Summer 2018
Volume 10, Issue 2

A refereed, online journal published thrice yearly by Thomas Edison State University

ILJ

INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP JOURNAL

In this issue

Thomas Edison State University
111 W. State St., Trenton, NJ 08608
www.tesu.edu/ilj

International Leadership Journal

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Volume 10, Issue 2, Summer 2018

From the Editor

June 2018

Welcome to the 30th issue of the *International Leadership Journal,* an online, peer-reviewed journal. This issue contains three articles, an essay, and a viewpoint piece.

In the first article, Mullen-Rhoads, Halkias, and Harkiolakis explore the perceived challenges encountered by Chinese and American business leaders when conducting e-negotiations with their respective counterparts. Their findings offer important observations on how cultural values affect the behavior of Chinese business leaders in critical negotiation situations and elucidate the types of resources that can help overcome negotiating challenges between Chinese and American business leaders.

In their study of female fire chiefs in the United States, Ballaro and Blanchard sought to determine if a transformational leadership style played a role in their success in the male-dominated career field of firefighting. Their findings supported four themes: transformational characteristics; mentoring, training, and education; barriers; and diversifying assignments. Based on the themes and the self-rated questionnaires, each participant in the study was found to have strong transformational leadership skills.

Leary and Ashman examine key considerations enabling human resources personnel and executive recruiters to assess characteristics and unique situations conducive to success for leaders with narcissistic traits. They also explore the discriminatory impact of implicit gender bias toward female narcissistic leaders as well as the combined effects of humility with an optimal level of narcissism as a prelude to leadership success.

In their essay, Harter and Heuvel ask whether there is still a place for the study of great leaders in the modern leadership studies field. They discuss how there may be vital reasons for continued research on great leaders within the context of the broader leadership process, namely as a response to today's "cult of celebrity" that is influencing how younger generations view leadership.

Finally, Klein presents ways in which leaders can connect with employees to create real change and enduring value that will benefit an organization. He notes that by connecting and empowering employees, and by stewarding growth and interpersonal acceptance, leaders can better engage employees to create innovative companies.

We've had some changes to the *ILJ* editorial board. Drs. Darren Hansen and Craig Johnson have retired from full-time teaching and stepped down from the board; we wish them much happiness in their retirement. We welcomed Dr. Terence Leary, Florida Gulf Coast University, as a new member of the editorial board. Two editorial board members have recently changed affiliations: Dr. Stuart Weinstein is now at Aston University (UK), and Dr. Jeffrey Klein is now at Hult international Business School (UK).

Sadly, I would like to inform the *ILJ* community that editorial board member, leadership scholar, colleague, and friend Dr. Ken W. Parry has recently passed away. He will be sorely missed by all.

Joseph C. Santora, EdD
Editor

ARTICLES

Perceived Challenges of E-Negotiations Between Chinese and American Business Leaders: A Multiple Case Study*

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E-negotiations present challenges when conducting business with individuals who prefer face-to-face negotiations. Although China's expanding role in international commerce provides opportunities for increased business transactions, cultural differences between China and the West create diverse styles of conducting business, including preference in the negotiation platform used. This qualitative study explored the perceived challenges encountered by Chinese and American business leaders when conducting e-negotiations with their respective counterparts. Data were collected through multiple sources, including in-depth individual interviews, subject matter expert review, and reflection on the data collected. This study's findings offer important observations concerning how cultural values affect the behavior of the Chinese in critical negotiation situations. Further, this article contributes knowledge on the types of resources that can help overcome negotiating challenges between Chinese and American business leaders. This study also corroborates findings of previous research regarding the importance of cultural diversity training for e-negotiators of small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Key words: business leaders, China, cultural differences, e-negotiations, international business

International business negotiations with individuals from China are becoming more vital as the political and economic standing of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese diaspora communities continues to increase (Chuah, Hoffman, & Lamer, 2014). In an increasingly global marketplace, e-negotiations are quickly becoming an accepted business practice worldwide, including in the

*To cite this article: Mullen-Rhoads, R. E., Halkias, D., & Harkiolakis,N. (2018). Perceived challenges of e-negotiations between Chinese and American business leaders: A multiple case study. *International Leadership Journal, 10*(2), 3–37.

burgeoning business transactions between China and the United States (Harkiolakis, Halkias, & Abadir, 2012). However, it is important to understand how culture can influence individual perceptions concerning the various methods of negotiation, including face-to-face and e-communication (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Harkiolakis et al., 2012).

Cultural issues contribute to the challenges of negotiating online, a common business practice among Western business leaders (Gilson, Maynard, Young, Vartiainen, & Hakonen, 2015), given that Chinese business leaders favor face-to-face negotiations over other forms (Ebner, 2014; Mujtaba, 2013; Sousa & Qun, 2015). Since many business strategies are based on e-negotiations rather than face-to-face encounters (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Harkiolakis et al., 2012), identifying methods to overcome real and perceived challenges is a growing area of interest (Gilson et al., 2015). Therefore, a key issue facing American small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engaged in international business is how to train individuals to negotiate effectively with their Chinese counterparts, who typically prefer to develop relationships founded on trust before entering into business associations (Mujtaba, 2013).

A comprehensive review of the literature revealed that empirical research has not adequately established how cultural values held by the Chinese affect their decisions under specific conditions such as e-negotiation (Chuah et al., 2014). This article presents a qualitative case study that explored the experiences of Chinese and American business leaders with online negotiation when conducting mutual business transactions. Individual interviews with six Chinese and six American business leaders provided in-depth information regarding the challenges faced when conducting e-negotiations.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, describe, and document the experiences of Chinese and American businesspeople with online negotiation when conducting mutual business transactions. The research design used to conduct this study was a multiple case research design that was exploratory and used e-communication, including Skype, phone, and e-mail interviews, as the primary sources for data collection. A multiple case research study design was chosen as a framework for obtaining direct evidence from Chinese and American businesspeople regarding their perceptions of challenges when conducting online business negotiations with their American or Chinese counterparts (Ebner, 2014; Mujtaba, 2013). Individual interviews provided depth of information on those perceptions of challenges when conducting e-negotiations. The researcher for this project used a multiple case research study approach to examine a number of cases in order to comprehend the similarities and differences between each case (Yin, 2014). It was the optimal research design for this study because it provided an opportunity to investigate a complex existing occurrence in depth within its context and was less restrictive than a survey or experimental design (Yin, 2014).

The study's findings offer important observations on how cultural values affect the behavior of the Chinese in critical negotiation situations. Further, this study adds to the literature on the types of resources that can assist in overcoming negotiating challenges between Chinese and American business leaders. Finally, a significant aspect of this study was the opportunity to corroborate findings of previous research regarding the importance of cultural diversity training for e-negotiators of SMEs (Cortes, 2013; Qiao, Ju, & Fung, 2014).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The literature review that follows focuses on negotiations between individuals from diverse cultures. Hence, social exchange theory (SET) and cultural intelligence (CQ) were at the core of the theoretical/conceptual framework guiding this work. One of the most prominent theoretical models in organizational behavior (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), *social exchange theory* is a far-reaching theory that has been used to describe trust as an outcome of various exchange relationships (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015). Another component of SET is reciprocity. It has been proposed that reciprocal exchanges produce higher levels of trust and emotional commitment than negotiated contracts (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000). Considering the elements of SET, which reflect the negotiation process, it appears to be a particularly promising framework to incorporate trust and negotiations and to develop predictions concerning the role of trust in negotiations. Yet, this theory has not been extensively employed in negotiation research (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Cultural intelligence was initially conceptualized and described by Earley and Ang (2003) as the level of competence an individual demonstrates in a culturally diverse setting. The concept of CQ provides an excellent structure in which to study how individuals effectively acclimate in unaccustomed environments (Earley, Ang, & Tan, 2006). It has been suggested that the negotiation process can be enhanced through the development of CQ (Chen, Kirkman, Kim, Farh, & Tangirala, 2010; Earley & Ang, 2003). It can increase a negotiator's ability to create a supportive, interest-based negotiation platform, which can enhance the development of social networks. This is important for Chinese and American business leaders who wish to conduct successful business dealings (Fehr & Kuo, 2008; Groves, Feyerherm, & Gu, 2015; Szeto, Wright, & Cheng, 2006).

Literature Review

The Influence of Culture on Negotiations

Cross-cultural studies of negotiation tactics are essential (Harkiolakis et al., 2012; Hendon, 2007), and research that focuses on the effect of culture on negotiation is vital for increasing theories of negotiation beyond Western cultures and achieving interdependence in an environment of global threats and opportunities (Gelfand, Lun, Lyons, & Shteynberg, 2011). Janosik (1987) identified four distinct possibilities of the effect culture has on negotiations. First, as a learned behavior, culture affects negotiation because it shapes an individual's concept of reciprocity and justice, outlook regarding acceptable outcomes, and ideas concerning suitable timing for particular bargaining behaviors. Second, culture involves shared values, which produces a collective bargaining style among the people of a specific culture. Third, culture represents dialectic—tensions that occur among values rooted in a given culture. Therefore, culture as a dialectic may create what appears to be incompatible negotiation behaviors among people within the same culture. Finally, because culture is a conductor of dominant social and contextual factors, it influences the negotiation style and outcome of the individuals of a particular culture in a specific situation (Janosik, 1987). Lin and Miller (2003) found that the negotiation style employed by an individual or organization is conditioned principally by relational circumstantial variables, such as relationship commitment and relative power. The findings of a study by Liu (2008) with Chinese and American negotiators indicate that anger has an effect on negotiators. Anger can cause some negotiators to use more positional statements (affirmations of beliefs) and to provide less information about priorities, and it also minimizes the number of integrative or harmonious offers (Liu, 2008).

Negotiations and Chinese Business Culture

Mujtaba (2013) suggests that Chinese negotiators prefer to develop relationships and build trust before making any important agreements; therefore, traditional means of negotiations, such as face-to-face, are preferred. Before negotiating with Chinese business leaders, three elements of Chinese culture should be thoroughly understood: harmony, face, and winning (Ghauri & Fang, 2001; Hwang, Soon, & Francesco, 2002; Kumar & Worm, 2003). Chuah et al. (2014) examined whether Chinese cultural values affected the negotiation process and found that these three elements affected the choices made by negotiators.

Harmony is the Confucian concept that encourages the avoidance of discord in social interactions; it is the foundation and most essential element of Chinese cultural values (Gao, Ting-Toomey, & Gudykunst, 1996; Ghauri & Fang, 2001; Kirkbride, Tang, & Westwood, 1991) and dictates relationships between individuals of diverse social rank and between peers. The countless dimensions of harmony are pertinent to the bargaining and negotiation behavior of the Chinese (Fang, 1999; Ghauri & Fang, 2001; Kirkbride et al., 1991). *Face* is the extent to which an individual measures up to a standard to which they hold themselves privately and publicly (Earley, 1997). Face comprises two components that are essential for successful dealings with others. The first (*lian*) is associated with an individual's good moral standing in the community, and the second (*mianzi*) concerns an individual's personal standing and success.

Numerous studies have theorized a connection between the Chinese idea of face and negotiating behaviors (Earley, 1997; Ghauri & Fang, 2001; Graham & Lam, 2003; Kim, 2008; Kirkbride et al., 1991; Kumar & Worm, 2003). *Winning* is the competitive element, which creates a desire to win (Ho, Ang, Loh, & Ng, 1998; Hwang et al., 2002). This concept is known as *askiasu*, which explicitly identifies a fear of losing out when measured against others. This idea considers the calculation of greed, selfishness, and risk aversion. When the need to win is the primary consideration in the negotiation process, it is more likely that competitive choices will be made, perhaps necessarily trumping the desire to maintain harmony and face (Chuah et al., 2014). This concept therefore has clear applicability to and potential consequences for negotiation.

***The significance of* guanxi.** An aspect of Chinese culture many Westerners struggle with is *guanxi*, the three components of which are trust, relationship commitment, and communication. Characterized by reciprocal business relationships and social networks, *guanxi* is prevalent in Confucian cultures and is crucial for leveraging the attainment of goals when conducting business in China (Berger, Herstein, Silbiger, & Barnes, 2015). It is considered the lifeblood of Chinese business societies, acting as the mechanism that smooths business activities (Ramasamy, Goh, & Yeung, 2006). *Guanxi* shapes the attitudes and actions of individuals in interactions (Hwang, 1987; Xiaotong, 1992; Yang, 1995), and thus, also extends to networks. Berger et al. (2015) and Yen, Barnes, and Wang (2011) found diverse perspectives between how Chinese and Western business leaders view their partners; even when Westerners were cognizant of *guanxi*, they did not perceive it as an element of friendship or appear to grasp its significance in the Chinese business culture. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account the value of harmony as well as the multiple facets of *guanxi* when conducting business with Chinese individuals (Zhang & Zhang, 2013).

China's demographically diverse nature should also be considered as a factor affecting business negotiations. For example, research indicates that there are differences between how individuals from mainland China and individuals from Taiwan conduct negotiations, and that the different negotiation tactics employed by Taiwanese have been influenced by Western culture, economic philosophy, and trade philosophies (Chang, 2006, 2011).

Negotiations and American Business Culture

Frequently, American business leaders who pursue business opportunities in China expect the negotiation process and outcomes to include detailed written contracts, with nominal emphasis placed on developing social relationships. This is in direct opposition to traditional Chinese business methods (Li, Karande, & Zhou, 2009; Yang & Wang, 2011). Because they do not understand the Chinese way of doing things, Americans often neglect to identify and consider some key risk factors when conducting business with Chinese business leaders (Lu, 2015). Since American negotiators often lack patience or have not developed the necessary understanding of their Chinese counterparts, they are often ill equipped to conduct online business with them in a manner that would increase the opportunities for successful outcomes (Hamilton & Zhang, 2012).

The process favored by American negotiators is typically quite different from their Chinese counterparts. The former tend to provide information in a direct manner (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 2001; Lee, Adair, & Seo, 2013), attributed to the United States being a low-context culture (Hall, 1976; Okabe, 1983). Negotiators from low-context cultures concentrate on transmitting and receiving precise messages (Harris & Moran, 1991). For instance, Brett and Okumura (1998) and Adair et al. (2001) indicate that American negotiators are more forthcoming with information. Graham (1993) suggests that American negotiating teams divulge more information than many high-context negotiating teams; however, American negotiators also tend to ask fewer questions (Graham & Sano, 1989). In addition, American negotiators are more likely to use an unmistakable “no” (Graham, 1993) and are less reluctant than high-context counterparts to turn down a proposal unequivocally (March, 1990). Brett and Okumura indicate that indirect evidence suggests that negotiators from low-context cultures, such as the United States, have more difficulty understanding the main concerns of their high-context counterparts because they are not proficient in inexplicit nuances of communication.

North American negotiators shun topics concerning status and power; they prefer to depend on logic and fact when making decisions (Lee et al., 2013; Pearson & Stephan, 1998). Meyer (2015) suggests that American negotiators tend to separate the emotional from the practical. They also make a sharp distinction between cognitive trust, based on the perception of responsibility, reliability, and competency, and affective trust, an emotion-based trust founded mainly on feelings and intuition that occurs when it appears another is concerned for the welfare of others. Meyer, as well as Ready and Tessema (2009), suggest that American negotiators are perceived to be friendly on the surface, but difficult to know at a deeper level; politically correct; and careful not to show negative emotion.

Countries that rank high in individualism, such as the United States, are described as employing a more competitive approach to the negotiation process than individuals from collective societies (Mintu-Wimsatt, 2002). Findings from a study by Gelfand and Christakopoulou (1999) suggest that individuals from high-individualism countries are more concerned with their own interests during the negotiation process, which appears to concur with Hofstede's (1991) contention that Americans seeking self-serving interests may hinder the advancement of mutually advantageous outcomes in cooperative problem-solving situations.

E-negotiations: Doing Business Through Virtual Networks

Negotiating methods that extend beyond the traditional face-to-face model are becoming more prevalent (Craver, 2015; Wang, Wong, & Wang, 2014). Even when negotiations begin with face-to-face meetings or occasional meetings at a common location, most portions of the negotiation process are conducted through other communication vehicles, such as telephone and e-mail (Craver, 2015). Consequently, many organizational leaders have begun exploring methods for collaborating with current and potential business partners through virtual networks, or computer networks comprised of, at least in part, virtual network links (Landi et al., 2014). Negotiation platforms include e-mail, instant messaging, and videoconferencing (Ebner, 2014). The two primary forms of e-negotiation are e-mail and chat platforms. E-mail is considered the simplest form in which offers and counteroffers can be made (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Ebner, 2014).

Disadvantages, challenges, and benefits of e-negotiations. The disadvantages and challenges of negotiating electronically are numerous, though many of the disadvantages have a corresponding benefit (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Ebner, 2014). Two disadvantages of e-mail are its perception as an informal communication medium and an anonymous means of communication. A disadvantage of e-negotiation is that unlike face-to-face negotiation, it does not provide contextual cues and nuances. Another disadvantage is the possibility that negotiators may send messages simultaneously. Additionally, there is a tendency for many negotiators to bundle arguments when using e-mail (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Ebner, 2014).

These issues can contribute to negotiation challenges. Some of these challenges include the propensity to amplify contentiousness and negativity (Friedman & Currall, 2003), and others include a reduction in the sharing of information, inter-party cooperation, privacy, trust, party commitment, and focus (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Ebner, 2014). Ebner (2014) suggests that the lack of contextual cues modifies the way in which information is transmitted and received. Some researchers have reported that e-mail lacks the visibility and audibility that is present during other forms of e-communication (Clark & Brennan, 1991; McNaughton, Rackensperger, Dorn, & Wilson, 2014; Wang et al., 2014). Two theories, media richness and task-media, suggest that negotiations conducted through e-mail often produce results that are less positive than face-to-face negotiations (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Hollingshead, McGrath, & O'Connor, 1993; Straus & McGrath, 1994; Trevino, Daft, & Lengel, 1990).

Another e-negotiation concern is system security (Wang et al., 2014). It is crucial to design a negotiation procedure to regulate negotiators' movements securely and prevent access to confidential and proprietary information that could put the organization at risk (Wang et al., 2014). Similarly to Dennis, Fuller, and Valaccich (2008) and Parlamis and Geiger (2015), Faratin, Sierra, and Jennings (1998), Jennings et al. (2001), and Wang et al. (2014) suggested and identified a hybrid negotiation method that supports protocols to protect system security.

Areas that should be considered include protocols governing the rules of interaction and negotiation, stated objectives identifying the issues that will be negotiated, and negotiation decision-making models guiding agents' concession behaviors.

Although the issues, disadvantages, and challenges of e-negotiations may appear overwhelming, there are benefits that should be considered. Dobrijević and Boljanović (2014) suggest that negotiating through electronic measures has several advantages in addition to being cost effective. A primary advantage of using e-mail as a negotiation medium is the flexibility of scheduling; individual negotiators can work during their organization's normal business hours (McNaughton et al., 2014). Negotiating through e-mail can minimize unconscious biases, and when employed deliberately, can increase the interchange of information, offer an opportunity to consider and consult with others before responding, establish trust, contemplate possible interpretations, and analyze what has been sent and received (Ebner, 2014).

Purpose

The following questions were developed to address the problem and purpose of the study.

Research Question 1: What challenges are identified by Chinese business leaders when conducting online business negotiations with their American counterparts?

Research Question 2: What challenges are identified by American business leaders when conducting online business negotiations with their Chinese counterparts?

Method and Design

A qualitative case study approach was deemed best for answering the study's research questions because the focus of the study was to identify the perceived challenges Chinese and American business leaders encounter when conducting e-negotiations with their counterparts. This entailed employing a multiple-case research study design that was exploratory in nature and collected data primarily through e-communications with Chinese and American business leaders who conducted e-negotiations. The study has significance because of the perceived link between culture and negotiating tactics.

This research used criterion and snowball sampling methods. Participants were identified through professional networks and recommendations of study participants. With such a purposeful sampling, participants fulfilled the minimum requirements to participate, possessed well-developed attitudes and options regarding their experiences, and provided in-depth information on the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2002). Thus, the unit of analysis was the Chinese and American business leader who had participated in e-negotiations with American and Chinese counterparts, respectively. The researcher conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with individuals who engaged in e-negotiations when conducting mutual business transactions. Instead of an absolute number, Schram (2006) suggests a range of 5 to 10 participants for a typical qualitative study, claiming that a large sample size could hinder a deeper investigation.

Demographics

Six Chinese and six American individuals representing various industries and job functions participated in the study. Eleven participants had worked for a multinational organization, and one had not. Each participant had knowledge related to e-negotiation; 11 indicated that e-negotiations were essential to their job function and one participant noted that they occasionally (i.e., at least once every three months) employed e-negotiations as part of their job function. All participants used English at work, and one indicated that English was used for written communication. Five participants indicated they used Mandarin/Chinese at work, and one noted Mandarin/Chinese was used for oral communication. The average number of years in which participants had negotiated as part of their job function was 16. The average number of years in which participants had used e-negotiation platforms as part of their job function was 11.5. The participant group comprised 10 men and two women. The average age of the group was 46.5; three participants were 30 to 39, four were 40 to 49, and five were 50 to 59.

Three participants held undergraduate degrees and eight held graduate degrees. Nine participants had some training in Eastern management practices, and nine had some training in Western management practices. Seven participants had only lived in the country of their birth, and three had lived in one country in addition to their country of birth for more than a year. One participant reported they had lived in two countries other than their country of birth for more than a year.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data collected were subjective and acquired through semi-structured interviews and field notes. The literature review conducted for this study aligned with the semi-structured interview questions. The interview questions were formatted in a semi-structured manner to guide participants in providing their in-depth perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). Two subject matter experts reviewed the interview questions to ensure the information extracted during participant interviews could be reviewed for themes and similar responses. Eleven interview questions were developed based on concepts identified in previous research.

- What are your experiences in conducting business negotiations?
- What are your experiences with conducting business e-negotiations with individuals who share a similar culture to yours?
- What are your experiences with conducting business e-negotiations with individuals who share a dissimilar culture to yours?
- What experiences have you had in using online tools in addition to e-mail for business e-negotiations?
- Could you tell me your thoughts concerning the policies of many global organizations on reducing costs associated with the business negotiation process by using online negotiation platforms?
- What are some of the challenges that you have experienced during online business negotiations?
- How would you describe social skills you value in your online business negotiation exchanges with individuals from a cultural background similar to your own?

- How would you describe social skills you value in your online business negotiation exchanges with individuals from a cultural background dissimilar to your own?
- How would you describe social skills you value in your online negotiation exchanges with individuals from an American/a Chinese cultural background?
- What actions reinforce the degree of trust you build with individuals with whom you conduct business negotiations, and can you give me an example?
- How do you think your cultural background influences you as a business negotiator?

Where appropriate, follow-up clarification questions were asked to ensure complete understanding of individual responses. In addition, after the 11 interview questions were asked and answered, participants were afforded an opportunity to share any thoughts or opinions they felt might be beneficial for this study. The interview questions were designed to elicit detailed individual perceptions regarding the challenges encountered by Chinese business leaders when conducting online business negotiations with their American counterparts and by American business leaders when conducting online business negotiations with their Chinese counterparts. When appropriate, these perceptions were supported by examples that explained each individual's perceptions concerning each challenge.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and Word documents and thematically analyzed. Due process was followed to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality (National Academies, 2009). Triangulation of all sources, including subject matter experts' consideration of the data, supported the reliability and validity of the research. The development of a database using Microsoft Excel software enhanced reliability (Yin, 2014), which was an important aspect of the research and provided credibility to the findings and interpretations of the data collected (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). The content was analyzed to describe the phenomena and the context being investigated (Hatch, 2003; Yin, 2014). A chain of evidence, a database of organized themes, and member checking through reviews of interview transcripts increased the study's worth and aided in ensuring credible, transferable, and dependable outcomes. The validity and reliability augmented and reflected the study's trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002).

Limitations

A key assumption was that participants would provide an in-depth description of their experiences and their perceptions concerning the challenges they encounter with their cultural counterparts when negotiating using e-platforms. A second assumption was that participants' responses to the interview questions would be transparent and candid. The third assumption was the researcher would correctly transcribe each digitally recorded interview response to attain the participant's anticipated meaning of the research issues.

Limitations of this study include time constraints on the part of the participants and potential bias, given that individuals were asked to verbalize their perceptions and experiences with diverse cultures and the e-negotiation process (Patton, 2002). However, some of the bias or misconstruction of results was minimized because the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed to accurately document each participant's responses. The personal field notes handwritten during the interview were another source of supporting evidence to reduce bias (Yin, 2014). Another limitation was the ability of the researchers in performing the case study. Several steps were taken to prepare for the interviews, including providing an informed consent form and an overview of what the interviewing researcher would be doing, what would be done with the information collected, and when participants would have access to the study's results (Hatch, 2003). The interviewing researcher also created an atmosphere that was advantageous to open communication and sharing individual perceptions concerning the research issues (Patton, 2002).

The scope of the study relates to the targeted participant population from which each of the interviewees was selected. The participants were Chinese and American business leaders who engaged in e-negotiation with their respective counterparts. Twelve individuals were chosen from various business industries.

This delimitation aided in attaining an assortment of participant perceptions because the individuals had diverse business purposes, assignments, and goals.

Regarding ethical assurances, the protection of privacy and safeguarding of any proprietary information collected was established by eliminating identifying information and employing a stringent chain of evidence to enhance reliability (Yin, 2014). Except for ensuring that participants considered themselves Chinese or American, this study did not screen potential participants on gender, race, religion, or cultural background so as to gather as diverse a sample of Chinese and American study participants as possible (Patton, 2002). Chinese and American business leaders who participated in this study were informed about the methods, procedures, and the scope of the research to ensure transparency and understanding during the research process (Hatch, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Discussion

Thematic Analysis of the Textual Data

The interview sessions' transcript reviews resulted in multiple clear and significant themes (see Table 1). Triangulation employing different investigators in the analysis process was used to strengthen confidence in the findings (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011), and common ideas were thematically coded to establish a framework and validity by corroborating facts and consistency within the data collected from the participants (Yin, 2014). Individual responses to the interview questions and the resulting summary were compared to theoretical/conceptual frameworks, and any variations were noted to highlight the differences found in this study (Yin, 2014).

Table 1: Overarching Themes

Research Questions	Themes
Research Question 1: What challenges are identified by Chinese business leaders when conducting online business negotiations with their American counterparts?	1a: The importance of gradually building a business relationship in China 1b: Online negotiations do not support context building 1c: Americans are not time efficient/effective in online communications 1d: Language issues 1e: Despite certain challenges, Americans remain the preferred foreign group for online negotiations 1f: *Guanxi* 1g: Additional observations and thoughts
Research Question 2: What challenges are identified by American business leaders when conducting online business negotiations with their Chinese counterparts?	2a: Americans prefer online negotiations 2b: Americans must know the business law/customs of China very well to avoid errors in business deals 2c: Lack of a pre-established relationship is a major challenge 2d: Language issues 2e: Trust and credibility issues 2f: *Guanxi* 2g: Additional observations and thoughts

Qualitative data were managed to ensure that identified themes were supported, attributed, and traceable to the source data by organizing the interview notes by research question. The same method was employed to organize themes, with the number referring to the research question and the letter referring to the theme. The responses were analyzed in context with literature on e-negotiations, Eastern and Western cultures, and business and relational theories. All participants' responses provided support for multiple existing issues, leading to themes that support the concepts of effects of culture on business negotiation (Berger et al., 2015; Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Harkiolakis et al., 2012), challenges associated with e-negotiation (Friedman & Belkin, 2013; Mujtaba, 2013; Sousa & Qun, 2015), and trust in business relations (Ebner, 2014; Searle, Weibel, & Den Hartog, 2011; Tong, 2014).

Implications

The findings of this research study provide individual insights that support the existing literature used to address the central research questions of this study.

This study illustrates that American negotiators often rely on a more direct and formal negotiation process, while their Chinese counterparts depend on relationship building (Adair et al., 2001; Hall, 1976). The findings of this study also support earlier studies that indicate that unlike many American business leaders, Chinese negotiators choose to cultivate relationships and establish trust prior to entering into any major business relationship; therefore, many Chinese business leaders prefer face-to-face negotiations (Mujtaba, 2013). Accordingly, this study found evidence to suggest that interactions at the individual level will affect interorganizational relationships (Håkansson & Wootz, 1979; Tsang, 1998).

The study's findings indicate that behaviors identified as typical of American negotiators include being open and explicit concerning the acceptance or rejection of a proposal, basing decisions on logic and fact, and separating the emotional from the practical (Lee et al., 2013; Meyer, 2015; Pearson & Stephan, 1998). They also suggest that American negotiators are typically low-context, meaning they favor providing information in a straightforward manner (Adair et al., 2001; Hall, 1976; Lee et al., 2013). Additionally, this study suggests that while e-mail is considered the simplest form of communication in a negotiation through which offers and counteroffers can be made, this form of dialogue is perceived as a communication medium that does not provide contextual cues and nuances (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Ebner, 2014).

The findings also underline that many business strategies, especially those of Americans, are based on e-negotiations rather than face-to-face encounters (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Harkiolakis et al., 2012). This study illustrates that culture can influence individual perceptions of the various negotiation methods, including face-to-face and e-communication (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Harkiolakis et al., 2012). The research findings support the concept that cultural issues influence how individuals negotiate (Chen, 1993), and they contribute to the challenges of negotiating online, a common business practice among Western business leaders (Gilson et al., 2015). However, this study illustrates that Western nations are endeavoring to build strong business relationships with Chinese business leaders (Chuah et al., 2014).

This study found evidence to suggest that during the initial phases of negotiation, Chinese teams often establish agreement on general principles and then move to specific issues, since the Chinese usually attempt to avoid or postpone direct confrontation (Chen, 1993). This research indicates that the Chinese negotiation style is in direct opposition to most American negotiation styles, which tend to adhere to concrete and specific details (Pye, 1982). The findings indicate that win–win negotiation strategies, which include fostering mutual trust and long-term relationships, working accommodatingly, and increasing mutual benefits, are foundational for most Chinese negotiators (Zhao, 2000).

The research findings suggest that some Chinese practices may seem unprofessional to Americans (Pye, 1992). Accordingly, this study found evidence to suggest that depending upon how an American individual or team of negotiators has been sized up by their Chinese counterparts will determine how they will proceed (Pye, 1992). This study further suggests that the logic and goal of most Chinese negotiators is to establish a strong relationship that will withstand the test of time (Pye, 1992); therefore, negotiations typically do not advance until the Chinese are satisfied that a harmonious working relationship can be established (Zhao, 2000). This research indicates that because the Chinese approach is to use the negotiating process as a method to establish a long-term, often dependent relationship, they tend to treat business-like details as secondary to sizing up the other party (Pye, 1992). This study suggests that Americans tend to separate the emotional from the practical and make a distinction between trust based on the perception of responsibility, reliability, and competency and emotion-based trust founded mainly on feelings and intuition (Meyer, 2015).

This study found evidence to suggest that international negotiation disappointments are often attributed to deficits in negotiator cross-cultural abilities, including inadequate awareness of the cultural differences of the parties involved in the transaction, incompetence in communicating effectively with individuals from dissimilar cultural backgrounds, and inadequate behavioral flexibility to adjust to racially unfamiliar situations (Groves et al., 2015). The findings of this study appear to confirm the frequently publicized significance of negotiating effectively across cultures (Imai & Gelfand, 2010) and the necessity for training individuals to negotiate effectively with counterparts who typically prefer negotiating tactics that are different from their own (Mujtaba, 2013).

The findings suggest that a primary challenge facing Chinese and American business leaders when they attempt to negotiate is cross-cultural communication preferences (Harkiolakis et al., 2012; Jun, 2011). This research also supports suggestions regarding the attitudes of negotiators concerning the limitations of e-mail negotiation, as discussed in 'Disadvantages, challenges, and benefits of e-negotiations,' and the recommendation for research that examines the relationship between e-mail communication, intercultural variables, cultural differences, and language barriers (Friedman & Belkin, 2013; Geiger & Parlamis, 2014). The findings also suggest that the Chinese view legalities from a different perspective than their American counterparts (Li et al., 2009; Yang & Wang, 2011). They also indicate that while low-context cultures (such as Anglo-American countries) consider what is written in legal documents and contracts to be of paramount importance, Chinese contract law is more flexible (Zhao, 2000).

The culture and history of the Chinese influence the business decision-making process (Chuah et al., 2014), and, more specifically, when such business decision-making is conducted online through e-negotiations (Dobrijević & Boljanović, 2014; Harkiolakis et al., 2012). In addition, this research suggests that the negotiation approach used by the Chinese might appear adversarial to American negotiators; however, once a relationship is firmly established, it is typically enduring with the expectation of permanency (Li et al., 2009; Yang & Wang, 2011). In addition, this study suggests that low-context cultures should be aware of cultural context and such concerns, while individuals from high-context cultures should pay close attention to the actual meaning of words rather than what may be implied or inferred by individuals from low-context cultures (Varner & Beamer, 1995).

This study illustrates that *guanxi* is prevalent in Confucian cultures and has been recognized as crucial for leveraging attainment of goals when conducting business in China (Berger et al., 2015). Accordingly, this study found evidence to suggest that while *guanxi* is usually considered an effective tool for business performance for insiders, it has sparked controversy for individuals and organizations from countries that do not understand or employ these concepts (Szeto et al., 2006). China's demographically diverse character can affect business negotiations; Taiwan is an example of that diversity, as it is sometimes referred to as the R.O.C., Taiwan, or Chinese Taipei (Misco & Tseng, 2017). This study illustrates there are differences between how individuals from mainland China and individuals from Taiwan conduct business negotiations (Chang, 2006), with 50% of the American participants referring to such differences.

One business aspect that was identified as important by 83% of the Chinese participants was building business relationships gradually, which the participants indicated was best achieved through face-to-face interaction. Fifty percent of American participants indicated that a pre-established relationship was a major challenge when conducting business with their Chinese counterparts; however, 100% of the American participants indicated they prefer online negotiations. Eighty-three percent of the Chinese participants suggested that online negotiations do not support context building. This concept was also briefly mentioned by two (33%) of the American participants, while one (17%) American stressed the importance of context building. Trust and credibility issues were identified by 83% of the American participants. Fifty percent of the Chinese participants indicated that Americans are not time efficient/effective in online communications, though all of the Chinese participants indicated that Americans remain the preferred foreign group for online negotiations. Language issues were identified by 67% of both Chinese and American participants as a challenge when conducting business. Fifty percent of Chinese and 67% of American participants discussed the concept of *guanxi* as an aspect of conducting business. Demographics were suggested as contributing factors in business by 50% of the Chinese participants and 83% of the American participants. Half of the American participants indicated it was important for them to know the laws and customs in China to avoid errors when conducting business.

This study supports several theories, including social exchange theory, which is used to describe trust as an outcome of various exchange relationships (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015). Although trust is often established through prior agreements or other ties, SET suggests that trust is not necessarily founded on previous exchanges and trust based on prior relationships is only essential under certain circumstances (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015; Schoenherr, Narayanan, & Narasimhan, 2015). Researchers have identified the components of SET as the processes in which trust progresses and functions in working relationships (Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo, Zapata, & Rich, 2012; Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009; Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998). SET also postulates that an individual will participate in undertakings that encourage relationships if the perceived net benefits of the relationship, which include disclosure of information, are equal to or greater than any perceived costs (Bottom, Holloway, Miller, Mislin, & Whitford, 2006; Liu, Min, Zhai, & Smyth, 2016).

Social information processing (SIP) theory is also supported by this research. SIP proposes that individuals are able to establish important relationships when individuals take time to get to know one another and become comfortable with the e-environment (Walther, 1992). Cultural Intelligence was also supported by this research. CQ can increase a negotiator's ability to create a supportive, interest-based negotiation platform, which can enhance the development of social networks. The ability to create a supportive negotiation platform can be especially important when employing online communication methods (Chen et al., 2010). CQ, as defined by Earley and Ang (2003), can foster intercultural negotiation that is more effective (Fehr & Kuo, 2008; Groves et al., 2015; Imai & Gelfand, 2010). Chinese individuals tend to model a conflict-avoidance tendency in interchanges with individuals who have good *guanxi* with them, because they are hesitant to harm the *guanxi* between them or damage the harmonious environment (Zhang & Zhang, 2013). Further, Zhang and Zhang (2013) recommend that negotiators should consider cultural backgrounds when developing an analysis of interorganizational relationships, especially in high-context cultures such as Chinese culture.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study were based on Chinese and American business leaders' perspectives and contribute to validating previous studies describing the challenges experienced by Chinese and American business leaders when conducting negotiations with their respective counterparts. A complementary study on challenges as they are perceived at an organizational level could provide an alternative view for comparison and the convergence between both perceptions could be analyzed. Additionally, although 83% of Chinese participants in the study indicated the importance of context building, only one of the three American participants who mentioned context building stressed the importance of nonverbal cues. A future study on negotiation outcomes based on face-to-face meetings compared to other types of meetings could be used to help inform training programs on more effective negotiations between Chinese and American business leaders.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the input of the Chinese participants, American negotiators could increase opportunities for more successful negotiating outcomes with the following actions:

- Spend additional time cultivating personal and business relationships with their Chinese counterparts.
- Consider employing negotiating platforms that encourage context building.
- Learn the forms of communication their Chinese counterparts consider efficient/effective during online communications.
- Determine and cultivate the characteristics American negotiators display that makes them the preferred foreign group for online negotiations.

Based on the input of the American participants, Chinese negotiators could increase opportunities for more successful negotiating outcomes with the following actions:

- Provide greater transparency concerning Chinese business laws\ and customs.

- Ascertain the foundational elements that aid American counterparts in establishing pre-negotiating relationships.
- Determine what elements undermine trust and credibility in their American counterparts.
- Employ online negotiation platforms when they are a viable option.

Based on the mutual input of the Chinese and American participants, both sides could increase opportunities for more successful negotiating outcomes with the following actions:

- Collaboratively identify language mediums that will be used to minimize language challenges, such as written communication follow-ups on verbal meetings; the use of translators; and, in the case of American companies, employing negotiators who have a working knowledge of Mandarin/Chinese.
- Develop an increased awareness that in-country demographics can bring uncertainty to the negotiation process.

Based on the input of both Chinese and American participants, American negotiators could also increase opportunities for more successful negotiating outcomes by increasing their awareness of *guanxi* and how this concept might influence the negotiation process.

Conclusion

Many organizations employ e-negotiation strategies to be more effective and improve overall performance (Craver, 2015; Landi et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014); however, there are many influencing factors that must be considered. When negotiating with Chinese business leaders, it is important to consider their history and how it influences their values and institutions, which affects their decision-making process (Bond & Shtin, 1987; Fang, Zhao, & Worm, 2008; Ghauri & Fang, 2001; Graham & Lam, 2003; Kirkbride et al., 1991). E-negotiations with Chinese business leaders present unique challenges to Americans, given that their Chinese counterparts favor face-to-face negotiations over other forms (Ebner, 2014; Mujtaba, 2013; Sousa & Qun, 2015).

From the Chinese negotiator perspective, gradually building business relationships, employing negotiation methods that support context building, and using efficient and effective communication when employing online communication are three areas that would facilitate the negotiation process with their American counterparts. From the American negotiator perspective, enhanced knowledge of Chinese business law and customs, pre-established relationships, and a sense of trust and credibility are three areas that would facilitate the negotiation process with their Chinese counterparts. Chinese and American negotiators agree that language issues, *guanxi*, and demographic differences play a part in the negotiation process and can prove challenging. Chinese negotiators indicate that American business leaders are the preferred group for online negotiations, and American negotiators indicate they prefer online negotiations when conducting business.

The negotiation process will continue to present challenges to individuals who engage in the practice, but the results of this study indicate that understanding the culture, concerns, frustrations, and desired outcomes of the negotiating counterpart and a willingness to adapt or accommodate can increase the opportunities for a successful collaboration. The knowledge gained from this study offers additional insight into the challenges encountered by Chinese and American negotiators. It lays the foundation and also calls for more investigation into the challenges that impede the online negotiation process between Chinese and American business leaders.

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Women Making It to the Top: From Firefighter to Fire Chief[*]

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This study focused on an international understanding of the challenges women face in achieving a position in the male-dominated career field of firefighting and sought to determine if a transformational leadership style played a role in their success. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight female fire chiefs from the United States to understand the challenges they encountered during their career ascension from firefighter to fire chief. The self-rater portion of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was administered to determine the leadership skills and characteristics of each fire chief. The results indicated that all eight fire chiefs self-rated as having strong transformational characteristics and skills. Interview questions were developed to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership characteristics, career paths, technical skills, motivations, and challenges that led to their successful careers. Four themes emerged from the data analysis of the interviews: transformational characteristics; mentoring, training, and education; barriers; and diversifying assignments. A combination of all four themes and the MLQ findings support the findings of strong transformational leadership skills for all eight women, which may have contributed to their advancement to the rank of fire chief.

Key words: diversification, education, female firefighters, fire chief, mentoring, MLQ, training, transformational leaders

Women comprise slightly more than 3% of American firefighters (BLS, 2017). Although some American fire departments have taken steps to increase the number of female firefighters, there have been few attempts to establish practices to promote women as fire chiefs (Griffith, Roberts, & Wakeham, 2016). While the presence of women in the overall workforce has increased, the number of female firefighters has not kept pace with current trends.

A staggeringly low number of female firefighters achieve promotion to the position of chief. The small number of women attaining promotion to the position of chief is in line with the small number of women who become firefighters. Six factors are attributed to the disparity between the number of male and female firefighters in the United States: the recruitment process, testing for physical abilities, uniforms and equipment used by departments, firehouse living, sexual

[*]To cite this article: Ballaro, J. M., & Blanchard, C. (2018). Women making it to the top: From firefighter to fire chief. *International Leadership Journal, 10*(2), 39–61.

harassment, and promotions (Hom, Stanley, Spencer-Thomas, & Joiner, 2017; Hulett, Bendick, Thomas, & Moccio, 2008; Jahnke et al., 2012). Although improvements have been made over the years, unfair practices, harassment, hostility, and gender disparity are the major reasons why few women seek the fire service as a career (Ainsworth, 2014; Hom et al., 2017; Jahnke et al., 2012).

In the United States, lawmakers have tried to ensure the diminishment of discriminatory practices and that women and minorities are fairly represented in government and public service positions. Laws and policies were enacted to help protect organizations as well as minority groups (EEOC, 2017). Even with these laws in place, there exists a disparity in the number of women in the fire service as well as those promoted to chief (Hom et al., 2017).

Research has covered the topics of unfair hiring practices and unfair and unequal treatment of women and minorities in the workforce; however, there is a gap in the research on female leaders in the fire service (Eagly, 2007; Hom et al., 2017; Hulett et al., 2008; Jahnke et al., 2012). Research on the leadership skills and characteristics present in the women promoted to leadership positions, specifically fire department chiefs, also appears to be missing from the literature. Learning about the leadership characteristics and skills of female fire chiefs may help prepare women for these positions. Therefore, this study investigated what characteristics and leadership styles female firefighters need to become fire chiefs in American fire departments.

Historically, the fire service has been a male-dominated industry in which women were very rarely promoted to leadership positions. Women have been in the fire service as career firefighters in the United States since 1973 (Hulett et al., 2008, NFPA, 2004). However, most departments did not begin hiring women as part of the workforce until the 1980s (Hulett et al., 2008). Women have slowly trickled into the position of firefighter in departments all over the country (BLS, 2017). Although prior studies focused on harassment, hostility, and gender disparity for women firefighters in the United States (Ainsworth, 2014: Hom, 2017; Jahnke, 2012), this current study focused on learning more about the leadership styles and characteristics of American female firefighters who were able to overcome obstacles and earn their positions as fire chiefs in the American fire service career field. By exploring American female fire chiefs' leadership styles and characteristics, a gap noted in the literature can be filled.

Multifactor Leadership Theory (MLT)

We found that the most appropriate theory that frames this study is the multifactor leadership theory (MLT) (Bass, 2008). The MLT examines transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles in various industries. For this study, the MLT provided the groundwork for discovering the leadership styles and characteristics of female fire chiefs. Avolio and Bass (2004) identified the characteristics associated with transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

Transformational leadership. *Transformational leaders* motivate their followers to excel even beyond the leaders' expectations and often beyond the followers' own expectations (Avolio & Bass, 2004). A transformational leader presents ideas that challenge the status quo and motivate followers to set high expectations and focus all efforts toward achieving the goal. Bass and Riggio (2006) describe the five transformational characteristics considered in the current study as follows:

- *Idealized influence—attributes* (II-A) refers to attribution of charisma of the leader. A transformational leader is someone who demonstrates extraordinary characteristics and leads by communicating high expectations through visual aids and stories.
- *Idealized influence—behavior* (II-B) emphasizes a collective sense of mission and values, as well as acting upon these values.
- *Inspirational motivation* characterizes the transformational leader as providing meaningful and challenging tasks while building team spirit and developing a positive work environment.
- *Intellectual stimulation* describes a leader who encourages followers to be creative and innovative and, most importantly, to be problem solvers.

- *Individualized consideration* presents a leader as a coach who develops followers' styles and skills through delegation.

Followers become motivated by their own achievements when a leader uses the combination of these characteristics of transformational leadership. As Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) note in their study, these characteristics are a direct link to leadership effectiveness. Davis (2007) posits that the most important leadership characteristics of a transformational leader are having self-confidence, being visionary, inspiring others, being mission focused, being a team builder, valuing followers, and willing to accept the input of followers.

Transactional leadership. According to Avolio and Bass (2004), *transactional leadership* contains the components of contingent reward, management by exception—active, and management by exception—passive in followers' goal attainment. These three factors were considered in the current study.

- *Contingent reward* is the degree to which a leader develops exchanges with a follower (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).
- *Management by exception—active* is demonstrated by a leader actively monitoring followers with the goal of finding an action to take (Bass, 2008).
- *Management by exception—passive* is demonstrated by a leader who sits back passively, waiting for an action to occur, and then making the necessary correction (Bass, 2008).

A transactional leader may view leadership situations as a transaction and prefer to keep the status quo, but transactional leadership does contribute to the overall leader–follower exchange aspect of leadership (Burke, 2008; Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011). As noted in Zhu, John, Riggio, and Yang's (2012) study, transactional leaders communicate to their followers what they should do and how they should do it and then monitor them closely; followers perform tasks and obtain contingent rewards for satisfactory performance and are punished for unsatisfactory performance.

Laissez-faire leadership. A *laissez-faire leader* is one who is passive and dismissive of followers' needs (Wong & Giessner, 2016). This leadership style generally leads to the lowest productivity among group members (Zareen, Razzaq, & Ramzan, 2013). Otherwise known as passive/avoidant leadership, laissez-faire leadership is considered more as non-leadership, in contrast to the more active forms of transformational and transactional leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Individuals exhibiting this leadership style procrastinate, refuse to make decisions, avoid conflicts, and do not involve themselves in the development of their followers (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). Chaudhry and Javed (2012) posit that laissez-faire leaders are more effective in situations in which followers are highly skilled, motivated, capable, and willing to accomplish tasks without assistance. They found that the laissez-faire leadership style was negatively related to collective efficacy and was omitted from the implications of their study (Sudha, Shahnawaz, & Farhat, 2016).

Gender Differences

Several studies have focused on gender differences between transformational and transactional leadership styles (Ballaro & O'Neil, 2013; Isaac, Griffin, & Carnes, 2010; Quader, 2011). Quader (2011) conducted an analysis on 51 male and female leaders to determine their leadership style and characteristics using only the transformational and transactional factors of the MLQ. For the 51 men and women involved, the mean transactional leadership score was 38.59 and the mean transformational leadership score was slightly higher at 40.29 on a scale of 10 to 50. The study also demonstrated that scores for each gender separately were also slightly higher for the transformational style. The standard deviations were also smaller for this style. No gender differences in leadership style were noted in the findings. Ballaro and O'Neil (2013) found that women in executive sports positions contributed to the overall leader–follower exchange aspect of leadership with their balance of transformational and transactional leadership skills. Isaac et al. (2010) posit that women leaders are most successful when they combine some of the tough and direct skills associated with transactional leaders with the transformational skills stereotypical of female leaders.

Research Questions

The following three research questions were posed in this study:

Research Question 1: What leadership characteristics do female fire chiefs possess that are recognized as essential to attaining the leadership position?

Research Question 2: What training, mentoring, or coaching opportunities, if any, are required to advance to the leadership roles in the profession, and have they contributed to a woman's advancement?

Research Question 3: What advice can be given to the next level of female leaders in the fire service to continue training and achieve an upward movement in their careers?

Method

The problem noted in the study was that few female firefighters become fire chiefs. This study employed a mixed-method approach, using both interviews and the self-rater version of the MLQ to collect data for this study.

Population, Sample, and Sample Technique

The population consisted of American female fire chiefs. At the time of the study, there were 34 female fire chiefs. We used the publicly available Women in the Fire Service database to locate fire chiefs for this study. We selected a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling provides a better understanding of the subject being studied and the focus of the investigation (Krathwohl, 2009). A sample size of 15 was initially selected. Of the 10 that responded, only 8 were interviewed, since saturation occurred at the eighth interview wherein no new concepts emerged. *Saturation* is the continuation of sampling of data collection until no new conceptual insights are generated and additional sampling will not offer additional new information (Bogdan & Biklen, 2017).

Demographic data of the participants appear in Table 1, including years in fire service, years in leadership positions, and years as a fire chief. Participants were long-term female firefighters with years of service ranging from 20 to 33 years with an average of slightly more than 25 years. The participants had been in leadership positions for an average of 18 years, and their average tenure as fire chiefs was slightly more than 7.5 years.

Table 1: Demographic Data for Participants

Fire Chief	Years in Fire Service	Years in Leadership Position	Tenure as Fire Chief
1	26	22	15
2	33	28	21
3	20	11	3
4	25	20	6
5	25	15	1
6	25	18	0.20
7	24	14	7
8	29	16	8
Mean	25.88	18	7.65

Instrumentation

This study implemented two data collection instruments: semi-structured interviews and the self-rater version of the MLQ.

Interviews. Fourteen semi-structured interview questions were developed for the study. The interview questions were semi-structured to allow the information to flow freely and without reservations from the participants. To test the reliability of the questions, a pilot test was performed with three subject matter experts (SME) to determine the appropriateness of the questions and make sure they were not leading, confusing, and/or ambiguous. One SME is a firefighter administrator, and the other two SMEs are researchers who have published articles in peer-reviewed journals. According to Rea and Parker (2014), a researcher may assemble a team of experts and use a pilot test to determine if there is any bias in their questionnaire and establish clarity, comprehensiveness, and acceptability. The pilot test did not require data to be collected, as its purpose was to ensure the clarity and conciseness of interview questions. Changes to three interview questions were implemented based on the recommendations from the SMEs.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ self-rater version consists of 45 items that identify and measure key leadership and effectiveness characteristics shown in prior research to be strongly linked with both individual and organizational success (Avolio & Bass, 2004). It uses a five-point Likert-type scale to rate leaders' characteristics as observed by others or themselves, where 0 = Not at all, 1 = Once in a while, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Fairly often, and 4 = Frequently if not always.

The MLQ measures nine leadership components. It measures five transformational leadership factors: idealized influence—attributed, idealized influence—behavior, inspirational motivation, intellectual consideration, and individualized consideration. It measures three transactional leadership factors: contingency reward, management by exception—passive, and management by exception—active. It also measures one laissez-faire leadership factor: passive/avoidant.

The MLQ measures leadership effectiveness skills linked with individual and organizational achievement. The reliability of the MLQ has been verified by researchers, with over 6,000 respondents in 18 independent samples ranging from 45 to 700 in size throughout the United States (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). Avolio, Wernsing, and Garder (2017) and Muenjohn and Armstrong (2008) evaluated the structural validity of the MLQ and found that the overall fit of the nine-correlated-factor model was statistically significant.

Procedures

The data collection procedures consisted of two phases. Phase 1 comprised of the 45-item MLQ self-rater version (Avolio & Bass, 2004), which was administered to the fire chiefs via the Mindgarden website (mindgarden.com). Mindgarden is an independent publisher of psychological assessments and instruments in leadership, self-esteem, anxiety, burnout, and many other areas, including the MLQ. The MLQ self-rated version took approximately 15 to 20 minutes for the fire chiefs to complete. The responses were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and descriptive statistics were provided for the mean and standard deviation for each MLQ factor.

In Phase 2, the female fire chiefs who had completed the MLQ were contacted by e-mail to schedule a convenient time for completing the interview. Informed consent forms were signed and returned by scanning and e-mailing. There were 14 semi-structured interview questions. All interviews were conducted by telephone at the scheduled time. When the interview began, all respondents were asked to consent to being audio-recorded for the duration of the interview, and all respondents agreed. The duration of the interviews was between 38 and 55 minutes. The transcribed interviews, for the purpose of data analysis with each participant's information, remain confidential. Field notes, both descriptive and reflective, were also used during the interview for the benefit of retaining information by the researcher.

Findings

Nine fire chiefs completed all the questions in the MLQ. During the telephone interviews, saturation occurred when the eighth participant was interviewed. Responses after the eighth interview did not provide any new significant information. Certain factors determining saturation include sample size and the overall objective of the study (Stake, 2010).

MLQ Self-Rater

Data collected from the MLQ for the eight chiefs who completed the interviews were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and the group mean, standard deviation, median, mode, and range were found for each transformational and transactional factor from the self-rater version of the MLQ. Table 2 lists the descriptive statistics for each MLQ factor.

Table 2: Results of MLQ Self Rater Descriptive Statistics (*N* = 8)

Component	Mean	SD	Median	Mode	Range
Transformational					
IC	3.43	.35	3.40	3.50	1.00
IIA	3.15	.27	3.20	2.80	.70
IIB	3.55	.16	3.50	3.50	.50
IM	3.61	.27	3.50	3.50	.70
IS	3.34	.38	3.50	3.50	1.00
Transactional					
CR	3.16	.24	3.30	3.30	.70
MBE-P	0.99	.70	.90	1.50	2.30
MBE-A	0.98	.50	.90	.50	1.50

Note: IC = individual consideration, IIA = idealized influence—attributes,
IIB = idealized influence—behavior, IM = inspirational motivation, IS = intellectual stimulation,
CR = contingency reward, MBE-P =management by exception—passive,
MBE-A = management by exception—active

The statistical findings from this study answered the first research question: What leadership characteristics do female fire chiefs possess that are recognized as essential to attaining the leadership position? The standard deviation measured the dispersion for each set of values from its mean and provided a strong indication of the distribution of scores around the mean scores for the fire chiefs. In this case, the smaller the standard deviation, the more narrow the range between the lowest and highest scores, and the scores for this data set clustered closely to the average score, indicating that all eight fire chiefs self-rated as having greater transformational characteristics and skills. The MLQ findings from this study support prior studies in which participants perceived they had higher scores for transformational factors as measured by the group mean and standard deviation (Balwant, 2016; Greiman, 2009; Quader (2011).

Interviews

Transcription and analysis of the data were in compliance with the modified van Kaam method (see Moustakas, 1994, 121) using the following steps:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping of relevant expression or horizontalization;
2. Reduction and elimination or coding to determine invariant themes. The overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions were eliminated;
3. Clustering of the invariant constituents;

4. Validating of themes and uncovering of patterns;
5. Creating a textural description from the invariant constituents;
6. Creating a structural description from the invariant constituents;
7. Constructing a textural–structural description for each participant; and
8. From the textural–structural description, developing a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole.

After analyzing the interview transcripts, we categorized this information into NVivo 10 nodes (i.e., a digital locker or a "bucket" storing common data). NVivo 10 (2008) is a data analysis software that facilitates the ability to manage, query, envision, and report ideas and information (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). NVivo 10 was used to manage the information in an effort to discover patterns, identify themes, glean insight, and, ultimately, deliver informed robust findings. The data were organized by question. The responses to the 14 interview questions were imported into NVivo 10 within the respective nodes.

Discussion

Four major themes emerged as part of this study: (a) transformational characteristics; (b) mentoring, training, and education; (c) barriers; and (d) diversifying assignments. Each of the four themes that emerged from interview data supported the research questions in this study.

Theme 1: Transformational Characteristics

The first theme, transformational characteristics, supports Research Question 1: What leadership characteristics do female fire chiefs possess that are recognized as essential to attaining the leadership position? The answer is purpose driven, people driven, innovative, and inspiring—these are all transformational leadership characteristics that the respondents had in common. Table 3 provides a summary of their responses relating to these strong transformational leadership characteristics and skills.

Table 3: Theme 1 Findings from Interviews

Thematic Category	Participant Key Terms	Participant Responses
Transformational Characteristics	Purpose driven People driven Innovative Inspiring	"Fire chiefs must have the ability to be sensitive, compassionate, and nurturing." "We must have a little bit greater sensitivity to people and situations and somewhat, across the board, maybe more compassion." "I think with us having a nurturing mindset, and [being] inspiring are the keys for being successful in our job[s]." "Certainly, being compassionate—compassionate without being emotional; being compassionate is really being able to put yourself in somebody else's shoes." "We must be understanding of what the situation is." "For women to rise through the ranks, they have to be persistent and creative." "We have to be inspiring and role models, and we do so by developing programs like the Junior Firefighter program for high school students."

Theme 2: Mentoring, Training, and Education

The second theme, mentoring, training, and education, recognizes significant factors in contributing to the success of the female fire chiefs. This theme supports Research Question 2: What training, mentoring, or coaching opportunities, if any, are required to advance to the leadership roles in the profession, and have they contributed to a woman's advancement? All of the participants agreed that pursuing higher education and training are necessary for any woman in the fire service to advance in her career; five of the participants had attained master's degrees, and two held bachelor's degrees. All of the respondents attend leadership classes and training. Table 4 provides a summary of responses in support of Theme 2.

Table 4: Theme 2 Findings from Interviews

Thematic Category	Participant Key Terms	Participant Responses
Mentoring, Training, and Education	Training and education were significant factors in contributing to success.	"[A master's degree] was something necessary in competing for promotion." "Pursuing higher education and training is necessary for any woman in the fire service to advance in [her] career." "Leadership training encompasses our ability to totally do our job." "Leadership courses are not just inside the fire service, but also specific to mentoring or specific types of leadership or specific types of communication." "Career-specific courses were important to learning and maintaining skills." "Classes include hazardous materials training, executive fire officer training program, fire investigator, paramedic . . . arson investigator, [and] fire marshal for fire prevention and fire codes." "At the technical level, there were a number of certifications and coursework specific to the industry that we pursued and continue to pursue." "Mentoring with leaders and training has contributed to our advancement because it has allowed us to become better leaders."

Theme 3: Barriers

The third theme, barriers, supports Research Question 3: What advice can be given to the next level of female leaders to continue training and achieve an upward movement in their careers? Four of the eight participants stated that the barriers they experienced in becoming fire chief were no different from any person moving up the ranks in an organization and that the dominant barrier they faced was societal acceptance and inclusion in a male-dominated world. The other four said that they did not face any barriers. One of the participants strongly believed some women experience internal barriers that women bring upon themselves. Table 5 provides a summary of responses in support of Theme 3.

Table 5: Theme 3 Findings from Interviews

Thematic Category	Participant Key Terms	Participant Responses
Barriers	No different from any person moving up the ranks in an organization; thus, disparate treatment of women was not a barrier. Societal acceptance	“We need access to the same information as [the] men in the field to enable us to [be] promote[d].” “Inclusion is one of the huge obstacles that we face as women in the fire service.” “Learning how to ignore the negativity and not let it crush our dreams. . . .”

Theme 4: Diversifying Assignments

The fourth theme, diversifying assignments, also supports Research Question 3: What advice can be given to the next level of female leaders to continue training and achieve an upward movement in their careers? Seven of the eight participants believe that diversifying in their chosen field allowed them to continually be promoted in their field. Being involved in new and different programs and trying new things enhanced the knowledge needed to move into leadership positions. Table 6 contains a summary of responses in support of Theme 4.

Table 6: Theme 4 Findings from Interviews

Thematic Category	Participant Key Terms	Participant Responses
Diversifying Assignments	Diversifying in their chosen field allowed them to be able to continually be promoted in their field.	"Do not be afraid to be involved in new and different programs and try new things." "Working in each of the different positions within the department expands knowledge needed to move to the top."

Summary of the Findings

The interviews provided a clear picture of the noteworthy strengths of these eight female fire chiefs. Their responses clearly supported the skills and characteristics of transformational leaders. The purpose of the self-rater version of the MLQ was to determine the dominant leadership style. The extent of transformational and transactional leadership styles and characteristics reported by the fire chiefs in this study was explored with descriptive statistics (e.g., SD, and means). Given the limited sample size, power analysis and more complex analyses were not feasible. The mean and standard deviation scores from the eight transformational and transactional factors from the MLQ self-rater questionnaire indicated that the dominant leadership style was transformational. Although all of the female fire chiefs exhibited some transactional characteristics, the transformational characteristics were more dominant. The findings from the first theme, transformational characteristics, revealed that all of the participants are purpose driven, people driven, innovative, and inspiring, all of which are characteristics of a transformational leader. This and the other three emergent themes and MLQ data supported the three research questions that framed this study.

Based on the results from this study, female firefighters worldwide can learn valuable lessons from the experiences and perceptions of the fire chiefs who participated in this study. Mentoring, training, and education were significant factors in contributing to their success as fire chiefs. The women in this study believed the barriers they faced in becoming fire chiefs were no different from any person moving up the ranks in an organization; however, four of the participants experienced a lack of societal acceptance and inclusion in a male-dominated world. Seven participants agreed that to be promoted on a career path, female firefighters must be willing to diversify their roles. Overall, the four themes emerging from this study and the findings from the MLQ provide a better understanding of why very few female firefighters achieve the position of fire chief and identify corrective measures to assist other female firefighters to ascend to the position of fire chief.

Limitations

There were five limitations encountered during the research. Only the fire chiefs of career departments participated in this study. Only 10 of the initial sample of 15 fire chiefs agreed to participate in the study, and only 9 completed the MLQ. With saturation occurring at the eighth interview and no new information being generated thereafter, only eight of the MLQ responses were analyzed. Given the limited sample size, power analysis and more complex analyses were not feasible. Only the transformational and transactional leadership factors from the MLQ were reported due to the one laissez-faire factor on the MLQ revealing little to no findings. In prior studies (Sudha et al., 2016; Quader, 2011), the laissez-faire factor was also found to be insignificant and omitted from the implications of their research.

Implications

The findings from this mixed-method exploratory case study of the experiences and perceptions of female fire chiefs has significant implications for women in the fire service, leaders of fire departments, and leadership research. For many years, men were thought to be more capable leaders than women. Women were thought to need to exhibit the masculine characteristics of ambition, competitiveness, and task-orientation (Bass, 2008) to become a leader and succeed. Evidence suggests that women tend to be more transformational than men are, yet still are successful as their men counterparts (Ballaro & O'Neil, 2013; Brown, 2017; Hom et al., 2017). The female fire chiefs in this study exhibited a dominant transformational leadership style, supported by the first theme. The self-rater version of the MLQ determined the leadership skills and characteristics of each fire chief. The analysis of the MLQ factors indicated that all eight fire chiefs rated themselves as having strong transformational leadership characteristics and skills.

Although women possess the skills and characteristics inherent in effective leaders, women usually are passed over for leadership positions (Hom et al., 2017). Several studies (e.g., Ballaro & O'Neil, 2013; Brown, 2017; Griffith et al., 2016) note that most women cannot build the relationships necessary to gain acceptance in influential networks, requiring a woman to be especially strong, skillful, and persistent to advance in a highly male-dominated hierarchy. Johnson and Ridley (2004) and Booth (2017) both assert that women, especially, need mentoring when trying to become more marketable in a male-dominated career field. Their findings support the recommendations in this study that female firefighters should be mentored by leaders to contribute to the advancement of their careers, as it allowed these fire chiefs to become better leaders. Finding a mentor earlier in one's career may alleviate the problem of women being accepted in a male-dominated career field.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Study

Our research falls short of answering all of the questions of why women are excluded from top-level positions, specifically the position of fire chief. The findings from our research do, however, shed light on specific career enhancements that can improve a female firefighter's chance of promotion to fire chief. A review of the literature offered no help in determining the leadership characteristics of fire chiefs. Our study helped to close this literature gap. We found that higher education, training, mentoring, diversifying, and understanding the barriers women face in many male-dominated career fields may help female firefighters prepare for achieving the position of fire chief. The conceptual framework of the multifactor leadership theory (MLT) by Bass (2008) supported this study and provided an understanding of problems facing female firefighters.

The practices of recruitment, retention, and societal acceptance may be some reasons that women are not promoted to fire chief (Booth, 2017; Brown, 2017; Griffith et al., 2016; GAO, 2015). Further studies may help to answer the question as to why so few female firefighters are promoted to the position of fire chief.

Implications for the Fire Service

In this study, four themes emerged: transformational leadership; mentoring, training, and education; barriers; and diversifying assignments. The emergence of these key themes suggests that fire departments should incorporate mentoring, training, career broadening, and skills building, and promote higher education. For instance, by developing a strong mentorship program to help firefighters find mentors earlier in their careers, more women may be afforded the opportunity to develop a career enhancement plan leading toward a fire chief position. Offering awareness programs may reduce the barriers that are still prevalent in many fire departments. Developing a solid leadership training program as part of the regular curriculum will prepare firefighters for promotional opportunities. Since transformational leadership skills were dominant in all eight fire chiefs, leadership training that focuses on transformational skill awareness may help women firefighters develop these skills. Fire departments can also encourage formal education by partnering with local universities to meet the schedule needs of the firefighter. Finally, offering cross-training opportunities that allow firefighters to work in different capacities of the fire service may also help prepare female firefighters for promotion by diversifying their experience, skills, and knowledge of leadership positions within the fire service.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Future studies should consider a comparative analysis of male and female fire chiefs' leadership styles and characteristics. A comparative study may show that transformational leadership skills are also dominant in men and that there is no gender differences in leadership style in achieving the rank of fire chief.

Increasing the sample size to promote quantitative studies will allow a power analysis and more complex statistical analyses to be conducted. Knowing how women would score on transformational and transactional factors using the MLQ for quantitative analysis could help determine if these factors actually contribute to our understanding about attaining a position of fire chief, as noted by a study conducted by Sarros, Tanewski, Winter, Santora, and Densten (2002). Future studies might also include female fire chiefs in volunteer fire departments in the United States, as the number of volunteer departments are more extensive than career departments and could provide additional evidence about their leadership characteristics. Finally, replicating the current study by focusing on women fire chiefs in international settings may determine if they encounter the same problems as their American counterparts in becoming fire chief.

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Narcissistic Leadership: Important Considerations and Practical Implications[*]

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Narcissistic leadership is enigmatic, complex, and multifaceted. This article elucidates key considerations enabling human resources practitioners and executive recruiters to carefully assess characteristics and unique situations conducive to success for leaders with narcissistic traits. An understanding of these intricacies is enhanced through use of valid assessment tools, awareness of exemplars that differentiate narcissists at their "best" vs. "worst," and the presence of synergistic traits (e.g., humility) that may offset the deleterious effects of narcissism and prevent leader derailment. The discriminatory impact of implicit gender bias toward female narcissistic leaders is addressed as well as the combined effects of humility with an optimal level of narcissism as a prelude to leadership success.

Key words: gender bias, humility, leader assessment, narcissistic leadership, subclinical narcissism

Narcissism is an intricate, complex, and multi-contextual construct. Dysfunctional dispositions demonstrated by narcissistic leaders, such as arrogant actions, emotional outbursts, and grandiosity, disrupt effective team-building initiatives, devastate employee engagement, and accelerate burnout. Over time, leadership derailment is a likely outcome (Leary et al., 2013). Paradoxically, the coexistence of traits such as humility may moderate these deleterious outcomes, have an obverse effect and contribute to leadership success (Owens, Wallace, & Waldman, 2015; Zhang, Ou, Tsui, & Wang 2017). An informed and non-prejudiced assessment of narcissism, regardless of gender, presented below, will enhance practitioners' evaluative skills relative to leadership selection and subsequent development.

The origin of the word *narcissism* can be traced back to the first century, when Ovid depicted Narcissus as a self-absorbed man in love with the perfection of his reflection (Hamilton, 1942/2013). Within psychiatry, the term *narcissism* was first coined by Havelock Ellis (1898) as a clinical condition of "perverse" self-love;

[*]To cite this article: Leary, T., & Ashman, J. (2018). Narcissistic leadership: Important considerations and practical implications. *International Leadership Journal, 10*(2), 62–74.

Freud (1914/2014) later embellished the definition to include outwardly unflappable strength, confidence, and arrogance (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). From a workplace perspective, salient characteristics of a narcissist include a sense of entitlement, excessive self-esteem, feelings of superiority, and an incessant need for attention and reinforcement (Bogart, Benotsch, & Pavlovic, 2004; Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Hogan, 2007). Current clinical and psychiatric literature conceptualizes narcissism as a stable trait that is traceable to the combined effect of genetic factors and early parental relations (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Narcissistic leaders take more credit for success than is warranted and refuse to acknowledge their own failure, errors, or mistakes. Hogan (2007) astutely describes a narcissist as "frequently in error but never in doubt" (125).

The American Psychiatric Association (2013) describes *pathological narcissism,* or *narcissistic personality disorder (NPD),* more broadly, as having a grandiose sense of self-importance and fantasies of unlimited success and being interpersonally exploitive, arrogant, and lacking in empathy. While extreme narcissism constitutes a serious psychological disorder, the subclinical version, manifested as *grandiose narcissism,* is most relevant to leadership research. Best defined as a pattern of characteristics devoid of the distress and impairment associated with NPD, *subclinical narcissists* exhibit many of the classic symptoms of NPD but are able to perform reasonably well at work (Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011; Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015; Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

In order to reconceptualize narcissism operationally, as a measurable personality dimension versus that of a clinical syndrome, various psychometric scales have been successfully developed to measure this construct. Credible exemplars include the frequently used Narcissistic Personality Inventory or NPI-40 (Raskin & Terry, 1988), the NPI-16, an abbreviated form that effectively captures subclinical narcissism (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006), and the Hogan Development Survey (HDS-Bold), a broader assessment of "dark side" dispositions designed to measure narcissism in corporate environments (Hogan, 1997). The emergence of narcissistic leadership is catalyzed through a combination of innate personality characteristics, flawed selection processes, and a “zeitgeist,” during perilous times, that reinforces supreme confidence and inspiration among emerging leaders.

Narcissistic Leaders at Their “Best” vs. Their “Worst”

When displayed in moderation, narcissism can be an asset. Referred to as *productive narcissists* (Maccoby, 2000), these individuals excel in situations in which their grandiose self-image, confidence, and risk-taking are beneficial (King, 2007; Patel & Cooper, 2014; Wales, Patel, & Lumpkin, 2013). In times of crisis, they can make hard decisions with confidence and adapt to situations quickly (Campbell, Goodie, & Foster, 2004). When given the opportunity for glory, their performance is further increased and their ability to adapt enables them to process information quickly and effectively resolve a crisis (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Furthermore, they develop a honed and highly effective public persona in an effort to earn praise and assert their dominance (Babiak & Hare, 2006).

When working with relatively unfamiliar individuals who share similar goals, productive narcissists thrive and their natural extraversion makes them very appealing as leaders. Their leadership is most effective in transitory, high-pressure, high-prestige jobs that avoid the need for long-term relationships (Grijalva, Newman, et al., 2015). As leaders, productive narcissists share powerful and provocative visions that amass and inspire followers to unify around a collective goal for the future. Winston Churchill is a historic example of a productive narcissist in times of peril. Churchill’s wartime broadcasts demonstrated charismatic leadership and unflinching resolve, which inspired his followers and exposed Hitler’s duplicitous intentions (Maccoby, 2000). Jack Welch, Steve Jobs, Michael Eisner, and Elon Musk exemplify the prototype of productive narcissists in a corporate environment; all have been praised for their passion, vision, and innovation (Campbell et al., 2011).

At their "worst," narcissists have the capacity to become extremely damaging both to themselves and to the organization where they work. Narcissists often inappropriately "stir the pot," potentially destabilizing a functional business (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Classic prototypes include "Chainsaw Al" Dunlap, a disgraced American executive who engineered a massive accounting scandal at Sunbeam Products, and "Queen of the Mean" Leona Helmsley, the American hotelier known for tyrannical outbursts who was convicted of federal income tax evasion and other crimes. Each displayed a grandiose sense of self, interpersonal exploitative, and lack of empathy. Their callous leadership style decimated employee morale, and in Helmsley's case, led to incarceration (Kellerman, 2004). When placed in an environment with strict conditions, the narcissist's desire for perpetual conflict and ongoing challenge will manifest as inappropriate and counterproductive behavior (Judge, Scott & Ilies, 2006; Penney & Specter, 2002). Attempts to mitigate unwanted behaviors are perceived by the narcissist as threats or challenges to their ego and will provoke an aggressive response (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Once provoked, a narcissist's dispositional impulsivity is likely to lead them toward a campaign of self-destructive behavior (Vazire & Funder, 2006).

However, their leadership may not endure over time, as their inability to manage their own behavior may derail their ability to successfully lead (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). As organizational leaders, narcissists can develop a cult-like following in which subordinates blindly accept the narcissist's manipulations and inappropriately assume responsibility for their failures. Conversely, the narcissist claims an inordinate proportion of the organization's success, which reinforces a false sense of grandiosity (Hogan, 2007; Sankowsky, 1995).

The Integration of Paradoxical Traits: Narcissism and Humility as a Prelude to Leader Effectiveness

Whether narcissism is good or bad for leadership effectiveness has been "one of the longest running issues" in leader–narcissism literature (Campbell et al., 2011, 272). A recent call to delineate potential characteristics influencing leadership effectiveness elucidated the beneficial coexistence of seemingly oxymoronic qualities: narcissism and humility (Owens et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). To envision the coexistence of both traits seems incongruent and irreconcilable. However, the paradox perspective, now recognized as a viable model for workplace effectiveness, provides a theoretical lens for understanding how conflicting states can coexist and synergistically promote greater creativity, productivity, and effective leadership (Owens et. al., 2015; Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). In this case, leader humility, operationalized in a social context by admitting mistakes and limitations, acknowledging others' contributions, and modeling teachability, counterbalances the potentially destructive effects of narcissism. The most toxic dimensions of narcissism (e.g., exploitation, self-absorption, excessive self -admiration) are counteracted and mollified by the coexistence of this metavirtue (Grenberg, 2005; Owens et al., 2015).

Research on leadership traits such as humility and narcissism has traditionally evolved along independent paths. However, recent findings by Owens et al. (2015) validate the counterbalancing and complementary effect of humility on narcissism relative to effective leadership and follower outcomes. Building upon the findings of Owens et al., Zhang et al. (2017) successfully linked the synergistic effect of narcissism and humility among executives in Chinese firms to highly innovative cultures and, ultimately, successful performance. The compelling discovery that the traits of humility and narcissism in CEOs are mediated by socialized charisma, a historic predictor of firm innovation and performance, demonstrates the vital role of complementary leadership traits for long-term success.

Gender Differences

In an unprecedented series of studies, Grijalva, Harms, et al. (2015) performed a meta-analytic review of gender differences in narcissism research. The results identified a significant gender difference, as men tended to display more narcissistic characteristics than women. This research is aligned with clinical data that suggests the majority of NPD diagnoses are men (Hartung & Widiger, 1998).

Traits associated with narcissism are typically aligned with traditionally masculine characteristics, such as grandiose displays of behavior, the desire for dominance and superiority, and a lack of empathy. In fact, many of the traits associated with narcissism correlate with desirable career qualities for men, whereas they correspond with undesirable traits for women. For example, traits in men such as assertive leadership, independence, and career orientation are often viewed in women as aggression, arrogance, domination, and rebelliousness (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012).

Social role theory proposes that these workplace implications originate from gender role stereotypes (Rudman, 1998). Behavior that deviates from gender roles often results in a backlash, as suggested by the stereotype maintenance model (Rudman et al., 2012). Therefore, both men and women are encouraged to behave in accordance with their stereotypical roles. Acts of deviance from respective stereotypes result in a backlash that can harm future career opportunities (Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010; Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, & Ten Velden, 2013; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

When in leadership positions, female narcissists are viewed far more negatively than their male counterparts. Narcissists tend to employ archetypically masculine leadership styles, such as autocratic or directive management (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Consequently, women who attempt to lead in a manner that deviates from their expected gender role are subject to negative evaluations of their leadership (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). For example, prior to being fired as CEO of Hewlett-Packard, Cara Carleton "Carly" Fiorina was known to be aggressive, arrogant, callous, and melodramatic. She was disliked and viewed as a pariah by her staff and coworkers (Hogan, 2007). Another exemplar, Ellen Pau, prior to her forced resignation as CEO of Reddit, took direct action against online communities promoting harassment. The extensive backlash portrayed Ellen as an overly direct and highly manipulative narcissist who "overstepped her boundaries" (Johnson, 2015, para. 1). Such perceived behavior did not align with expected gender norms (Rudman et al., 2012). Due to stereotypical gender expectations, such behaviors exhibited by male executives may not have been subject to as much negative scrutiny and ultimate demise.

Conclusion and Implications

Leaders who behave humbly may prevent narcissistic traits from damaging their leader effectiveness; as a result, narcissistic leaders may not be "ultimately doomed to fail" (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, 619). Recent findings demonstrate statistically robust relationships between the coexistence of humility and narcissism with successful business outcomes. Over time, in all likelihood, leader derailment is reduced when such synergistic traits are utilized on a sustained basis (Owens et al., 2015, Zhang et al., 2017).

From a practitioner's perspective, leadership candidates should be carefully scrutinized; selecting leaders who combine humility with narcissism is a beneficial alternative to hiring "larger than life" narcissists who may manage initial impressions well but lack other leadership traits for long-term effectiveness. For example, humble traits (e.g., candidly admits mistakes, develops subordinates, models teachability) enables narcissistic leaders to be effective; "self-focused, toxic dimensions" (Owens et al., 2015, 1205) of narcissism (e.g., arrogance, emotional outbursts) are counteracted and mollified by these dimensions of humility (Zhang et al., 2017).

During the selection or promotion process, it is also crucial to identify the situational characteristics most conducive to success. During times of peril (e.g., Churchill during World War II) or when vision, innovation, and passion are key leadership requirements (e.g., Welch, Eisner, Musk), the demonstration of narcissistic traits can be highly coveted and effective in the short term. However, these traits may become excessive, unbridled, and ultimately destructive in the long term. Tempered by humility, "a sense of superiority is neutralized by the leader's admissions of limits and mistakes, self-centered perspectives are transcended by a leader's enhanced receptivity of others' ideas" (Owens et al., 2015, 1205) and a preoccupation with personal success is redirected to that of others' success. Additionally, one must consider the level of narcissism. Grijalva, Harms, et al. (2015) astutely suggest that "individuals with average levels of narcissism should be preferred over those with either very low or very high levels" (30). This is reinforced by Kaiser, LeBreton, and Hogan (2015), who found that normative levels of narcissism are associated with optimal levels of leader effectiveness. Logically extended, the combined effects of humility in conjunction with an optimal level of narcissism (neither high nor low) should greatly enhance the propensity for highly effective leadership, on a sustained basis.

On occasion, uninformed executive recruiters are "hoodwinked" by false impressions; illusory correlations align with extraversion, ego-driven charisma, and long-term success. A more comprehensive evaluative process of multiple leadership traits, such as humility and socialized (communal) charisma, provides rigor to the selection process, decreasing the likelihood of selection bias or error.

Lastly, from an equal opportunity perspective, it is critical to prevent implicit gender bias toward women who exhibit narcissistic traits. One could attribute the demise of CEOs such as Ellen Pau (Reddit) and Carly Fiorina (Hewlett-Packard) to the presence of one or more of traits that did not "fit" archetypal female leader expectations. Attributes in men such as assertive leadership, independence, and career orientation are often viewed in women as aggression, arrogance, domination, and rebelliousness (Rudman et al., 2012). Elimination of such biases provides an equal playing field for women to succeed, enhances tolerance for individual differences associated with gender biases, and, ultimately, will increase the likelihood of sustained success among women in leadership.

In conclusion, an appreciation for intricacies associated with narcissism and leadership is enhanced through awareness of exemplars that differentiate narcissistic leaders at their "best" versus "worst," synergies between narcissism and humility as a prelude to leader effectiveness, and gender bias relative to a differential tolerance for narcissism in leadership.

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ESSAY

Is There Still a Place for the Study of Great Leaders?*

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This essay examines whether there is still a place for the study of great leaders in the modern leadership studies field. It begins with how leaders have been studied historically and then discusses the reservations some researchers hold about the study of great leaders. The essay concludes with a discussion of how there may be vital reasons for continued research on great leaders within the context of the broader leadership process, namely as a response to the troubling "cult of celebrity" that is permeating modern society and influencing how younger generations view leadership.

Key words: celebrity, great man, history, leader

Leadership studies have evolved from a leader-centric focus to placing more emphasis on the integral roles played by both followers and contextual variables (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). Over time, the *great man theory,* which has held since Aristotle that leaders are somehow different from other people, superior, and therefore born to lead (Cawthon, 2017; Mouton, 2017), has declined in favor of more inclusive and less leader-focused models (Komives et al., 2007; Payne, 2010). Followers of the so-called Annales School—historians who turned away from political history toward a focus on long-term social history—have suggested it is now passé to focus on the exploits of legendary leaders of old times, arguing that centuries-long patterns of economic and social change have much greater impact than the efforts of individuals (Bell, 2017). To that end, Payne (2010) states that "in shunning all this [Great Man theory], historians have hoped to discover truths about what really matters" (3).

This essay asks whether there still a place for the study of great leaders and explores some of the pros and cons of this argument. We assert that in the current environment of political divisiveness, cynicism, and cult of celebrity, the study of great leaders, as part of a complete investigation, may be more important and necessary than ever.

*To cite this article: Harter, N. W., & Heuvel, S. M. (2018). Is there still a place for the study of great leaders? *International Leadership Journal, 10*(2), 75–84.

To begin, we must reexamine how we study leaders. Aside from experimentation, history provides the only empirical evidence of leadership. History consists of episodes it repays to study, because one can detect patterns and trends that might inform the present (Wren, 2011). Therefore, which historical episodes should be studied? As a practical problem, there are many instances of leadership in nearly every domain of human endeavor, wherever people coordinate their activities for a shared purpose.

Since not everyone accepts which historic episodes constitute leadership and not everyone agrees who is or is not a leader, the passage of time helps to establish leaders. Hiller, DeChurch, Murase, and Doty (2011) opine that “temporal separation allows stronger inferences of causality of leadership affecting outcomes” (1167). Choosing recent examples of leadership might be risky and result in controversies that could distract from the main objective as there are too many partisans who have their own viewpoints. Looking retrospectively, we tend to form a consensus that particular individuals were indeed leaders. If we can identify a few leaders to study, there may be less controversy about whether we successfully chose an episode of leadership.

The list of so-called great leaders can easily be altered. The traditional canon of historical figures often changes as we learn more about other cultures. Therefore, we begin to explore other potential leaders without having to return continuously to the same leaders, in part because it brings us back to the question what constitutes greatness. We need to appreciate the significance of Ashoka (c. 268–c. 232 BC), Indian emperor of the Maurya Dynasty; Coco Chanel (1883–1971), French fashion designer and businesswoman; and Jane Addams (1860–1935), American settlement activist/reformer, despite the recurrence of many familiar historical leaders (e.g., Moses, Queen Elizabeth I, and Winston Churchill). Perhaps the stories of these historical figures illustrate a particularly vivid lesson. We see absolutely no harm in introducing students to new leaders because their lessons are entirely fresh. Some students may become weary of yet another analysis of Abraham Lincoln, but that does not mean we should not teach Lincoln’s story.

To a certain extent, the multiple studies about Lincoln validate using him, if for no other reason than that we have more to add to the conversation. Thus, we can bring a greater variety of perspectives about him into our classrooms than we can when discussing some marginal leadership figure. Similarly, the historical record (e.g., primary sources) regarding the so-called great leaders is much more extensive. We should not miss the advantage of a rich historical record. The more we know more about the people, place, and time of a particular episode, the more reliable our findings. The historical record is simply more extensive for certain leaders than it is for others.

By "great," we do not necessarily mean successful leaders or leaders who had a highly likability rating. We agree with Searle (1998): one of the best ways to study a subject is to study its breakdowns and pathologies. For example, we might investigate what went wrong in the life of a leader, or what external conditions had a major impact on the leader. Kellerman (2004) adopts such a strategy, introducing a taxonomy of bad leaders and explaining the basis for her negative judgment in such things as their flawed character traits and exigent social pressure. However, we should also be cautious, because a normal impulse might be to diagnose quickly where leaders went wrong without taking the necessary time to examine all the factors. We often blame before we fully understand the prevailing dynamics. We blame the leader's background, race, gender, age, religion, political ideology, or worldview. But it may be too soon to diagnose bad leadership in a responsible fashion until we first obtain the necessary foundational knowledge, which can be taught by means of great leadership.

Since antiquity, children and young people have been regaled with "the glories of the heroes and the deeds of the fathers" as a way to instill in them respect for and an appreciation of what was required to establish the community they will inherit (Arendt, 1971, 213). Parents want their offspring to know their heritage and aspire to emulate the best of their forebears. That is one reason to study great leaders.

In fact, psychology has shown by means of controlled experiment and historical example that "man cannot have true inner security or fulfillment without possessing an ideal to imitate, a hero to follow" (Liebman, 1946, 191). Liebman (1946) cites the practices of both ancient Greece and Israel using examples for instruction. He also adds that "adults seldom outgrow that need for the ideal hero-friend" (192). We concede that Klapp (1949), Ricks (1993), Lines (2001), Wynn (2004), and Hollander (2010) have raised serious concerns about the hazards of hero-worship, and we should heed those concerns. By the same token, many people today implicitly accept elements of the great man theory. Yet the study of great leaders does not necessarily implicate the great man theory or hero-worship.

Why the Great Man Theory Isn't Always Great

We present three critiques of the great man theory to studying leadership. First, valorizing extraordinary individuals such as Socrates or Lincoln is the result of an optical illusion, since "great men" are as constrained and limited as anyone else. "Great men" are thrust forward by circumstances to represent vast, impersonal forces. By studying leaders, we overlook these impersonal forces (e.g., the means of production or genetic imperatives), attribute agency to the wrong thing, and exaggerate the effect of individual human beings. Leaders may be no more than "cogs in a wheel" and slaves of history.

Polanyi (1959) understood this point well: one could study leadership in an "impersonal" fashion, conceptually bracketing out the human being to see what was supposedly happening. This is equivalent to studying a pocket watch using the tools of physics. It can be done, because a pocket watch is a physical object subject to the laws of physics, and therefore physics can contribute to understanding the workings of such an instrument. However, physics is incapable of making sense of the pieces as a watch. That level of understanding requires a subsidiary awareness that just is not possible at the level of physics. There are other levels of inquiry, and one of those levels allows us to discern the meaning of a phenomenon. In leadership studies, we are interested here in the level of meaning.

The study of great leaders would be enhanced by studying the vast, impersonal forces. Moreover, to understand a particular episode, it is imperative to appreciate the larger context (Wren & Swatez, 1995). Nevertheless, leadership studies must take seriously the impact of individuals on the flow of events (Harter, 2003). In order to understand individual leaders, it is useful to understand their motives. A significant part of that investigation will introduce these vast, impersonal forces. The study of great leaders is a means by which these forces can be concretely studied. A study of Hitler becomes a study of economics, politics, and culture, and it may become the lens through which we might access broader themes.

Second, studying great leaders may prevent us from noticing leadership on a smaller scale (McGill & Slocum, 1998). As Carlyle states, “when the oak tree is felled, the whole forest echoes with it; but a hundred acorns are planted silently by some unnoticed breeze” (1830/1908, 180). The great man theory explicitly omits women and emphasizes the contributions of Tall-Handsome-White-alpha-Males-of-Privilege (THWaMPs; Grint, 2010). We are usually more broadly influenced by supposedly “lesser” persons in our lives, including parents, teachers, and bosses at work, not all of whom are THWaMPs. These daily leaders have more of an impact on us than distant heroes. Of course, there are also other types of leaders we can study.

The third concern casts doubt on our ability to relate to great leaders. Great leaders are often remote and appear to be beyond comprehension. Studying these special cases makes it difficult to learn very much about their value for our ordinary lives. Few of us will ever engage in conquest, revolution, or the radical transformation of a culture, and what happens at that level has little or no consequence on our lives. Great leaders, especially those selected from another time and place, are so radically different from us that it strains our reliability in our comprehension of them. Even if these great leaders left records of their thoughts and feelings, can we assume that people today who do not share their context can draw useful inferences from the record of a great personage?

The easy answer is what historians routinely say: we have no choice. For instance, several popular books explain the leadership secrets of Queen Elizabeth I, George Washington, or Attila the Hun. These books belong to what Hogan and Kaiser (2005) derisively refer to as the “troubadour tradition” of unreliable entertainment about leadership (170). While these books may not qualify as serious studies of leadership, they should not be dismissed out-of-hand, as Hogan and Kaiser also favorably cite de Hartog’s *Genghis Khan* (2000) and Pocock’s *Horatio Nelson* (1987).

The remoteness (time and status) of these leaders is a matter of degree. For example, at what point would we be permitted to study them without this objection? If we cannot go back 160 years to study Lincoln, why can we go back 80 years or 20 or 2? Remoteness can create difficulties, but remoteness does not preclude such investigations. In fact, all historical figures are somewhat remote. Any boss or coach or dean or pastor occupies a position we may never reach. If we were to take this objection seriously, the only leaders we would study are those we are likely to become. We see no reason to take this objection too seriously, except to appreciate that our task becomes more difficult the further removed we are from the subjects of our inquiry and that our findings might be somewhat less reliable. Perhaps by studying great leaders from the past, current students are more likely to aspire to greatness.

The Value in Continuing the Study of Great Leaders

While we acknowledge the importance of studying followership and context, other vital leadership components, there is a place for the study of great leaders. First, studying great leaders provides an important lens into who we are as a society, and moreover, what values and priorities we possess. As Payne (2010) notes, “we shouldn’t rule out heroes and villains. Even if they don’t really explain how things are today, it’s still important that we made heroes and villains out of them; and that tells us so much about us” (3). Ultimately, by studying great leaders, we learn about them, and why we chose them as great leaders.

A second, and more urgent, reason to study great leaders concerns the growing cult of celebrity that permeates modern society. In an age of reality television and social media, our culture has been inundated by celebrities who have arguably reached semi-divine status in our collective consciousness (Lawrence, 2009). As Lawrence (2009) notes, “celebrity has soaked into every part of our culture” (5). Even though the notion of “celebrity” is not a new concept (Payne, 2010), an alarming trend is the growing number and impact of celebrities, particularly reality TV stars, who are just famous for being famous, and are primarily self-serving and self-obsessed people. Such behavior has also crept into the world of business, wherein some executives have gained popularity by adopting self-promotion strategies from the world of entertainment (Collins, 2001; Wood, Corbett, & Flinders, 2016). Admittedly, some of these people take on positive leadership roles, standing for causes larger than themselves and “giving back” to the community. Celebrities can be leaders, but they are not necessarily leaders—the distinction is blurring.

This presents a potentially dangerous situation. Younger generations view these celebrities as leaders simply because they are celebrities. For instance, a recent British survey found that children under 10 years of age believe that they could self-actualize by becoming a celebrity (Lawrence, 2009). These children also increasingly look to these same celebrities as role models. This raises concerns that more people will have the potential to fall under the sway of Keegan’s (1987) false heroic leaders as time goes on. Thus, we believe that such a state of affairs presents the strongest reason for the continued study of great leaders. In our view, leaders like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, and Martin Luther King Jr. should be closely studied as a counterbalance to the “Celebrity Housewives” and Kardashians’ reality TV shows. We need to understand what makes great leaders great and the study of great leaders is a good excuse to have that conversation.

In conclusion, every study of a leader has its limitations. Studying another person becomes difficult, if not impossible, in the absence of information. Still, it is an essential part of the study of leadership to try to work with the available evidence. The difficulties inherent in historical study should not deter us. Instead, they should inspire us to do the job better.

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VIEWPOINT

Connecting with and Developing Employees for Real Leadership*

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This article presents ways in which leaders can connect with employees to create real change and enduring value that will benefit an organization. Oftentimes, many leaders have focused on strategy and structure rather than on the ability to understand employees and nurture employee relationships. However, by connecting and empowering employees, and by stewarding growth and interpersonal acceptance, leaders can better engage employees to create innovative companies. The increased emphasis on enhancing employee motivation and serving employee needs have become key factors in both organizational success and profit.

Key words: career development, engagement, mentoring, retention

Many business leaders have shifted from autocratic leadership to a leadership model that focuses on transmitting positive energy by serving employee needs for connection, community, and growth. These leaders see the value in supporting people by meeting with them face-to-face to repair problems with good solutions. They focus on serving others, seek to involve others in the decision-making process, and adopt strong ethical, caring behavior to enhance employee growth (Spears, 2010).

Career happiness and success can be traced back to helping and empowering employees. When asked what makes them happy at work, most people say it is working with people they believe in and trust. Leaders have a dual responsibility: (a) to be the best version of themselves and (b) to help others to become the best versions of themselves (Tjan, 2017). Work offers people an enormous opportunity to develop themselves, and business leaders can find great professional satisfaction in helping colleagues and employees accomplish their goals through mentorship and coaching.

*To cite this article: Klein, J. (2018). Connecting with and developing employees for real leadership. *International Leadership Journal, 10*(2), 85–92.

Business leaders are most often faced with the choice of ideas over people, but it is people who create and execute ideas. Putting the right people in the right positions helps organizations achieve excellence and avoid mediocrity. Hiring values-centered people who possess strong skill sets in their professional domains is perhaps the single most important part of building a great business. Embodying a people-first attitude is a long-term goal and requires a major commitment to cultivating the best in people so that it becomes a top standard in performance reviews and hiring behaviors.

Good Leadership Through Social Connection

Lieberman (2013) argues that people need love, care, and social connection. Scarlett (2016) agrees, noting that social connection should not be viewed as an “extra” at work. These connections are paramount to success and satisfaction, and leaders must support people in building them. Furthermore, the need for good social skills is even more important when working with diverse people and cultures. In order to operate well in social situations, we need a strong capacity to read and interpret people beyond their literal intentions. The skill of building social connections is not restricted to those with natural talent—it is a skill that can, indeed, be developed. Leaders should build opportunities for others to learn and excel in building this soft skill.

Connecting with people at work has an important impact on one’s capacity to think and do their best work (Scarlett, 2016). As work projects become more collaborative and team-focused, the ability of a leader to create closer connections with employees becomes more relevant. This may seem simple, but prescribing how to create these conditions is difficult. Leaders must know employees and learn what motivates them best. They must also become adept at developing positive working relationships with employees and be aware that their time with employees is one of the most crucial parts of their work for employee and team development (Carton, 2015). Despite this, some leaders feel uncomfortable taking time out for a coffee or an informal chat, as this may be considered as being too lenient with time and may bring criticism from peers.

One possible way to developer closer work relationships is by beginning each staff meeting with some positive points or by changing the venues of the meeting so employees learn more about each other.

Leaders make choices about which personal qualities they should show to employees in the workplace. Unfortunately, they often choose to show their strength and competencies first. However, Cuddy, Kohut, and Neffinger (2013) found that the trait of warmth is needed. Warmth leads to connecting with people and builds trust. Displaying warmth does not mean that organizational goals are not accomplished; these are not mutually exclusive.

Carr and Walton (2014) found that the word “together” can influence employees positively by giving them a sense of belonging. Employees who experience togetherness enjoy their tasks more. It can also increase work effort and performance. Leaders would do well to pay attention to using language that creates togetherness. Employees develop passion and become excited about work when they belong to a team and have shared goals. That engagement with the workplace helps them stay positive and focused.

Social Connection Brings Buy-In and Trust

Unfortunately many organizations have not been optimized for social connection (Dunbar, 1998). Instead, they have developed leaders based on their abilities to devise strategy, manage finances, and sell products and services rather than on their ability to collaborate with and support employees. Managerial consultancies reinforce this view when they are asked by clients to redesign organizational strategy and structure. While these consultants have excellent technical and analytical skills, they are rarely encouraged to consider the social element of how organizations operate (Lieberman, 2013). Their approach often results in failure, since they fall short in securing “buy-in” from employees for new concepts or managerial practices. Without buy-in and employee trust, changes cannot be effectively accomplished.

Giving people trust and freedom will attract the most gifted, hardest-working employees who can do meaningful work and contribute to the destiny of the company (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Leaders should show trust and give employees the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions. If leaders have shown little trust in the past, then small gestures become more meaningful and allowing employees to begin to build trust. Gaining employee input about change leads to building trust. Furthermore, employees should be encouraged to help take responsibility for the success of the company (Bock, 2015).

Social Connection with Customers Brings Motivation and Satisfaction

Leaders need to consider how and when employees meet with customers. Customer service, as a growing indicator of business excellence, means that employees must be able to quickly enter conversations and discussions, find and offer solutions, and close deals. Grant (2014) found that employee–customer interactions and relationships can have an enormous positive impact. Employees who meet and talk with customers become more effective in their work by connecting with and understanding how their work benefits customers. This process of connecting employees to people can create and help maintain high levels of motivation (Grant, 2014). Many employees want to witness firsthand how they are helping customers. Another way to enhance this relationship is to bring customers into the workplace. This can create unexpected conversations and become a great source of satisfaction and pride for employees. One of the most powerful motivators in workplace settings is employees' knowledge that they make a difference in the world.

Social Connection Brings Innovation and Creativity

Organizational culture plays an essential role in innovation (Scarlett, 2016). Those organizations in which collaboration is encouraged and leaders create opportunities for employees to share ideas and get involved are the ones that win. Organizational leaders must innovate and communicate with others. They must have the ability to talk to people and discuss ideas effectively to ensure success.

Leaders need to learn to say "yes" to suggestions by employees for programs and services. The outcome is improved organizational efficiency, community, and innovation. Google's 2004 IPO filing is instructive:

> We provide many unusual benefits for our employees, including meals free of charge, doctors, and washing machines. We are careful to consider the long-term advantages to the company of these benefits. Expect us to add benefits rather than pare them down over time. We believe it is easy to be penny wise and pound foolish with respect to benefits that can save employees considerable time and improve their health and productivity. (Page & Brin, "Googlers," para. 2)

Leaders need to make on-site services and programs available to employees. It contributes to their sense of well-being and community, and fuels innovation. For example, programs such as TGIF meetings and random lunches help deconstruct rigid structures and create a strong sense of community, which fuels innovation and sparks creativity.

Leaders need to connect employees to improve efficiency and create well-being. Enabling employees to be near other employees with contrasting skills and knowledge or "holes in a social structure are at a higher risk of having good ideas" is one of the most effective ways for creativity (Burt, 2004, 349). Connecting employees across groups introduces them to alternative ways of thinking and behaving. New ideas evolve as they are synthesized across "structural holes" (Burt, 2004).

Social Connection Through Mentorship Creates New Leaders

Leaders can create new potential for organizations through mentorship, which is extends beyond the leader-employee, top-down relationship. Anyone can serve as a mentor. A mentorship can help employees perform better, and in turn, they can serve as mentors for other employees. Such a commitment to help others has greater value than skills, knowledge, or competencies (Heslin, Vandewalle, & Latham, 2006). Many leaders often use their authority and power to solve organizational problems, but fail to understand the high level of interdependency in most organizations. Only by creating multiple helping relationships can organizational performance be improved (Schein, 2009).

Leaders–and all employees—whose mindsets is based on humility and openness improve themselves personally and professionally (Dweck, 2007). Real leadership begins with competencies as well as character and focuses on developing others whenever possible (Tjan, 2017). Finally, leading employees to become leaders is the mandate for every leader who aspires to create better, more caring organizations.

Conclusion

For those open to the challenge, the strategies presented in this article communicate the power and promise of leading by connecting with employees. Many top companies openly espouse these strategies, and many have formally integrated them as part of their corporate culture. As more organizations put these ideas into practice, research is surely needed to determine their long-term impact. For example, research initiatives might include the type of training leaders need to become more adept at mentoring others and leading by connecting. Other research could focus on strategies used by recruiters to search for leaders who display the traits and skills necessary for nurturing relationships, mentoring, and connecting. Finally, research could explore whether or not leaders with previous training in mentoring and nurturing relationships are more effective than leaders who have had formal training.

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