Does Career Maturity Impact Leadership Behavior?

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Do the elements of leadership skill vary across career stages? Five respondents, one or more from each of Donald Super's Stages of Career Maturity, were interviewed, answering questions derived from The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes and Posner, 2008) and Examining the Validity of The Leadership Challenge Inventory: The Case for Law Enforcement (Vito and Higgins, 2010). A majority of the leadership skills discussed were consistent regardless of career stage, implying that leadership skills do not seem to change throughout the maturity of a career. The Decline Stage showed the most deviation from the rest of the Life Stages.

BACKGROUND

Historically, leadership theory focused on identifying the common elements which distinguish leaders from followers. A great deal of effort was invested in identifying the distinguishing elements that determined effective leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Goffee & Jones, 2010; Brocato & Gold, 2010; Plato, 380 BC/1941; Plutarch, 1532/1990; Machiavelli, 1532/1992). The combination of elements which constitute any particular leader varied greatly, thus to this day experts agree that there was no single path to leadership effectiveness (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Green, Chirichello, Mallory, Melton, & Lindahl, 2011; Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). Indeed, many studies stated that leadership effectiveness could be developed in a broad variety of ways (Goleman,; 1998 Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Legault, 2012; Blanchard, 2011; Kanter, 2001). Eventually, research has yielded a spectrum of leadership theories classified into one of four categories:

1. Theories stressing leader traits/behaviors
2. Theories emphasizing contingencies and/or environmental influences
3. Theories dealing with transactional encounters
4. Theories emphasizing cognitive processes.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, it was a widespread belief that leaders were born. Trait Theory credited that the specific traits, which are believed to make effective leaders, were inherited and could not be learned (Malos, 2011). But, in recent times, the idea that specific leadership traits were inherited was

not as widely accepted (Gehring, 2007), although there continued to be debate on whether leaders were born or made (Avolio, 2005). The more modern theories are based on contingency/environmental influences, transaction encounters, and cognitive processes ascribed to the idea that a leader must have the desire to lead others (Bennis, 2008; Goffee & Jones, 2010 Tichy, 2012). It seems logical that people who aspired to lead must, thus, be aware of the set of elements needed to be an effective leader (Goffee & Jones, 2010).

Conflicting viewpoints on leadership theory and leadership development were and continue to be commonplace. No one leadership theory or idea conclusively determined a single set of factors that make up a leader. In fact, the variance and interplay of elements was quite large leaving a great deal of room for the individual development of leadership skills. However, a common viewpoint on leadership development was that leaders needed to learn leadership theories to be most effective (Freed, Covrig, Baumgartner, 2010). Leadership skills and theories learned could then be mastered through leadership development programs (Freed, Covrig, Baumgartner, 2010).

Current thinking seems to have shown that leaders learn best through personal experience (Goffee & Jones, 2010). Kolb and Kolb (2009) in reference to Experiential Leadership Theory stated that leaders "by consciously following a recursive cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting, they can increase their learning power" (p. 297). Leaders who examined past experience had a great opportunity to increase leadership ability and effectiveness (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Perhaps a hybrid of personal learning by experience and organization-led "experiential learning activities" created the most effective leaders (Legault, 2012).

Current leadership development thinking appeared based on the notion that leaders must be taught the skills necessary to be effective (Lynas, 2012, Kouzes & Posner, 2007, Garraway, 2002). Irrespective of whether leaders were developed through environmental influences, through the give and take of the social interaction with coworkers and peers, or through the leader's control over the group's processes and outcomes, people could not be effective when leading others if they did not discover the techniques for enhancing their personal leadership styles (Goffee & Jones, 2010; Smits & Bowden, 2013). Thus, this paper was based on the core idea of leadership as a learned behavior best developed over time.

Calls for improving leadership development suggested ways to improve leadership research based on this notion of developing skill over time. "Research methods need to be sharper and more focused, and more varied. ...theories such as stages of development should be explored more deeply" (Middlehurst, 2008, p.334). "[Researchers need to] examine leadership life cycles associated with stages of development" (Middlehurst, 2008, p.335). Furthermore, researchers "need to examine leadership 'beyond authority' and outside formally designated leadership roles" (Middlehurst, 2008, p.335).

This paper ascribes to the notion that leaders are shaped through their experiences. It seems reasonable that as one progresses through a career or life, the number or opportunities for leadership growth increase. Thus, it is logical to assume that leaders are molded throughout their career; however, very few articles researching leadership over the lifecycle of a career have been published. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine how or if the elements of leadership, and specifically the skills used to lead, change throughout the career cycle.

SUPER'S LIFE CAREER STAGES

Donald Super describes career maturity as the "readiness to make career decisions (Freeman, 1993)." Attitude and planning determine the focus of the individual. What the individual deems as important is determined by the specific life stage that individual occupies (Freeman, 1993). Super's Theory involves five career stages: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline (Super, 1975).

During the Growth Stage, children begin to become self-aware (Super, 1975); thus, while children may lead, they may not be aware of which leadership skills are being implemented. The surroundings of the child begin to make a more important impact (Super, 1975). A leader in this stage may be someone who is athletic or is encouraged by adults and other role models. (Super, 1975).

During the Exploration Stage, leaders develop interests, form leadership views, and explore options

for career development (Super, 1975). Leaders in this stage are most likely charismatic and outgoing. Someone who is likeable is most likely going to be followed by others. Also, in this stage, someone who can make decisions stands out as a leader. A leader in this stage is most likely not going to have much work experience, and this work experience is most likely not toward any specific career path, as yet.

During the Establishment Stage, sets of concrete values around leadership develop. Men focus on finding a suitable career, while women focus on the home first and career second (Super, 1975). A leader at this stage of their career works hard to move up into a position to lead others. Such leaders search for many opportunities to further develop the elements of leadership.

During the Maintenance Stage, people work diligently to uphold current skills and control their career, competing with younger workers (Super, 1975). In this stage leaders are expected to have obtained most of the knowledge necessary to be an effective leader. A leader begins to mentor those in the previous stages, passing on the knowledge learned through years of experience. A person's involvement in conventional life and career decreases throughout the Decline Stage (Super, 1975). During this stage, the number of leadership experiences available greatly decreases. The leader is much less prevalent in the organization. However, a person in the Decline Stage may use the leadership skills developed during a long career in different venues such as taking on nonprofit endeavors or work outside of their primary career path.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Kouzes and Posner (2008) conducted research into the exemplary leadership behaviors that effective leaders displayed on a regular basis. "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" resulted from an intensive research project to determine the leadership competencies that are essential to getting extraordinary things done in organizations. As a part of the research process, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner collected thousands of "Personal Best" stories—the experiences people recalled when asked to think of a peak leadership experience. Despite differences in people's individual stories, their Personal Best Leadership Experiences revealed similar patterns of behavior" (Source: www.theleadership challenge.com).

Brocato and Gold (2010) examined a broad array of past articles in the *Global Management Journal* to form an overall view of contemporary leadership elements. The resultant overview of the research at the time showed that society viewed a leader as someone who has specific characteristics which included: leading by example, being team-focused, being fair, being just, being ethical, having emotional intelligence, and being innovative (Brocato & Gold, 2010).

An effective leader demonstrates the ability to bring his or her subordinates together as "leadership calls for team players" (Nwabueze, 2011, p. 338). An effective leader must sometimes subordinate themself to the will of others, placing the common interest before one's parochial interest (Mason, 2006). A leader must be capable of analyzing any differences in team members' abilities (Goffee & Jones, 2010). A leader realizes that others might not work at the same pace, slowing down so that others can follow (Mason, 2006).

Effective leaders must have emotional intelligence. People must be self-aware of their own progress towards the elements of leadership. A leader is able to make accurate assessments of themselves and others (Goleman, 1998). These assessments allow for a person to grow as a leader. Also, being self-aware allows a leader the ability to quickly react to events (Peck, 2009). Quick reaction is possible because the leader must already have considered the possible outcomes of any project or situation. Thus, leadership becomes unique to each individual and a self-aware leader must be able to identify specific inherent traits which allow them to lead.

At times newly promoted leaders do not possess the essential interpersonal skills needed to lead others; subsequently, interpersonal skills must be learned through experience (Goffee & Jones, 2010). Leaders used "interpersonal influence...to change behavior in order to receive cooperation from others for the purpose of attaining personal and professional goals. "Understanding which influence behavior to use led to a strong influential impact within work settings" (Moss & Barbuto, 2010, p. 160). A leader who

understands how to use the specific leadership traits he or she possessed was more capable when leading others.

Across the authors reviewed, the different elements required for great leaders were constantly overlapping. Specifically, this study was based predominantly on Kouzes and Posner's approach to leadership development using the ideas from the "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership." The interview questions were derived from information found in *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner (2008) and *Examining the Validity of The Leadership Challenge Inventory: The Case for Law Enforcement* by Gennaro Vito and George Higgins (2010). Each question addresses important behaviors involved in leadership.

TABLE 1
LEADERSHIP SKILL AND AUTHOR AGREEMENT

Leadership Skill	Kouzes & Posner	Vito & Higgins	Brocato & Gold	Mason	Goffee & Jones	Goleman
Continual Learning	✓	✓			✓	✓
Self-Aware	✓	✓	✓			
Innovative	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Team Focused	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Interpersonal Growth	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Lead by Example	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Encourage	✓	✓		✓		✓

Table 1 shows how the leadership skills were derived using the authors cited throughout this study. If the author mentioned a particular leadership skill, it is marked in the row corresponding to the skill. All of the skills cited as necessary for effective leadership gained a measure of consensus by being declared as important in many of articles reviewed.

RESEARCH METHOD

Using Donald Super's Career Life Stages Rainbow, a representative sample of each of the four latter life stages was selected: Exploration Stage (15-24), Establishment Stage (25-44), Maintenance Stage (45-64), Decline Stage (65+) (Super, 1975). At least one leader was selected from each age group based on leader involvement in career, extracurricular activities and selected sector of society. Leaders are not always found at the top of an organization (Mason, 2006), so an effort was made to find respondents in a variety of levels and from a variety of sectors (see Table 2). Individuals from the Growth Stage (Ages 1--14) were not included in this study, as it involved an age in which a consensus methodology for leader identification was not established. In addition, it was not clear if young children have the self-awareness needed to articulate exemplary leadership behaviors at this stage. The specific individuals selected for

interviews represent leaders from a variety of sectors of society with specific leadership-based backgrounds, but most importantly all are clearly connected to Super's Life Stages.

TABLE 2
DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Interviewee	Age	Education	Title	Experience
Colin Hanna (Exploration Stage)	22	Attending College (Graduates 2013)	Student	Collegiate Football; Position Leader (Linebacker), Leadership Council
Celine Porrevecchio (Establishment Stage)	28	Two Bachelor's Degrees	Senior Sales Manager	KEDDEG Company; Strategic Accounts Manager, Associate Director of Marketing & Business Development
Gerald Scheperle (Maintenance Stage)	58	Master's Degree	Pastor	St. John's Lutheran Church
Interviewee	Age	Education	Title	Experience
Roger Schroeder (Maintenance Stage)	60	Master's Degree	Chief of Police	Chief of Police. Jefferson City, Missouri
Don Shinkle (Decline Stage)	70	Some College	Retired, Involved in Community	Walmart Corporation; Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Jefferson City Chamber of Commerce, President & CEO News Station KRCG; Chief News Anchor; News Director

Structured Interviewing

This study utilized face-to-face interviewing to collect information to develop in-depth answers to the interview questions on leadership skills as utilized in each of the Life Stages. As an accepted research method (Kothari, 2004), the structured interviews focused on the study's core purpose: to determine how or if leadership skills change throughout the cycle of a career. Similar to Kouzes and Posner who collected "Personal Best" stories, this study sought to encourage leaders to discuss the leadership skills developed during their career. The main strengths of structured interviewing as a data collection method, an increased volume of information, outweighed the primary limitations. While structured interviewing can be time-consuming and expensive when large samples are involved (Kothari, 2004), however, having a small sample size, interviews were not significantly time-consuming.

Dragon Dictate for Mac (2012), speech-recognition software, was used to transcribe each interview. This approach enabled the research to construct a full transcript of each interview, thereby allowing the researchers to devote time comparing the interview answers, instead of transcribing the voice recorded interviews.

Survey Questions

As with any interview based study, this research was predominantly qualitative in nature in that answers to the structured questions were open-ended and needed to be interpreted by the researcher. However, this study employed focused interview questions clearly aimed toward the primary purpose of the study (see Table 1 and Table 3), and recorded answers with transcription software to reduce errors. As stated earlier, the interview questions were derived primarily from information found in *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner (2008) and *Examining the Validity of The Leadership Challenge Inventory: The Case for Law Enforcement* by Vito and Higgins (2010), thus justifying validity of utilization of the questions in this study. Table 3 shows how the interview questions were derived.

TABLE 3
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND AUTHORS

Question	Skills	Kouzes & Posner	Vito & Higgins
How do you continually improve your skills as a leader?	Continual Learning	✓	✓
How can experience from taking risks yield positive gain?	Innovative	✓	
How do clear goals affect your ability to lead?	Self-Aware	✓	✓
Describe the importance of communicating your plan to those working with you.	Team Focused	✓	✓
How must you communicate to those around you in order to be the most effective?	Interpersonal Skills	✓	
Describe the relationship you must have with your colleagues to provide a productive environment.	Interpersonal Skills	✓	✓
Does a leader always need to take the lead? Why?	Lead by Example	✓	✓
How can taking the backseat to a project be effective for you as a leader?	Self-Aware	✓	✓
How do you develop the ability to lead in others?	Interpersonal Skills	✓	✓
How do you instill your beliefs and values on those around you?	Self-Aware	✓	✓
Describe the importance on being a perfect example of the values you preach.	Lead by Example	✓	✓
Describe the role you play in showing appreciation and celebrating victories of those around you.	Encourage	✓	✓
How does recognizing others affect the workplace?	Encourage	✓	✓

Pilot Study

"A Pilot Study is a version of the main study that is run in miniature to test whether the components of the main study can all work together. It is focused on the processes of the main study" (Arain et al, 2010). Working with new software and implementing a questionnaire were new processes to the interviewer, thus, it was important for the process to run smoothly during the final interviews. Two interviews were conducted in the pilot study. One interview was conducted without using the Dragon Dictate software, and one was conducted and then dictating into Dragon Dictate software. The pilot study served to determine that the software, Dragon Dictate and Macspeech, did not transcribe the recorded interview with enough accuracy to use as a final written document. However, by creating a profile to fit the interviewer's voice, it was possible for the interviewer to speak the interviews into the software program with almost perfect accuracy. Thus, the interviews were recorded and later, these recordings were read back into Dragon Dictate by the interviewer to create the final written transcript.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Key findings were structured around Kouzes and Posner's (2008) "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" to provide a framework for examining each of the elements of leadership skill: challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart.

Challenge the Process

Behaviors associated with "Challenge the Process" focus on leadership skill improvement. Leaders must constantly seek self-improvement, the improvement of others, and the improvement of the system or organization through different means than what may be considered generally accepted, "search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). A leader's view on such improvement-related challenges is not something that can be taught: this view or outlook must be learned.

Four out of five respondents said that reading literature is a viable way to increase one's leadership skills. Challenging the mind with new ideas or methods was utilized to increase leadership. The Decline Stage did not discuss reading literature. While searching for a job and working during a career, the Exploration, Establishment, and Maintenance Stages, it is important for leaders to read to keep updated with leadership techniques. "You must constantly look outside yourself and your organization for new products, processes, and services," as well as "keep alert to new possibilities from anywhere or anyone. Constantly survey the landscapes of technology, politics, economics, demographics, art, religion, and society in search of new ideas" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

Four out of five respondents stated that the experience gained from challenging the process are completed is important for leadership growth. One must assess the outcome of each action, each risk. Gerald Scheperle claimed "if you never venture out, you don't really grow. You stay in a little cocoon, a little shell, it's safer there." Leaders learn from the negative results, as well as the positive, and use the outcome to make more informed future decisions. "People make mistakes, especially when attempting something new. Without mistakes, they can't know what they can and cannot do. The overall quality of work improves when people are allowed to fail" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Super's Decline Stage did not state that experience through challenging tasks is important for leadership growth. Leaders at the end of a career, the Decline Stage, may not find importance in leadership growth from new experiences, but instead through "making sure that those in their care live lives not only of success, but also of significance. Leaders who see their role as serving others leave the most lasting legacies" (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Super (1975) states the Decline Stage psychological goal is "to develop a new self-image that is independent of career success."

Don Shinkle, Decline Stage participant, claimed that those who do not take risks are average in their work world and, subsequently, average workers. Three of the five respondents stated that one cannot be afraid to take on the challenges involved in risk-taking. They attributed risk-taking as a pivotal aspect of leadership ability and growth. Don Shinkle stated that "[Leaders] should never be afraid to take risks…just don't make too many mistakes." The Exploration Stage and Establishment Stage did not

mention the importance of taking risks. *Leaders in the Exploration and Establishment Stages may not understand the importance of risk-taking because leaders early in their career lack firsthand experience. Alternatively, such early stage leaders may not view many tasks as risky because all of the tasks are unfamiliar.*

Inspire a Shared Vision

Behaviors associated with "Inspiring a Shared Vision" focus on communication. Leaders must be able to communicate all aspects of an organization. "Expressing the vision is the most difficult task for leaders. The more practice in public speaking (leaders) have, the more comfortable (leaders) will be with it" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). A leader has to be certain that all members are working toward the same outcome or goal. Four out of five respondents (one from each stage) mentioned that having clear goals written down and tracked is important for goal attainment. Conflict can spawn from a lack of communication, and such misunderstandings can have a negative impact on an organization. "Keeping individuals focused on a common goal promotes a stronger sense of teamwork" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

All respondents agreed that communication should be accomplished through the use of various forms. These forms included face-to-face communication, tangible written communication, email, and meetings. Only one interviewee mentioned communication through the use of social media. Successful outcomes rely on using these various methods of communication. Roger Schroeder stated: "I think to ignore any of those [means of communication] is a mistake." In the study each Stage recognized that communication usually works best when one uses different forms simultaneously to communicate the vision or goal. *Not one form of communication is superior.* "A key responsibility for leaders is to provide people with the information they need in a timely manner and in an understandable and usable form" (Kouses & Posner, 2010).

Two out of five respondents stated that clearly defined goals are a way of challenging oneself. These respondents were from the Exploration and Decline Stages and, thus, really on opposite sides of the Life Stages. Yet, they agreed that challenging oneself is a method for inspiring others. Challenging oneself may be a way to "explore" leadership development for the Exploration Stage. During the Decline Stage, one may use challenges to keep motivated about life and career.

All respondents stressed success as being directly correlated to clear communication. Explaining what is expected or needed increased the probability for success when working with subordinates and peers. Leaders must make sure that constituents fully understand the stipulations to a task or project. In synthesizing all the aspects of a shared vision Roger Schroeder stated, "When you put all those components together, and they are working in the same direction, trying to attain the same goal, then the odds are that they will be successful." Leaders from every Career Stage understand and recognize the importance of clear communication throughout an organization as the driving force behind success. If a leader does not take the time or steps necessary for effective, clear, communication, the chance of failure increases. Also, leaders "must let ideas flow freely from outside, and remain open to opinions other than (just the leader). Keep alert to new possibilities from anywhere or anyone. Constantly survey the landscapes of technology, politics, economics, demographics, art, religion, and society in search of new ideas" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

Enable Others to Act

Behaviors centering on "Enabling Others to Act" are associated with development of a leader's constituents. A leader must be able to develop others into the most effective workers they can become. However, exemplary leaders understand that each individual may require a different method of development, a different path toward growth. "Generating a strong sense of shared creation and shared responsibility. Leaders who do this have to be skilled in two essentials: Creating a climate of trust and facilitating relationships" (Kouses & Posner, 2008).

In reference to the relationship a leader must have with those around him or her, two respondents declared that a leader must have trust (Maintenance Stage); two respondents indicated that a leader must

be caring (Exploration and Establishment Stage); and, one respondent said the leader must demand respect (Decline Stage). Each of the Career Stages, with the exception of the Exploration and Establishment Stage, had different views on the relationship a leader must have with subordinates. As noted by her statement, Celine Porrevecchio, from the Establishment Stage, is "not one who manages on fear or power trips." *The earlier Career Stages appear to be more compassionate toward subordinates. Different Stages are taught a certain type of relationship leaders must have with those around him or her, but each Stage is taught a different style of relationship a leader must have with his or her subordinates. The age or place in career maturity may be a direct reflection of the type of relationship thought to be needed with others in an organization.* No matter the Career Stage, relationships must be built "to get extraordinary things done, (and) people have to rely on one another. They need to have mutual dependence – a community of people in which each knows that they need the others in order to be successful" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

All respondents indicated that a leader does not always need to take the lead. "You can't lead if you can't follow," stated Hanna. All felt as though their job as a leader was to guide and offer support for their subordinates. In reference to leaders, Roger Schroeder states, "your job is, basically most of the time, to stand back and ensure the wheels of progress are still in motion." By allowing others to take the lead, a leader is assisting the development of possible future leaders. "If you want higher levels of performance, you must make your employees feel as if they are in control. They need to be allowed to be creative and flexible in doing their jobs" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Leaders believe it is important to allow others to be in the forefront of the project, both for personal growth and leadership development. Leaders may better understand the capabilities of subordinates when those subordinates are leading.

All respondents believed that future leaders develop through real world experiences and that leaders give subordinates opportunities to perform in leadership roles. "Accountability results in a sense of ownership" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).As a leader, one must be sure to explain goals and be patient when developing future leaders. However, Roger Schroeder believed that by watching his subordinates in their everyday duties, he was able spot future leaders. Schroeder stated, "if an individual does not have the elements necessary to be a good leader, I can train them all year long, (and) they will (still) never be an effective leader." Leadership growth through experience may be a belief held by most leaders. Each Stage stated that subordinates required leadership roles to shape their own leadership experiences. "Educate your constituents. Equip employees with skills and resources to do superior work. Make them more qualified, more capable, and more effective" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

Model the Way

"Model the Way" is, in part, about setting the example for others to follow. Leaders must first show others what and how to complete specific tasks. A leader must also conduct themselves in the way that he or she requires from subordinates, so being clear with one's values quickly comes into play. "Leaders take every opportunity to show others by their own example that they're deeply committed to the values and aspirations they communicate. In other words, no one will believe that you're serious until they see you doing what you're asking of others" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

Four of the five leaders interviewed stated explicitly that a leader must not be hypocritical. A leader will fail if that leader does not live by the values he or she is trying to teach. Subsequently, four out of five also explicitly stated that one must live by their values. In order to have others follow one's lead, as Celine Porrevecchio stated, "you have to live it. You have to be it every day." Subordinates are constantly watching the leader, using that leader as an unspoken, or designated mentor. Leaders find it important to approach life through their values, wavering as little in their actions as possible. All the Stages stated that subordinates are more likely to follow a leader who is not hypocritical. Leaders need to be consistent in their actions, and be predictable to their constituents to create an environment where people will understand and follow their values. "In practicing (setting the example), leaders will become a role model for what the whole team stands for. (Leaders) will also create a culture in which everyone commits to aligning themselves with the shared values" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

All of the respondents stated that a leader must lead by example. Roger Schroeder said, "one cannot expect one's subordinates to have that same set of values unless you are leading by that example, portraying yourself as being the very best." All of the respondents agreed that leaders must set the example. Leaders realize that subordinates are constantly watching for guidance. Kouzes & Posner, 2008, stated the following relating to subordinates watchful eyes:

> "They're watching to see what the message is – not in what you say but in what you do. All people constantly send non-verbal signals, but leaders are under much closer scrutiny, so your signals are more powerful. You have to mindful of the choices you make, because you're setting an example of what's appropriate and what's not."

The Decline Stage contained the only participant who mentioned that a leader is probably unable to force his or her values upon subordinates. All constituents already have a specific set of values. If a leader wants to instill his or her values in others, it is not something that can be done forcibly. *It seems as if only at the complete maturity of a career, in that latest stage of Decline, leaders have gathered enough experiences to yield this knowledge, and only at this stage are individuals able to reflect effectively to see this function in values.* "One of the great joys and grave responsibilities of leaders is making sure that those in their care live lives not only of success, but also of significance. Leaders who see their role as serving others leave the most lasting legacies" (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

Two out of five, from the Maintenance Stage, stated that a leader must first commit to a set of values through words before actions. "Use words and phrases that best express the culture you want to create" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Reverend Gerald Scheperle stated that one must first "speak about [values], then you have to live them." Values must be apparent through any policies, procedures, or rules. The specific types of training required demonstrates the values one must accept. The training should reflect the type of values the leader wants instilled in his or her organization. "There are critical moments when you have to take action to put values squarely on the table in front of others so that everyone can return to this common ground for working together" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). *Leaders in later stages (the Maintenance Stage in particular) of their career may be seasoned enough to know specifically the set of values they want their organization to learn. Also, the Maintenance Stage may know the key to better reach all constituents.*

Encourage the Heart

"Encourage the Heart" focuses on the skills which encourage constituents to act in the best interest of the organization. A leader has an obligation to acknowledge the good works of others within the organization. "To do this, a leader must both expect the best and personalize recognition" (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). Encouraging in the correct manner requires the leader to observe and know the methods that will be best received.

Three out of five respondents stated that a heightened level of care must be taken with praising individuals. A leader must make sure that no individual or group is overlooked when acknowledgments are made. One cannot overdo any level or praise because it may lose its meaning. People like to be appreciated but a leader must know the preferences some hold when praise is given. Kouzes & Posner, 2008, give two essentials to celebrating values and victories, "first, create a spirit of community and second, be personally involved." *The Exploration and Decline Stages were not as concerned with taking extra care, for two drastically different reasons related to experience. During the Exploration Stage, one might not know or might not have had enough opportunities to give praise and learn that care must be taken. However, during the Decline Stage, one might be experienced enough to make the right decision regarding praise without having to take extra precaution.*

All respondents believed that showing appreciation had a positive effect on individuals. These effects ranged from building people up to make them work harder, inspiring people, and motivating people. Colin Hanna boldly claimed that individuals must want to be successful before all else is possible. Hanna stated, "You want to make sure that your workers are intrinsically motivated, first." Furthermore, Roger

Schroeder said, "it's extremely important for the morale of the organization to take a little extra time and ensure that people know publicly, internally and externally, when a good job is done." It is clear that praising and celebrating a "job well done" is of vital importance in any organization. Each Stage stressed the importance of having motivated workers who want to do a good job, and each stage attributed praise to motivated workers.

CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to determine whether the elements of leadership change throughout the maturity of a career, and how these elements might differ in different stages. The results vary across the different aspects of leadership. A majority of the leadership skills discussed by each group were consistent, implying that leadership skills, overall, do not seem to change throughout the maturity of a career. However, the Decline Stage showed the most deviation from the rest of the Life Stages. Different Stages are taught a certain type of relationship leaders must have with those around him or her, but each Stage is taught a different style of relationship a leader must have with his or her subordinates. The age or place in career maturity may be a direct reflection of the type of relationship thought to be needed with others in an organization.

The Decline Stage stood out because of the contradictory aspects discovered in leadership growth: leaders at the end of a career do not place as much importance on their own leadership growth as the other Stages. While most Stages found it important to use literature, and to seek out challenging tasks and new experiences to build skills, the Decline Stage did not indicate any of those tasks to be important. Leaders in the Exploration, Establishment, and Maintenance Stages used their current experiences to mold the decisions, present and future, that they made. "Studies have shown that one of the most important competencies for successful leadership in changing times is the ability to learn from experience and from others" (Oginde, 2011; Argyris, 1991; Dechant, 1990; Mumford & Connelly, 1991). However, the Decline Stage did not use current experiences and did not feel current experiences were needed to make decisions, instead "perceive information concretely and process this information actively, generally being risk takers who concordantly accumulate new experiences" (Toms & Kovacs, 2010). In the first two stages, Exploration and Establishment, it was found that the respondents did not choose to take risks, whereas the Decline respondent said that "those who do not take risks are…. average workers."

In the Decline and Exploration Stages, leaders stated that clearly defined goals are a way of challenging oneself leads to personal leadership growth, and is a method of inspiring others. Also, it is found that "leaders with inspirational motivation, challenge followers with high standards, communicate optimism about future goal attainment, and provide meaning for the task at hand" (Oginde, 2011). However it appears that goals are set during these two stages for differing reasons. In the Decline Stage, leaders set clearly defined goals to keep motivated in other aspects of his or her life and career. "As compared to the other generations, have a strong concern for their health and being free from sickness. As they prepare to retire, they are likely to be concerned about health care benefits and retirement plans" (Greenwood, Gibson & Murphy, 2008). In addition, respondents from each Life Stage felt that multiple forms of communication were necessary in their work and clear communication is necessary for success in the workplace. "Littlejohn (1999) suggests that relationships are 'connected through communication (and the) nature of the relationship is defined by the communication between its members'" (Watt, 2013). Leaders must know how to use a broad variety of communications forms, verbal and written, to be the most effective. "Burgoon, Buller, Hale, and deTurck (1984) indicate that relational interaction is both verbal and nonverbal communication that affects how a person regards oneself, the other, and the relationship" (Watt, 2013). One of a leader's essential tasks is to effectively communicate their expectations, and goals of the individual, project, or organization.

In addition to the use of a variety of communication methods, there were multiple aspects of this study that showed that the elements of leadership behavior can be extremely similar throughout the Stages of Career Maturity. Leaders must provide clear direction toward subordinates, and guide and offer support. "Setting a vision requires personal integrity based on an understanding of who you are, what you

believe in and stand for, and what is most important to you" (Watt, 2013). The Exploration and Establishment Stages both expressed importance of leaders being caring and compassionate to enable others. "Murphy and Ensher (2008) associated charismatic leadership with such behavior as vision and vision articulation, personal risk and deviation from the status quo, unconventional behavior, sensitivity to group members' needs" (Oginde, 2011). Leaders need to allow subordinates to take the reins on projects, and be willing to take the backseat, as a leader, and allowing others to experience "the lead" of real life experiences, in order to help develop the skills of future leaders. "A recent analysis of popular leadership books revealed that effective leaders … (provide) their followers with opportunities to reach their unique potential" (Oginde, 2011). The experience gained from leading projects is essential for developing new leaders. Current leaders do not overlook the responsibility they have to develop the leaders of tomorrow. "Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) found that followers of leaders with the visioning behavior perceived a task to be more interesting, challenging, and important. They set higher performance goals and had greater trust in the leader (Oginde, 2011). However, those in the Establishment and Decline Stages had drastically different views on actions associated with Enabling Others to Act. The Establishment Stage did not lead with fear or power, whereas, the Decline Stage demanded respect. Those in the Decline Stage, "want respect and esteem from co-workers, subordinates and managers" (Greenwood, Gibson & Murphy, 2008).

The study also showed that all Stages felt a leader must not be a hypocrite in their process of modeling the way for subordinates. Leaders must not only set the example but also lead by that example without wavering from the stated path. Both respondents from the Maintenance Stage added that a leader must commit to values through words before actions, and the Decline Stage felt that it is not possible to forcibly instill values into subordinates. In fact, "current leadership research provides only limited information on the dynamics that guide peoples' actions both as social beings and individual operators, and what factors, social or individual, drive peoples' decision-making processes" (Adams, 2013). However, subordinates are constantly watching the leader, using them as an unspoken mentor, therefore leaders must always be aware of his or her actions and insure they are in line with the stated goals to model the way. In addition, leaders must be aware of the differences in overall values, and that "members of each generation display different attitudes and behaviors in the workplace and must therefore be led differently," (Greenwood, Gibson & Murphy, 2008) and "researchers have long acknowledged that values influence attitudes which in turn affect behavior" (Greenwood, Gibson & Murphy, 2008; Murphy, Gordon, & Anderson, 2004; Rokeach, 1973).

All stages agree that leaders must praise individuals and make sure those in the organization know that the leader appreciates each individuals' hard work. "Workers who have a clear direction and experience meaningfulness in their work likely bring out the best in themselves while also helping the workplace culture become healthier and more productive" (Kerns, 2013). Showing appreciation will, ultimately, make others work harder for that leader and is vital for motivating subordinates. Leaders must have a group of employees or subordinates who want the same end result. Thus, a leader must not overlook showing appreciation toward his or her subordinates. Praise and appreciation are essential to keep motivated, hard-working, happy employees working for that leader. The Maintenance Stage encourages publicly recognizing the individuals, whereas the Exploration Stage believes individuals must want to be successful to begin with, and leaders need to make sure the individual is intrinsically motivated first, before being able to motivate in other ways to achieve organizational goals. This belief coincides with Knowles (1970) "concept of the learner, the learner's orientation to learning, the role of the learner, the learner's readiness for learning, and the learner's motivation to learn" (Toms & Kovacs, 2010).

LIMITATIONS

While conducting the pilot study, aspects of Dragon Dictate did not function according to expectation. The Dragon Dictate software technology was expected to transcribe the interviews in real time, but this was not possible. Instead, the researcher had to dictate into Dragon Dictate while listening to the audio

files of each interview. Although Dragon Dictate is interesting as a research tool, in this study, it did not transcribe directly without extensively voice training the software. On the other hand, the process used was much faster than transcribing by hand. This off the shelf technology is very close to transcribing any audio file and thus being usable for researchers wishing to use interviewing on a large-scale basis as a data research methodology.

Due to the size and brevity of the study, many key elements of Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge* were not mentioned in the study. Some findings only focused on one or two areas discussed under the ideas from each of the "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership." For this reason, the depth of the study was limited on the number of respondents and the given answers used for the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What leaders need to lead, or their skill set in leading, seems to be consistent throughout life. Those looking to develop leadership skills should focus on the findings consistently mentioned by our respondents: reading to increase skills, seeking out challenging tasks and seeking out new experiences, using a variety of communication methods to communicate plans clearly to others, guiding and offering support, giving subordinate leadership roles to develop, not being a hypocrite and leading by example, showing appreciation, and motivating workers. Responses for this study indicate that "experience" from first-hand accounts is the most important aspect for improving or developing a leader. Current or future leaders need to continually "experience" to grow their leadership skill set both as the leader, and as the subordinate. Clearly, leaders late in their career should be able to help build such experiences in their constituencies.

Experience-based leadership growth over the life-cycle of a career needs to be further researched, especially near the end of leaders' careers. The study found that the Decline Stage had the most deviations from the other stages. This would pose the questions: So when did this deviation occur? And Why?

Based on the small sample of five respondents used in this study, future research should include a larger sample capable of yielding more significant results. A larger sample would also allow more concrete trends to arise. Future research should include a larger number of respondents from each Career Life Stage, including the Growth Stage (ages 1-14). Participants from this stage may not be able to articulate leadership behaviors through an interview process, however, significant research through observational studies, may yield significant results in demonstrating leadership qualities in those young individuals.

Future research could also include: more in the same level of the hierarchy of a business, more of each level of a business, more in the same industry, more varieties of industry represented, more in each gender demographic. Research could also pull in the perspective of subordinates in order to get a more 360 degree perception of what leaders need to lead, or their skill set in leading, as well as other elements of leadership skill over the career stages of a leader.

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