions are similar enough to generalize validity from the OSI to the OSIR. The three questionnaires (ORG, PSQ, and PRQ) of the OSI-R were separately subjected to maximum factor analysis varimax rotations. The same method of analysis was used for the four PSQ scales.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

Six research questions and 17 hypotheses form the core of this study. They are as follows:

1. Question 1: What stressors do women in leadership positions face in their current positions?

2. Question 2: What coping strategies do women in leadership use in their current positions?

3. Question 3: Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies each experience the same stressors?

a. Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in the occupational stressors among women in leadership positions within corporate America, education, and government agencies.

b. Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the personal strain stressors among women in leadership positions within corporate America, education, and government agencies.

4. Question 4: Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies each utilize the same coping strategies?

Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in the coping strategies used among women leaders in corporate America, education, and government agencies.

5. Question 5: What is the relationship between the stressors that women experience in leadership and race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service?

- a. Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between race and occupational stressors that women face in their current leadership positions.
- b. Hypothesis 5: There is no relationship between race and personal strain stressors that women face in their current leadership positions.
- c. Hypothesis 6: There is no relationship between age and occupational stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.
- d. Hypothesis 7: There is no relationship between age and personal strain stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.
- e. Hypothesis 8: There is no relationship between marital status and occupational stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.
- f. Hypothesis 9: There is no relationship between marital status and personal strain stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.
- g. Hypothesis 10: There is no relationship between number of children and occupational stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.
- h. Hypothesis 11: There is no relationship between number of children and the personal strain stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.
- i. Hypothesis 12: There is no relationship between length of service in the organization and stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.

6. Question 6: What is the relationship between the coping strategies used by women leaders and race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service?
- a. Hypothesis 13: There is no relationship between race and the coping strategies that women face in their current leadership positions.
 - b. Hypothesis 14: There is no relationship between age and the coping strategies that women experience in their current leadership positions.
 - c. Hypothesis 15: There is no relationship between marital status and the coping strategies that women experience in their current leadership positions.
 - d. Hypothesis 16: There is no relationship between number of children and the coping strategies that women experience in their current leadership positions.
 - e. Hypothesis 17: There is no relationship between length of service in the organization and coping strategies that women experience in their current leadership positions.

Analysis of the Data

Qualitative Data Analysis

In analyzing the interviews of each of the participants, it was important to make sense of the data. According to Merriam (1988), making sense of the data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. After data were collected I developed a spreadsheet to include common statements by category aligned with the OSI-R stressor elements identified in the literature review. The questions developed for the interview were designed to complement categories within the instrument. I identified the relationship between the

OSI-R and themes that ran through the interviews and consolidated data from all interviews to identify common themes. The results were compared to the quantitative data received from 67 surveys. The themes identified in the interviews complemented the OSI-R instrument.

Quantitative Data Analysis

A quantitative method of collecting data was used in this study. The instrument chosen was the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSI-R), which precisely measured occupational roles, personal strain, and personal coping resources. These categories were aligned with the themes that run through the interviews in order to provide consistency.

The data for this study were analyzed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences. The first of these were given by description of the data according to demographic analysis of the participants. Categories were race, age, number of children, length of service, and industry.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine which stressors women in leadership positions experienced in their current positions. Means, standard deviations, and percentages were also calculated. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a statistical procedure that determines the proportion of variability attributed to each of several components. Participants were grouped into the following three categories: (a) corporate America, (b) education, and (c) government. The results of these three groups were statistically compared to each other. To test the hypotheses statistically, a significant difference between the groups was calculated.

The ANOVA uses the variances of the group and not the means to calculate a value that reflects the degree of differences in the means. Because there were more than two groups, the ANOVA was used in rejecting or accepting the null hypotheses. I chose not to look inside of the groups, but to identify the differences between the groups. Since I focused only on the differences between the groups, additional questions may generate recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate stressors experienced and coping strategies used by women who hold leadership positions in corporate America, education, and government agencies. This chapter presents the results of the questionnaire, feedback from interviews, and statistical analyses of the data. It includes findings concerning the relationship between stress factors, coping strategies, and the age, race, marital status, number of children, and length of service among women.

Description of the Quantitative Sample

Data were collected from three different sites: Girl Scouts of Metropolitan Detroit, Paul Roberson Academy K-8 Detroit Public School, and the U.S. Tank Automotive and Armaments Command in Warren, Michigan. A total of 150 surveys were distributed to women in government agencies, corporate America, and education. Of this number, 67 were returned for a response rate of 45%.

The study participants were asked to complete a demographic survey. Their responses were cross-tabulated by the type of organization with which they were affiliated. Table 1 presents results of this analysis.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample by Organization Type, Age, Marital Status, Number of Children, and Race (N = 67)

Demographic Characteristics	Organization type							
	Government		Corporate		Education		Total	
	(n=35)		(n=19)		(n=13)			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age								
20 to 39	9	25.7	9	47.3	3	23.0	21	31.3
40 to 49	14	40.0	4	21.1	2	15.4	20	29.9
50 to 59	10	28.5	2	10.5	2	15.4	14	20.9
60 and over	1	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.5
Missing	1	2.9	4	21.1	6	46.2	11	16.4
Marital status								
Married	19	54.2	6	31.6	2	15.4	27	40.3
Divorced	4	11.4	3	15.7	2	15.4	9	13.4
Single	10	28.5	6	31.6	3	23.0	19	28.4
Missing	2	5.7	4	21.1	6	46.2	12	17.9
Number of children								
None	7	20.0	11	57.9	2	15.4	20	29.9
1-2	18	51.4	2	10.5	4	30.8	24	35.8
3-4	9	25.7	2	10.5	0	0.0	11	16.4
Missing	1	2.9	4	21.1	7	53.8	12	17.9
Race								
African Am.	16	45.7	11	57.9	6	46.2	33	49.3
Caucasian	16	45.7	4	21.0	1	7.6	21	31.3
Other	2	5.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.0
Missing	1	2.9	4	21.1	6	46.2	11	16.4

The majority of the women who participated in the sample reported that their ages were between 20 and 49 ($n = 41$, 61.2%). Of these two age groups, 23 (56%) were working in government agencies, 13 (32%) were in corporate America, and 5 (12%) were in education.

Most of the women ($n = 27$, 40.3%) reported their marital status as married. Included in this number were 19 (70.4%) women who were working in government agencies, 6 (22.2%) in corporate America, and 2 (7.4%) in education.

Forty-four (65.6%) of the women reported having no more than two children. Of these 44 women, 25 (56.9%) work in government. Thirteen (29.5%) worked for corporate America, and six of them (13.6%) worked in education.

The majority of the women ($n = 33$, 49.3%) reported their race as African American. This number included 16 (45.7%) who were in government agencies, 11 (57.9%) who were working in corporate America, and 6 (46.2%) who were in education.

In summary, most of the women who completed the questionnaire were married, African American, and between 20 and 49 years of age. Most of the participants had no more than two children and worked for governmental agencies.

Description of the Qualitative Sample

To support the qualitative portion of the research, six women—two from each category of corporate America, education, and governmental agencies—participated in a one hour interview. Demographic characteristics of the sample by organization type, age, marital status, number of children, and race ($N = 6$) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Characteristics of Sample by Time With Organization and Type of Organization (N=67)

Organization	Number	Mean	SD	Range	
				Minimum	Maximum
Government (<i>n</i> = 35)	34	11.82	9.06	2	34
Corporate (<i>n</i> = 19)	15	6.27	6.26	<1	16
Education (<i>n</i> = 13)	7	12.14	11.67	3	34
Missing (<i>n</i> = 11)	11	0	0	0	0
Total	67	10.38	8.96	0	34

The participants were asked to indicate the length of time they have worked with their organizations. Their survey responses were summarized using descriptive statistics for presentation in Table 2.

The women who worked for government agencies had been with their organization from 2 to 34 years with an average experience of 11.82 years. The average length of time that women in corporate America had been with their organizations was 6.27 years. Their experience with their organizations ranged from less than 1 year to 16 years. Women in education had been in their positions for an average of 12.14 years. The range of experience women in education had in their present positions ranged from 3 to 34 years. Looking at the total sample, the women who participated in the study have worked in their organizations for an average of 10.38 years.

The women interviewed who worked for government agencies had been with their agency from 9 to 28 years with a mean of 18.5 years. Those women who worked

for corporate America had a mean length of service of 12.5 years, with a range from 7 to 18 years. Length of time for women in education ranged from 7 to 18 years with their organization, with a mean of 12.5 years.

As shown in Table 3, five of the women interviewed were African American; four were between the ages of 50 and 59. Five were single or divorced with no more than two children.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Sample by Organization Type, Age, Marital Status, Number of Children, and Race (N = 6)

Demographic Characteristics	Organization type							
	Government		Corporate		Education		Total	
	(n=2)		(n=2)		(n=2)			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age								
20 to 39	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	1	16.7
40 to 49	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	1	16.7
50 to 59	2	100.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	4	66.6
Marital status								
Married	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7
Divorced	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	3	50.0
Single	0	0.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	2	33.3
Number of children								
None	2	100.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	4	66.7
1-2	0	0.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	2	33.3
Race								
African Am.	1	50.0	2	100.0	2	100.0	5	83.3
Caucasian	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	16.7

Findings

Six research questions were developed for the study. Each of these questions was addressed using inferential statistical analyses. All decisions on the statistical significance of the findings used a criterion alpha level of .05.

Research Question 1

What stressors do women in leadership positions face in their current positions?

To answer this question, both quantitative and qualitative data were used.

Quantitative Data

The mean T-scores for the 10 stress factors as measured by the Occupational Stress Inventory–Revised (OSI-R) were compared to the mean T-Score of 50 utilizing *t*-tests for one sample to determine the stressors women in leadership positions were facing in their current positions. Table 4 presents the results of these quantitative analyses.

Three of the six stress factors associated with Occupational Roles (role ambiguity, role boundary, and role overload) were significantly different from the mean T-score of 50. The mean T-scores for role ambiguity were $M = 55.24$ ($SD = 12.58$), $p = .001$; for role boundary, $M = 54.52$ ($SD = 13.46$), $p = .008$; and for role overload, $M = 53.85$ ($SD = 12.72$), $p = .012$. This indicates that the women in this sample were experiencing some stress from their jobs in these areas. The mean T-scores for responsibility ($M = 45.54$, $SD = 11.74$, $p = .003$), role insufficiency ($M = 52.52$, $SD = 11.62$, and $p = .080$), and physical environment ($M = 50.76$, $SD = 10.69$, and $p = .562$) were not significantly above the mean T-score of 50, indicating that responsibility, role

Table 4

Stress Factors for Women in Leadership Positions (N = 67)

Stress factors	Number	Mean	SD	Test Statistic	t-value	Sig.
<u>Occupational Roles</u>						
Role ambiguity	67	55.24	12.58	50	3.41	.001
Role boundary	67	54.52	13.46	50	2.75	.008
Role overload	67	53.85	12.72	50	2.57	.012
Role insufficiency	67	52.52	11.62	50	1.78	.080
Responsibility	67	45.54	11.74	50	-3.11	.003
Physical environment	67	50.76	10.69	50	0.58	.562
<u>Personal Strain</u>						
Vocational strain	67	56.91	13.57	50	4.17	<.001
Psychological strain	67	55.03	13.29	50	3.10	.003
Physical strain	67	54.27	11.92	50	2.93	.005
Interpersonal strain	67	53.70	12.88	50	2.35	.022

insufficiency, and physical environment associated with their positions were not contributing to stress.

The second set of stress factors was related to Personal Strain. Statistically significant differences were found between the participants' mean T-scores for the four stress factors in this group and the mean T-score of 50. The results indicated that vocational strain, $M = 56.91$ ($SD = 13.57$), $p < .001$; psychological strain, $M = 55.03$ ($SD = 13.29$), $p = .003$; physical strain, $M = 54.27$ ($SD = 11.29$), $p = .005$; and interpersonal strain, $M = 53.70$ ($SD = 12.88$), $p = .022$, were all contributing to stress. Although all four personal strain categories contributed to stress, it appears that vocational strain was the highest contributor.

Qualitative Data

Interviews were conducted with six women who worked in leadership positions. These women had not completed the quantitative surveys. The results of the interviews were recorded and analyzed by three raters. These raters placed the comments made by the women in categories according to the 10 stress factors identified and defined by the Occupational Stress Inventory—Revised (OSI-R).

Three of the stress factors associated with occupational roles were expressed as key stressors. These stress factors and the percentage of women who identified them were role overload (83%), role boundary (50%), and role ambiguity (33%). Role insufficiency, responsibility, and physical environment were identified by less than 10% of women interviewed. Table 5 presents the top three significant occupational stress factors identified by the women and a sample of their comments for each stress factor. Table 5 presents the comments related to occupational roles.

When analyzing the three stress factors associated with occupational roles, the women described their workload as increasing, unreasonable, and not supported by much-needed resources. Many worked long hours under tight deadlines without being properly staffed. Their comments were within the definition of role overload. Conflict between supervisory demands and what had to be accomplished and their feelings regarding work were aligned with role boundary. Role ambiguity was a source of stress as the women were unclear as to what work needed to be performed, how to prioritize the workload, and how they were going to be evaluated.

Table 5

Occupational Stressor Interviewee Comments

Occupational Stressor	Definition	Group	Comments
Role overload	Individuals may describe workload as increasing, unreasonable, and unsupported by needed resources. They may describe themselves as not feeling well-trained or competent for the job at hand, needing more help, and/or working under tight deadlines.	Government	My campaign was so expensive, it became an economic issue. Working on an intense project for Iraq has kept me working 7 days a week and 12 hours a day. Given responsibility but not able to provide me with the resources needed to do their job.
		Corporate	I work 7 days a week (24/7) which leaves little time for me. Working 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 hours a day for the last couple of weeks. I think my biggest stress is not having enough time to accomplish my work.
		Education	As an institution, we are constantly balancing our budget and we don't have the level of flexibility that a lot of business have.
Role boundary	May report feeling caught between conflicting supervisory demands and factions. They may report not feeling proud of what they do or not having a stake in the enterprise. May also report being unclear about lines of authority and having more than one person to tell them what to do.	Government	It seems that we go through cycles of having to answer the same questions every three to five months. Not seeing anything change from what you previously answered. Never knowing exactly what approach was going to work on any one particular day. Never knowing if your responses were being listened to or valued.
		Corporate	Management is very dominant, authoritative, critical, and uncaring.
		Education	No comments regarding role boundary.
Role ambiguity	May report an unclear sense of what they are expected to do, how they should be spending their time, and how they will be evaluated. They seem not to know where to begin on new projects and experience conflicting demands from supervisors. They also may report no clear sense of what they should do to get ahead.	Government	When a change in higher management occurs, it puts you into having to figure out what the next chain up is looking for and trying to make sure you are trying to provide it properly.

Table 5—*Continued.*

Physical environment	May report being exposed to high levels of noise, moisture, dust, heat, cold, light, poisonous substances, or unpleasant odors. They may also report having an erratic work schedule or feeling personally isolated.	Corporate	There was no infrastructure (job description) in the organization and I felt it should have been there.
		Education	No comments regarding role ambiguity.
		Government	No comments regarding physical environment.
		Corporate	There is only 2% Black in the entire organization and 1% female. It is a barrier I guess because you have no one to relate to. Typically it is all male, I mean it is no one to bond with.
		Education	No comments regarding physical environment.

The second set of stressors related to personal strain identified all four strains: psychological, interpersonal, vocational, and physical strains were associated with personal stress. Table 6 presents the four personal strain factors identified by the women interviewed along with their comments.

When analyzing the personal strain stress factors, half of the interviewees reported psychological strain. All interviewees reported some form of irritability and shared minor complaints regarding the job. They identified their perception of how things were in their workplace, which is psychological strain. They reported things not going well, lacking time with friends, and feelings of isolation, which are symptoms of interpersonal strain. Some of the interviewees reported having physical symptoms that were either caused or exacerbated by the stress on their jobs. These reports were evidence of physical strain. Vocational strain was indicated by women who reported dreading

Table 6

Personal Strain—Interviewee Comments

Personal Stressor	Definition	Group	Comments
Psychological Strain	May report feeling depressed, anxious, unhappy, and/or irritable. They may report complaining about little things, responding badly in routine situations, and having no sense of humor. They may also report things not going well.	Government	No comments related to psychological strain
		Corporate	Working with women who are intimidated by women leaders. I experience sexism; the good-old-boys network is still alive and well. As a female, I was not welcome. They did not want to shake my hand. They were like “what are you doing here? We did not interview you.” I have the strain and stress of hearing criminal cases every day.
		Education	Having to work with women who have adopted a masculine leadership style.
Vocational Strain	May report poor attitudes toward their work, including dread, boredom, and lack of interest. They may report making errors in their work or having accidents. They may also report the quality of their work is suffering. Concentration problems and absenteeism may be present.	Government	No comments related to vocational strain
		Corporate	I think there is a continuing perception that women are not able to lead in the same manner as men. It has gotten so bad that I dread going to work. The job is not enjoyable any more. My supervisor makes me sick to look at him.
		Education	No comments related to vocational strain.

Table 6—*Continued.*

Interpersonal Strain	May report frequent quarrels or excessive dependency on family members, spouses, and friends. They also may report wanting to withdraw and have time alone, or conversely, not having time to spend with family and friends.	Government	Going through a divorce last year was very stressful. Being a judge, the family thinks I should pay for every thing. I think I sacrifice having children because I love to work.
		Corporate	My biggest stress comes with not having enough time. Basically you are compromising time with family and friends if you are spending long hours at work. I don't have a personal life, I work so hard. My job left little time for me to spend with my husband, who is now my ex-husband. Women's negative relationships with each other present a barrier to us getting the best product or the best thing that we can get done.
		Education	I sacrifice things like vacation and social time.
Physical Strain	May report frequent worries about their health, as well as a number of physical symptoms (e.g., colds, heart palpitations, aches and pains, stomachaches, and erratic eating habits). They may report unplanned weight change, overuse of alcohol, and disturbances in sleep patterns. They may also report feeling lethargic and/or apathetic.	Government	I developed lupus, which is stress-related. Locking up folks became a health issue for me.
		Corporate	I experienced headaches, weight gain, crying episodes; the job is not enjoyable any more.
		Education	No comments related to physical strain.

going to work, lack of enjoyment from the job, and increasing stress from making difficult decisions.

When examining the results of the analysis from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, it was found that role overload, role ambiguity, and role boundary were sources of stress associated with occupational roles. In addition, sources of stress connected with personal strain were vocational, psychological, interpersonal, and physical strains.

Research Question 2

What coping strategies do women in leadership use in their current position? To answer this question, both quantitative and qualitative data were used.

Quantitative Data

The mean scores for the women's responses for the coping strategies they currently use were compared to the mean T-score of 50 using *t*-tests for one sample. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

t-Tests for One Sample—Coping Factors for Women in Leadership Positions (*N* = 67)

Coping factors	Number	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Test statistic	<i>t</i> -Value	Sig.
Recreation	67	49.25	14.18	50	-.43	.668
Self-care	67	50.72	10.34	50	.57	.573
Social support	67	48.94	8.96	50	-.97	.336
Rational/cognitive thinking	67	49.40	11.05	50	-.44	.660

The comparisons of the mean scores for the four coping factors for women in leadership positions were not statistically significant. Three of the four coping factors were lower than the mean T-score of 50, indicating that the women may not have been using these coping factors to alleviate the stress associated with their positions.

Qualitative Data

Interviews were conducted utilizing six women who worked in leadership positions. The results of the interviews were recorded and analyzed by three raters. These raters placed the comments made by the women in categories according to the four coping factors identified and defined by the Occupational Stress Inventory—Revised (OSI-R).

Most of the women interviewed reported having support and help from those around them. Their comments reflected the positive support they received from others. Interviewee comments are reflected in Table 8.

Although prayer and spirituality were not identified as occupational coping factors on the Occupational Stress Questionnaire, prayer and spirituality appeared throughout the majority of the interviews as a coping strategy. The women made statements to support the value of this coping strategy, including these:

1. “I take care of my mind spiritually.”
2. “I pray.”
3. “I am a prayerful person.”
4. “I read scripture and stay continuously in the Word each day.”

Table 8

Personal Resources Interviewee Comments

Personal resources	Definition	Group	Comments
Recreation	Individuals may report taking advantage of the recreational/leisure time coming to them and engage in a variety of activities that they find relaxing and satisfying. They also may report doing the things they most enjoy in their spare time.	Government	Baking cookies relaxes me.
		Corporate	I watch HGTV Home & Garden Network.
		Education	I love theatre. I read a lot. I really enjoy going out to eat.
Self-Care	May report exercising regularly, sleep 8 hours per day, are careful about their diet, practice relaxation techniques, and avoid harmful substances (alcohol, drugs, tobacco, coffee).	Government	I exercise. I read non-law fiction novels, no brainier that doesn't take anything else.
		Corporate	I clean my house. I do work out; I try to three times a week.
		Education	No comments regarding self care.
Social Support	May report feeling there is at least one person they can count on who values and/or loves them. They may report having sympathetic people with whom to talk about work problems and may report having help to do important things and/or things around the house, They also may report feeling close to another individual.	Government	I've had so much support from my church, pastor, community, family and friends. I had two individuals that I think were very good supervisors very early on. I think that was probably the most positive effect on me. I go home to a nice husband and a couple of dogs.
		Corporate	I've been blessed to have a lot of mentors in my career.
		Education	No comments regarding social support.

In summary, it appears that the quantitative data showed that the women in this study may not have been using specific coping strategies associated with recreation, self-care, social support, and rational/cognitive thinking. However, the women who were interviewed reported that they often used social support and self-care as coping mechanisms when stressed at their jobs. In addition, they also used prayer and spirituality to help relieve occupational stress.

Research Question 3

Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies each experience the same stressors? To address this question, only quantitative data were used.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in the occupational role stressors among women in leadership positions within corporate America, education, and government agencies.

The six stressors associated with occupational role measured on the OSI-R were used as dependent variables in a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The independent variable was the type of organization (corporate, education, and governmental). Table 9 presents the results of this analysis.

The comparison of organizational stressors by type of organization was statistically significant: $F(6, 60) = 2.90, p = .015$. While the comparison was statistically significant, the effect size of .23 indicated the difference may also be of practical significance. To determine which of the subscales were contributing to the statistically

Table 9

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Organizational Stressors by Type of Organization

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.34	6, 60	2.90	.015	.23

significant outcome, the univariate *F* tests were examined. Table 10 presents results of this analysis.

Two types of organizational stressors—role insufficiency, $F(2, 64) = 3.19, p = .048$; and responsibility, $F(2, 64) = 4.86, p = .011$ —provided evidence of statistically significant differences among the three groups of participants. The remaining four organizational stressors did not differ among the three groups of women.

Descriptive statistics were obtained for the three groups to provide additional information on how the groups were varying. To determine which of the three groups of women were contributing to the significant results, Scheffé a posteriori tests were used to compare all possible pairwise comparisons. Table 11 presents results of this analysis.

The means for the women in the three types of organizations were similar except for stressors associated with role insufficiency and responsibility. Women in government ($M = 49.43, SD = 10.57$) had the lowest mean scores, while women in the corporate world ($M = 57.42, SD = 10.87$) had the highest scores.

The second area that differed substantially was for stressors due to responsibility. The results of the Scheffé a posteriori tests indicated that women in government ($M = 41.80, SD = 11.31$) differed significantly from women in education ($M = 52.46, SD =$

Table 10

Univariate F Tests—Organizational Stressors by Type of Organization

Organizational stressors	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>
Role overload	453.34	2, 64	226.67	1.53	.225
Role insufficiency	808.74	2, 64	404.37	3.19	.048
Role ambiguity	512.00	2, 64	256.00	1.65	.200
Role boundary	409.83	2, 64	204.92	1.14	.327
Responsibility	1199.72	2, 64	599.86	4.86	.011
Physical environment	92.06	2, 64	46.03	0.40	.675

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics—Organizational Stressors by Type of Organization

Organizational stressors	<u>Type of Organization</u>					
	<u>Corporate (<i>n</i> = 19)</u>		<u>Education (<i>n</i> = 13)</u>		<u>Government (<i>n</i> = 35)</u>	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Role overload	55.47	13.98	57.85	10.57	51.49	11.67
Role insufficiency	57.42	10.87	53.69	13.49	49.43	10.57
Role ambiguity	59.63	15.21	53.38	13.09	53.54	10.45
Role boundary	58.11	16.77	55.08	14.15	52.37	10.96
Responsibility	47.68	11.56	52.46	9.80	41.80 _a	11.31
Physical environment	52.21	14.67	51.62 _a	9.46	49.66 _a	8.58

9.80) who indicated the highest levels of stress. The women in corporate organizations ($M = 47.68$, $SD = 2.55$) did not differ from either women in education or women in government organizations. The remaining stressors had less fluctuation among the three groups.

In summary, when looking at the three types of organizations, role insufficiency—which identifies a poor fit between skills and the job being performed—was most significant within corporate America. Responsibility, which identifies the level of responsibility for activities and work performance of subordinates and a concern that others may not perform, was also statistically significant among those associated with education. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis of no difference in occupational stressors among the three organizational types was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference in the personal strain stressors among women in leadership positions within corporate America, education, and government agencies.

A second one-way MANOVA was used to compare scores on personal strain by the type of organization. Table 12 presents results of this analysis.

The comparison of the four types of personal strain by the type of organization provided evidence of statistically significant differences among the three groups, $F(4, 62) = 3.48$, $p = .012$. The effect size of .18 indicated that the result had some practical significance in addition to statistical significance. To determine which of the four measures of personal strain were contributing to the statistically significant result, the univariate F tests were examined. Table 13 presents results of this analysis.

Table 12

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Personal Strain by Type of Organization

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> Ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.23	4, 62	3.48	.012	.18

Table 13

Univariate F Tests—Personal Strain by Type of Organization

Personal strain	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>
Vocational strain	597.68	2, 64	298.84	1.66	.199
Psychological strain	1027.80	2, 64	513.90	3.10	.052
Interpersonal strain	1925.42	2, 64	962.71	6.83	.002
Physical strain	883.61	2, 64	441.81	3.33	.042

Two measures of personal strain—interpersonal strain, $F(2, 64) = 6.83, p = .002$ and physical strain, $F(2, 64) = 3.33, p = .042$ —differed significantly among the three types of organization. The remaining two types of personal strain—vocational strain and psychological strain—did not differ among the three groups of women. To further examine the two statistically significant results, Scheffé a posteriori tests were used to compare all possible pairwise comparisons. Table 14 presents the descriptive statistics for all measures of personal strain and the results of the Scheffé a posteriori tests for the significant univariate analyses.

The results of the Scheffé a posteriori tests for interpersonal strain indicated that women in the corporate world ($M = 61.79, SD = 15.93$) experienced significantly higher levels of interpersonal strain than women in government ($M = 49.29, SD = 8.98$). Women

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics—Personal Strain by Type of Organization

	<u>Type of organization</u>					
	<u>Corporate (<i>n</i> = 19)</u>		<u>Education (<i>n</i> = 13)</u>		<u>Government (<i>n</i> = 35)</u>	
Personal strain	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Vocational strain	60.53	16.12	59.23	16.00	54.09	10.57
Psychological strain	60.42	15.27	56.69	13.51	51.49	11.16
Interpersonal strain	61.79 _a	15.93	53.77	11.92	49.29 _a	8.98
Physical strain	59.89 _a	13.35	53.62	12.22	51.46 _a	10.13

in education ($M = 53.77$, $SD = 11.92$) did not differ significantly from either women in the corporate world or women in government organizations. Women in corporate organizations ($M = 59.89$, $SD = 13.35$) had significantly higher levels of physical strain than women in government organizations ($M = 51.46$, $SD = 10.13$). Women in education ($M = 53.62$, $SD = 12.22$) did not differ from either women in the corporate world or women in governmental organizations. The remaining two types of personal strain, vocational or psychological, did not differ significantly among the three groups of women. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis of no difference in personal strain stressors is rejected.

Research Question 4

Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies each utilize the same coping strategies? To answer this question, both quantitative and qualitative data were used.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3: There is no difference in the coping strategies used among women leaders in corporate America, education, and government agencies.

Quantitative analysis

The four coping strategies included on the OSI-R were used as dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The independent variable in this analysis was the type of organization (corporate, education, and government). The results of this analysis are presented in Table 15.

The results of the MANOVA were not statistically significant, $F(4, 62) = .85, p = .497$. This finding indicated that women in the three organizational types did not differ in coping with organizational structures. The effect size of .05 provides further evidence that the differences between the three groups for the four types of coping were not substantive. Descriptive statistics for the four coping styles are presented in Table 16.

The means for the three groups were similar for the four coping styles that were used to reduce organizational stress and personal strain. Based on the lack of statistically significant differences, the null hypothesis of no difference in coping styles among the four groups was retained.

Table 15

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Coping by Type of Organization

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.06	4, 62	.85	.497	.05

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics—Coping Styles by Type of Organization

Coping styles	<u>Type of organization</u>					
	<u>Corporate (n = 19)</u>		<u>Education (n = 13)</u>		<u>Government (n = 35)</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Recreation	48.58	16.48	53.38	14.04	48.09	12.99
Self-care	51.63	9.33	49.85	11.51	50.54	10.68
Social support	48.47	5.67	46.31	10.61	50.17	9.73
Rational/cognitive coping	50.58	10.30	48.69	12.13	49.03	11.30

Qualitative analysis

Interviews were conducted with six women who worked in leadership positions. The results of the interviews were recorded and analyzed by three raters. These raters placed the comments made by the women in categories according to the four coping factors identified and defined by the Occupational Stress Inventory—Revised (OSI-R).

Their comments revealed that the interviewees from each category mentioned an attempt to consider recreation, self-care, and social support. It appears that women who worked for governmental agencies may have used social support more than the other work categories. However, the small sample size of six interviewees and the quantitative data proved a lack of statistically significant differences; the null hypothesis of no difference in coping styles among the four groups was retained.

Research Question 5

What is the relationship between the stressors that women experience in leadership and race, age, family, and length of service? To answer this question, only quantitative data were used.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between race and occupational stressors that women face in their current leadership positions.

The six organizational stressors were used as the dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The race (African American or Caucasian) of the participants was used as the independent variables. Because of the few respondents in other race categories, they were not used in this analysis. Table 17 presents results of the MANOVA.

The results of the MANOVA that compared the six organizational stressors by race were not statistically significant, $F(6, 47) = 1.61, p = .166$. However, the medium effect size of .17 indicated that the differences among the groups may be of practical significance. Descriptive statistics were obtained for the six measures by race. Table 18 presents results of this analysis.

Table 17

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Organizational Stressors by Race

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.21	6, 47	1.61	.166	.17

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics—Organizational Stressors by Race of Participant

Organizational stress	<u>Race of participant</u>			
	<u>African American (<i>n</i> = 33)</u>		<u>Caucasian (<i>n</i> = 21)</u>	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Role overload	56.67	11.45	51.14	12.06
Role insufficiency	52.03	12.00	52.05	10.19
Role ambiguity	57.97	11.59	50.67	10.28
Role boundary	56.94	14.44	52.48	10.21
Responsibility	45.12	11.89	43.38	11.96
Physical environment	51.97	7.82	49.43	13.44

The mean scores for the six types of organizational stressors between the African-American and Caucasian participants were similar, although African-American women experienced somewhat greater stress for role overload, role ambiguity, and role boundary than Caucasian women. Due to the lack of statistically significant results, the null hypothesis of no difference between African-American and Caucasian women on organizational stressors is retained.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5: There is no relationship between race and personal strain stressors that women face in their current leadership positions.

The four measures of personal strain on the OSI-R were used as the dependent variables, with the race of the women used as the independent variable. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 19.

The results of the MANOVA comparing personal strain between African-American and Caucasian women were not statistically significant, $F(4, 49) = .86, p = .495$. The small effect size supported the lack of statistically significant differences on personal strain between the two groups. Descriptive statistics obtained for the four measures of personal strain can be found in Table 20.

The mean scores for the four measures of personal strain were similar between the African-American and Caucasian women. Based on the non-significant findings on the MANOVA, the null hypothesis of no difference between the two groups of women is retained.

Table 19

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Personal Strain by Race

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.07	4, 49	.86	.495	.07

Table 20

Descriptive Statistics—Personal Strain by Race of Participant

	<u>Race of participant</u>			
	<u>African American (<i>n</i> = 33)</u>		<u>Caucasian (<i>n</i> = 21)</u>	
Personal strain	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Vocational strain	56.94	13.32	57.52	12.88
Psychological strain	58.03	13.94	53.52	12.39
Interpersonal strain	55.97	14.17	51.29	10.90
Physical strain	56.88	12.51	52.81	11.30

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6: There is no relationship between age and the occupational stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The age categories used in this study were 20 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, and 60 plus. The women who participated in this study recorded their ages in three categories: only 20 to 39, 40 to 49, and 50 to 59. The recorded ages were used as the independent variable in one-way MANOVA, with the six measures of organizational stress used as the dependent variables. Table 21 presents results of this analysis.

The results of the MANOVA comparing the six types of organizational stressors by the age of the participants were not statistically significant, $F(6, 49) = 1.53, p = .190$. The moderate effect size of .16 indicated that although the comparison was not statistically significant, it has some practical significance. The descriptive statistics comparing the six types of organizational stressors by the age of the respondents are presented in Table 22.

The comparisons of organizational stressors by age supported the lack of statistical significance on the MANOVA. Due to the non-significant findings on the MANOVA, the null hypothesis of no difference in organizational stressors by age of the respondents is retained.

Table 21

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Organizational Stressors by Age

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.19	6, 49	1.53	.190	.16

Table 22

Descriptive Statistics—Organizational Stressors by Respondents' Ages

Organizational stressors	<u>Respondents' ages</u>					
	20 to 39 years (<i>n</i> = 21)		40 to 49 years (<i>n</i> = 20)		50 years & over (<i>n</i> = 15)	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Role overload	56.05	11.06	53.50	12.19	53.07	12.71
Role insufficiency	54.05	10.58	47.90	11.72	54.00	10.03
Role ambiguity	52.95	11.33	53.85	12.11	58.80	10.50
Role boundary	55.57	13.80	50.30	12.52	59.73	11.21
Responsibility	44.38	11.54	47.85	11.93	41.13	11.36
Physical environment	50.29	8.45	51.05	10.47	50.87	12.65

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7: There is no relationship between age and the personal strain stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.

A second MANOVA was completed using the four sources of personal strain as the dependent variables and the ages of the participants as the independent variable.

Table 23 presents the results of these analyses.

The results of the MANOVA comparing the four measures of personal strain by age were not statistically significant, $F(4, 51) = 1.99, p = .110$. The moderate effect size of .14 provided evidence that the comparison of personal strain by age had some practical significance, although the differences were not statistically significant. Descriptive statistics obtained for the four measures of personal strain are presented in Table 24.

Table 23

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Personal Strain by Age

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.16	4, 51	1.99	.110	.14

Table 24

Descriptive Statistics—Personal Strain by Respondents' Ages

	<u>Respondents' ages</u>					
	20 to 39 years (<i>n</i> = 21)		40 to 49 years (<i>n</i> = 20)		50 years & over (<i>n</i> = 15)	
Personal stress	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Vocational strain	59.86	13.02	54.70	12.50	55.40	13.45
Psychological strain	60.33	15.36	51.55	10.85	55.47	12.04
Interpersonal strain	59.76	15.15	49.60	9.23	51.47	11.29
Physical strain	58.48	12.55	53.75	12.88	51.40	9.43

The lack of statistically significant differences in the four measures of personal strain is supported through an examination of the mean scores for the three groups. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis of no difference in personal strain by the age of the respondents is retained.

Hypothesis 8

Hypothesis 8: There is no relationship between marital status and occupational stressors women experience in their current leadership positions.

The marital status of the women was used as the independent variable in a one-way MANOVA. The six measures of organizational stress were used as the dependent variables in this analysis. Table 25 presents results of this analysis.

The one-way MANOVA comparing the six measures of organizational stress by the marital status of the women was not statistically significant, $F(6, 48) = .67, p = .676$. The small effect size of .08 indicated that the differences between the women were not of practical significance. Table 26 presents the descriptive statistics of the six types of organizational stress by the marital status of the women.

Table 25

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Organizational Stress by Marital Status

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.08	6, 48	.67	.676	.08

Table 26

Descriptive Statistics—Organizational Stressors by Marital Status

Organizational stressors	<u>Respondents' ages</u>					
	<u>Married (<i>n</i> = 27)</u>		<u>Divorced (<i>n</i> = 9)</u>		<u>Single (<i>n</i> = 19)</u>	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Role overload	53.15	11.22	59.33	13.67	54.16	11.81
Role insufficiency	51.96	11.21	52.78	10.31	52.05	11.47
Role ambiguity	53.56	11.91	53.22	11.73	57.47	11.14
Role boundary	53.96	11.49	58.89	11.88	54.74	15.69
Responsibility	44.00	11.08	50.00	10.56	43.47	13.29
Physical environment	51.15	11.90	54.11	9.69	48.68	7.91

The comparison of the mean scores for the six types of organizational stressors by the three marital statuses supported the lack of statistical significance. As a result of the lack of statistically significant findings on the MANOVA, the null hypothesis of no difference on the six types of organizational stressors by marital status is retained.

Hypothesis 9

Hypothesis 9: There is no relationship between marital status and personal strain stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The four types of personal strain stressors were used as the dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The three marital statuses were used as the independent variable. Table 27 presents results of this analysis.

The comparison of the four measures of personal strain by marital status provided no evidence of a statistically significant result, $F(4, 50) = 1.15, p = .342$. The low effect size of .08 indicated that the findings were not of practical significance. Table 28 presents the descriptive statistics for each of the four types of personal strain.

The mean scores for the four types of personal stress were similar across the three marital statuses. Because the MANOVA was not statistically significant, the null hypothesis of no differences on personal strain by marital status was retained.

Table 27

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Personal Strain by Marital Status

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.09	4, 50	1.15	.342	.08

Table 28

Descriptive Statistics—Personal Stress by Marital Status

	<u>Respondents' ages</u>					
	<u>Married (<i>n</i> = 27)</u>		<u>Divorced (<i>n</i> = 9)</u>		<u>Single (<i>n</i> = 19)</u>	
Personal strain	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Vocational strain	56.44	12.11	59.22	15.60	56.79	13.49
Psychological strain	53.48	12.36	59.67	10.54	57.84	15.85
Interpersonal strain	50.85	10.97	57.56	13.43	56.95	14.89
Physical strain	53.74	13.02	59.44	12.73	54.79	10.63

Hypothesis 10

Hypothesis 10: There is no relationship between number of children and occupational stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The number of children was divided into three groups: 0, 1 to 2, and 3 to 4.

These groupings were used as the independent variable in a one-way MANOVA. The dependent variables in these types of analyses were the six types of organizational stress.

Table 29 presents results of this analysis.

The results of the comparison of the six types of organizational stress by the number of children were statistically significant, $F(6, 48) = 2.42, p = .040$. The moderate

Table 29

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Organizational Stress by Number of Children

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.30	6, 48	2.42	.040	.23

effect size of .23 provided evidence that the results of this analysis also had practical significance. The univariate F tests used to determine which types of organizational stressors were contributing to the statistically significant results are presented in Table 30.

The results of the univariate F tests were not statistically significant. Although the omnibus F test was statistically significant, comparing the individual types of stressors did not provide any statistically significant differences. Descriptive statistics were obtained for each of the organizational stressors by the number of children. Table 31 presents results of these analyses.

The mean scores for the six types of organizational stressors by the number of children supported the findings of the MANOVA. As a result, the null hypothesis of no difference in organizational stressors by the number of children was retained.

Table 30

Univariate F Tests—Organizational Stressors by Number of Children

Organizational stressors	SS	df	MS	F ratio	Sig. of F
Role overload	232.07	2, 52	116.03	.82	.448
Role insufficiency	460.20	2, 52	230.10	2.01	.144
Role ambiguity	420.44	2, 52	210.22	1.67	.198
Role boundary	195.44	2, 52	97.72	.58	.562
Responsibility	358.26	2, 52	179.13	1.34	.270
Physical environment	131.90	2, 52	65.95	.62	.543

Table 31

Descriptive Statistics—Organizational Stressors by Number of Children

Organizational stressors	<u>Number of children</u>					
	<u>None (n = 20)</u>		<u>1 to 2 (n = 24)</u>		<u>3 to 4 (n = 11)</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Role overload	54.10	11.69	56.17	12.65	50.64	10.58
Role insufficiency	53.55	11.29	49.08	10.69	56.36	9.52
Role ambiguity	58.70	11.81	52.58	11.38	54.18	9.60
Role boundary	56.55	15.15	53.05	12.15	57.27	9.88
Responsibility	45.50	13.34	45.92	9.70	39.36	11.81
Physical environment	49.55	7.06	50.63	10.17	53.82	14.91

Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis 11: There is no relationship between number of children and personal strain stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The number of children was divided into three groups: 0, 1 to 2, and 3 to 4. The four types of personal strains were used as the dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The number of children was used as the independent variable in this analysis. Table 32 presents results of this analysis.

The comparison of the four types of personal strain by the number of children was not statistically significant, $F(4, 50) = 2.19, p = .083$. The moderate effect size of .15 indicated that while the results were not statistically significant, the outcomes may have some practical significance. Table 33 presents the descriptive statistics for the four types of personal strain by the number of children.

Table 32

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Personal Strain by Number of Children

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.18	4, 50	2.19	.083	.15

Table 33

Descriptive Statistics—Personal Strain by Number of Children

	<u>Number of children</u>					
	<u>None (<i>n</i> = 20)</u>		<u>1 to 2 (<i>n</i> = 24)</u>		<u>3 to 4 (<i>n</i> = 11)</u>	
Personal strain	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Vocational strain	57.75	14.05	57.29	12.32	56.18	11.91
Psychological strain	59.00	15.99	54.67	10.39	53.91	14.31
Interpersonal strain	58.55	16.51	50.71	9.80	52.55	10.43
Physical strain	55.25	12.33	55.33	12.59	53.09	13.03

The mean scores for the four types of personal strain did not differ significantly by the number of children. Based on the non-significant findings for personal strain by the number of children, the null hypothesis of no difference is retained.

Hypothesis 12

Hypothesis 12: There is no relationship between length of service in the organization and all stressors that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The organizational stressors and personal strain were correlated with years of service with the organization for which the women were currently working. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 34.

Table 34

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations—Years of Service by Organizational Stressors and Personal Strain

Organizational stressors and personal strain	Years of service with organization		
	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	Sig.
Organizational stressors			
Role overload	56	.16	.248
Role insufficiency	56	-.24	.075
Role ambiguity	56	-.22	.106
Role boundary	56	-.07	.596
Responsibility	56	.19	.161
Physical environment	56	-.04	.760
Personal strain			
Vocational strain	56	-.24	.074
Psychological strain	56	-.23	.091
Interpersonal strain	56	-.36	.007
Physical strain	56	-.29	.031

Two statistically significant relationships were obtained on the analyses that correlated organizational stressors with personal strain. Interpersonal strain was significantly related to years with the organization, $r(56) = -.36, p = .007$, and physical strain was significantly related to years with the organization, $r(56) = -.29, p = .031$. The negative relationships between the variables indicated that as years with their respective organizations increased, less organizational stress and personal strain was experienced by the women. Because of the mixed findings on the relationships between years of service and organizational stress and personal strain, the null hypothesis is retained.

Research Question 6

What is the relationship between the coping strategies used by women leaders and race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service? To answer this question only quantitative data were used.

Hypothesis 13

Hypothesis 13: There is no relationship between race and the coping strategies that women face in their current leadership position.

The four coping strategies were used as the dependent variable in a one-way MANOVA. The race (African American and Caucasian) was used as the independent variable in this analysis. Table 35 presents results of this analysis.

The results of the MANOVA provided no evidence of a statistically significant difference between African-American and Caucasian participants on coping strategies, $F(4, 49) = 2.01, p = .107$. The moderate effect size of .14 indicated that the differences between the two groups of women may be of practical significance. Descriptive statistics on the four coping strategies by race are presented in Table 36.

The comparison of mean scores between the African-American and Caucasian women supported the lack of statistical significance on coping strategies. Due to the

Table 35

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Coping Strategies by Race

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.16	4, 49	2.01	.107	.14

Table 36

Descriptive Statistics—Coping Strategies by Race of Participant

Coping strategies	<u>Race of participant</u>			
	<u>African American (<i>n</i> = 33)</u>		<u>Caucasian (<i>n</i> = 21)</u>	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Recreation	48.27	13.13	50.43	15.06
Self-care	49.05	8.43	51.90	12.31
Social support	50.16	9.10	46.57	8.44
Rational/cognitive coping	50.33	10.02	46.29	13.57

non-significant findings, the null hypothesis of no difference between African-American and Caucasian women on coping strategies is retained.

Hypothesis 14

Hypothesis 14: There is no relationship between age and the coping strategies that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The three age groups (20 to 39 years, 40 to 49 years, and 50 years and over) were used as the independent variable in a one-way MANOVA. The four coping strategies were used as the dependent variables in this analysis. Table 37 presents results of this analysis.

The results of the MANOVA comparing the four coping strategies by age were not statistically significant, $F(4, 51) = 1.28, p = 1.28$. The small effect size of .09 provided evidence that the comparison of coping strategies by age has little practical significance. Descriptive statistics obtained for the four measures of coping strategies are presented in Table 38.

Table 37

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Coping Strategies by Age

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.10	4, 51	1.28	.290	.091

Table 38

Descriptive Statistics—Coping Strategies by Respondents' Ages

Coping strategies	<u>Respondents' ages</u>					
	20 to 39 years (<i>n</i> = 21)		40 to 49 years (<i>n</i> = 20)		50 years & over (<i>n</i> = 15)	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Recreation	49.05	14.13	47.70	14.67	49.73	12.52
Self-care	48.86	10.19	50.05	10.58	52.93	9.03
Social support	49.48	9.83	50.50	6.95	46.53	9.94
Rational/cognitive coping	47.10	12.01	51.30	11.00	47.80	11.14

The mean scores among the three age groups were not substantially different, providing support for the lack of statistical significance. As a result of this analysis, the null hypothesis of no difference among the three age groups is retained.

Hypothesis 15

Hypothesis 15: There is no relationship between marital status and the coping strategies that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The four coping strategies measured by the OSI-R were used as dependent variables in a one-way MANOVA. The marital status of the women was used as the independent variable in this analysis. Table 39 presents results of this analysis.

The comparison of the four measures of coping strategies by marital status provided no evidence of a statistically significant result, $F(4, 50) = 1.80, p = .144$. The low effect size of .12 indicated that the findings were not of practical significance. Table 40 presents the descriptive statistics for each of the four coping strategies.

Table 39

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Coping Strategies by Marital Status

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.14	4, 50	1.80	.144	.13

Table 40

Descriptive Statistics—Coping Strategies by Marital Status

Coping strategies	Respondents' marital status					
	<u>Married (<i>n</i> = 27)</u>		<u>Divorced (<i>n</i> = 9)</u>		<u>Single (<i>n</i> = 19)</u>	
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Recreation	47.33	15.10	50.11	12.21	50.37	13.02
Self-care	49.78	11.40	51.33	10.77	50.47	7.94
Social support	49.15	11.07	52.00	5.32	47.37	6.75
Rational/cognitive coping	47.37	12.00	56.67	10.40	47.00	10.11

The mean scores for coping strategies showed that some differences were occurring in the coping strategies among the women of the three age groups; however, these differences were not statistically significant. Due to the lack of statistically significant findings, the null hypothesis of no differences in coping strategies among the married, divorced, and single women is retained.

Hypothesis 16

Hypothesis 16: There is no relationship between children and the coping strategies that women experience in their current leadership positions.

The number of children, divided into three groups, was used as the independent variable in a one-way MANOVA. The dependent variables in this analysis were the four coping strategies measured on the OSI-R. Table 41 presents results of this analysis.

The comparison of the four coping strategies by the number of children was not statistically significant, $F(4, 50) = 1.60, p = .189$. The small effect size of .11 indicated that while the results were not statistically significant, the outcomes may have some practical significance. Table 42 presents the descriptive statistics for the four coping strategies by the number of children.

Table 41

Multivariate Analysis of Variance—Coping Strategies by Number of Children

Roy's largest root	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i> ratio	Sig. of <i>F</i>	Effect size
.13	4, 50	1.60	.189	.11

Table 42

Descriptive Statistics—Coping Strategies by Number of Children

Coping strategies	<u>Number of Children</u>					
	<u>None (n = 20)</u>		<u>1 to 2 (n = 24)</u>		<u>3 to 4 (n = 11)</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Recreation	52.40	12.48	47.29	14.98	46.36	12.94
Self-care	53.45	8.97	46.75	10.64	53.09	8.69
Social support	48.75	6.55	48.71	7.49	51.27	14.53
Rational/cognitive coping	49.40	9.34	47.04	12.88	50.82	12.14

The comparison of the three groups based on the number of children showed minor fluctuations in coping strategies. Due to the lack of statistically significant differences, the null hypothesis of no difference for coping strategies among the three groups (based on the number of children) was retained.

Hypothesis 17

Hypothesis 17: There is no relationship between length of service in the organization and the coping strategies that women use in their current leadership positions.

The four types of coping strategies were correlated with the number of years of service to determine if a relationship existed and the direction of the relationship. Table 43 presents results of this analysis.

One statistically significant correlation was found between social support and years of service, $r(56) = .28, p = .034$. The positive direction of the correlation indicated that as years of service with the organization increased, the use of social support as a

Table 43

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations—Years of Service by Coping Strategies

Coping strategies	<u>Years of service with organization</u>		
	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	Sig
Recreation	56	-.09	.528
Self-care	56	.12	.366
Social support	56	.28	.034
Rational/cognitive coping	56	.02	.882

coping strategy also increased. The remaining coping strategies were not related to years of service with the organization. The null hypothesis of no difference in the years of service in the organization and coping strategies used by women leaders was rejected.

Summary

The majority of the women in this study who completed the survey (61.2%) were married, African American, ages 20 to 49 years, with no more than two children, and worked for governmental agencies. Of the six women who were interviewed, 83.3% were divorced, African American, between the ages of 50 and 59, with no more than two children. The total sample of women who participated in the study worked in their organizations for an average of 10.38 years.

When examining the results of the analysis from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives, to determine the stressors women in leadership positions were facing in their current positions, three of the six stress factors associated with Occupational Roles—role ambiguity, role boundary, and role overload—were identified as sources of stress. The sources of stress connected with personal strain were vocational strain,

psychological strain, interpersonal strain, and physical strain. It is interesting to note that vocational strain was the highest contributor of all the stressors.

When comparing the three types of organizations, role insufficiency was statistically significant within corporate America. Responsibility was statistically significant among those associated with education. Women in government were the least stressed out of all the organizations.

In examining coping strategies, using the OSI-R, it was found that three (recreation, social support, rational/cognitive thinking) of the four coping factors were lower than the mean T-score of 50, indicating that the women may not have been using these coping factors to alleviate stress associated with their positions. It appears that the only coping strategy used was self-care.

However, from the qualitative perspective, women interviewed reported they often used social support and self-care as coping mechanisms when stressed at their jobs. It was also interesting to note that they reported prayer and spirituality as major means of coping with stress.

When looking at the demographic data, there was no difference in the stressors or coping strategies experienced by the women in this study regardless of race, age, marital status, and children. When considering length of service, it was found that as the years of service with the organization increased, the use of social support as a coping strategy also increased.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate stressors experienced and coping strategies used by women who hold leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies. This study investigated the types of occupational stressors, personal strain stressors, and coping strategies experienced by women in leadership. Demographic variables such as age, marital status, number of children, race, and length of service were also examined. This chapter presents a summary of the study including discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Research Methodology

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative portion, a survey questionnaire was administered to 67 women who held leadership positions within all three occupational categories. The sample for this study consisted of women who were at least 20 years of age and held leadership positions in corporate America (32%), education (12%), and government (56%). The questionnaire selected was the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised (OSI-R). The OSI-R consisted of structured questions on a Likert-type rating scale.

The OSI-R contained three categories: (a) Occupational Roles Questionnaires, which measured six sources of stress (role overload, role insufficiency, roles ambiguity, role boundary, responsibility, and physical environment), (b) Personal Strain, which measured four different levels of stress (vocational strain, psychological strain, interpersonal strain, and physical strain), and (c) Personal Resources, which measured four coping strategies (recreation, self-care, social support, and rational/cognitive coping).

Data were analyzed through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics such as Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), and Univariate *F* Tests. All decisions on the statistical significance of findings used a criterion alpha level of .05.

The qualitative portion consisted of a face-to-face semi-structured interview with six women from education, corporate America, and government. Participants interviewed for this study can be described this way:

1. A university president from education
2. A teacher from education
3. A COO of a girls' organization from corporate America
4. An engineer from corporate America
5. A logistics manager from federal government
6. A Michigan Court of Appeals judge from state government.

Data from the interview were analyzed by first placing comments in the categories provided by the OSI-R occupational roles, personal strain, and coping strategies. Then new categories were proved for any comments that did not apply to any

of the OSI-R categories. The purpose of utilizing both methods was to assist with confirming and providing completeness of the data. Not all sources of data necessarily validate each other; however, the results complement and contribute to the research.

Summary of Literature

Women currently make up half of the general workforce and are increasingly moving into occupations that were held exclusively by men. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, 1999), women continue to face high risks from job-related stress in the workplace. There are many reasons for this dilemma. First of all, women have been socialized to be caretakers, and take on responsibilities not always performed by men. They are often faced with balancing demands from their career and family (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002).

Second, women who hold positions traditionally held by men are often in the minority. This may in turn generate stereotyping and a disproportionate share of attention. Increased visibility often subjects women to greater scrutiny while performing their duties (Catalyst, 2003). Prior research has shown that stereotypes create relatively negative perceptions of women's overall leadership competence. This often perpetuates the need for women to outperform their male colleagues (Heilman, 2001).

Third, in order to have a successful career, women recognize the importance of developing a leadership style comfortable to their male colleagues. This often results in women adopting a "masculine" style of leadership that may not be comfortable for them (Catalyst, 1996).

Fourth, isolation is often experienced by women in leadership positions. For example, men may choose to conduct sidebars during smoke breaks or while golfing after

work. This type of behavior becomes more apparent during business trips. Catalyst (2003) further supports this contention by indicating that women are not privy to critical business information gained in such places.

In summary, workplace stress experienced by women in leadership may be due to the need to alter leadership styles to be acceptable to their male counterparts, isolation from critical information, high visibility, and the attending pressure to perform as well as the need to balance family and work.

Previous studies have been conducted on occupational stress and have proven that stress in the workplace has become a common occurrence. According to *Health and Safety Executive* (2000), employees are often stressed when faced with a heavy workload, short timeframe to accomplish work, and conflicting priorities. The feeling of not having a stake in the enterprise and minimal recognition can also produce stress. Minimal management support along with lack of clarity generates a greater risk of the employee suffering a psychiatric disorder. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1999) defined workplace stress as the harmful physical and emotional response that is triggered when conflict exists between job demand and the amount of control, capabilities, or resources the employee has to meet the demand.

In this study, women in leadership experienced occupational stress in all these areas. Since minimal research has been conducted identifying occupational stressors and coping of women in leadership, this study focused on not just identifying the occupational stressors but the coping strategies used by women as well.

Theories Relevant to Stress

Hans Selye (1982) defined stress as the rate of wear and tear on the body and identified good (eustress) and bad (distress) stresses. Eustress can be stimulating, challenging, and exhilarating. On the other hand, distress is a situation that can be threatening, disturbing, and distressing. The reaction concept believes that stress exists if an individual shows a specific reaction pattern regardless of situational characteristics (Selye, 1956). There were three general theories of stress identified in the literature: (a) response, (b) stimulus, and (c) transaction. The response theorist views stress as a neurological and physiological response when confronted with a stressor. This general response to stress is viewed as a set of reactions that mobilize the organism's resources to combat a potential threat. When a person or organism reacts to a noxious agent, Selye (1956) categorized this condition as the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). GAS consists of three stages—alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. The first reaction to stress is the alarm stage which is similar to the fight-or-flight response. The alarm stage occurs when a shock triggers bodily responses such as increased heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, metabolic rate, tensed muscles, and perspiring palms and soles. Further exposure to stress leads to the second stage, in which the body remains on alert and adapts to the stressor. If the stressor continues, it may lead to the third stage, which is exhaustion. The body's energy reserves are finally exhausted and breakdown occurs. The exhaustion stage occurs after prolonged chronic stress, and shutting off the stress activation system becomes difficult. Therefore, bodily responses may continue to occur during sleep or free time. If this erratic behavior continues, it may eventually lead to death (Selye, 1970).

The stimulus theorists believe a stressor stimulates a person or organism beyond capacity, which generates stress (Cox, 1978). The stimulus theory focuses on situational conditions or events. Most situations or events may cause strain in some individuals. Yet all individuals may not react in the same manner to the same stressor. The transaction and cognitive appraisal theorist emphasizes the relationship between the person and environment. R. S. Lazarus (1966) defined stress as an internal state of one's perception in reference to a potential threat to that person's physical or psychic well-being. Therefore the type of interaction perceived would determine the outcome of a stressful experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The appraisal of one's personal control plays an active role in the interaction of the person and environment. It is Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) belief that cognitive appraisal plays a significant role in the stress process. Appraisal processes refer to an individual's classification and assessment of an encounter with respect to the individual's well-being. The cognitive appraisal of stress is a two-part process which involves a primary appraisal and a secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal involves the determination of an event as stressful. During primary appraisal, the event or situation can be categorized as irrelevant, beneficial, or stressful. If the event is appraised as stressful, the event is then further evaluated as a harm/loss, a threat, or a challenge which leads to the secondary appraisal.

Stress and Demographics

Demographics such as age, race, marital status, and length of service play an integral part in the stress levels of individuals (Smith et al., 2000). When analyzing the effect of age, Smith et al. (2000) revealed that middle-aged workers (30-50 years old) had

slightly higher proportions of stress than those under 30 and over 55. Davis-Roberts (2006) indicated the age group 31-40 experienced higher levels of stress in role insufficiency and role boundary than colleagues in other age groups at the Northern Caribbean University.

Marital status influenced the reporting of stress according to Smith et al. (2000). Those widowed, divorced, or separated experienced a greater proportion of high stress. Davis-Roberts (2006) found that marital status was also related to sources of stress. Single faculty and staff who had never been married were found to experience higher levels of stress in both role insufficiency and role boundary than those who were married or had previously been married. Ethnicity also revealed a difference according to Smith et al. (2000): The non-White group reported having a greater proportion in the high reported stress category than the sample as a whole.

Coping Strategies

Coping has been researched as a psychological construct for years. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) grouped coping into two phases. The primary appraisal is an evaluation process of determining whether or not the stressor has the potential of leading to harm and how challenging the stressor may be to manage. The second phase of coping is secondary appraisal, when the potential to deal with the stressor is assessed. To understand coping one must know the difference between coping strategies and coping resources. An individual's endurance, health, intelligence, emotional stability, and social support can play an active role in the amount of coping resources they possess (Burr & Klein, 1994). Coping strategies refer to the specific efforts, both behavioral and

psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events.

There are several coping strategies identified in this study, which include problem solving, active, emotion-focused, and avoidance. Problem-solving strategies are efforts to actively alleviate stressful circumstances, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve efforts to regulate emotionally stressful events. Research indicates that people use both types of coping strategies to combat the majority of stressful events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

Problem-focus coping is normally used when dealing with work and family-related problems. Stressors one may perceive to have less control over, such as physical health, require the use of emotion-focused coping. The coping styles used by workers, whether focused on altering the situation or managing intra-psychic distress, tend to influence the extent to which workers will experience illness, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction with their jobs (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

Coping literature has also revealed a distinction between active and avoidant strategies. Active coping strategies are either behavioral or psychological responses designed to change the nature of the stressor itself or how one thinks about it. Avoidant coping strategies lead people into activities (such as alcohol use) or mental states (such as withdrawal) in order to keep them from directly addressing the stressor.

Social support used in the workplace and at home buffers the impact of stress by providing actual assistance in problem solving. It also provides a feeling of attachment to others for emotional support (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Pugliesi & Shook, 1988). At work,

while men's support networks tend to be work-based, women's networks tend to be family- and friend-based (Piltch et al., 1994).

Summary and Discussion of Major Findings

Although a summary of all findings was presented at the end of chapter 4, major findings are summarized and discussed here providing a basis for conclusions and recommendations. Six research questions were developed for the study. The summary of major findings includes both quantitative and qualitative data.

Research Question 1

What stressors do women in leadership positions face in their current positions?

Six sources of occupational stress identified by the OSI-R were examined: role overload, role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary, responsibility, and physical environment. Research revealed that women in this study experienced maladaptive levels of stress relating to three out of six occupational stressors—role ambiguity, role boundary, and role overload.

Role ambiguity surfaced when women reported they were given assignments with unclear guidance. They did not have a sense of their boss's expectations and needed clarity. They expressed a challenge in prioritizing their workload and were not always sure how completed assignments were evaluated. A government group leader stated, "When a change in higher management occurs, it forces you into having to figure out what the next chain up is looking for and trying to make sure you are providing it properly."

The previous statement also interfaces with Role Boundary, since women were unclear about authority lines. When faced with decision making, women reported the feeling of not having a stake in the enterprise and felt their voices were not always heard. To confirm this feeling, a government group leader complained, “You never know if your responses are being listened to or valued.” For example, if a male colleague proposes an idea previously made by a woman, the male’s suggestion is often viewed as the first time the idea had ever been mentioned. Management often had mixed views on how an assignment should be accomplished; therefore, women experienced conflicting guidance. Another leader shared, “We never know exactly what approach was going to work on any one particular day.”

Finally, the characteristics of role overload were prevalent throughout all occupational categories. Women were faced with unreasonable workloads and lack of resources. Women reported working excessive hours and were often faced with tight deadlines. A corporate engineer shared, “I work 7 days a week which leaves little time for me. I have been working 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 hours a day for the last couple of weeks.” She continued by stating, “I think my biggest stress is not having enough time to accomplish my work.” Another woman also shared, “Working on an intense project for Iraq has kept me working 7 days a week and 12 hours a day.” A college president stated, “As an institution, we are constantly balancing our budget and we don’t have the level of flexibility that a lot of businesses have.” Davis-Roberts (2006) supported this situation as her research also revealed that women working full time in education experienced role overload.

While published literature was found that women in education experience these types of stressors in their positions (Fischer, 1994), studies on women executives in different fields, specifically government and business, revealed that these stressors were not considered; however, the present study found that women in all three occupations experienced stress from role overload, role ambiguity, and role boundary.

The second set of stressors identified as personal strain stressors by the OSI-R were vocational, psychological, interpersonal, and physical strain. Results revealed that while psychological, physical, and interpersonal strain were associated with some stress, the major influence of stress in this area was vocational strain. The qualitative portion complemented the quantitative findings in this area.

Even though some psychological strain was exhibited as the respondents of this study reported complaints regarding their job, interpersonal strain was revealed by women feeling guilty for not being able to spend quality time with their family and loved ones. Physical strain surfaced as some of the interviewees reported having physical symptoms that were exacerbated by the stress on their jobs; women in this study were greatly stressed as they continued to work in positions in which they dreaded going to work. Some women lost interest in their jobs. A teacher stated, “It has gotten so bad that I dread going to work; the job is not enjoyable anymore.” To support similar findings with the academic occupation, Davis-Roberts (2006) found that female faculty and staff at Northern Caribbean University experienced high levels of vocational strain.

The finding of role ambiguity, role boundary, and role overload is not surprising since these can be linked to socialization and gender stereotyping. According to Tannen (1994), girls are socialized to act as if they are not too sure of themselves for fear of

being perceived as conceited. These gender role perceptions may be embedded in women's work environments. For example, even though aggressiveness and assertiveness have been identified as important attributes of leadership behavior, women's hesitancy to be aggressive is often misinterpreted in the workplace as a lack of self-confidence, lack of competence, and ambiguity. When women are viewed as lacking self-confidence and competence it may perpetuate questions concerning their credibility and authority (Catalyst, 1999).

When women are not clear on what is required to be evaluated favorably and advance within their organizations they often work hard and experience role overload. Wentling (1998) confirms that women experience more role overload and stress than their male counterparts.

Research Question 2

What coping strategies do women in leadership use in their current position?

A total of four coping strategies were examined, using the OSI-R: recreation, self-care, social support, and rational cognitive coping. These coping factors were not found to be statistically significant according to the instrument. However, from a qualitative perspective, women reported the use of self-care by attempting to get proper sleep, by exercising, and watching their eating habits. Some relied on family and friends as social support. Most of the women felt they could count on at least one person who valued and loved them. A woman judge stated, "I've had so much support from my church, pastor, community, family and friends." The majority of the women did not appear to take advantage of recreation, relaxing activities, and rational cognitive thinking.

Based on socialization, men and women may appraise situations differently. Women report a lower sense of personal control over their lives than men. Therefore a difference has been found in the coping styles of men and women (Krajewski & Goffin, 2005). Women may resort to an emotional focused form of coping when they feel they do not have the power to control the situation. As a result, religious coping and spirituality have been found to be a central coping strategy especially for African American women dealing with racism and sexism (Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

The majority of the women in this study were African American and although prayer and spirituality were not identified as an occupational coping factor on the OSI-R, they appeared throughout the interviews as a means of coping with stress. One woman stated, “I am a prayerful person and read scripture and stay continuously in the Word each day.” This finding is consistent with Heintzman and Mannell’s (2003) notion of spiritual functions that may “serve as coping strategies to improve the negative influence of time pressure” (p. 207) and possibly stress in general. It is also consistent with research conducted by Constantine et al. (2002), in which they found that African American women distracted themselves from stressors by using a sense of spiritual connection. This spiritual connection helped them to obtain emotional and spiritual balance in their lives by connecting with a higher power.

Research Question 3

Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies each experience the same stressors?

Role insufficiency, which identifies a poor fit between skills and the job being performed, was not seen across all three occupational groups but was revealed mostly in

the corporate America group. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), psychological stress is “a particular relationship between the person and their environment and is appraised as taxing or exceeding one’s resources and endangering their well-being” (p. 19). Women experienced role insufficiency within their work environment as some felt they lacked the proper skills required to be successful and advance on the job. This may have been appraised as a threat to their economic status and well-being. This dilemma aligns with the Transaction Theory of Stress since it is Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) belief that cognitive appraisal plays a significant role in the stress process. As women appraise their workplace experience to be stressful it may cause them to feel threatened and they lacked confidence in their work performance.

The minimal number of women holding leadership positions traditionally held by men may be a major factor. For example, even though women account for over 46% of the total U.S. labor force, only 11.9% of the 11,681 corporate officers in America’s top 500 companies are women. In 1998, it was 11.2%. If this pace continues, the number of women on top corporate boards will not equal the number of men until the year 2064 (Evans, 2000). These statistics may support the notion that women may be perceived as not fitting the image of an ideal leader. This also contributes to lack of mentors and role models required to assist in developing women as leaders. By being a minority in their work environments women are subjected to high visibility and isolation. To support this notion, according to Catalyst (2003), isolation of information may diminish women’s opportunity to be armed with viable information and their ability to obtain the experience required to be competent on their job. Kanter (1979) also supports this notion by revealing that as women find themselves in small numbers they may be subject to

isolation, hostility, harassment, and discrimination. As a result of isolation, the likelihood of internalizing failures is increased (Bhatnagar, 1988; Long, 1989). Isolation of critical information and lack of role models and mentors creates a deficit in skills and competence required for women to be successful leaders (Catalyst, 2005). Competence is the ability of a person to impact, affect, or change their environment. These women may have been experiencing isolation, lack of competence, and lack of role models and mentors, all which support the finding of role insufficiency in this study.

A comparison of the four types of personal strain stressors—vocational, interpersonal, psychological, and physical strain—provided significant differences among the three occupational groups. Results revealed that corporate women experienced significantly higher levels of interpersonal and physical strain than women in government and education. Interpersonal strain may have surfaced as women suffer from multiple role stress combined with balancing work and family time. Lease (1999) supports this concept by reporting professional women continue to be primarily responsible for household chores and childcare. Taking care of children and aging parents continues to be a source of stress for women who work outside the home (Repetti et al., 1989). These multiple role stressors generate conflicting priorities as women internalize the strain of having to choose between their family and work, which is associated with interpersonal strain.

Physical strain surfaced as a major strain experienced by women who work in corporations. Physical strain may take a toll on women's health in the work environment. In Haynes and Feinleib (1980), the Framingham Heart Study states that women's health is jeopardized by stress. Stress further perpetuates conditions such as depression, heart

disease, chronic pain, nervousness, cancer, strokes, and high blood pressure. Deaths from stress-related diseases are increasing among women, and it is Barnett and Hyde's (2001) belief that women will suffer more stress-related illnesses as they move into high-pressure jobs that are combined with family roles.

There was no real difference in vocational strain and psychological strain among the other occupational groups. However, responsibility which identifies the level of accountability for activities, work performance of subordinates, and a concern for others' performance was significant among those associated with education. Davis-Roberts's (2006) research supports this finding by identifying responsibility as a contributor to stress for women faculty and staff at Northern Caribbean University.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined the Transaction Theory of Stress as the degree of fit between a person and their environment. The finding of role insufficiency and interpersonal and physical strain experienced predominately by women in corporate America along with the finding of responsibility within the education arena are associated with the Transaction Theory of Stress. According to this theory, stressful experiences are construed as person-environment transactions. These transactions depend on the impact of the external stressor. The impact is mediated by the person's appraisal of the stressor. When faced with an event, a person evaluates the potential threat of that event as positive, controllable, challenging, irrelevant, etc. When women are isolated or treated differently from men because of gender stereotyping or lack of role models, they may view the treatment as negative, thus upsetting balance of fit to the environment and causing them to be stressed.

Research Question 4

Do women holding leadership positions in corporate America, education, and governmental agencies each utilize the same coping strategies?

Results revealed that women in the three organizational types did not differ in coping strategies. They did not fully take advantage of coping resources such as recreation, self-care, rational cognitive thinking, and social support. This could be the result of working long hours and not having adequate time to take advantage of these strategies.

These results may also align with the socialization of women. Girls are sometimes socialized in a manner that would prevent them from learning effective ways of problem solving and managing distress. Such socialization may lead them to underestimating their abilities to take care of themselves. This type of behavior may be transferred to the workplace. Most women in leadership positions do not take advantage of the opportunities to engage in rational cognitive thinking to mitigate stresses (Korabik & Van Kampen, 1995). It could be possible that women cope better with stressful situations that demand passive coping, since avoidance can be an effective appropriate approach when one feels powerless to impacts and events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Since women have been socialized to be caregivers, they often neglect themselves and may not feel they had a stake in the enterprise. This may have led them not to take adequate advantage of coping resources available to them.

Research Question 5

What is the relationship between the stressors that women experience in leadership and race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service?

In this study, there was no significant relationship between races, age, number of children, and marital status when considering occupational or personal strain stressors that women face in their current leadership positions. Even though all women experienced stress in role overload, role ambiguity, and role boundary, African American women experienced slightly greater degrees of stress in these areas than did Caucasian women but not enough to be statistically significant.

According to Essed (1990) and Collins (1991) African American women are faced with racial and gender discrimination, as well as discrimination based on socioeconomic status. These forms of discrimination may cause stress that may be detrimental to their mental and physical health (Lepore et al., 2006). Cumulative experiences of racism can lead to psychological distress and have been proven to have lasting negative effects on their targets (Utsey et al., 2002). Theoretically and empirically, there are gaps in literature with respect to the stress experience of African American women. Consequently more studies should be conducted on African American women and stress.

When considering length of service, two statistically significant relationships were revealed. Interpersonal and physical strain was significantly related to the number of years women had worked with their organization. This study revealed that as years with their respective organizations increased, fewer interpersonal and physical strains were experienced by these women. This phenomenon may exist since the longevity of a woman's career allows for time to adjust to the culture and work environment. The organization may grow to respect her abilities and leadership style. As women are promoted to higher levels of management, they become more involved in the decision-

making process. This level of involvement mitigates isolation of critical information that further minimizes the impact of interpersonal and physical strain.

Research Question 6

What is the relationship between the coping strategies used by women leaders and race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service?

Results revealed there is no relationship between coping strategies and race, age, number of children, marital status, and length of service that women face in their current leadership position. It seems that women in leadership, who experience various forms of stress, quickly learn to appraise what is relevant to them and consider their coping options for balancing their work and family obligations. If the situation is perceived to be a challenge or threat to their well-being, they learn to use the personal and environmental resources at their disposal regardless of age, marital status, or number of children. Powell's (1998) study on senior executive women and how they cope with difficult work situations found that women coped by using their skills, personality traits, expertise, and problem-solving techniques. Age was not a factor. Bierema's (1994) study on women coping in a corporate world found that executive women across the board mitigated obstacles or barriers by developing and maintaining their self-confidence.

The majority of the women in this study were 40 years of age or older, were not married, and had zero to two children. According to Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), one of the major factors that facilitate women's career development is what he calls home lifestyle (the women are single, marry late, and have no or few children). It could be that by the time women's careers develop to leadership positions, demographics such as race,

age, number of children, marital status, and length of service play a minimal role in what they do including the coping strategies they used to combat stress.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the results of this study. Women who hold leadership positions within corporate America, education, and governmental agencies experienced maladaptive levels of occupational stress to include role ambiguity, role boundary, and role overload. African American women experienced somewhat greater levels of stress than Caucasian women. When considering personal strain stressors, vocational strain proved to be the most significant stressor. Yet all women were also plagued with some levels of psychological, interpersonal, and physical strain.

Overall, women in leadership positions in corporate America experienced higher levels of stress than those in education and government. Corporate women experienced higher levels of role insufficiency (a poor fit between skills and job being performed), interpersonal strain (not having enough time to spend with family members), and physical strain (physical symptoms). Women who worked for education experienced higher levels of stress associated with responsibility than other occupational categories. This may be due to the fact that they are accountable for the accomplishments of their students.

This study revealed two statistically significant relationships that correlated personal strain stressors with length of service. As the length of time with their respective organizations increased, less occupational stress and personal strain was experienced by the women.

Although prayer and spirituality were not identified as occupational coping factors on the OSI-R questionnaire, they appeared throughout the interviews as a means of coping. This finding is consistent with the fact that many African Americans use religious problem-solving as a way to cope in search for meaning, comfort, and control when faced with problems. It allows them to align their religious and spirituality beliefs with the issue at hand (Pargament et al., 1988; Pargament et al., 2000). This finding may have surfaced since African American women represented the majority of women in this study.

Recommendations for Practice

One single study cannot always provide adequate solutions to a given problem; however, the following suggestions may be helpful. The findings in this study can provide information on ways to create a healthier environment within corporate America, education, and governmental agencies. Examining the ways women cope with stress can help facilitate understanding of the processes and mechanisms by which coping strategies counteract the negative impact of stress on health and well-being (Somerfield & McCrae, 2000). This knowledge may prove to be useful in developing effective health-related policies and programs to prevent stress-induced illnesses, reduce health service costs, and promote population health (Folkman & Greer, 2000).

Women must stop falling victim to believing that in order to be successful they must sacrifice family. Half of the women interviewed in this study—one each from corporate America, government, and education—sacrificed having children for their careers. In order for women to balance their life with family and career, men must also realize the importance of being equal partners and share responsibilities of the home and

family. Women must be aware of the need for their support and release control of mothering and household duties.

Leaders in corporate America, governmental agencies, and education must support women on issues that generate stress such as stereotyping, isolation of critical information due to good-ole-boy networks, and making women feel pressured to alter their leadership style.

Need for Education

There is a need to generate awareness through educating women on how to identify stressors and cope with them as they arise. Employers of corporate America, education, and governmental agencies must play an active role by supporting and providing education. Seminars, lectures, and conferences must be conducted to generate awareness and assist women on how to mitigate occupational and personal strain stressors. It is important for women to identify and understand the stressors they may be experiencing. This would allow them to be proactive and make better career and life choices. They must be taught time management skills to learn how to balance their work and personal lives. Corporate America, education, and governmental agencies should invest in training these women.

Recommendations for Research

The study of stress is inexhaustible and has been limited to measuring stress and coping, as well as using independent variables of race, age, marital status, number of children, and length of service. It is suggested that more studies be conducted on each of the stressors identified within the three occupations used.

There is a great need to study coping strategies since women in this study rarely used the coping resources identified in the literature. Stress and coping literature is minimal with respect to providing knowledge about African American women functioning in leadership positions. African American women leaders and stress should be studied further, since the majority of African American families are headed by single African American women and rely solely on their income, which is an additional stressor.

Prayer and spirituality surfaced throughout the interviews but were not among the OSI-R coping strategies suggested. Since women are using prayer and strategies related to spirituality perhaps more recognition should be given to these strategies and more research should be conducted on the efficacy of such strategies.

There is also a need for qualitative research to obtain more information from personal interviews and case studies that have not been dealt with in this study. Future studies should consider using men in leadership to compare the difference between those stressors experienced by men and those experienced by women.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER, SURVEY, AND CONSENT FORMS

Researcher Patricia A. Bernard
Andrews University
School of Education
Department: Leadership

Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

Topic of qualitative research study: The Stresses and Coping Strategies of Women in Leadership Positions.

Purpose: Stress is at an all time high in our society. This study will explore stressors experienced and coping strategies used by women that hold leadership positions in corporate America, Education and government agencies. This population was chosen because there is much debate on how stress and the working environment affect women in leadership. This populace is unique since it will encompass opinions of women leaders from three different industries.

Potential Benefits: By identifying stressors experienced and coping strategies used by women experience while in leadership positions, upper and middle management can become aware of the need to alter their organizations' leadership training programs, and their policies for recruiting, promoting, and retaining people in leadership positions. In addition, this study can help provide essential information to support women in pursuit of equality in the workplace and assist them with the journey of becoming successful leaders in whatever type of enterprise they seek to excel.

I will keep the information and data I collect during this investigation confidential. I will not disclose the identity of the participants or the write-up of the study unless otherwise indicated by the participants.

Each participant will choose the location, home, office, or other location of her involvement in this study. The interview process will consist of one face-to-face, tape recorded interview, lasting 1 hour. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. In order to insure that all information will remain confidential please do not include your name. Copies of the project will be provided to my Andrews University advisor and made available to corporate America, Education and governmental agencies if requested.

It is recognized that participation in this study is of a voluntary nature. The researcher or participant is free to withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Because of the voluntary nature of participation there will be no form of payment, reimbursement of costs other type of inducement for participation in the research.

Participants have the opportunity to ask questions and receive satisfactory answers before consenting to participate in this study.

I hereby give consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Subject

Date

Printed name

Date

Witness

Please send me a report on the results of this research project. (Please circle one.)
YES NO

"I have been given a copy of this consent form." _____
YES NO

Note: Criteria for this study: (1) Women in leadership positions within the state of Michigan ; (2) at least 20 years old (3) must supervise others and (4) must possess a minimum of two years or experience within corporate America, Education and government industries.

Dated _____

Signature of Investigator:

"I have reviewed the content of this form with the person signing above. I have explained potential risks and benefits of the study."

Signature of Investigator
Date _____

(248) 561-7721
Telephone Number

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Demographics

1. **What is your current position and title?**
2. **Where does your position fit into your organization structure?**
3. **How long have you been with this organization?**
4. **What was the gender of the person that previously held your position?**
5. **Have you worked for any other Corporate America, Education or government agencies? _____ If so when, how long and what was your position? _____**
6. **What age group do you fall in 20-39-____-40-49____50-59____60+_____**
7. **What gender traditionally holds your position?**

8. **What is your marital status? Married____, divorced____, single____**
9. **How many children do you have? 0____1-2____3-4____, 5+_____**
10. **What is the age group of the children? Early childhood ____0-5 middle Child hood 6-8____, 9-14 adolescent____15-17early adult____18-21 21+____**
11. **What is your race? African American ____Asian ____Caucasian____Hispanic____ Other_____**

12. What events within your career may have generated a positive affect on your career? _____

13. What events within your career have left a negative affect on your career?

14. How do you unwind after work?_____

15. On a typical morning how do you feel about going to work?

16. What barriers if any, do you think exist for women in leadership?

17. Have you ever felt the need to alter your leadership style when dealing with men versus women?

18. What goals have you sacrificed or compromised in order to be successful in your position?

19. What kinds of stress have you experienced within the last 12 months? How did you handle it?

20. Of the stressors that you named what are the three top stressors that concern you?

21. What recommendations do you have for women aspiring to become future leaders in your arena?

22. For future women leaders that hold leadership positions, what recommendations do you have for combating stress in the work environment?

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE

(Insert

Item Booklet

This booklet is divided into three sections which contain statements about work situations and individual habits. You may be asked to complete one, two, or all three of the sections. Be sure to respond to all of the statements for each section you are asked to complete.

Begin by completing the information on the front page of your OSI-R Rating Sheet. Enter your name, age, gender, job title, and today's date. Now turn to page 3 for directions for completing your ratings.

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~~Section One~~ (ORQ)

Make your ratings in Section One of the Rating Sheet

1. At work I am expected to do too many different tasks in too little time.
2. I feel that my job responsibilities are increasing.
3. I am expected to perform tasks on my job for which I have never been trained.
4. I have to take work home with me.
5. I have the resources I need to get my job done.
6. I'm good at my job.
7. I work under tight time deadlines.
8. I wish that I had more help to deal with the demands placed upon me at work.
9. My job requires me to work in several equally important areas at once.
10. I am expected to do more work than is reasonable.
11. My career is progressing about as I hoped it would.
12. My job fits my skills and interests.
13. I am bored with my job.
14. I feel I have enough responsibility on my job.
15. My talents are being used on my job.
16. My job has a good future.
17. I am able to satisfy my needs for success and recognition in my job.
18. I feel overqualified for my job.
19. I learn new skills in my work.
20. I have to perform tasks that are beneath my ability.
21. My supervisor provides me with useful feedback about my performance.
22. It is clear to me what I have to do to get ahead.
23. I am uncertain about what I am supposed to accomplish in my work.
24. When faced with several tasks I know which should be done first.
25. I know where to begin a new project when it is assigned to me.
26. My supervisor asks for one thing, but really wants another.
27. I understand what is acceptable personal behavior on my job (e.g., dress, interpersonal relations, etc.)
28. The priorities of my job are clear to me.
29. I have a clear understanding of how my boss wants me to spend my time.
30. I know the basis on which I am evaluated.
31. I feel conflict between what my employer expects me to do and what I think is right or proper.
32. I feel caught between factions at work.
33. I have more than one person telling me what to do.
34. I know where I fit in my organization.
35. I feel good about the work I do.
36. My supervisors have conflicting ideas about what I should be doing.
37. My job requires working with individuals from several departments or work areas.
38. It is clear who really runs things where I work.
39. I have divided loyalties on my job.
40. I frequently disagree with individuals from other work units or departments.

Directions

Read each statement carefully. For each statement, fill in the circle with the number which fits you best.

Fill in ① if the statement is *rarely* or *never* true.

Fill in ② if the statement is *occasionally* true.

Fill in ③ if the statement is *often* true.

Fill in ④ if the statement is *usually* true.

Fill in ⑤ if the statement is true *most of the time*.

For example, if you believe that a statement is often true about you, you would fill in the 3 circle for that statement on your rating sheet.

Example

1 ① ② ● ④ ⑤

Fill in only one circle for each statement. Be sure to rate ALL of the statements for each section you are asked to complete. DO NOT ERASE!

If you need to change an answer, make an "X" through the incorrect response and then fill in the correct circle, like this.

Example

1 ① X ● ④ ⑤

If a statement is not applicable, please mark ① *rarely* or *never* true.

~~Section One~~ (ORQ)

Make your ratings in Section One of the Rating Sheet

1. At work I am expected to do too many different tasks in too little time.
2. I feel that my job responsibilities are increasing.
3. I am expected to perform tasks on my job for which I have never been trained.
4. I have to take work home with me.
5. I have the resources I need to get my job done.
6. I'm good at my job.
7. I work under tight time deadlines.
8. I wish that I had more help to deal with the demands placed upon me at work.
9. My job requires me to work in several equally important areas at once.
10. I am expected to do more work than is reasonable.
11. My career is progressing about as I hoped it would.
12. My job fits my skills and interests.
13. I am bored with my job.
14. I feel I have enough responsibility on my job.
15. My talents are being used on my job.
16. My job has a good future.
17. I am able to satisfy my needs for success and recognition in my job.
18. I feel overqualified for my job.
19. I learn new skills in my work.
20. I have to perform tasks that are beneath my ability.
21. My supervisor provides me with useful feedback about my performance.
22. It is clear to me what I have to do to get ahead.
23. I am uncertain about what I am supposed to accomplish in my work.
24. When faced with several tasks I know which should be done first.
25. I know where to begin a new project when it is assigned to me.
26. My supervisor asks for one thing, but really wants another.
27. I understand what is acceptable personal behavior on my job (e.g., dress, interpersonal relations, etc.)
28. The priorities of my job are clear to me.
29. I have a clear understanding of how my boss wants me to spend my time.
30. I know the basis on which I am evaluated.
31. I feel conflict between what my employer expects me to do and what I think is right or proper.
32. I feel caught between factions at work.
33. I have more than one person telling me what to do.
34. I know where I fit in my organization.
35. I feel good about the work I do.
36. My supervisors have conflicting ideas about what I should be doing.
37. My job requires working with individuals from several departments or work areas.
38. It is clear who really runs things where I work.
39. I have divided loyalties on my job.
40. I frequently disagree with individuals from other work units or departments.

41. I deal with more people during the day than I prefer. 42. I spend time concerned with the problems others at work bring to me. 43. I am responsible for the welfare of subordinates. 44. People on-the-job look to me for leadership. 45. I have on-the-job responsibility for the activities of others. 46. I worry about whether the people who work for/with me will get things done properly. 47. My job requires me to make important decisions. 48. If I make a mistake in my work, the consequences for others can be pretty bad. 49. I worry about meeting my job responsibilities. 50. I like the people I work with.	51. On my job I am exposed to high levels of noise. 52. On my job I am exposed to high levels of wetness. 53. On my job I am exposed to high levels of dust. 54. On my job I am exposed to temperature extremes. 55. On my job I am exposed to bright light. 56. My job is physically dangerous. 57. I have an erratic work schedule. 58. I work all by myself. 59. On my job I am exposed to unpleasant odors. 60. On my job I am exposed to poisonous substances.

~~Section~~ Two (PSQ)

Make your ratings in Section Two of the Rating Sheet

1. I don't seem to be able to get much done at work.2. Lately, I dread going to work.3. I am bored with my work.4. I find myself getting behind in my work, lately.5. I have accidents on the job of late.6. The quality of my work is good.7. Recently, I have been absent from work.8. I find my work interesting and/or exciting.9. I can concentrate on the things I need to at work.10. I make errors or mistakes in my work. 11. Lately, I am easily irritated.12. Lately, I have been depressed.13. Lately, I have been feeling anxious.14. I have been happy, lately.15. So many thoughts run through my head at night that I have trouble falling asleep.16. Lately, I respond badly in situations that normally wouldn't bother me.17. I find myself complaining about little things.18. Lately, I have been worrying.19. I have a good sense of humor.20. Things are going about as they should.	21. I wish I had more time to spend with close friends.22. I often quarrel with the person closest to me.23. I often argue with friends.24. My spouse and I are happy together.25. Lately, I do things by myself instead of with other people.26. I quarrel with members of the family.27. Lately, my relationships with people are good.28. I find that I need time to myself to work out my problems.29. Lately, I am worried about how others at work view me.30. I have been withdrawing from people lately. 31. I have unplanned weight gains.32. My eating habits are erratic.33. I find myself drinking a lot lately.34. Lately, I have been tired.35. I have been feeling tense.36. I have trouble falling and staying asleep.37. I have aches and pains I can not explain.38. I eat the wrong foods.39. I feel well.40. I have lots of energy lately.

~~Section~~ Three (PRQ)

Make your ratings in Section Three of the Rating Sheet

1. When I need a vacation I take one. 2. I am able to do what I want to do in my free time. 3. On weekends I spend time doing the things I enjoy most. 4. I hardly ever watch television. 5. A lot of my free time is spent attending performances (e.g., sporting events, theater, movies, concerts, etc.) 6. I spend a lot of my free time in participant activities (e.g., sports, music, painting, woodworking, sewing, etc.) 7. I set aside time to do the things I really enjoy. 8. When I'm relaxing, I frequently think about work. 9. I spend enough time in recreational activities to satisfy my needs. 10. I spend a lot of my free time on hobbies (e.g., collections of various kinds, etc.) 11. I am careful about my diet (e.g., eating regularly, moderately, and with good nutrition in mind.) 12. I get regular physical checkups. 13. I avoid excessive use of alcohol. 14. I exercise regularly (at least 20 minutes, 3 times a week.) 15. I practice "relaxation" techniques. 16. I get the sleep I need. 17. I avoid eating or drinking things I know are unhealthy (e.g., coffee, tea, cigarettes, etc.) 18. I engage in meditation. 19. I practice deep breathing exercises a few minutes several times each day. 20. I floss my teeth regularly.	21. There is at least one person important to me who values me. 22. I have help with tasks around the house. 23. I have help with the important things that have to be done. 24. There is at least one sympathetic person with whom I can discuss my concerns. 25. There is at least one sympathetic person with whom I can discuss my work problems. 26. I feel I have at least one good friend I can count on. 27. I feel loved. 28. There is a person with whom I feel really close. 29. I have a circle of friends who value me. 30. If I need help at work, I know who to approach. 31. I am able to put my job out of my mind when I go home. 32. I feel that there are other jobs I could do besides my current one. 33. I periodically reexamine or reorganize my work style and schedule. 34. I can establish priorities for the use of my time. 35. Once they are set, I am able to stick to my priorities. 36. I have techniques to help avoid being distracted. 37. I can identify important elements of problems I encounter. 38. When faced with a problem I use a systematic approach. 39. When faced with the need to make a decision I try to think through the consequences of choices I might make. 40. I try to keep aware of important ways I behave and things I do.

PAR Profile Form for Females

Name Case C.D.

Age 26

Job Title Administrative Assistant

Date 7/8/98

REFERENCE LIST

REFERENCE LIST

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VITA

VITA

Name: Patricia Ann Bernard

Place of Birth: Cambridge, England

Undergraduate and Graduate Schools Attended:

Wayne Community College, Detroit, Michigan

Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

Degrees Awarded:

Associate Degree in Business, Wayne Community College, 1978

Bachelor of Science, Wayne State University, May 1998

Master of Science, Central Michigan University, January 2000

Professional Experience:

1982- Licensed Real Estate Agent, State of Michigan

1985-1994 Inventory Management, Department of the Army

1994-2004 Logistic Manager, Department of the Army

2002-2003 Adjunct Professor, Davenport University

2004- Proprietor, Hope Realty LLC Real Estate Broker

2004-2008 Supervisor Logistic Manager, Department of the Army

2007-2008 Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certified Trainer