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**EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAMS: IMPACT ON FEMALE EXECUTIVE  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN URBAN EDUCATION**

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**May 2016**

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**Stella Niro**

**Joanne Reiley**

**Ron Cox**

**Victor Butko**

### **"Reach for the Stars"**

This dissertation is dedicated to the above individuals as they believed in my ability to complete this important journey as a doctoral student and practitioner.

Gabriela and Juanita, thank you for your friendship and encouragement to believe in myself in having the ability to "reach for the stars." You both were there many a night and day, encouraging me on the importance of my research and believing in me. You proved to me that empathy is an essential component of leadership and that I should never forget its importance as a leader. For that, I thank you.

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an inspiration to them and will provide them with the knowledge and skills that will help them become the individuals society will need in the future.

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To these individuals I will always be grateful and cherish the friendship I have with them as they have helped me pursue a dream I have had since I was a child. These individuals have given me the inspiration that I will carry forward in trying to create the change that is needed in our current organizational structures.

**EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAMS: IMPACT ON FEMALE EXECUTIVE  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

**MONICA A. BUTKO**

**ABSTRACT**

Corporate America faces an erosion of senior leadership talent due to the exodus of many baby boomers who had occupied these positions. Many of them have either retired or will do so in the next decade. The erosion of this talent will become a major problem that can be avoided by grooming women to assume many of these positions.

Over the past 60 years women have made significant strides in middle management as cited by their progression in the workforce since World War II. Education has been viewed as a key to career development by women. While women have made significant gains toward earning a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree, very few women have earned an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree, which has been cited as an essential component for leadership development in today's globalized economy.

The problem addressed in this research was the impact of an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree on the career development of female executives. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how earning an EMBA affected the career development of female executives. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What were the women's experience in context of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree?

2. How does the experience of completing an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program influence women's professional development?

The primary method of data collection was through qualitative process known as narrative inquiry. It was a process that was felt to provide a greater understanding of the experience associated with those that participated in this study. Restorying was used in order to analyze for key themes that emerged throughout the narratives.

The findings indicate that an EMBA's program networking had an impact on the career development of the participants involved in this study. The significance of this study warrants that educational institutions look at incorporating networking to recruit future female candidates.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Crisis in Management**

Organizations are rapidly changing amidst a challenging global environment. It is fiercer than ever before, creating a need for effective leadership that will help an organization maintain a competitive edge in today's financial market. Today's leadership faces insurmountable pressure from all stakeholders to maintain a sense of profitability and integrity. Northouse (2013) defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p.5).

Barrett and Beeson (2002) cite that the foundational base of leadership that currently exists is being eroded as the baby boomers who occupy key leadership positions are beginning to retire. This exodus will create a problem in filling such positions as there will be a lack of qualified managers available to lead organizations in the 21st century (Crainer & Dearlove, 1999). Qualified managers are needed if organizations are to succeed, otherwise they will become fragmented and obsolete. As these leaders retire, a drain on knowledge is created that can halt an organization's survival.

One area of replenishment for this void is the use of women to fill these high-level positions. Despite the number of women available, men are sought for high-level positions as society has created a pattern of socialization that utilize a male standpoint in

management. Northouse (2013) cites that the leadership gap of women in senior management can be cited on the basis of gender stereotyping. He states, "according to the role congruity theory, the agentic qualities thought necessary in the leadership role are incompatible with the predominantly communal qualities stereotypically associated with women, thus resulting in prejudice against female leaders" (p. 358-359).

Gender plays an important role in the determination of leadership as it is ingrained into an organization's culture and plays a significant role in the fact that male leadership models have governed corporate America (Jogulu & Wood, 2006). Mills (2002) cited how the study of gender and organizational culture "is exacerbated by the fact that legitimate cues for the construction of a corporate history or culture then draws on selected discourses (e.g. competition) that have been shaped in contexts of male domination" (p. 290). The influence of a male standpoint, globally has become antiquated in managing corporate structures.

### **Society's View of Men and Women**

Socialization has created beliefs on how women view management and their ability to succeed (Wilson, 2005). Men are seen as ambitious and assertive, whereas women are seen as nurturing individuals and the center of family life. McKinsey & Company (2007) stated women have been depicted as not being able to compete with the "anytime, anywhere" performance model, as society (management in particular) has seen them as being unwilling to commit themselves to unfailing availability or being mobile at times. As a result, women have not received the mentoring they need to assume top-level positions at many of the Fortune 500 companies (Wilson, 2005). Organizations must revisit this issue as women have assumed a greater presence in today's economy.

## **Importance of Women in the Economy**

Women now play a significant role in our workforce and economic growth. Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland (2008) focused on the growing economic purchasing power of women and the global influence they have in today's retail market -- noting that 83% of all consumer purchases, including 94% of home furnishing, 91% of new homes and 60% of new cars, are made by women. More importantly, they speculated that 90% of the growth in private wealth would be gained by women between 2008 and 2010. The importance of women in the workforce is based on the historical progression of women in recent years.

## **Historical Movement of Women in the Workforce and Management**

Over the past 60 years, women have entered the workforce in great numbers. During World War II, women answered the needs of our manufacturing companies as men answered "the call to arms." After the war, women continued to enter the workforce in order to supplement their family incomes. Many of the jobs that women occupied were in heavily female-dominated occupations, better known as "pink collar jobs."

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s changed the professional goals of many women who were just entering the workforce as they began to enter fields previously dominated by men. Women of this era went to college not seeking a husband, but a degree that was necessary to enter the management arena (Dominico & Jones, 2006). They became the role models that helped other women later aspire to positions in management that were considered unheard of 40 years ago. As women gained the necessary knowledge and work experience in management, they become the supply of talent needed to assume those positions being vacated by retiring baby boomers (Stelter,

2002). Despite the talent that has been developed in the past few decades, the movement of women into key management positions has been slow.

Schein (2001) pointed out in a series of studies conducted among the five most influential countries (United Kingdom, China, Japan, Germany and United States) that show how since the 1970's organizations have been reluctant to place women in management based on the persistent stereotyping of management as being exclusively for males. She further states how male management students in the five countries where the studies were conducted and male corporate managers in the United States view women "as much less likely to have leadership ability, be competitive, ambitious or skilled in business matters, have analytical ability or desired responsibility. If one holds this view, as apparently most males do, it is no wonder that women globally have difficulty entering and advancing in managerial positions" (p. 683).

The findings that Schein reported over a decade ago are still present today. Women's representation in high-ranking management positions have been stagnant in recent years. Catalyst (2012) pointed out that 14.3% of the senior management positions in the corporate world were held by women. In 2009, 13.5% of high-ranking positions in management were occupied by women. In 2013, only 4.6% of all women in high-ranking positions occupied Chief Executive Officer positions (Catalyst, 2014). The lack of women in positions of authority warrants examining how women have been socialized in corporate America.

## **Socialization of Women in Management**

Society has greatly impacted how men and women are viewed in society. The roles that have been bestowed upon each gender is deeply entrenched and influences our career orientation (Wilson, 2005).

Ancis and Phillips (1996) state that one of the reasons women have not assumed high-level positions in management is based on their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is seen as a cognitive factor that helps women determine the career path they choose. In other words, the reinforcement women receive as a youth and into adulthood influences what choices they make now and in the future. A woman's self-efficacy affects how women view their chances in management, as it is a field that is dominated by a male-oriented style of leadership. The events of the past have taught today's women managers how to develop their self-efficacy in a manner that is positively conducive to a style that is accepted by their male colleagues (Raggins & Scandura, 1994).

## **Women, the Glass Ceiling Effect, and Graduate Education**

For women, their contributions and voices in the corporate world are mostly unheard (Benavides, 2008). Women who aspire to become high-level executives have met a hostile environment created by their male peers. This phenomenon of hitting an invisible barrier is often referred to as "the glass ceiling," which is prevalent not only in corporate America, but also in higher education programs such as graduate education in business.

Educational institutions have placed a great deal of emphasis on the use of education as a catalytic agent to empower both men and women to succeed. Simpson and Ituna (2009) state that a Master of Business Administration (MBA) is a degree that is

touted to improve organizational effectiveness based on business functions and analytical approaches that are associated with masculine values and practices. They further explain "while the MBA can be seen to have masculine bias in terms of course culture, design, and underlying values, it is women rather than men who are 'transformed' by the experience and who undergo a deeper level of learning. Men by contrast progress through the programme 'under-developed' and largely unchallenged" (p. 302).

Boyatzis, Cowen, and David A. Kolb and Associates (1995) discussed that the common criticisms attached to most MBA graduates were that they were too analytical, lacked interpersonal skills and they were parochial in their thinking -- lacking an ability to understand global values. Over a decade later, Boyatzis (2008) cited that graduate education in business for the 21st century needed to incorporate strategies that focused on the importance of teaching students how to make sense of their world, utilizing an individual's professional experience within his or her work environment as a guide for leading.

### **Research Problem**

Over the years, graduate education has relied on a didactic approach to teaching management skills. According to Mintzberg (2004), "you can't create a manager in a classroom" (p. 30). Most MBA programs utilize this approach when teaching inexperienced students. They look at past theories and case studies as a means of teaching how to lead. There is a total lack of utilizing a student's work experience as a means of teaching new management skills (Mintzberg, 2004).

This concept is crucial as the ideology of organizational behavior for the past two decades has emphasized that successful organizations are those that are learning-based

ones, where leaders understand themselves and their workers (Senge, 2006). Managers act as catalytic agents that work synonymously with all stakeholders in order to achieve organizational goals and are responsible for developing educated managers to handle this responsibility. As Long (2004) points out with regard to executive education, the "literature speaks to the potential of the CEO to establish the corporate culture and lead the drive in terms of involvement in and support of executive education" (p. 711).

While the MBA is useful for individuals trying to develop the operational skills needed to work in an organizational setting, the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) is a program that has emerged in higher education to teach new management skills. The focus is on the teaching managers how to develop strategic and innovative plans that can help lead organizations in a global economy. The focus is on the personal development of a manager as a leader (Boyatzis, 2008). Long (2004) has suggested that, "executive education is deemed to be such an important organisational activity and since executives play such a critical role in organisational success, logic dictates that it is important to understand particularly from the individuals' perspective the reasons why they attend these programs" (p. 702).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Boyatzis (2008) has stated that executive education should be viewed as a resource for developing leaders for the 21st century as the focus is on small group sessions with other individuals with similar management experience. Small group sessions are felt to provide additional experience and insights that can be used within a manager's job setting. The focus is on soft skills such as emotional intelligence, empathy

and teamwork which lead to learning organizations that are able survive in today's globalized market (Boyatzis, 2008).

While there is a recognized importance in obtaining an EMBA, the number of women enrolled in such programs are small. According to a survey conducted by the Executive MBA Council in 2005, 25.4% of graduates in any EMBA program were women compared to 75.6% men ( Executive MBA Council, 2013 April 25 ). This is in strong contrast to women attaining an MBA. In a June, 2012 article entitled, "*American Women Earning Less: The Salary Gap in the United States*," published by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), a total of 36.8% of all MBA graduates in 2010-2011 were women compared to 63.2% being men. More importantly, Wharton School of Business at Pennsylvania State University reported 45% of its incoming class for the 2010-2011 year was anticipated to be female.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand how an EMBA has impacted the professional lives of women executives who have attained this degree. This study will address the following research questions:

1. What were the women's experience in the context of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA)?
2. How does the experience of completing an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program influence women's professional development?

### **Significance of the Study**

A narrative approach gave voice to the women who participated, as they were able to reflect on their life stories on how the EMBA experience impacted their career

development. As their stories unfolded, we began to understand more about how women viewed this educational experience and whether it had enhanced their progression in management. Their personal stories, hinted that the literature on the career development of women is somewhat affected by the invisible barrier called the "glass ceiling," which has limited the growth of these women, despite their education and management experience.

The study of EMBA women helped adult educators understand the importance of how women can become the supply of human capital that will be needed to maintain an organization's competitive edge in a globalized economy. As Barrett and Beeson (2002) have stated, "the business challenges projected for the coming years are expected to test both the capability and supply of senior leaders in many industries" (p. 5).

This study was important as the data presented provided additional research on what value female participants found in the attainment of an EMBA and how it affected their lives from an organizational setting. It provided insight regarding the advancement of women in leadership positions, by adding to the body of knowledge regarding the development of leaders and managers for the future, as well as aid in the development of succession planning and management strategies. It also will aid higher education institutions in examining whether their executive education programs are meeting the needs of the stakeholders they serve. Prior to commencing to Chapter Two, it is important to define pertinent terminology.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Career.* A career can be defined as "how individuals see themselves in relationship to what they do" (Sharf, 2002, p. 3).

*Career development.* Career development looks at how individuals manage their career throughout their life among the various organizations they work for and how an organization has an effect on the career progress of their members. Career development is "the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and change factors that combine to influence the nature and significance of work in the total lifespan of any given individual" (Gutteridge, 1986, p. 52).

*Organizational culture.* Organizational culture, also referred to as corporate culture, is a set of basic assumptions that are invented and defined by people (Schein, 1992). It is a general term that outlines the collective attitudes, beliefs, common experiences, procedures and values that are prevalent in most organizations and reflect traditional values of society.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

The demand for managers has reached a critical stage in corporate America. The baby boomers who currently have occupied these positions are beginning to retire. McCuiston, Woodridge & Pierce (2004) stated that one in five of the largest U.S. companies will lose 40% of the talent that currently exists in top level positions in Corporate America and that 50 percent of all new entrants to the U.S. workforce in 2008 would consist of women, people of color and ethnic minorities. This change in demographic composition has created a shock awareness of how business must view their strategic alignment that will include this diverse population (including women), especially in light of the fact that this newly composited population can affect the magnitude of company profits (McCuiston, Woodridge & Pierce, 2004). Significant research has been done on women in management roles and the return on investment (ROI) corporations received as a result of their involvement.

Catalyst (2004) found that companies with a higher concentration of women in management roles experienced at least 35% higher return on their investments than initially anticipated. Furthermore, Adler (2001) pointed out that a study of 215 of the

leading Fortune 500 firms showed that promoting females into management roles led to a 40% or better increase in profits. Shrader, Blackman, and Iles (1997) cited that corporations that have a higher level of female managers tend to be more competitive and progressive. As such, they are in tune with the needs of their subordinates and consumers, responding to change within their environment with greater ease. As women gain knowledge and work experience, they add to the supply of talent needed to assume management positions of retired baby boomers (Stelter, 2002).

Despite these findings, women have found it difficult to assume high-level leadership positions within many Fortune 500 companies. Eagly and Carli (2003) cited that a number of women who had assumed entry and mid-level management positions were overlooked when it came to senior-level positions. Many of these positions have been filled by men who were of equal status and ability. According to the Carta and Silva's (2010) report, "*Pipeline's Broken Promise*," only 3 percent of the women in the work force represented CEO's for Fortune 500 companies and only 15 percent of the board of directors for such companies. More importantly, less than 14 percent are high-level executives at the top publicly traded companies around the world.

Wilson (2005) cited that the credentials and attributes established for high-level executives were established by men who have occupied these positions since their inception. Benavides (2008) pointed out that men who are in positions of authority contributed to attitudes and cultural values that did not value female input. As a result, women's contributions and voices have been mostly unheard. Females chosen to achieve top-level positions have been met with negativity by their male peers.

The determination of who will lead is androcentric in nature, as a masculine viewpoint has been seen as the key to leadership in many organizations. Ryan and Haslam (2007) stated that, "the evidence for gender differentiation in the workplace can be seen to reflect people's implicit theories about leadership and gender" (p. 550).

Oakley (2000) points out that the lack of women occupying leadership roles can be attributed to preferred male-oriented styles of leadership that have created a transparent barrier. This barrier is seen as a form of cultural and behavioral practices used against women who aspired to become leaders. According to Oakley (2000), the advancement women made in the 1980s were in non-traditional positions such as human resources and public relations. By the 1990s, many of these same individuals were overlooked to fill senior level positions as the criteria for these spots required experience in the areas of marketing and operations. The lack of guidance these women experienced was seen as a cultural practice that hampered their career development in order to lead. It was a barrier that was not only transparent, but significant and evident to those who challenged it both then and today. The belief of a transparent barrier is better known as the glass ceiling effect.

### **Defining the Glass Ceiling Effect**

As Eagly and Carli (2007) point out, the term glass ceiling was first coined by Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt of *The Wall Street Journal* in 1986. The authors stated that, "Even those few women who rose steadily through the ranks eventually cracked into an invisible barrier. The executive suite seemed within their grasp, but they just couldn't break through the glass ceiling" (p. 64). In 1995, the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission officially defined the concept as "artificial barriers to the

advancement of women and minorities" (U.S. Ceiling Commission, 1995). Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman (2001) referred to it, "as the residual difference that exists in the corporate setting on the basis of race and gender, after educational experience and job-relevant characteristics are controlled within the corporate setting" (p. 657).

### **Leadership and the Glass Ceiling Effect**

The glass ceiling that exists in many organizations is dependent on how society defines the term leadership. Rudman and Glick (2001) point out that the theories of management are gender-related. They are not only descriptive in nature, but prescriptive, as they guide how we act and how we view how others should act. In other words, management theories are stereotypical and impact how both men and women are treated in the work place.

The perceived relationship between leadership and gender has been durable and global over the past three decades. In an article written by Schein in 2007, she is quoted as stating that the research on gender stereotyping and the requisite management characteristics done almost 30 years ago in the USA, followed by U.S. replications and extended internationally, allows us to see the strengths and inflexibility of the 'think male think manager' attitude held by males. Despite enormous changes in the status of working women in the USA over the last three decades, the corporate males in each decade hold the same view (p. 11).

Schein (2001) reviewed studies that had replicated the studies she had performed in 1973 and 1975 in such countries as the United States (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989; Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995); the United Kingdom and Germany (Schein & Muller, 1992); and Japan and China (Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996). She found

that the characteristics identified with being a successful leader were still prevalent years later. Both men and women managers viewed successful leadership as being male oriented in nature.

Schein (1973) examined the stereotypes of 300 male managers ranging in age from 24 to 64 years old from nine insurance companies throughout the United States. The median age of those sampled was 43 years of age, with the median management experience being 10 years.

An instrument called the Descriptive Index was used that had 92 adjectives and descriptive terms; managers were asked to consider the terms of this index to describe women in general, men in general, or successful middle managers (three separate forms). The Index used a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not characteristic) to 5 (characteristic), with 3 representing a neutral rating (neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic). The data collected from the sample surveyed showed that an analysis of variance and mean between men and managers was  $r' = .62$  ( $F = 4.23$ ,  $p = <.01$ ), while the analysis of variance and mean between women and managers was  $r' = .06$  ( $F = 1.13$ ,  $p = <.01$ ).

In order to determine whether age correlated with a manager's view on gender and management, the sample was divided into three age groups: 24-39 years of age, 40-48 years of age, and 49 years old and above. The analysis showed that the 24-39 years old group had an  $r' = .60$  ( $p <.01$ ); 40 - 48 years of age group had an  $r' = .64$  ( $p = <.01$ ); and the 49 years of age and older group had an  $r' = .60$  ( $P = <.01$ ).

The significance of  $r' = .62$  confirmed the hypothesis that successful middle managers were perceived as possessing the characteristics, attitudes and temperance that

are commonly associated with men rather than women. Those that were successful were seen as being aggressive, self-reliant, competitive and self-confident. These traits were the traits that were seen as the key to running a successful organization.

In another study conducted by Schein (1975), 167 female managers were surveyed in order to further investigate the effect of stereotyping in relation to management requisites. This time the study involved 12 insurance companies. The age of the participants ranged from 23 years of age to 62 years of age, with the median age of those that participated being 43.5 years old. The overall management experience ranged from 1 year to 32 years, with 6.5 being the median level of experience. The Descriptive Index was once again used as a means of analyzing the responses of those who participated.

The results showed a strong correlation of analysis of variance and mean ( $r' = .54$ ,  $p = <.01$ ) between men and managers rather than women and managers ( $r' = .30$ ,  $p = <.01$ ). Despite the increase in analysis of variance and mean for women, the increase was not significant to conclude a change in attitude on women as successful managers.

Deal (1998) and Eagly (2005) also replicated Schein's initial studies and found that both male and female respondents identified successful leadership with the characteristics initially being male in nature. The suitability of leadership was seen as a by-product of cultural norms and the profile of a particular industry. Stereotyping was found to be a significant hurdle for many women to overcome when trying to break the glass ceiling.

## **The Glass Ceiling and Social and Congruity Theories**

The idea of a glass ceiling existing in corporate America today challenges the belief in meritocracy. Society has taught Americans that if they follow the rules and work hard, they can advance the corporate ladder (Gascombe & Mattis, 2003). The stereotyping that has created the existence of an artificial barrier can be attributed to two theories: social role theory and congruity theory.

The social role theory promotes the idea that society dictates the role an individual will pursue in life. In other words, one's role is grounded on the notion that his or her actions, behavior, disposition and desire is determined by a set of specific socially determined roles. These roles are internalized as one becomes socialized. Individuals are rewarded for conforming to social expectations and punished for any actions that do not conform to a designated image (Skelly & Johnson, 2011).

Eagly and Karau (2002) utilized Osgood and Tanenbaum's congruity theory (originally developed in 1955) to suggest how women are viewed in leadership by developing their own theory, which they called the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Eagly states that an audience has an assertion about a concept that is either positive or negative. Acceptance of such a concept is dependent on whether the audience accepts change (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

A unique aspect of their theory is the proposition that prejudice toward female leaders and potential leaders takes two forms: a) less favorable evaluation of women's (than men's) potential for leadership because leadership ability is more stereotypical of men than women and b) less favorable evaluation of the actual leadership of women than men because such behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men.

Women who assume leadership positions have the added stress of commanding the respect of those who work for them as the acceptance of their authority is not as prevalent as it would be for a male manager. The social role and congruity theories play an important role on how women perceive what is achievable from their personal standpoint as a woman, which is a by-product of their gender and the position they occupy in society. It is this personal standpoint that affects how a woman views their own ability. Eagly and Karau (2002) concluded this provides "greater difficulty for women in being recognized as effective in these roles" (p. 589).

### **Concept of Self-Efficacy and Women**

The term "self-efficacy" is a concept from the Social Cognitive Theory developed by lead educational psychologist, Alfred Bandura, who believed that individuals are nurtured through a series of cognitive stages within their environment (Bandura, 1989). Individuals use learning symbols as a vehicle of expressing their own traits. Symbols are developed through the use of such tools as observational learning, modeling and imitation. They give meaning to people's experience and a sense of continuity to their lives. In order to maintain continuity, an individual must believe he or she has the capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments, which is known as self-efficacy. Individuals will face obstacles that lead to an overall level of accomplishment and avoid those situations where they have little or no control (Pajares, 2002).

Bandura's (1989) concept of reciprocal determinism is self-efficacy in motion. It is an individual's personal factors such as cognitive and biological events, combined with

behavioral and environmental influences that create a triadic reciprocity in response to an event within their environment.

According to Bandura (2008), the human is a recipient of four agents that influence the events that happen within his or her environment. These agents interact with each other to create Bandura's triad called reciprocal determinism. The first agent is intentionality, which is the plan an individual develops based on a state of disequilibrium within his or her environment. The second agent is the forethought that is used to develop the goals that are needed to achieve and the anticipated outcomes one perceives will happen based on their personal experience. The third agent is the self-reactiveness an individual displays in response to the enacted plan, and whether he or she is motivated to continue with a particular course of action. The fourth agent is self-reflectiveness, which is the process of examining one's pursuit and how it affects one's personal outlook in life.

Overall, each agent complements one another within this triad in order to achieve the goals an individual pursues. Disequilibrium creates the need for change, while the equilibrium process provides a sense of realism as to how individuals view themselves within their environment that also feeds into their personal self-efficacy.

The stereotyping and socialization process that has occurred within society and corporate America has affected the self-efficacy of women in their attempts to enter senior management positions. This is further demonstrated in the progress of women and their movement through the workforce over the last seven decades. The progression of women through the workforce has greatly affected their career development in management. This next section will elaborate on this.

## **History of Women in the Workforce**

And not only did Rosie do, she did it better than anyone had ever done it before. Yet despite her success, Rosie was forced off the factory floor when the war ended, her achievements buried in books, all her accomplishments wiped out of our consciousness (Nichols, 1993, p. 54).

### **1941-1945: World War II**

World War II can be seen as a major influence on the number of women that have entered the work force over the past 70 years. As men were called to action, women assumed many of the male-dominated positions (Dominico & Jones, 2006). America needed “Rosie the Riveter” to step up to the plate and “man” its war machine. The “can do” attitude displayed by these women was instrumental in helping America win the war (Nichols, 1993).

### **1945-1959: Post World War II**

Once the war ended, so did the image of “Rosie the Riveter,” as many of the women who had manned the plants during war were replaced by those men who returned. Employers cited changes to technological processes as the main reason women were replaced by these returning veterans (Nichols, 1993).

Despite such challenges, women increased their presence in the work force after World War II as the nucleus of the major breadwinner changed from the husband only to a combination of both spouses needed to supplement family income (Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen, & Webster, 2009). Many assumed positions in administrative, nursing, sales, or teaching. They were positions that were considered socially acceptable for women during this time period. By 1950, 30% of the participation in the U.S. labor market

consisted of women (Dominico & Jones, 2006). In 2009, that number had increased to 59.2% of the entire U.S. labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013).

### **1960s: Generation Gap and Women's Movement**

The advent of the 1960s saw the cultivation of two social movements: The Generation of the Baby Boomers (born between 1943 and 1962) and the Women's Liberation Movement. Both of these events helped solidify women's presence in the work force and provided career development alternatives.

The 1960s was a time of change. During his 1960 inaugural speech, President John F. Kennedy appealed to the young by stating, "Ask not what your country can do for you – Ask what you can do for your country" (U.S. History.org., n.d.). Many individuals responded to his call by becoming involved in issues that promoted the equality of all people – including women. It was a generation that used the media, marketing and political activities to advance the causes for social change (Danielson, 2011). They are seen as individuals who were creative in rewriting the established rules.

In 1961, President Kennedy established the Commission on the Status of Women. This commission documented how women were treated as second class citizens. This led to the creation of an advisory council and a fifty-state commission that closely followed the advancement of women and the passage of a variety of key legislation (Freeman, 1970).

In 1963, the Equal Right Act was passed, which prohibited wage discrimination between men and women in the work place for the same job. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act that not only prohibited discrimination of individuals on the basis of race, color and creed, but also the discrimination of women in the work place (Sink, 2008).

By 1966, 28 women who were attending a Commission on the Status of Women conference in Washington, D.C. banded together to create the National Organization for Women (NOW), headed by famous female activist, Betty Freidan. The main goal of this organization was to work toward the full participation of women in American society by utilizing key legislation as the means of ensuring such rights. NOW was instrumental in getting Congress to revisit the Equal Rights Amendment so that it not only allowed women the right to vote, but also recognized them on the basis of their individuality (Sink, 2008). The group used a grass roots approach to branch out into the work place, seeking recognition of women on the basis of their knowledge and skills while championing their advancement into management positions that had been denied to them in the past.

NOW championed for women to seek higher education as a means of advancement as they realized this was essential to assume career paths previously dominated by males. Women who obtained a college degree and positions in management became role models that helped women of the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to aspire to such positions that would have been unheard of in “Rosie the Riveter’s” era.

### **1980s - 2000s: Management Toward the New Millennium**

Over the past 40 years, women have made great strides in educational attainment. In 2011, an estimated 37% of all women in the labor force ranging in age from 25 to 64 years old had a college degree. In 1970, only 11% of the women in this same age group within the labor force had a college degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). What is more important is the gain women have made in graduate education. In 2008, women

accounted for 59% of all graduate school enrollment (U.S. Department of Commerce - White House Council on Women and Girls, 2011, p. 22).

In 2011, 51% of all women ranging in age from 25 to 64 years old occupied positions in management, professional and related occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). For example, the 2011 data indicated that 34% of all physicians and surgeons were women, while 61% of all accountants and auditors were women.

According to Domenico and Jones (2006), a women's gain in education supports the idea of paid employment throughout life. Despite the increase of women's presence in management and the professional occupations, the culture of most companies of the new millennium is based on traditional, linear, single-income male career models.

Senior-level managers who run these companies are male partners who have wives that do not work, while the women who work for such firms have husbands that work (Wittenberg-Cox & Maitland, 2008, p. 51). This mentality is a part of the career development theories that have permeated our society in the 20th century and remain steadfast into the 21st century, which is depicted in the following section on career development of women in management.

### **Career Development of Women in Management**

Even though the Women's Liberation Movement and certain legal legislation has helped women to aspire to career paths in management, it has not been enough for women to break the barrier to senior management. In fact, general career development theories and literature written on the career development of women highlight how one's role and social status within the context of their environment affect how women develop their career paths.

## **General Career Development Theories**

Career development theories have been criticized for their lack of applicability to women for many years (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002). Many of the past theories that are depicted in general are derived from the study and observation of white heterosexual males in an era when there was little expectation for the career development of women. In many of these studies, a male's career development was emphasized through the attainment of goals, not through the perspective of life experience, family, community, or one's society as a manner of shaping one's career development (Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002). As such, there continues to be a lack of theoretical focus on the career development of women in general. Contemporary theories will not address all of the needs associated with a women's career development. Neither will a single world view of their career development suffice. Therefore, it is important to look at multiple theoretical perspectives as a means of understanding the career development of women.

### **Donald Super's Life Span Theory of Career Development**

Super's (1990) lifespan theory of career development is an extension of Eli Ginzberg's (1972) developmental career theory that spans over three broad life stages from childhood to young adulthood (fantasy, tentative, and realistic). Extensive research was done on the demographics of the development of Super's Theory, and there is no indication of the demographics tied to the population used to develop his theory, which was first published in 1955. Nonetheless, Super's theory is one that is utilized by many professionals in the career development field.

According to Super (1990), career development extends beyond adolescence and continues throughout one's lifespan. Super's theory is segmental in that it includes the

work of many theorists from the fields of cognitive and developmental psychology. The basic assumption of Super's theory is the idea that physiological aspects such as one's genetic predisposition, along with one's geographic origin will impact an individual's career development (Super, 1990). Accordingly, there are five general stages individuals will experience during their lifetime. Those stages are: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline. One's travel through each stage occurs with a transitional cycle that is not linear, but recursive.

Super's (1990) initial stage, the growth stage, occurs at birth and ends at 14 years of age. It is at this stage that individuals establish their identity and have an awareness of their abilities and willingness to explore their environment. In the exploration stage, which occurs between 15 and 24 years of age, individuals examine their career options that ties to their development. Super calls this process the crystallization, specification and implementation phases. In the crystallization phase, an individual begins to formulate and plan a career path. With the specification phase, individuals narrow their career goals, objectives and choices. This eventually leads to the implementation phase, where individuals utilize their education and training that will lead to the implementation of a new vocation.

In the establishment stage, which usually takes place between 25 and 44 years of age, an individual is characterized as being gainfully employed. It is during this stage that stabilization, consolidation, and advancement tasks happen (Super, 1990). Stabilization looks at how individuals begin to settle down into a new role, perform work that validates their career choice and uses the knowledge, skills, and abilities they acquired during the exploration stage to perfect it to their advantage. This process helps

individuals to consolidate their role and prepare for an opportunity in career advancement.

The fourth stage of Super's (1990) theory is the maintenance stage, which takes place between the ages of 45 and 64. It is at this stage that individuals seek to maintain their career through the process of continuing education or mentoring. The fifth stage is the disengagement stage that takes place at 65 years and older. This stage is identified as a period of planning for one's retirement, a reduced workload and looking at pursuing and developing new hobbies (Super, 1990).

The main concept of Super's (1990) theory is the concept of role. The role individuals ascribe to informs and influences their career choice. Furthermore, an individual's personal trait has a bearing on the vocation chosen and the gratification received. According to Super, one's perception of one's self will change over time as it is a reflection of one's personality, needs, values and interest. This development happens through such events as role-playing, exploration, and reality testing, which is enhanced by the interaction individuals encounter within their community, the schools they attend and the family and peers they associate with. It is important to note that people differ in their abilities, needs, values, interests, traits and self-concepts. The career pattern one chooses involves the occupational level attained and the sequence, frequency and duration of all jobs held. Career patterns are determined by an individual's socioeconomic level, educational and mental ability, as well as personal characteristics and how far one has evolved in one's career (Super, 1990).

Super's (1990) theory has been cited as being adaptable and flexible as it is applicable to both men and women when it comes to understanding career development.

Despite its flexibility, it is still a theory that has been formulated primarily from a male viewpoint (Trusty, 2002). As a theory, it lacks important gender-specific aspects that must be considered when looking at the career development of women. Therefore, it is important to focus on a theory that looks at the career development of women. The next section will focus on one such theory, Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise.

### **Linda Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise**

Among many of the theories on career development that have arisen in the past two decades, Gottfredson's (1996) model addresses the role of gender in relation to career aspirations and career development. Using Super's (1990) theory as a foundation, Gottfredson identified stages and sub stages of career development that entails how and why men and women choose the career they pursue.

Gottfredson (1996) used the term "self-concept" to help describe what makes individuals determine the career they pursue. "Self-concept" is based on the idea that one's gender, social class, intelligence, interest and values play an important role on how one perceives oneself within society. In essence, self-concept and knowledge of the world of work influences helps individuals to find their niches to express themselves within the boundaries of their own cultural environment. Gottfredson (1996) suggests that individuals will circumscribe to a career based on the experiences of gender-role stereotyping.

Gottfredson's stages of compromise and circumscription are concerned with an individual's career development and aspirations. The term *circumscription* is defined as "the progressive elimination of unacceptable alternatives" (Sharf, 2002, p. 174). In other

words, gender will influence occupational preference at the various stages of one's life that are within the boundaries of socially accepted roles. The term *compromise* is defined as "the necessity for an individual to modify her or his career choices because of the reality of limiting environmental factors such as a competitive job market or not having sufficient academic performance to enter an academic program" (Sharf, 2002, p. 175).

Gottfredson's (1996) compromise stage involves influences by family and friends, finances, time and accessibility. It is one's ability to identify and investigate opportunities for jobs and training. This involves utilizing one's personal traits to explore what is achievable. Gottfredson's (1996) circumscription stage refers to two types of orientation, size and power and sex roles. The size and power stage occurs at 3 to 5 years of age. It is at this stage that children begin to distinguish between adults and children, and they are able to understand the distinction that adults work. The orientation to sex roles occurs at 6 to 8 years of age. During this stage, children are able to identify socially appropriate occupations based on gender. At 9 to 13 years of age, children begin to think more abstractly and recognize the important of education to occupation and income. During this stage they understand their status in society and the power they have over their destiny. By the age of 14 and older, young adults begin to focus on their identity and decide on acceptable career alternatives on the basis of their own preference and what is socially acceptable (Gottfredson, 1996).

Gottfredson's (1996) model is highly appropriate for women when looking at how they have developed their career development. Scharf (2002) states that "Gottfredson (1981,1996) has articulated a life-stage theory of career development in childhood and adolescence that emphasizes the important part that gender roles and prestige play in

making choices" (p. 173). Gottfredson differs from Super by how she views vocational choice. Swanson & Fouad (1999) state that Gottfredson views the choice of career as "first as an implementation of the social self and only secondarily as an implementation of the psychological self" (p. 86).

Super's (1990) model of early career development may be considered flexible and adjustable, but it lacks the ability of dealing with gender bias. Gottfredson's (1996) theory cites the importance of being able to explore career options that are unaffected by gender bias. This leads to the importance of looking at the recent career development literature on women in management to see what major factors have contributed to women in their development as managers.

### **Career Development Literature**

The career development of female executives has been affected by two major components: organizational climate and organizational culture. The two interact together and affect the interpersonal skills women utilize in the workplace. Raggins, Townsend and Mattis (1998) state successful female executives "regard the issue of cultural fit and acceptance as a greater challenge for women than do top male executives" (p. 35).

Organizational climate and organizational culture interact together, affecting the interpersonal skills women use in the workplace. In fact, it plays a significant role on how women view their ability in senior management, and thus, their overall self-efficacy. The interaction of these components is affected by the utilization of the "old boy network" concept as a means of excluding women from top-level positions (Dimovski, Skerlavaj, & Kim Man, 2010). In order to understand how such a network affects the

career advancement of women in management, it is important to define what is considered organizational climate and organizational culture and how they have meshed themselves into many corporate structures.

The concept of organizational climate refers to how an organization exists within its current environment. The climate of any organization is greatly affected by the external factors that surround it. Those factors are based on the values that are considered acceptable by society's dominant culture.

Organizational culture refers to the values that are considered essential in order to achieve strategic goals. They are the accepted values or practices that are used to support or accommodate workers. They aid in the selection and tracking of qualified individuals who will assume the necessary roles that ensure an organization's survival. Furthermore, it leads to the development of internal networks that aid in the enhancement of workers' knowledge, skills and credentials (Tharenou, 1995).

Bierema (2005) stated that "women need networks because they are not well integrated into men's networks, lack access to top management, and may be related from career paths that lead to power" (p. 208). Furthermore, "networks may help modify women's assimilation into a male-dominated culture while simultaneously giving them collective power and confidence to advocate and act for organization change" (p. 209). The study used a qualitative approach that interviewed ten women from a Fortune 500 company that had recently implemented a network to advance women within the organization.

Interviews were held with nine of the participants, as well as observations conducted during the networks meetings as a means of solidifying the data collected on

this experience. All of the data was analyzed for common themes in order to develop an explanation that described how the women who participated felt about gender awareness and gender action. The limitations of the study cited the usage of a single corporate organization and the researcher's privileged access to the group based on their relationship with the executive who had created the network. During the initial study, the organization had experienced the retirement of its chief executive officer, a recent relocation of its headquarters and a decline in financial performance that led to the downsizing of the organization.

The findings of Bierma's study revealed that women's participation in networking was affected by their own perception of power. Networking was seen as a device that could damage their careers -- especially when the organizations that were surveyed were primarily run by men. Many of the participants of this study were aware of gender power in relation to position and how it created privileges for men, while oppressing women. These women recognized there were inequities and modified their behavior in order to "fit in" the male-dominated culture. As Bierma (2005) stated, "every participant in the study cited culture as a key barrier to the Network having impact" (p. 215). Networks help breed solidarity, by providing a way for women to share their stories and to provide inspiration for others to follow. Yet, it is clear that gender issues affected the further advancement of networking at many of these organizations. As Bierma (2005) states, "In practice, however, they expressed fear about their participation in the Network and publicly working to advance women in the company. They were anxious about being perceived as 'recipe swapping male-bashers' or appearing to 'need help'" (p. 216).

The overall implications of Bierema's study cites the importance of developing inter-company networks that could understand what women want and need. A network that aids in the development of a female's self-efficacy can help minimize a male-dominated culture that currently exists in corporate America. In doing so, an organization must be open to the fact that a women's network does not mean an end to an existing organization, but learning how to incorporate diversity into its setting.

Dimovski, Skerlavaj, & Kim Man (2010) further comment that culture affects how workers view themselves within an organization. In other words, it relates to how workers interact within their work environment. Each interaction acts as a guide that is used for future analysis. As such, they affect how a worker views his or her self-efficacy.

The authors state that the foundational analysis of organizational culture is based on a concept called "the old boy network," where men are viewed more desirably in management than women. In fact, women who do pursue managerial careers ultimately do not achieve high-level positions on many occasions due to a variety of system checks that have been established within an organization. Many of these internal controls are based on societal values that play heavily on how men and women are viewed in society, making it difficult for women to break into senior management.

Dimovski, Skerlavaj, & Kim Man (2010) performed a quantitative study utilizing mid-level female managers from Singapore's prestigious 1000 Companies. It is based on Rosabeth Kanter's (1977) prior research where the managers chosen were employed in a section or department of a whole organization. The following criteria were used for the targeted population: 1) all participants held a mid-level management position; and 2) worked for an organization for a minimum of one year. They used Bergman and

Hallberg's (2002) Women Workplace Questionnaire in order to develop a five-point Likert questionnaire that was used for the study.

The Bergman and Hallberg (2002) Women Workplace Questionnaire was developed from data obtained from a qualitative study performed in 1997, using 11 independent interviews of women's work experiences in male dominated organizations. The women who participated ranged in age from 27 to 57 years of age, with the mean being 47 years of age. The participants interviewed were obtained from company health departments, where these women had visited for a check-up. The interviews were coded on the basis of a grounded theory approach, where the focus was on developing abstract coding that dealt with system norms, expectations and experiences.

Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify clusters of inter-correlated variables. This process helped detect structures in the relationships between variables that allowed for a reduction in the number of factors contributing to a theoretical structure of the questionnaire that focused on women and their views of the organizations they worked for. The four factors that dominated Bergman and Hallberg's (2002) grounded approach were as follows: Factor 1 - perceived burdens to me; Factor 2 - perceived burdens on women; Factor 3 - sexual harassment; and Factor 4 - organizational support. The internal consistency (reliability) of the four factors were as follows: Factor 1 had an estimated alpha of .86; Factor 2 had an estimated alpha of .80; Factor 3 had an alpha of .75; and Factor 4 had an alpha of .65.

Dimovski, Skerlavaj, & Kim Man (2010) sent a total of 1,000 surveys out to the qualified applicants. It was determined from prior quantitative methodology that a response rate of 10% would be acceptable for an adequate sample size. A total of 120

respondents were chosen for the sample population. Any survey that was less than 25% complete was eliminated from the study.

Of the 120 respondents chosen, 86.7% were in the age range of 30 to 49 years old. More importantly, 56.7% were married, while 43.3% were either single or divorced. In addition, 68% of the women who participated had children and 73.3% held either an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Respondents were asked to evaluate their corporate culture, corporate climate and corporate practices currently intact within their organization. Based on the responses analyzed, 66.7% (80 respondents) of the women found it more difficult than men to work independently within their organization. Furthermore, 36.7% (44) respondents felt their work was judged more harshly than their male counterparts. This correlates with the 39.2% of the women (47 respondents) who felt their organizational culture had a negative attitude toward women. More importantly, 35.8% (43 respondents) felt that women had fewer professional development opportunities as a result of the organizational climate as it instilled a negative approach to the career development of women. These participants were more pessimistic as to the opportunities available to them. Organizational culture and climate were cited as creating a barrier for these women despite an organization's belief in diversity. As such, this affected how an individual perceived themselves within the context of their environment and reinforces cultural practices within an establishment.

Metz (2003) cited how individual, interpersonal and organizational factors play a great role in how women advance in management. The study conducted involved 848 women who were in non-management and management positions that worked for banks

in Australia. 138 were women in non-management (16.3%); 82 were first-line supervisors (9.7%); 233 junior managers (27.5%); 278 middle managers (32.9%); and 115 senior managers and executives (13.6%). Most of the women who participated ranged in age from 25 to 40 years of age and worked full-time (74%). More importantly, many of these women had never changed companies (54%) or were married or in a relationship (62.7%) and had no children (75.3%). In addition, 73 % of the sample had either a technical degree or held an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. As for hours worked, 63% worked between 40 to 48 hours a week and 26.3% worked beyond 49 hours. As least 88.1% of the sample population had five or more years of full-time work experience.

A hierarchy multiple regression analysis was used in order to test how individual, interpersonal and organizational factors affect a woman trying to advance in management. The researcher used 23 independent variables that were categorized on the basis of age, occupation, educational and marital status in order to determine how these combine to create the personality traits women use to develop their career path.

The respondents cited that accumulated work experience and working long hours were major factors that helped women in their managerial achievement. Furthermore, individual factors such as the drive women possessed helped in developing a career that lead to senior management. In addition, the greater ease women had at identifying with their organizational culture helped them to be recognized as being in alignment with male-oriented decision making managers who positively encourage women to be identified for senior management. Women who had the drive and interpersonal skills that

matched their male counterparts created mentor-based friends that helped them get recognized for assignments that led to senior-level positions later in their careers.

The career development of women in senior management is not only based on organizational culture but also societal values attached to the role women play in management. This is especially true when it comes to the participation of women in graduate education. Many of the educational institutions that offer executive education require several years of work experience in the area of management. The basis for this requirement is further discussed in the next section on graduate education in business.

### **Background on Graduate Education in Business**

Globalization has created a need for organizations that can adapt to the challenges of an ever-changing environment. Managers must be prepared to handle the needs of their organization on both a technical and personal level in order to achieve the visions and values of the organizations they lead (Boyatzis, 2008).

The primary objective of graduate education is to prepare people to be outstanding managers, leaders and professionals (Boyatzis & Saaticouglu, 2008). Senge (2006), has cited that good leaders are those that 1) have the cognitive or intellectual ability to understand systems thinking; 2) the self-management or interpersonal skills such as adaptability; 3) able to network relationships on a personal and professional level; and 4) have the self-confidence to manage those around them. Good managers have a desire to use their talent. They are driven by their personal values and philosophy. More importantly, they have a sense of calling or mission that directs their motives and personal traits (Boyatzis & Saaticouglu, 2008).

In the past 40 years, there has been a great deal of emphasis on attaining graduate degrees in business. The programs offered at many of the higher educational institutions have focused on the emphasis of creating a profit. This emphasis is based upon what society considered essential for organizations to survive in the 20th century and beyond. In addition, there was an added emphasis on developing business communication skills that could aid in the preparation of written documentation of a company's progress (Gupta, Sanders, & Smith, 2007).

Many business graduate programs experienced a decrease in enrollment in the 1980s as they lacked the ability to embrace the needs of business (Boyatzis, Cowen, & Kolb, D.A. & Associates, 1995) . Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs were cited as being too analytical and not action-oriented. More importantly, many focused on educating graduates with ideas that were archaic in nature, lacking an emphasis on global thinking and values. These programs were cited as lacking the ability to produce graduates who understood themselves or the value of working in groups. They were not geared to individuals who had management experience (Boyatzis, et al., 1995).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB International) had been monitoring the slump in business graduate enrollment during this time period (Executive Master of Business Administration Council, 2013). There was a genuine concern on creating a program that could increase the leadership skills of professionals and executives who faced the competitive pressures of a globalized economy. This concern led to a surge in the development of EMBA programs during the

1980s and 1990s. Many tout they have been geared to help develop many seasoned professionals currently in management.

Since executive education is deemed to be such an important organisational activity and since executives play such a critical role in organisational success, logic dictates that it is important to understand, particularly from the individuals' perspective, the reasons why they attend these programmes (Long, 2004, p. 702).

### **The Importance of Executive Master of Business Administration**

As far back as the beginning of the 21st century, educators have understood the importance of changing executive education to meet the needs of organizations. Conger and Xiu (2000) stated over a decade ago that executive education was "no longer simply a reward for high potential executives or a chance to renew an individual's knowledge base, programs are increasingly harnessed as opportunities to recast the world views of executive teams and to align organizations to new directions" (p. 73).

The basis for their statement revolved around a study they conducted in 1997. Conger and Xiu used members of the International Consortium for Executive Development Research (ICEDR) and the Leadership Institute at the University of Southern California to develop a survey that focused on how executive education was viewed by organizations in today's globalized economy. At the time, the ICEDR was an international alliance that consisted of 47 leading global corporations and 26 academic institutions. It is the largest global learning network and research center in the world, whose main concentration is on leadership development (Conger & Kim, 2000).

The goal of the study was to find out what organizations were doing and what was the trend in executive education, looking at methods used to teach executive education; the trainers used to support this function; and how these programs were assessed.

A 73-item questionnaire, using a Likert-scale survey consisting of a 5 point rating scale (1 = strongly disagreed to 5 = strongly agreed) and ten open-end questions was used as the instrument to conduct this study. Prior to the initial study, a pre-testing was conducted in 1995-1996 in order to test whether the questions being asked diminished or increased in response to certain measures.

The initial study was conducted among 47 corporate members of the ICEDR. Of the 47 surveyed, 25 of the members responded, consisting of 10 companies from Europe, 9 companies from North America, 4 companies from Australia and 2 companies from Asia. These companies represented a wide range of multinational companies from automotive to consumer-retail. Overall, Conger and Xiu (2000) discovered that "executive education needed to move away from its traditional role of providing general or functional knowledge to its newer role as a lever for orchestrating organizational change" (p. 77). Seventy-two percent of the respondents surveyed saw executive education as a means of enhancing overall leadership and facilitating change in management effectiveness (Conger & Xiu, 2000).

Conger and Xiu (2000) concluded that it is important for executive education to focus on creating a learning organization that changes as the need for change happens. Executives need to understand the current stakeholders within their environment as well as understand future stakeholders that are evolving as competition changes. More importantly, executive education needs to mirror corporate-driven initiatives in order to achieve organizational goals. Finally, learning sessions need to be action-oriented in order to create a pedagogy that is based on the learner and not driven by didactic

measures, as this will allow for the creation of transformational learning that can help executives think "outside the box."

The findings of Conger and Xiu were reflected by Boehner and O'Neil (2005), who looked at developing an effective MBA program. The authors contended that an effective MBA program (like an EMBA) should be one that is action-oriented. Those in existence were cited as failing to instill the norms needed to run any organization, as they were formulated on the basis of journal publications, and not on how well an organization performed within its environment. They cite that educational institutions needed to develop a curriculum that recognized the importance of business as a profession. Educational institutions must understand that business professions are oriented on satisfying a client's needs and require specific knowledge and practice that focus on the importance of utilizing that knowledge and imagination when leading in today's competitive market (Boehner & O'Neil, 2005).

Rojas-Mendez and Ahmed's (2004) study further emulated the same analysis, stating that the educational techniques utilized in an EMBA program should reflect the environment in which the learner resides and reflects the educational preference of the student. The authors looked at a limited number of universities in Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Mexico). A total of 292 Latin American EMBA students participated, consisting of 143 Columbians; 44 Chileans; 35 Argentineans; and 75 Mexicans. The population consisted of 66% male students and 34% female students. A total of 65% were between the ages of 25-34 years of age, while 25% were over 34 years old. A total of 76% surveyed indicated a strong desire to work in the private sector.

More importantly, these EMBA students indicated a high preference for case studies and guest lecturers. The analysis of the data indicated that case-based instruction was seen as "exciting, motivating, flexible, practical, progressive, creative, active, expressive, democratic, competitive, of high quality and leader oriented" (p. 33). Their response to this type of teaching technique was reflected in the data analysis as being strongly associated with their communication style, calling for strong human interaction. The authors concluded that it was important to gear EMBA programs that utilized class participation and class readings as a means of effective instruction (Rojas-Mendez & Ahmed, 2004).

Boehner and O'Neil (2010) also cited the importance of developing a results-oriented program. In other words, executive education should challenge students to use their critical thinking and analytical abilities. They state the goal of a good EMBA program is to develop an individual's leadership and interpersonal skills. This is different from the goal of a traditional MBA program. Boehner and O'Neil state that "One cannot merely present the same set of courses to executive education students as regular graduate students. Thus an MBA program needs to be different than EMBA programs" (p. 88).

The article goes into detail on how the Rochester Institute of Technology(RIT)'s Saunders School of Business has utilized a teaching approach that focuses on case studies and trainers acting as facilitators as a means of deriving solutions to real-life problems. The college accepts around three to six real-life cases from a variety of organizations. (The college uses communication tools such as the local newspapers to recruit for case studies.)

Executive education students work with organizational representatives to solve a variety of problems. The students have reflected that the problems are realistic and help develop the analytical skills needed to compete in today's business environment. More importantly, they allow executive education students to utilize classroom knowledge, combined with their management experience, to design solutions that help organizations strategically compete in a global setting (Boehner & O'Neal, 2010).

Overall, graduates of EMBA programs have found it motivational to discuss coursework with cohort peers and professors (Dizik, 2008). The emphasis of an EMBA program is the utilization of small study groups that provide an individual with an opportunity to benefit from cohort members' professional experiences and insights (Boyatzis & Saaticioglu, 2008).

The goal of an EMBA is to transform an individual's thinking in relation to management issues encountered with one's environment. Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) state that the role of "management education must change not just individuals, but sponsoring institutions" (p.3). Those who attend EMBA programs learn to utilize what they have learned in these active sessions to develop a reflective standpoint that can be used to educate others within an organization that will help them grow as the organization grows (Boyatzis, Stubbs & Taylor, 2002). Transformational learning not only helps individuals, it also helps organizations to develop as a learning organization. The background composite of those who enter any EMBA program has a direct bearing on how these programs have developed over the past few decades.

## **Background Composite of the Executive Master of Business Administration Student**

The goal of an EMBA program is to provide unique educational experiences to managers who are seeking to enhance their managerial skills (Bell, 2003). Individuals who enter EMBA programs must have seven years of managerial experience (Price, 2004). According to the Executive MBA Council (2013), the average managerial experience of students who participated in an EMBA program in 2013 was 8.5 years, with most participants in 2012 having 13.6 years of work experience, compared to 13.3 years of work experience for those that had entered in 2011.

In recent years, EMBA programs have become increasingly popular. In fact, 69 percent of all applications received at business colleges throughout the country were for EMBA programs (Siegert, 2008). In fact, the average age of students in an EMBA program was 37.2 years of age in 2013 (Executive MBA Council, 2013). Furthermore, 25.4 percent of the participants in 2012 were female, compared to 24.5 percent in 2011. The average class size in 2012 was 44 students per cohort in comparison to 43 students in 2011 (Executive MBA Council, 2013). The average length of an EMBA program was around 20 months, where classes are geared for alternate Fridays and Saturdays (Celestino, 1999). The average cost of an EMBA program was \$72,782 in 2012 (Executive MBA Council, 2013).

If executive education is an essential component in the development of leaders, it is a mystery as to why there is a lack of women in management that are pursuing an EMBA. This is especially true if the goal of this degree is to provide experiences that are needed to guide organizations into the 21st century. The goal of this study will be to

understand how senior-level women managers who have earned this coveted degree view their educational experience in comparison to their career development.

This chapter provided a literature review on the importance of women in management, followed by an analysis of variables that have played an important role in the historical events that have happened to women in the workforce. These events show how women have advanced somewhat and yet how their advancement has hit an invisible ceiling that has prevented many women from attaining senior management positions. Finally, the analysis on the importance of graduate education is an important factor as it correlates with the fact that senior management is aging and there is a need for talent to be developed to run our major organizations in society.

While the Master of Business Administration (MBA) may be important for understanding the operational side of business. An Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) has been cited by our educational institutions as being essential for leading in the 21st century (Boyatzis, 2002). The literature points out how the attainment of an MBA is equally divided among both genders, while the attainment of an EMBA constitutes one-fourth of all applicants at AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) higher education institutions - remaining a mystery to many educational institutions who are trying to engage women to attend such program.

Chapter Three explored the development of the design for this study in order to determine the impact of an EMBA degree on women and their career development. The focus of that chapter talked about how the participants were chosen and the manner in which data was collected during the study, as well as the limitations that were encountered during this study.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a drain on the foundational base of leadership as the baby boomers who occupy key leadership positions are beginning to retire (Barrett & Beeson, 2002). This exodus has created a problem as to who will assume these positions in the 21st century. Qualified managers are needed to lead organizations in this century. One source of replenishment for the void in leadership is filling such high-level positions with women.

Senge (2006) has stated managers who assume key positions must understand the importance of creating a learning organization -- one that not only understands the operational processes, but also one that can inspirationally motivate workers to achieve strategic goals. Executive education has been stated to be an important vehicle for developing the essential competencies to lead learning organizations in the 21st century (Boyatzis, 2008).

Although there is an abundance of literature on how education has enhanced the career development of women in management, there is a lack of literature on the role of executive education and its use for the development of women pursuing senior management positions. Therefore, was important to seek an understanding of the

meaning women have made from the experience in attaining an EMBA and how it enhanced their professional lives.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand how an EMBA has impacted the professional lives of women executives in corporate America. The methodology utilized for this research process was a qualitative approach in that it provided detailed perceptions and understanding of how the EMBA have impacted women in their professional endeavors.

The study of EMBA women helped in understanding the importance of developing human capital that is needed for maintaining our organizations in a global economy. Furthermore, it helped understand the experiences of these women so it can be used to help other women who may be interested in pursuing executive education in the future.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What were the women's experience in the context of an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA)?
2. How does the experience of completing an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) influence women's professional development?

### **Research Design**

Moen (2006) states that, "in Latin, the noun *narrario* means a narrative or story and the verb *narrare* to tell or narrate" (p.4). Merriam (2009) states that narrative research is the oldest form of sense making. Narrative research has been used in a variety of disciplines from anthropology to sociology, especially in the field of education

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Moen (2006) cites that "narrative research is increasingly used in the studies of education practice and experience, chiefly because teachers, like other human beings, are storytellers who individually and socially lead storied lives" (p.2).

The narrative approach allows an individual to create a voice as each individual has a story that is connected to them by their social, cultural and institutional experience (Moen, 2006). Creswell (2013) states that, "as a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in the lived and told stories of individuals" (p. 70). These stories provide a sequence of events that are significant to the researcher, narrator or the narrator's surrounding audience. Narratives help shed light on the identity of those who participate and how they see themselves (Creswell, 2013).

The role of the researcher utilizing this approach is to listen to the stories of a particular action/event in order to give voice to their stories. The engagement that happens between the researcher and the participant helps the researcher develop a sense of understanding of a participant's feelings, thoughts, attitudes and ideas (Lamott, 1995). There is no looking at the past or the future for an explanation to any narrative story. Narrative research recognizes that the meaning attached to all stories are multiple and contextually dependent among its participants (Etherington & Bridges, 2011). The researcher must treat each experience for the knowledge that is provided during the deconstructive phase known as restorying.

The process of restorying involves reorganizing stories into a particular framework. The stories were collected from participants provided data for the researcher to analyze for key themes on the basis of time, place, plot and scene (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher treated each experience for the knowledge that was provided during the deconstructive phase (Polkinghorne, 1998). As a story unfolded, data was organized into a theoretical framework. It allowed for the researcher to establish casual links by looking at metaphors used and what emotional responses, thoughts or ideas become transparent throughout the written transcript (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This allowed for the researcher to connect ideas corroborating a phenomena in a chronological order.

This chronology started at the beginning, placing an individual within a particular setting related to the phenomenon, leading to the climax that identified the actions and feelings the participant experienced, concluding with the resolution each participant engaged in that led to their change (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002). Coding for themes added depth and insight as to the magnitude of one's voice. Restorying allowed for both the participant and researcher's voice to be heard (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The narrative research process provided meaning that can be used by any organization to lend insight as to whether executive education was an important component in the development of the competencies women need to lead. This is especially true as the literature review of this study cited the importance of executive education as being a critical component of leadership in this century (Boyatzis, 2008). The stories that were told aided in understanding the impact women believed executive education played in enhancing their careers within their organization.

### **Researcher's Paradigm**

The questions that were imposed in this study were driven by the researcher's identification as a post-structural feminist who identified with the viewpoints of a social constructivist and looked at language as a way of shaping an individual (Tisdell, 1998).

Questioning allows for the researcher to investigate ideas that are entrenched within our societal structures that are known to exist, providing a voice for those that have been silenced. In other words, the goal is to rely on the participant's view of a situation (Creswell, 2013). The viewpoint of an individual is negotiated through social and historical interactions with others within their environment. In fact, it is based on the cultural norms that operate an individual's life.

In order to be consistent with the researcher's paradigm, it was important that the questions asked of each participant were broad and general so the researcher could construct meaning in relation to this study. The goal of this researcher was to record what each individual had learned so that it could be used to help others who face similar circumstances. The stories that were told provided a sequence of events that were significant to the researcher, narrator or narrator's surrounding audience.

The narrative process helped shed light on the identities of those who participated and how they saw themselves. The role of the researcher utilizing the narrative approach was to reflect on the stories of a particular action/event in order to convey a message.

### **Theoretical Framework**

As the researcher in a qualitative study, my paradigm was that of a post-structural feminist who identified with the viewpoints of a social constructivist, where individuals seek an understanding of the world in which one lives and works (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). There is a common belief that individuals learn and develop through their participations in social activities within their environment (Moen, 2006). Each individual occupies a unique position with respect to his/her environment. Our identity and worldview is generated through the interplay of forces that encourages us to interpret all

experiences based on our relationship to specific situations. Post-structural individuals believe that their lives are not constant, but are interactive in nature and are closely tied to their daily lives. The individuals tell a story so that connections can be made by the reader in order to speculate on the story being told. There are two theorists that are closely associated with the social constructivist and post-structural theoretical framework -- Len Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that people become who they are as a result of the interaction they encounter within their environment. Miller (1993) states, "In the Vygotskian sociocultural view, humans are embedded in a sociocultural matrix and human behavior cannot be understood independently of this ever present matrix" (p. 368).

Vygotsky stressed how culture defines the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in one's environment. Language is seen as a tool used to construct meaning within one's world (Miller, 1993). It is a by-product of our mental development, as it helps us find a sense of consciousness of who we are and a reflection of one's history and culture.

Bakhtin (1986) complements Vygotsky's theory through the emphasis of dialogue. Humans exist in relation to others and as a result of the dialogue that occurs within their environment. This interaction helps create meaning and understanding as it is a reflection of not only the individual speaking, but those who are a part of any utterance (Moen, 2006).

There are three central concepts that are a part of Bakhtin's theory: utterance, addressee and voice. An utterance is considered a voice that involves either written,

spoken or an internalized thought. The addressee is a person to whom an utterance is spoken, whereas a voice comprises words expressed by an individual that conveys a part of their life, history and culture. Bakhtin's concept of dialogue purports that individuals create meaning and understanding within their environment as the voice of one individual reflects the voices and attitudes of others. As an individual speaks, their words create a chain of meaning that represents a particular community that is rich in history. The goal for any researcher is to look at the words behind each interview in order to break down its meaning that can help explain a particular phenomenon (Moen, 2006). This ideology closely complements the feminist theories of Dorothy Smith(2005) and Patricia Hill Collins(1998).

Dorothy Smith is a sociologist who is best known as one of the originators of the feminist standpoint theory. Her beliefs are based on her own experience as a wife, mother and graduate student during the Women's Liberation movement. Smith believes our culture is socially constructed. The knowledge women gain is a by-product of their gender and the position they occupy in society.

Farganis (2000) pointed out how knowledge that is constructed from one's viewpoint conceals a particular bias. The experiences women have and the way they comprehend and understand the world around them influences how they react. It also determines their understanding of how power is constructed and exercised. From this researcher's standpoint, power is seen in society as a gatekeeper for many organizations, legitimizing who will gain the essential credentials to lead.

Smith (2005) points to the relevance of power in society based her own comments in relation to the field of sociology. According to Smith (2005), the field of sociology is

recognized as a science whose major focus has been on capitalism, politics and various social institutions within society, all of which has been influenced by those who dominate the power within our social structures. The theories that have been developed and utilized in sociology contain the perspectives and reflections of white, middle class males that have ignored the experiences of those who have been marginalized. Sociologists have emphasized the importance of subject detachment as a means of developing an understanding of a phenomenon (Smith, 2005).

Smith (2005) has stated that her standpoint theory emphasizes understanding the viewpoint of others where, "we must recognize it, be reflective about it, and problematize it. Our situated everyday experience should serve as a 'point of investigation' (p 10). She coined this process as the "bifurcation of consciousness," which looks at the experience of subjects being studied and the dominant view (male viewpoint) to which one is conditioned to adapt. The researcher is considered a source of influence for those who are under examination and should use their influence to develop an understanding of how others within a group think. The validation of each experience will help provide meaning, as each participant interviewed aids in validating the importance of this study by providing in-depth meaning on the value of experiences related to executive education (Appelrouth & Desfor-Edles, 2011).

Patricia Hill Collins is a black sociologist who took Smith's concept of standpoint theory one step further by looking at how race, gender and class work together to create a hierarchical stratification of oppression and discrimination. Collins called this process intersectionality, which cites how one's viewpoint is based on race, gender and social economic status. When these characteristics are combined with an individual's familial

background, it plays an important role on how they respond to events that happen within their environment (Collins, 1998).

Collins developed her theory based on her own experience as a black female sociologist. Appelrouth and Desfor-Edles (2011) state that "Collins maintains that the experience of multiple oppressions makes black women particularly skeptical of and vulnerable to dominant paradigms of knowledge and thus more reliant on their own experiential sources of information" (p. 334).

Intersectionality is a critical theory in that it looks at a variety of variables among groups and how they interact with the matrix of domination in society. This interaction helps acknowledge differences among groups and the voices that are attached to them (Appelrouth & Desfor-Edles, 2011). It shows how the vulnerability of one group can be compared to other groups in order to build alliances. The building of alliances helps in understanding the oppression of others so they can be recognized by those in domination through the spoken words of the underprivileged. Inequalities cannot be alleviated unless it is recognized and confronted by the power structures within society (Appelrouth & Desfor-Edles, 2011).

An individual can be an oppressor or a member of an oppressed group or a combination of both at the same time. There are differing degrees of privilege or penalty within any environment -- what Collins (1986) entitles "modes of domination" (S18). It acts as a frame of reference by which one lives by and how an individual such as a researcher develops their own perspective.

The theoretical lenses of both Smith and Collins relates well to mown personal standpoint. I understood that there were various standpoints that were presented based on

each participant's experience with power and their own social position within society. Therefore, it was important to acknowledge that each individual brought a different voice that was heard and understood for its value in relation to this study. The collective voices of all of the participants that were heard exemplified the value of executive education and how it impacted the career development of these women as cited by this researcher's own personal perspective.

### **Researcher's Perspective**

Research studies are influenced by the researcher's subjectivity. Peshkin (1988) stated that subjectivity is present from the beginning to the end of the research process. Regardless of the study problem or design, it is important for the researcher to identify one's subjectivity throughout the course of one's research. Reflecting and acknowledging one's subjectivity is critical to the validity of a study. The researcher is an important part of a study. Researchers bring their own lens, which has been influenced by their life experiences, beliefs, values, gender, race and occupation. It is important that researchers acknowledge their bias because they can impact every aspect of the research process.

As Peshkin (1988) suggested, there is a subjective "I" that helps the researcher to see and hear what each participant is saying about subject matter of a study. It help researchers clarify their own self in relation to the participants in order to prevent data from becoming skewed during the interpretation of the participants' transcripts.

The positive side of my beliefs as a post-structural feminist wanted females to succeed in their career development as executives. The just side as a researcher wanted to be fair and not believe women should be promoted because there is a quota to be filled. It was important to have a clear lens in order to make sure that the participants' truths

were recorded accurately and reflected the viewpoint of each participant. Therefore I had to set aside my own personal standpoint and accept every story for the value it contained.

My personal perspective related well to this study as I am a manager who has aspired to become a senior-level manager for many years. At the beginning of my research, my interest focused on the career development of high-ranking female executives who have broken the invisible barrier that is called the glass ceiling. As I immersed myself in the literature and discussed the topic with my dissertation chair, I realized that I wanted to study a more specific population to understand the answer to my question: *"How do women executives make it to the top?"* Executive education has been touted as the tool for developing senior-level executives.

The lack of participation by women in executive education has been mystifying as cited earlier in this dissertation. A study conducted by the EMBA Council in 2005 showed how 26% of all EMBA students were women in comparison to 74% were men (Executive MBA Council, 2013 April 25). In 2014, the EMBA Council reported that the number of women in EMBA remained consistent at 25.4% (Executive MBA Council, 2015, September 8). In comparison, the ASSCB reported in 2012-2013, 36.5% of all MBA graduates were women, compared to 63.5% being men (Catalyst, 2014). Hence, the focus of this study was to look at how women who went for an Executive Master of Business Administration degree (EMBA) utilized this degree for their career development.

I am a white female with a Master's degree in Adult Learning and Development and a Master's of Labor Relations and Human Resources. I am in my seventh year of the PhD program in Leadership and Lifelong Learning at a Midwest university.

For over 29 years, I have worked in non-management positions that were considered "pink collar" for three major financial institutions in the Midwest. In fact, I sought the advice of senior management as to how I could advance within the organization. Most managers cited the importance of going to graduate school, as education was seen as the key for advancement within any organization. As a result, I pursued a graduate degree in education in order to move up the corporate ladder.

No matter how I excelled within my position, pursued graduate education or assumed greater responsibility from management, I did not get acknowledged for my interest in becoming a manager. My chance at becoming a manager came as a result of my association and guidance from an Area Manager of a corporation for which I worked on a part-time basis. The guidance I received from the Area Manager was essential in helping me become an Event Manager for a new warehouse that opened in the Midwest at the end of 2009.

In the past six years, I have exceeded all expectations, creating a warehouse that has outstripped average performance by at least two-fold. In fact, I have been consulted by upper management on various high-level management issues that are crucial to the profitability of the organization. This had led me to believe I have the competencies and skills that are essential for assuming a greater role in leadership.

Despite my interest in assuming greater responsibility, I feel there is still an invisible barrier within the corporation that does not acknowledge my hard work and education as a female, limiting my chances of moving up the corporate ladder. From my viewpoint, the organization's structure is based on a male-dominated culture that does not recognize the importance of women in senior management despite the fact that the

organization has a female for its chief executive officer. The organization culture focuses greatly on the importance of profit over a sense of creating a culture that nurtures the development of its female managers who occupied approximately 80% of its operational centers.

The company's Vice President of Operations is so focused on being debt-free, ignoring the importance of replacement or succession management in the near future for key senior management positions that are about to be vacated due to early retirement. Empathy is sparse and does not resonate throughout its corporate policy. Promotions are not based on "what you know, but on who you know." Women who bow to the male-dominated culture and remain passive tend to move up to middle management positions, but have not broken the cement barrier that exists at the senior management level.

### **Participants**

The participants for this study were drawn from AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) colleges that offered an EMBA program. The AACSB is an accredited higher education organization that focuses on the development of excellent education programs. Graduates of AACSB programs are felt to have learned cutting-edge knowledge in the field of business - especially management. Those who graduate from such programs are believed to be ready to perform immediately upon graduation (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2013).

Enrollment in an accredited AACSB EMBA program is based on an individual's management experience in a business setting. Most EMBA programs require that graduate students have between five to nine years of management experience. This requirement helps students to reflect on their management experience and knowledge in

relation to what they have learned in the classroom in order to apply in an organizational setting (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, 2013).

The participants for this study were selected on the basis of a) completing their EMBA from an AACSB accredited business school within the last five to ten years; b) worked for either a Fortune 500 company; Fortune 1000 Company; or a Standard and Poor 500 company; and c) held positions in management from the areas of operations and finance. The positions they held ranged from Technical Operations Manager to Senior Vice President/Director of Digital Business or Portfolio Services as highlighted in the table listed below.

TABLE I: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Approximate Years Worked at Company</b>	<b>Year Obtained EMBA</b>
Anka	Senior Vice President/Director Digital Business	Financial	18 Years	2012
Lee	Director of Global Design	Retail	10 Years	2012
Michelle	Technical Operations Manager	Retail	17 Years	2013
Georgette	Project Manager	Retail	7 Years	2013
Phyllis	IT Business Analyst/Transportation Manager	Retail	17 Years	2010
Leah	Manager - Operational Effectiveness	Retail	5 Years	2010
Doris	Senior Vice President Portfolio Services	Financial	20 years	2010

Finance and operations are considered areas that tend to employ the least number of female managers in many organizations (Bierma, 2005). Yet, it is key to an organization's success, supplying candidates for key leadership positions in senior

management. Utilizing this approach helped the researcher in determining how the participants would be chosen for this study. It was important to see how women who held positions in such areas, and had obtained their EMBA, looked at education in relation to their career development in senior management. A total of seven participants from these areas were sought for the collection of data in order to provide depth, complexity and richness (Cresswell, 2013).

### **Recruitment Procedures**

Participants for this particular study were recruited through a qualitative process known as snowballing. It is a technique that is socio-cultural in nature, as it relies on the dynamics and nature of social networks within a given environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). These networks show how the balance of power and knowledge of a particular phenomenon is constructed in society (Noy, 2008). Furthermore, it helps promote locating information-rich participants when it is difficult to identify a sample population that has the characteristics needed to examine a particular phenomenon (Patton, 1990). More importantly, it helps a researcher "feel out" or explore a population in order to determine feasibility of conducting further in-depth studies at a later time. (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

Individuals who participate in a snowball sampling are known as "informants" and have considerable control over how information is supplied (Noy, 2008). Therefore, it was important for the researcher to gain the trust and sympathy of those who participated, as they controlled any gained insight that emerged or was shared during each interview. Those who have the knowledge of potential informants are known as

gatekeepers, as they hold the key to informal friends and associates that could be potential participants (Cresswell, 2013).

Candidates were selected through direct contact sources on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a search engine utilized by many professionals who want to network with others within their own environment. The researcher is a member of this network, with contacts relevant to the sample that was sought for this study. An e-mail was sent to all relevant LinkedIn contacts, explaining the nature of the study being conducted and asking for an introduction to potential candidates that fit the qualifications set forth in this study.

The gatekeepers who knew of potential candidates were asked by the researcher for an introduction so they could pursue such leads. Those who agreed to participate were sent additional information via e-mail as to the nature of the study. Contact information was requested from each participant so that a follow-up phone interview could be conducted by the researcher, where the participant was once again notified of the nature of the study prior to setting up an 60 minute in-person interview. Those who could not be interviewed in person were interviewed via a phone interview at a time convenient to the participant. All interviews were set up at an off-site location, away from each participant's work environment to ensure the confidentiality of their participation.

The major limitation in utilizing this technique was the possibility that the informants chosen had similar life histories and viewpoints, thereby complicating the possibility of obtaining a wide range of experiences that were relevant to the study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The other limitation was inability of those who were

interviewed of providing additional participants that could aid in creating a sufficient sampling base that was needed to conduct the study.

It is important to note, that the sample utilized for this study cannot be generalized as being representative of the whole population, as it did not have a variety of minority subgroups of interest present while this study was being conducted. The researcher went beyond their own professional network seeking additional candidates by contacting other colleges within the Midwest region that had an AACSB accredited EMBA program. Phone calls were made to the program coordinators of these respective programs, seeking additional female candidates of color or race that might be willing to participate in this study. Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to locate additional candidates that met the criteria of this study.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Prior to the initial collection of data, an Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research (IRB) Application for Project Review was completed and submitted to the researcher's dissertation committee and the College of Education and Human Services to ensure it meets the required criteria to conduct the study. Once it was approved by the dissertation committee, it was submitted to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies IRB for final approval. Upon receipt of the required approval, the researcher proceeded to utilize their LinkedIn contacts to obtain the necessary participants described above.

As it was mentioned previously, e-mails were sent to the researcher's initial LinkedIn contacts (informants), explaining the nature of the study, asking for an introduction to potential candidates who fit the qualifications set forth in the study. Once

a candidate was identified, an e-mail in order to get their contact information to set up the initial interview. Each participant was sent a copy of the Consent Form (Appendix A) that highlighted the study, assuring them of their confidentiality in connection with their participation.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Prior to the start of each interview, the researcher provided the participant with the introductory letter, two copies of the Consent Form (Appendix A), and a copy of the demographic questionnaire and the interview guide. The participants were asked to sign both copies of the Consent Form (Appendix A), whereby one copy given to the participant for their records and the other copy retained by the researcher for their own record. The researcher then introduced the interview guide (Appendix B) and answered any questions about procedures or concerns that could happen during the interview.

All participants were informed that the length of the first interview would take around 60 minutes and would be audio-taped, with notes taken by the researcher so that they could be cited in a field journal, citing any additional observations that merged during the interview that could shed additional light on this phenomenon. Each participant was informed that any information obtained in connection with their participation in this study would be kept confidential. Furthermore, both the tapes and notes would remain in the secured possession of the researcher's university for a total of three years, after which the data would be destroyed, insuring the confidentiality of all participants involved.

The participants were further informed that if a second interview was required, it would take no longer than 45 minutes and that it would be used as an opportunity to review what had been transcribed in order to validate the accuracy of the data if needed.

Furthermore, the participants were informed that transcribed data would only be accessible to the researcher and methodologist for usage. Upon the completion of the study, the data was placed in a locked file cabinet in a locked office at Cleveland State University.

The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their identities through the use of pseudonyms. They were also informed that there was no perceived risk associated with their participation and that they could withdraw at any time with no detrimental effect with regard to their institution or the position they held.

### **Internal and External Validity**

The goal of any study is to maintain the validity of a study both on an internal and external basis. Internal validity is defined as the ability to draw a causal relationship from the data obtained during a study (Creswell, 2013). For this to happen, the researcher needed to maintain a certain amount of control over the study when handling the sample population that was utilized for this study. In this case, triangulation was used in order to maintain internal validity of this study (Creswell, 2013).

In addition to maintaining the internal validity for this study, it was essential to maintain external validity as well. External validity is the extent to which the study's results, whether descriptive or experimental, can be generalized to other people or settings (Creswell, 2013). Replication is a strong determinant of a study's external validity. Utilizing the snowballing technique helped maintain a sense of external validity

## **Internal Validity**

For this study, internal validity was maintained through a triangulation process that involved the following: a) member checking; b) peer review; and c) expert review. Below is a detailed explanation of how this study conducted the triangulation process.

**Member Checking.** All interviews that were recorded were transcribed within a two to four-week period from the initial point of contact with the participant. Once the interviews were transcribed, they were sent via e-mail to the participants for review on the accuracy of the accountings and for any clarifications (Morse & Field, 2003). The participants were asked to provide feedback on their written transcript by noting any corrections on a separate piece of paper that was then returned to the researcher.

Once the corrections were received, the researcher reviewed them and made the noted changes if there was not a significant deviation from the material transcribed. If there was a significant variation, it was compared to the initial thoughts and ideas noted by the researcher in their field journal during the interview. The participant was contacted to set up an additional interview in order to clarify any changes that had been suggested. The additional conversation was noted in the researcher's journal as could lead to additional themes that were a part of this study. More importantly, it helped the researcher determine how each interview tied together, creating further meaning to the phenomenon being studied (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

**Peer Review.** Another source of checking for the internal validity of this study was by having the transcribed interviews reviewed by peers familiar with qualitative studies. In this case, a few doctoral students from the College of Education and the

Director of the Writing Lab at the researcher's college were asked to review the data for content analysis purposes.

**Expert Review.** As a final method in the triangulation process, the transcribed interviews were sent to the researcher's methodologist and chairperson to be read in order to determine again if the method, meaning and interpretation process were similar to that of the researcher's peers. Utilizing this process helped ensure that the data obtained represented the words of the sample population, strengthening the internal validity process of this study.

### **External Validity**

Replication is the key to maintaining external validity. The narrative process allowed the researcher to obtain a close to real-life situation of the phenomenon that was being investigated. As it was mentioned earlier, the snowballing process was used to obtain the sample population. Utilizing this process relies on the dynamics of a social network within a given environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). It helps the reader by providing a blueprint of how participants were obtained to examine this phenomenon.

The detailed analysis that was provided on each subject helped the reader know as much as possible about the original research situation so judgment could be made on whether the process can be duplicated in a similar setting. The data provided allows for the reader to infer if the results of this study will be the same or similar in their own situation if they are allowed to "transfer" the process of this study to another context (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

## **Data Analysis**

This section will discuss how the researcher managed, analyzed and interpreted the data. The stories that were collected from each participant were analyzed for key elements and re-written within a chronological order, by first looking at the individuals involved, identifying the setting in which the phenomena occurred, and describing the actions that were related to the feelings, actions (reactions) that were identified as being essential to the career development of the participants in this study.

. The researcher used key phrases in order to develop various themes that emerged during this study. The themes that were uncovered were based on the literature review and the behaviors that the data displayed during the initial analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Each transcribed interview that was finalized by the participant was read four to five times in order to embrace what had been said and reflected in the field journal on the observations noted at the time of the initial interview.

A theoretical memo was developed in order to cite the hierarchy or ordering that was displayed by the participants who were interviewed. This allowed for the researcher to reflect on the data that was collected in order to obtain significant insight on various themes and how there were interconnected. The memo also helped identify if there were any gaps that resulted from the initial interview. If there were questions that had been addressed in a follow-up interview, they were cited in this memo, adding clarity to the various themes that were identified in this study.

The process of sub-coding was done in order to provide a comprehensive description of the participants' experiences. This helped the researcher offer an integrative explanation of what had been learned from the EMBA graduates interviewed. Specific words or statements were highlighted in order to discuss or reveal the meaning

behind the words that were transcribed, allowing for the participants to tell their stories. The process of sub-coding continued well into the fifth reading of each narrative, where theoretical saturation happened and no additional themes emerged from the data analysis (Creswell, 2013).

As it was mentioned in the internal validity section of this chapter, the researcher utilized a second interview, as necessary, to clarify additional themes that needed to be explained or clarified during the data analysis phase of this study. This data obtained during this interview was then documented in the field journal and compared to the themes that the researcher discovered during that analysis phase of this study.

### **Summary**

This qualitative study has been designed to explore the impact on the career development of women who have taken an EMBA while working in corporate America. In this chapter, the researcher described the study, the population, research design, data collection procedures and methods of data analysis. In Chapter Four, the findings of this study were presented, as the narratives of these participants were presented in story format that allowed for the participants to present their stories that reflected relevant themes and findings that are discussed in Chapter Five of this study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES OF FEMALE PARTICIPANTS**

The purpose of this study was to understand how an EMBA affected the professional lives of women executives who attained this degree. In order to understand the impact of this degree on the professional development of women, the following research questions were developed:

1. What were the women's experience in the context of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree?
2. How does the experience of completing an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program influence women's professional development?

There were seven individuals who participated in this study. One was an immigrant who appears to be in her early to mid 40's that came from Central Europe to the Midwest as a child; one Asian female who appeared to be in her early 40's that migrated from the West Coast to the Midwest; three females who appeared to be in their late 30's that were born and raised in the Midwest; one female who appeared to be in her late 40's, with a Ph.D. in education who had taught in the Mountain States before moving

to the Midwest; and lastly, one Asian female who appeared to be in her early 60's, raised and educated in Eastern Canada. Below is a table identifying the seven participants:

TABLE II: KEY INFORMATION ON PARTICIPANTS OF EMBA STUDY

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age (Approximate)</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Geographic Location</b>
Anka	Mid 40's	Caucasian - Eastern Europe	Midwest, USA
Lee	Early 40's	Asian	Midwest, USA
Michelle	Late 30's	Caucasian - Southern Europe	Midwest, USA
Georgette	Late 30's	Caucasian - Western Europe	Midwest, USA
Phyllis	Late 30's	Caucasian - Western Europe	Midwest, USA
Leah	Late 40's	Caucasian - Western Europe	Midwest, USA
Doris	Early 60's	Asian	Eastern Canada

The following are the participants' pseudonyms: Anka, Lee, Michelle, Georgette, Phyllis, Leah, and Doris, respectively. As Chapter Three indicated, the individuals were selected primarily on the basis of their completing their EMBA from an AACSB-accredited school within the last ten years and working for a Fortune 500, Fortune 1000, or Standard & Poor 500 company, respectively.

Five out of the seven candidates that participated in this study had obtained their EMBA from local universities. One of the participants interviewed had recently quit their position at a Fortune 1000 company one month after the start of this research. Her data is included in this study as it was determined that her experience would provide data-rich information as to her experience while obtaining her EMBA, as well as her use of the knowledge she acquired away from a large corporate setting as a business

entrepreneur. Two of the participants obtained their EMBA from a university located in Eastern Canada.

Prior to the onset of their participation in this study, the seven individuals and I discussed that we are researchers and that I needed their help in understanding the impact of this degree on their lives, both on a personal and professional level, as it would help me to understand how this degree can affect the career development of other female executives in a large corporate settings. I asked each individual to identify critical events that had happened that impacted their pursuit of an EMBA or their career development. A critical event was identify as a key incident that had a profound impact on them, whether it was on a personal or professional basis.

Not only did these women speak about their own experiences, but they spoke about what they had learned from their graduate studies and how the knowledge they learned helped them understand themselves within their current environment. Each of the participants indicated an appreciation of having the opportunity to discuss these issues as it clarified why these women went for an EMBA and helped in providing information as to whether this degree aided their career development.

This chapter will provide a narrative about each of the participants. Their stories will contribute to how society views graduate education in relation to women in management -- especially those seeking senior management positions now and in the future. Before each narrative begins, the critical incident of each participant will be highlighted followed by their narrative in context to what they said during each interview.

## **Anka**

Anka states she is a Type A person. When I first met her, she was not only pleasant, but multi-tasking on her I-Phone. During our meeting she would constantly have to stop in the middle of our conversation to answer an e-mail that popped up on her phone. She would apologize, indicating that it was essential for her to answer her e-mails as it was "crunch time," at work, where everyone she managed was working on getting together the department budget to present to the head of Finance within the next few weeks.

During our conversation, Anka indicated she is an immigrant of Central European descent who came to the United States when she was six years old. She indicated how she went through the process of Americanization, losing whatever accent of her native tongue she had. Once she graduated from high school, Anka attended a private college in the Midwest, majoring in English literature, with a minor in French and women's studies. She had toyed with the idea of becoming a professor teaching English literature. Despite her dream, she started out working at a language institution as an assistant director that focused on developing programs for corporate clients. Within a matter of a year, Anka left that organization and began her career at a financial institution in the Midwest where she has been employed for the last 18 years.

Her narrative reflects how her initial observations of her work role changed by the time she had attained her degree. Upon her graduation, Anka was promoted to an executive level position. She has changed her outlook as a manager, citing she is more confident in her abilities. No longer does she work beyond an eight-hour day, as she has learned to accomplish more as a result of the skills she learned in graduate school.

As for the future, Anka has stated she is uncertain as to where she sees herself in the next five years. She does not feel she will remain with her current financial organization. She has entertained the idea of starting a new career or going back to school for additional graduate coursework. Right now, she is "playing it by ear," waiting for her sons to graduate from high school. The next few pages provides a brief summary of Anka's EMBA experience as taken from her transcribed interview.

*I had been thinking of graduate school for a while. I had spoken to my boss about assuming greater responsibility. We both agreed that if that were to happen, I would have to solidify my business foundation. An MBA was seen as the best choice to handle this situation. It was a degree that was recognized by my organization as a key for advancement. They saw it as a tool that provided the latest business skills needed in today's business world. I decided to go back to graduate school to obtain my MBA.*

*Once I had made the decision to go back, I needed to determine which school I would attend and which MBA I would obtain. In order to make this decision, I hired a former business associate to examine all of the graduate schools in the area, preparing a detailed spreadsheet outlining the pros and cons of each school, so I could determine which one was the best for me.*

*Both my boss and former associate convinced me that it would be in my best interest to go for an EMBA. A regular MBA focused on the initial nuts and bolts of management. An EMBA fit my management experience, focusing on understanding one's self and how to lead others. More importantly, it fit in with my work schedule. They suggested a local college that was considered to be one of the few elite business schools in the Midwest. Both had attended the same college. They felt an EMBA from this*

*college would be highly recognized by other corporations outside of the local market. I listened closely to what they said and decided to pursue an EMBA at the college they suggested.*

*Before I entered graduate school, I felt it was important to talk with my husband about the changes that were going to have to happen. No longer could I do the cleaning or shopping that I had done in the past on weekends. Luckily, my husband is very supportive and fits my Type A personality. We had a discussion on how we would have to outsource these tasks so that I could study or spend quality time with my family on the weekends. This is especially important, as I am a "soccer mom," spending my weekends taking my sons and their friends to various soccer matches.*

*My husband decided to assume the grocery shopping. I would give him a list and he would go to the grocery store. At times, I would have to overlook anything he might buy that was not on the list. As to the cleaning of my house, I was able to find a local cleaning agency that came once a week to clean it. In fact, I still use that cleaning agency today in order to allow me to continue spending quality time with my family or just to sleep in.*

*As for my parents, they were amazed at my outsourcing ability and how I was able to maintain a career and family life. They always thought I would have gone onto the graduate school right after I graduated. Years ago, I had toyed with the idea of teaching. I loved English Literature, but decided my career options were limited. I did a brief stint for a language organization, but left shortly thereafter to pursue a career in finance.*

*At work, my boss and co-workers were very supportive. My boss allowed me to leave as needed. I would arrive promptly at 8:00 a.m. and leave promptly at 5:00 p.m. in order to make it to graduate school. This was necessary if I was going to get through the program. It is a ritual that I have continued today, as I have found that am able to complete just as much or more of my work within an eight-hour time span. I no longer feel guilty not staying late as I did many years ago. I wish my co-workers, who are mostly Baby Boomers understood you don't have to feel guilty. I still see many of them stay beyond a normal eight-hour day.*

*The first week of the EMBA provided an eye-opening experience that I will carry for the rest of my life. I remember our cohort sitting in a large circle in order to pair off in groups that would work on various assignments throughout the program. Each member of the cohort had to give a little background information in front of everyone, focusing on what they felt they could offer if chosen as a group member. During the process, our professor said to us that we needed to trust the process -- that it really works. I had never really worked in a group without knowing ahead of time the chemistry of the group members. Most of my experience was on the basis of prior performance. Here, I was presenting myself to individuals who were strangers. I did not know what to expect or who would choose me.*

*The group I was chosen to be a member of had similar personalities, despite our differences in careers. In fact, one of the group members was a "soccer parent" like me. As a group, we developed a personal bond that has lasted well beyond graduate school. We learned how to understand and appreciate each other, picking up the slack as needed for each other to ensure our class projects were completed on a timely basis. You don't*

*get to that level at work. There is no personal connection. At work, you always have to be on guard, making sure you complete all tasks as assigned. You can't discuss anything that bothers you without it coming back to haunt you. It is all political. At home, no one understand the significant events you are experiencing at work or in school. The group was the focal point of strength. It allowed us to be free and open with one another -- a place to talk about our fears and aspirations. It was our sounding board.*

*Once, a group member, who was a doctor, came to the study session looking exhausted. When asked how he was doing, he proceeded to talk about how he had delivered three babies within a 24 hours period -- one of which was a very difficult delivery. As he talked, we listened attentively. He spoke freely of how difficult the one delivery was and what he feared while delivering the child. He bore his soul not only as a professional, but as an individual who was seeking solace from the group. It was a process he said he would have found difficult doing so at work.*

*Not only did we listen to each other's problems, we challenged one another to think about what was the next stage in our careers -- whether it be with our current employer or another career. This was something I could never do at work. If you had aspirations that involved a career outside of work, you didn't talk about it without facing the consequences of doing so. My organization wanted workers that are totally committed to them. Those not committed, are eventually "flushed out." You conform or you are seen as an outsider, where your career hits a wall. Again, it is all political and you have to learn how to play the "game" if you want to survive.*

*By the end of the program, I finally understood what our professor had meant that we needed to trust the process. Individuals pick groups on the basis of the initial*

*comfort displayed during their initial contact. The comfort my group experienced together helped us gel. We learned how to minimize our stress by focusing on each group member's strength. That was the key to our sustainability. We were energized by the fact that we were able to reflect on anything we talked about -- from work to our dreams and aspirations. The feedback we received helped us develop the strength and confidence that helped us to succeed as we went through the program and beyond that. Having a group like the one we had in graduate school is something most women do not have in a corporate setting. I know this based on my own experience and the experienced expressed by the other women in my cohort. Most organizations do not have a network that can help women confide in someone. The lack of such a network limits the ability for women to gain the confidence to succeed and to grow as an individual.*

*In fact, I wish I had the cohort group available years ago when I had worked for a boss that didn't listen very well. He was the type of boss that would cut you off, imposing his own opinion. Back then, I would have bit my lip, not saying a word, knowing he would not listen or accept any ideas beyond his own. He knew how to put you down. That was his way of maintaining control over you. It was something he did quite often to the women who worked for him. If I had the group back then, I think it would have been easier for me to find a way of talking to him about what I was feeling without letting my emotions getting the best of me. I would have felt more confident of who I was as individual.*

*The group experience has provided me with a support system where I can voice my opinion, reflect on what I have felt, and develop a plan that has helped me on both a personal and professional level. I feel I am more in control of my career and family life.*

*It is a more balanced life. I have a greater sense of confidence at what I do, knowing I can get the feedback I need that will help me in any situation.*

*Once I obtained my EMBA, I was promoted to Senior Vice President. The EMBA validated my position as a manager in the eyes of my organization. If I hadn't listened to my boss, I wouldn't have been promoted. It is sad that experience doesn't matter as much as a piece of paper like the EMBA.*

*As for the future, I am certain I do not want to remain in banking. Over the last year, I have used the cohort group as to a sounding board for advice on the future. I know for sure, it will be in the digital technology area, but not for the organization I work for. I just don't see myself in finance. My decision to change won't happen until my children are out of high school. That won't be for another few years. In the meantime, I will have time to think about where I am at, where I want to go. For now, I am "playing it by ear."*

### **Lee**

Lee is a young Asian female who appeared very upbeat and interested in participating in this study. She is originally from the West Coast. After graduating from high school, she pursued a degree in industrial design from a prestigious college on the East Coast. Eventually, Lee followed one of her mentors to the Midwest to take a job as a designer for a Fortune 1000 company that sold plumbing hardware to companies such as Home Depot and Lowe's. Lee describes herself as a simple designer who utilized a "hands on" approach when designing kitchen and bathroom accessories. As time when by, she moved up into management, eventually becoming a Director of a division.

Lee has cited her reason for attaining an EMBA was to get a better management foundation. She had looked at a lot of colleges -- from Harvard to UCLA, and decided she wanted to go to a school that had a personal touch and was located locally. For her, online schooling was out. Classroom experience was important. She wanted a school that had classroom interaction. She looked at a variety of schools located geographically close to where she lived and decided on a local college that was prestigiously noted for its organizational behavior. Her reason for choosing this school was based not only on its notoriety, but on the fact that a majority of the company executives who worked at her company had attended this college for their EMBA.

Lee decided that an EMBA was a better choice than a normal MBA based on the type of student who attended each program. To her, EMBA classmates were more experienced and seasoned in their management skills, providing a richer experience than what could be provided by professors who lectured.

Once Lee earned her EMBA, she was promoted to Director of Global Design at the company for which she worked. While in this position, Lee spoke how she was responsible for the organizational leadership behind the design groups both in North America and Asia. As a Director she was responsible for creating a group that was flexible in its approach in developing products. After two years as a Director, Lee quit to start her own design company that focused on developing urban dwelling units in major cities across the world. The next few pages provided a brief summary of Lee's EMBA experiences taken from her transcribed interview.

*Initially, I followed my mentor from the East Coast to the Midwest to take a job at a Fortune 1000 company as an industrial designer. As a designer, I focused on a "hands*

*on" approach when it came to developing plumbing hardware. Eventually, I moved from the design aspect to that of a manager developing business strategy behind the goods produced. Once I had made the move from design to management, I began to think about my management skills. If I was going to manage others, I felt I needed the management foundation that would help me do so.*

*I spoke with my boss, who was my mentor. I had followed her from the East Coast where I had first started working after college. We worked together on a variety of projects. I learned a lot from her both on a personal and professional basis. She was well-versed, knowledgeable, and skilled. She has been a positive influence in my life, becoming a good friend that has helped me with my career development by offering suggestions I should consider as I encounter a turning point in life.*

*Having my boss as a mentor was very important to me. She has created a positive impact in my life. Our professional association has gone beyond our professional careers. We have become very good friends in our private lives even though we no longer work with one another. She has helped me in many ways when it has come to my career development.*

*When I was thinking about graduate school, she was instrumental in motivating me to pursue an MBA. She pointed out that I was a designer who was very analytical. The degree would complement the business knowledge I had already acquired over the past eight years. If I wanted to move into senior management, an MBA was a major requirement of the company. It was a tool for mobility into senior management. She knew based on her own experience.*

*My boss had started out by going for her MBA while working for the company, but stopped when she got married and had kids. The lack of not having the degree limited her ability to move further up the ladder. It was something she regretted not pursuing later on. I knew she was right.*

*On the operational side of the company, there were no women in senior management. In fact, throughout the company's senior management staff there was only one woman. That woman was the Vice President of Human Resources -- a field heavily dominated by women.*

*If I wanted to manage on the operational side of the organization, the MBA would help solidify my move into a field that was heavily dominated by men. It was an important step that I felt I needed to take in my life. The next step involved deciding which degree was the best fit for me -- an MBA or EMBA.*

*At first, I looked at an MBA, speaking to a few friends who had attended a traditional program. I discovered that the caliber of student who attended this type of program lacked the solid management experience I had. I wanted a program where I could relate to based on my own experience. I decided to look at an EMBA.*

*I knew of a few of our corporate executives at my own company who had gone for their EMBA. I decided to speak with them on their experience and their take on the program they had attended. Those that I spoke with cited how each individual they were associated with had a depth of management experience and would exchange with each other on how they utilized their management style in the workplace. Many mentioned how learning was based on classroom interaction and not solely by lecture. This intrigued me. I wanted to be in a classroom setting with students who were close to my*

*age and had similar management experience. I realized that the EMBA was the right program for me.*

*I looked at a variety of graduate schools -- UCLA, Stanford, Berkley and event Harvard. All of these schools had online EMBA programs. As I mentioned earlier, I wanted a program with classroom experience. I focused locally, in order to find an EMBA program that fit my needs. I looked at the notes I had taken when speaking to some of the executives at my company. Many of them who had gone for an EMBA went to a local private college noted for their organizational behavior. I made an appointment with the program director at that college. During our meeting, she spoke with me about the uniqueness of the program. The average age of an EMBA student was around 39 years old and had around seven years of management experience. I was convinced this college's program had what I was looking for. I decided to pursue an EMBA at that college.*

*My company was financially ethical on how they invested in their employees and what they felt they were responsible for paying. I knew of people who went for an EMBA only if their employer had given them a full ride. I didn't feel my employer was responsible for what I had decided was important to me. I wanted this degree and understood I had to pay for it.*

*I received \$10,000 a year in tuition reimbursement for attending graduate school. The program I attended cost over \$90,000. Outside of my company's financial contribution, I paid for the remaining balance of the EMBA degree.*

*The one thing you are totally unprepared for when entering an EMBA program is the intensity of the program. There is a lot of stress associated with the degree. Not only*

*are you expected to perform the various roles at home or work, you are now a college student having to do a variety of assignments on a timely basis. There are long nights and a lot of coffee drinking. As work, I found myself being cranky, gaining weight and having no time for anything. In fact, I once came to work wearing my clothes inside out. I didn't realize it until a co-worker pointed it out to me. It is a good thing the program was short-term!*

*In addition to the initial stress, there was an added stress of change. Our program was a guinea pig for new changes that were being implemented into the EMBA. While most of the classes were pretty structured, there were some that were being re-vamped and lacked organization, were chaotic or confusing. This was the weak point of the EMBA, as we were already on an accelerated pace. As a cohort, we were very structured. Organization was critical to us, which led us to voice our concerns with those professors teaching those courses. We worked with them to clarify our reading and homework assignments.*

*Initially, my goal for going for an EMBA was to get a solid management foundation so I could move up. I didn't expect the EMBA to be holistic or emotional. The emotional intelligence segment of the program focused on life management skills, learning to know who we were, by crafting a personal vision that related to our leadership style. It was an epiphany for me as I learned that our personal vision affects how we manage and motivate others. The way we view ourselves has an impact on how credible we are viewed as a leader in the eyes of our subordinates. Credibility plays an important role in determining whether others are willing to follow you as a leader to achieve an organization's goals. I learned a lot about who I was and what I wanted out*

*of life. It helped me to set priorities that were clear and concise. To set a plan that matched what I wanted out of life, both now and in the future.*

*As for the holistic part of the program, the EMBA cohort group became my second family. I am originally from the West Coast where a majority of family still live. Our cohort group was diverse in nature, having different management styles and experiences. Despite that being the case, we learned how to bond as we went through the program. We were very supportive of one another and very understanding when it came to working on class projects, towing the line for one another when it came to getting our assignments done.*

*At times we had social functions at a cohort member's house that allowed us to get to know one another. We learned a lot about of our members and their families, living the various experiences they shared with the group. These functions brought us closer together. We learned how to lean on one another without feeling confined. We acted as a sounding board for each other, where we could talk about life in general, seeking advice on personal or professional challenges. That bond is still very strong today. I still keep in contact with them on a regular basis, using them as necessary whenever I need advice.*

*Once I graduated with my EMBA, I was promoted to the position of Director of Global Design. I was very lucky at the time. As I mentioned earlier, my boss was my mentor. When she decided to leave the company, she felt I was a good choice to replace her. She was my advocate who convinced upper management that I had the business and leadership tools that would help achieve the organization's strategic goals. If it wasn't for her, I don't think I would have moved into this position as I did.*

*As the Director of Global Design, I was responsible for the organizational leadership that supervised the design groups in both North America and Asia. My job was to ensure that the design quality standards for our company products were flexible and collaborative, fitting the needs of our stakeholders worldwide. That first year was like a baby taking its first steps. While I was good at designing, I now had to learn to have the patience to deal with a diverse group and the different needs that needed to be addressed. I was the custodian of the financial purse for my department. This meant I had to stay within a budget and yet achieve the department goals. At first it was very difficult, but by the end of my first year, I began to adjust to my role with greater ease.*

*I had been a director for about two years and was approaching 40. As I mentioned earlier, the EMBA had taught me how to understand myself by creating a personal vision of what I wanted to do. While the role of a director was a great experience, it was one that was intense and stressful. I didn't want to continue working a rigorous 60 hours a week, tied to a desk. It was an unhealthy life style. I wanted more out of life.*

*While in graduate school, I created a goal of retiring at 40. I had spoken to my cohort group for the past year about my goal. I wanted to retire in order to pursue a career as an industrial designer, focusing on creating habitat structures in large urban centers. Structures that were not only economically feasible, but also a source of pleasure. I wanted to be an entrepreneur with a humanitarian twist. This was something I strongly believed in.*

*My cohort group was my personal cheerleading team. I had spoken to them, asking for advice as to how I could make this dream realistically possible. They listened*

*attentively, providing encouragement each step of the way. The group helped me realize my dream was financially possible by helping me develop a business strategy that would make it happen. When I felt I couldn't follow through, they would provide me with positive feedback that it was possible -- that I had to believe in what I was doing. As time passed, I began to believe it was possible.*

*Shortly after my 40th birthday, I resigned from the Fortune 1000 company I had worked for the past ten years. I had all of my ducks in a row. My graduate loan was paid off and I had saved enough money to live off of while I worked on setting up my own consulting firm. Currently, I am working on developing working relationship with endowment foundations, such as Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, where I can partner with them in order to work in urban cities that need re-designed settings. I want to design products that are not only economically feasible, but ones that enhance the lives of those that use them.*

*Part of my strategy calls for me to travel around the world over the next 17 months. I want to see the world in order to understand its diversity and how I can help change it. To do this, I plan on signing up for volunteer vacations, where you work as a volunteer for a non-profit organization. Individuals that participate in these types of vacations not only see the world, but get a sense of achievement, educating those on how to read or write so they can become self-sufficient. It is also a great tax deduction.*

*My company may be in its infant stage, but I am not worried. I believe I will make it as it is something I am personally committed to. I love what I am doing on a daily basis. The connections I have established while vacationing as a volunteer have helped reinforced my commitment as an entrepreneur and humanitarian. I have*

*established business contacts that have allowed me to set up small consulting contracts that showcase my skills. It is giving me an opportunity to understand what is important in life, providing a blueprint on how to move forward in life to help others.*

### **Michelle**

For the past 18 years Michelle has worked for a Fortune 500 company in the Midwest. Most of her experience has been in the field of information technology. According to Michelle, it is a field that is heavily dominated by men at her company. Michelle was first introduced to the world of computers by her grandfather, who told her they would be the "wave of the future" and play an important role in the corporate world. She recalls the first computer she toyed with was an old Wang computer; she learned how to take it apart and put it back together. While in high school, Michelle began working part-time in the information technology department at the company for which she currently works. She eventually took a job as an Administrative Assistant in order to get full-time employment, moving up the ranks over time.

Michelle talked about the importance of education in her life. She mentioned how her grandfather would say "the more educated you are, the greater your independence will be." There are many members of Michelle's family who either have an associate or technical degree. No one in her family has a degree beyond that.

Money was scarce in her family. She was raised by a single mother who, as Michelle states, "had limited resources." She talked about how she would help the family at times. If she wanted anything she would have to find a way to pay for it. Michelle understood the importance of what her grandfather said about education. After high school, Michelle decided to go to night school to get her bachelor's degree in order to get

a better opportunity at being promoted. She saw being promoted as a key to her financial independence. Therefore, she would work a part-time job, in addition to her full-time one, in order to defray the expense of going to school.

Michelle eventually obtained her bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, it did not materialize into moving up the ladder within her department. This was due to the current management structure within the corporation for whom she worked.

Michelle realized that if she were going to move up, she would have to move out of IT to the financial sector of the corporation she worked for. To do this, an MBA was the key to that advancement. In fact, it was a requirement that had been established by her corporation. Michelle began her graduate education pursuing an MBA, but eventually switched over to an EMBA degree once she realized the MBA did not match the skill set she was trying to develop.

During our discussion she exuded her passion for the EMBA experience, citing how it has helped her in attaining a few promotions, as well as a significant increase in salary that has provided the independence she has sought for many years. When asked where she saw herself in five years, she mentioned she could see herself moving into a Vice President or Director's role, but anything beyond that was limited based on the current structure within her department. The next few pages provide a brief summary of Michelle's EMBA experience as taken from her transcribed interview.

*I have worked for my current employer for over 18 years. I initially started out working part-time while in high school rolling spools of tape that hooked up to large database computers in the IT department. After I graduated from high school, I began working full-time as an administrative assistant in the same department. I knew that if I*

wanted to expand my career opportunities, I would have to go to college. I went to night school while working full-time to pursue my bachelor's degree. At times I would have to work part-time in order to make cover my expenses.

Once I got my bachelor's degree, I tried to move up within my department. I thought I would have an opportunity based on my education and experience. I was given additional responsibility, but not the pay that went with it. I watched as my male colleagues with a bachelor's degree and the same responsibility were being promoted. If I asked how I could move up, it was met with deaf ears. I loved what I did, but hated the lack of recognition I received. I knew I made a contribution to the bottom line in my department just like my male colleagues. It was very disheartening.

Fortunately, while working on a project between IT and finance I met a female colleague who was a Vice President. She was very knowledgeable and savvy. She challenged me on how to "think outside the box" while working on our project. It was great working with someone who appreciated the work I did and complemented me for my initiative.

I admired her as she understood how to "work" the system in order to showcase whatever she worked on with upper management. In fact, the male colleagues in senior management admired her. She did not take a back seat to anyone.

One day I spoke to her about how I had been feeling about working in a position that had no promising future. We talked about how I could enhance my career. She mentioned that I should think about getting an MBA so I could move to the management side of the business. It was an area that was constantly looking for people who had

*passion for helping the company succeed -- especially women who wanted to move into senior management.*

*I realized that what she said was true. You have to understand, IT is heavily dominated by men -- very little women move up in this department. Those that remain in IT feel their career isn't going anywhere. There is a ceiling that limits your growth. This is not so much the case in other departments where the representation is a little more evenly distributed. I realized that if I wanted to move into management I would need to go to graduate school.*

*I decided to get my MBA at a local college by taking a few management courses. Within a few months, I realized an MBA was not what I really wanted... I felt I was going nowhere as most of the classes were basic operational classes that I had when I was going for my undergraduate degree. I wanted a degree that provided a little more interaction with more hands-on experience. I had heard about the EMBA from my next door neighbor who was in the program. One night, we sat down and talked about the program.*

*He spoke about how intense the program was. As a student, you needed to be committed to the degree in order to complete it. There was very little time you had for yourself. The classes met every weekend. There were a lot of projects that were required in a short time period. Students were encouraged to share their management ideas throughout the program. This helped an individual to learn how to incorporate what they knew and any new ideas into developing their own leadership style. The one thing that caught my attention during the conversation was the overseas trip to visit an international company.*

*The trip involved going to a company that had a working relationship with the college. Students that visited the company were able to talk to senior management about their organizational design and management structure. More importantly, they were given a problem that the company had recently been working on while reviewing their business plan. The goal was to take the information provided during the trip back to the States in order to work on a solution that would help the organization in today's competitive economy. This intrigued me. I realized that was the kind of hands-on experience I wanted if I was going to succeed. I decided to set up a meeting with the Program Director of the EMBA program in order to see if I could get in.*

*Everything that my neighbor had said about the EMBA program was correct. When I met with the Director of the program, he took the time to go through the goals and objectives of the program. He talked about how the EMBA was a degree that would help increase one's salary quite significantly as it had the state of the art classes and instructors with years of management experience that could help an individual become a leader in today's business world. I was ready to make the change, but I was also scared.*

*I was lucky I didn't have children while I pursued this degree. My family and my fiancé' were supportive. There were, of course, some family members who didn't understand why I wanted to pursue this degree. They thought it was a major accomplishment that I had already achieved a four-year degree. No one in my family had ever gone to graduate school. That was okay. For me, personally, I needed the degree to maintain my financial independence. I felt graduate school would provide that independence.*

*At work, my initial boss at the time wasn't very supportive. He was the team leader for our group. We had worked together for over ten years. He was the type of individual who was very controlling and used his demeanor to keep many of the workers (especially women) under him in "check." Working for him had its ups and downs. It could be very emotional.*

*When I first approached him about going for my EMBA, he was surprised and wanted to know why I wanted to do so. I indicated to him I wanted to move into a management position and I felt I needed the knowledge of how to change certain practices so they could be handled differently. He responded by saying, "No....you can't do that." He proceeded to state that the degree didn't relate to my current job, so therefore, the company shouldn't be obligate to pay for it.*

*I knew he was jealous of anyone having the same knowledge and credentials as him. He had an EMBA himself, going for it while working as an analyst. It was a degree that had given him an opportunity to become a leader in our department shortly after graduating from the program. There was no reason for him to deny me the right to get tuition reimbursement except for wanting to maintain status quo.*

*I was facing a brick wall when it came to my career development at this point. No matter how much I wanted to change or learn new skills, I would never get a chance to use them where I was at. You have to understand, IT is heavily dominated by men -- very little women move up in this department. Those that remain in IT feel their career isn't going anywhere. There is a ceiling that limits your growth. This is not so much the case in other departments where the representation men to women is a little more evenly*

*distributed. If I was going to move out of IT and into management, I need advice on how to get my request approved.*

*When my initial request was rejected, I went to the female Vice President who had convinced me to go to graduate school. I told her what had happened. She suggested that I go to the Director of the IT department. He was over my boss and was a very open person. I knew the Director while working on a project, where he had sat in on our meetings. He was different than my boss, encouraging workers to openly express what they were thinking while working on the project.*

*I decided to set up a meeting with him in order to discuss my career aspirations. I called him, introducing myself to him. He immediately remembered who I was and was open to meeting about how I could move up within the organization. I didn't mention to him at that point that I had been denied by my team leader any tuition reimbursement for an EMBA.*

*I found meeting with the Director of IT as being very refreshing. When I entered his office he exclaimed he was happy that I wanted to go to graduate school. He proceeded to say how he saw me as a very motivated individual who would go far based on my dedication and enthusiasm. I thanked him and told him I wanted to go to the management side of the organization and that I wanted to pursue an EMBA instead of an MBA, seeing that it was more geared toward developing leadership skills. He listened closely and agreed an EMBA was a good fit for what I wanted to do. I proceeded to tell him that my team leader had denied me tuition reimbursement, citing the degree wasn't job related. He did not ask me why, but hinted that he knew my boss could be a problem as he wasn't the type of person that liked to be over-ruled when it came to any decisions*

*in his department. He proceeded to ask me if I was willing to move to another section of IT, working for another manager who he knew was open to my career aspirations.*

*At first I was hesitant, but realized that I needed to stop worrying about the "what ifs." I agreed to do so. By the end of the meeting, the Director had set up a meeting with the team leader of another section in IT. My request to attend the program was approved. I was on my way. As for my old boss, he was eventually demoted. I cannot say it was because he had denied me the right to attend graduate school, but for other reasons.*

*The new job I was given required me to travel overseas a lot. My new boss worked around my school schedule, granting the extra vacation time I needed so I could attend the EMBA's initial boot camp and to attend any other classes. I was able to make up any additional time granted outside of my normal vacation schedule.*

*The first week in the EMBA program we had to attend a week-long "boot camp" session. I already knew the program was going to be a lot of work. I didn't have any confidence in myself. I didn't know if I would fit in or not. It showed all over me. The Program Coordinator of the EMBA program saw this. She pulled me aside and had a long conversation as to why I had every right to be in the program. I had the right skills -- meaning the right soft and technical skills. I shouldn't sell myself short. As she spoke those words, I felt a sense of encouragement come over me. It gave me the confidence to accept the challenge of boot camp and if I succeeded, I could accomplish the degree as well. I don't know if I could have finished boot camp without her coaching.*

*The group I was assigned to was very intense. There were a lot of strong personalities. Instead of sitting back, I learned how to open up to others within the*

*group, talking about the importance of working together to complete our assigned project. As we conversed, we realized we didn't have all of the answers we needed. What was important was to come up with an analysis as to what the problem was, a solution based on our current knowledge, and a logical explanation as to how we would explain to upper management (EMBA faculty) our ability to find the answers we needed. The initial presentation helped me in not only developing my confidence in knowing I had it in me to do this level work, but understanding the importance of building relationships.*

*Over the 19-month period, the group projects helped me understand that team members of any organization develop as a unit. It takes time, as it did with our cohort. Despite that being the case, we learned that an effective group is like a well-oiled machine, understanding each other's diversity, and yet understanding the importance of working as one toward achieving a goal. This was something I had not experienced while working in the IT department. I realized that I had the ability to develop the people skills that would lead others. I should not short-sell my abilities.*

*The EMBA program was the best thing I have done in my life. I went in as a project manager, coming out as a business manager. I learned how to develop the people management skills needed to lead. I am confident in the decisions I make on a daily basis. I don't think this would have been possible had I not gone for the degree. I would have been still working for my old team leader, frustrated at not getting the recognition I deserved for the work I did.*

*Once I completed the degree, I moved to the financial side of my organization. I have been promoted three times and my salary has increased by over 40%. This can be attributed to the personal negotiation skills I developed while in graduate school. I*

*learned how not to sell myself short, citing my strengths and what I could bring to each job. I wouldn't have even attempted to pursue the positions I have been promoted to if I didn't have the knowledge of going after what I really wanted. It has been an eye-opening experience!*

*As for the future, I want to continue working for my current company. My hope is to become a Director or Vice President within the next five years. That is something I am currently planning for. To do this, I must work on projects that will bring attention to me. If it requires that I need to travel frequently, that is something I must consider as a prerequisite for moving into upper management.*

### **Georgette**

Georgette obtained her undergraduate degree in liberal arts from a prestigious university in the Midwest. After graduation, she went to work for a corporate event planning corporation. Around seven years ago, Georgette decided to leave that job to assume a similar position at a Fortune 500 company. Over time, she moved into a management position working on selling various brand products to vendors that visit the company's headquarters. Today, Georgette works on the business development side of the company's brand products in the role of a project manager. Her position involves developing products for various buyers in the foods industry. She works with a variety of teams across the country. Logistics plays an important role in her job as she must often report to upper management as to where a project stands on its timeline.

When asked why she pursued an EMBA, Georgette indicated her reason was simple -- she wanted to pursue an upper-level position within her company -- preferably in marketing. To do so, she needed to pursue a graduate degree in business which was a

requirement of her company. If you want to be promoted, an MBA is necessary.

Georgette pursued her graduate degree at a local Midwestern college.

During our discussion, we talked about the future and moving into a "pure" marketing role. For this to happen, Georgette would have to assume a position as a Vice President or Director of a division. Promotions to these positions are limited as they are already occupied by individuals who are around her age. Georgette stated that if a position were to open up in her Company, it would be filled by individuals who have been appointed by the executive management at their world headquarters in Europe. When asked if she would consider taking a promotion that involved working overseas, Georgette indicated that that was not possible at this time. She is a single mother who is raising a son who has just entered high school. It is important to her to continue maintaining close family ties, as she relies on them to supply the necessary emotional support he needs as a teenager.

Georgette stated that if there is a career change, it will probably happen away from her current employer. She has mentioned that her real passion is to one day become an advertising executive at a marketing agency, developing products for large corporate clients. For this to happen, Georgette stated she will have to develop many network connections. The next few pages provides a brief summary of Georgette's EMBA experience as taken from her transcribed interview.

*My company gives very little support when it comes to career development. They will ask you what do you want to do with the rest of your life and yet give little guidance as to which career path to choose. One thing was for certain. If I wanted to move up, I needed to get an MBA. It was a pre-requisite for being promoted by my company.*

*When I had to decide on which graduate program to attend, MBA versus an EMBA, I chose an EMBA due to the shorter timeframe required to complete the degree and the fact that the classes met on Saturdays. A traditional MBA met two days a week and could take two to four years to complete. This was something I could not do. I am a single mother raising a son. It was easier for me to find someone to watch my son on Saturdays than it was during the weeknights.*

*As to the school I chose, I decided to go to a local college that was half the cost of a prestigious university in the area. I had spoken to a few managers within the company about choosing the "right" college. Those that I talked to spoke about how it wasn't important as to the name attached to the degree as it was to the initials attached to the degree. In other words, an EMBA is worth more than an MBA, as there is the word 'executive' is attached to the degree -- an association of management experience attached to the degree. An MBA is seen as a "nuts and bolts" degree on business. If you want to hire a manager, you don't want one that only has a "nuts and bolts" education, but one with management savvy.*

*Before I could go for the degree, I had to get my manager to approve the degree if I was going to get the company to pay for half of it. Getting that approval wasn't very easy. I had to approach my former boss to do so. My old boss was an individual who was from the "old school." In other words, everything had to be in black and white for her to agree to do something. For years she used this tactic, which enabled her to move from a simple position on the plant floor into a management role on the operations side of the business. When she moved from the operations side to the retail marketing segment, it was a difficult transition for her and those who worked for her.*

*As a boss, she was a micro-manager who questioned everything or anything someone did. She would constantly ask for updates on my progress throughout the day. I would get a list that she modified constantly. She refused to let me do my job on my terms. It was pretty miserable. I believe there was a jealousy issue she had with me. I was a college graduate and she was not. I think she felt she couldn't trust me. It was very difficult for me to feel valued when your work was being constantly scrutinized. There was no reason for her to be checking up on me when I had everything under control.*

*More importantly, she was an introverted individual who didn't work well with people. She had no people-skills when it came to talking or listening to people. I, on the other hand, was a more outgoing person who worked well with those around me, from my peers to those in upper management. That was not the case when it came to my boss. It was noticeable based on the interactions she had with those around her and upper management.*

*When I approached her on the idea of graduate school, her initial response was, "the degree doesn't fit in with your job at the company." She went on to point out that it wasn't job related, citing I had "no management" experience, despite the fact my title had the word "manager" and that I was responsible for managing a staff that marketed various product lines to multi-million dollar clients. My words met her deaf ears. I was frustrated.*

*I went to human resource seeking their help. The human resource generalist assigned to my department suggested putting together a business plan indicating how the degree would help my career. I became even more discouraged. Now, I had to write a plan as to how the degree would help my career development. Why was it necessary?*

*After all, wasn't it a degree that was business-related and relevant to my position as a manager. I knew that if I wanted for my company to pay for a portion of the degree, I needed to make sure I followed everything to the "t." Otherwise, it would have been impossible for me to afford the cost of the EMBA.*

*It is odd how things happen for a reason. Shortly after my initial request was denied, my old boss left the company for supposedly "personal" reasons. My new boss was an individual who was somewhat younger. He had worked at the world headquarters in Europe before coming to the States to assume a position as a Director. I already had known him from working on previous projects-- which was a good thing for me. Although he didn't have the number of years in terms of management experience, he was far more superior when it came to management style. He was more relaxed and easy going. There was no micro-managing with him. He felt that if you got the job done, there was no need for you to tell him or for him to question you as to what you had done. However, if you needed his help, he was always available.*

*School was about to start in a few months. I knew I would need his assistance if I was going to start on time. I decided to wait a few weeks before approaching my new boss on this idea. I had prepared the business plan as suggested by human resources and decided to wait a few weeks before I would approach him on the issue of school. I was a little apprehensive but determined to get this done.*

*When I approached him, he was very open and thought the EMBA was a good choice, stating I would benefit from working with other executives. He looked at the draft I had prepared and went over it, re-writing it to show how the degree was job related, and how the wording was important in order to get the plan approved. Since that initial*

*encounter, my boss has been very supportive of helping me with my career development. In fact, he has been helpful to me as a project manager by providing constructive criticism as needed when it comes to product development.*

*Once my business plan was approved by human resources, I was officially accepted into the EMBA program. Acceptance into EMBA program started out with each graduate attending a "boot camp" session at a local hotel near to the college. It was called "boot camp" as it was initially where each graduate was confined to a conference room and hotel room for a three day period in order to prepare a business plan to present in front of a committee of selected professors. It was here that I learned the importance of how one's voice helps in establishing a sense of confidence as a manager. How it was important that you spoke your voice if you wanted to be heard. It instilled in me the confidence of knowing the importance of speaking up so that you are noticed and heard by your peers.*

*An EMBA is different from an MBA, as there are a lot of group projects you must work on while in the program. I remember the first group project we had. During boot camp, we were given a particular reading assignment that involved creating a business plan. Everyone was given the task to read a case study and then meet to discuss how to approach writing the group paper that would be presented to a "mock" board of directors consisting of the EMBA professors.*

*We had one gentleman in the group who had already written a brief synopsis and offered to write the paper. As we listened, we realized the approach he was planning to utilize was totally wrong. I watched the reactions of those within the group, noticing how they felt the same way I did. The way he had presented his approach on writing this*

*paper was not in a professional manner that was expected of graduate student -- more importantly any executive! I surveyed the room once again -- no one spoke up. As I sat there, I realized I needed to say something; otherwise our group would not succeed in its first group project as graduates. This was an EMBA program. All of us had been chosen on the basis of our knowledge as managers. I felt it was important to present a project that reflected a tone of professionalism if we were going to succeed.*

*I bluntly spoke up, saying the approach he was suggesting did not provide a solution to the problem and did not reflect the experience of an executive. Opening up in this fashion was very difficult for me, as I not worked on many group projects where there was a lack of direction. Those that I worked on had a sense of direction, as I knew the stakeholders involved and were familiar with their work. There was a common understanding of what needed to be completed in order to get a job done. Here, I was dealing with a lot of different personalities from different backgrounds and did not know what to expect. All I knew there was a lot of talk, but no action.*

*I started out by saying that the solution to the problem was not realistic and the way this person had analyzed the situation was incorrect. As I spoke, others nodded, eventually speaking up, indicating they were in agreement with my analysis. By the end of the group meeting, I and another group member ended up setting up a plan of action for structuring the paper that reflected a step-by-step analysis of the problem and a solution to the case study. We determined who would speak on presenting the business plan and how it would be presented to the mock committee for their approval. In the end, we had developed a business plan that was reflective of graduate work and the work of an executive. More importantly, it reflected the voice of the group and not the opinion of*

*one individual. As for the gentleman who had initially offered his suggestion, he ended up dropping out of the program saying it was too intense for him.*

*This experience was quite an eye-opener. Over time, I learned the importance of speaking up during group projects. I have developed a sense of confidence in knowing I have developed the ability to communicate with diverse groups of people. As a manager, I have learned when to question what is important in order to become more interactive with the projects I handle on a day to day basis. I have learned how to step back and analyze the stakeholders involved in order to become familiar with the working habits of my group members. Understanding the chemistry of a group is important in order to motivate them to achieve organizational goals.*

*As I mentioned earlier, the career development for any individual within my company is very traditional. Positions that are higher than a Vice President or Director are closed off to most individuals within the company. In fact, positions at the senior management level are determined by certain credentials. Those individuals that have the credentials have been groomed by senior management at the world headquarters in Europe to assume key operational positions. They have been guided along a pre-determined path, where they go overseas to run divisional units before coming back to the States to assume a senior level position there.*

*Positions at a Vice President or Director's level in the States are about the highest level anyone can achieved while working for this company. In fact, they are very limited. They are currently occupied by individuals who around their late 30's or early 40's. It is highly unlikely anyone will be leaving any time soon.*

*At this point in my career, I don't see myself moving up soon as a division manager due to the limited availability of such positions. If there was a position available it would probably be overseas. It would be difficult to consider going for such a position as I have a young teenage son that has just started high school. As a single mother, I depend on my family for the emotional support to help raise him.*

*If I am going to develop my management skills as a leader to assume a position in senior management one day, it will have to be away from my current employer. My current job has provided me with the marketing credentials that can help me get a position within an advertising company where I can work with a variety of Fortune 500 companies to showcase my talent. This could eventually lead to a management position at one of those companies where I could expand my horizon.*

*For now, I am happy with the career progression I have made thus far. The EMBA has helped me obtain a project manager position within my company where I have been able to learn key marketing skills that I can use away from my current employer. The group projects I worked while in graduate school focused on learning how to develop strategic plans that lead people to achieve organizational goals. I have gained insight on how to recognize systematic problems an organization faces so I can develop a business plan that will help it survive within its current environment. This process involved understanding an organization's dynamics, as this is the key to developing a business plan that works.*

*If I had attended a regular MBA, I wouldn't have been exposed to executives from a variety of business settings. The EMBA teaches you about the importance of developing the right leadership skills that can lead an organization. You learn about the importance*

*of the personal development of a leader and how to motivate those around you in order to achieve key strategic goals. A good leader is one who understands an organization's dynamics and how it interacts within its environment. It is a skill that is essential to survive in today's global economy. I am happy I had an opportunity to experience this phenomenon. It wouldn't have happened if I hadn't taken the degree. As a woman in management, you don't have the opportunity to practice your skills as a leader or executive.*

### **Phyllis**

Phyllis is a very bubbly person who appears down-to-earth and jovial to whomever she comes into contact. She was very interested in telling her story, starting out by stating how she started working for the Fortune 500 Company she currently works for right after graduating from high school. While working full-time, Phyllis attended night school in order to pursue an undergraduate degree in business. She had been working for her current employer for over 15 years before deciding to go back to graduate school. Her main reason for going back to school was simple -- to enhance her career development.

Before deciding on entering an EMBA program, Phyllis attended a couple of MBA classes at a local college. She found these classes to be boring and stated that if she was going to spend money to further her career, it was going to be on classes that would enhance her job skills. As a result, she looked at an EMBA program at a nearby college, comparing the coursework to that of an MBA program. The coursework for EMBA was more challenging. Phyllis decided she would pursue an EMBA. She spoke with her boss and the Division Manager of her department regarding an EMBA. Both

convinced her that an EMBA was the challenge she was looking for. Phyllis pursued her graduate degree at a local Midwestern college.

Since completing her EMBA, Phyllis was promoted to a manager within her department. Two years later, she decided to leave her old department and moved to the information technology department as a business analyst. Her reasons for making such a move was once again to enhance her career. According to Phyllis, it is an area with high potential growth as information technology is the key to organizational success. How far she advances is based on the current organizational structure. Those in charge have been in their positions for many years and are very traditional when it comes to promoting individuals to a higher level position. According to Phyllis, it is a field that is heavily dominated by men.

Despite this domination, Phyllis had been told by her boss that an EMBA provides a promotional edge when it comes to picking a candidate with similar qualification. She feels it is possible she can advance, but that will not happen in the near future. The next few pages provides a brief summary of Phyllis' EMBA experience as taken from her transcribed interview.

*I had been working for 15 years in the transportation sector of a large Fortune 500 company when I decided to go to graduate school. Prior to that, I had gone to night school to obtain a bachelor's degree in business. I was the only one in my family who had ever went beyond an associate degree or high school diploma. As time passed, I moved into various positions in middle management, but never an upper-level management position. If I wanted to be considered for a Vice President level position I would need to*

*obtain an MBA. It didn't matter how much experience I possessed. My company saw an MBA as the tie-breaker when it came to promoting someone.*

*I attended a couple of MBA classes at a local college. The classes I took were not what I expected. In fact, they were boring. The coursework was geared to teach business skills for those with no prior business experience. I wanted a graduate degree where the content matched my experience and taught me skills I could use to move upward. I decided to look at an EMBA program.*

*There was a big difference between an EMBA and MBA program. The coursework taught for an EMBA program was done by instructors who worked in the business sector and taught real-life examples from the field. This intrigued me. An EMBA program is geared to the individual as an executive as it allowed students to combine newly-learned skills with their management experience that guide them to manage others. This was the program I felt I needed to succeed. I decided to approach my boss about getting approval for my company to pay for a portion of my graduate degree.*

*My manager had a traditional MBA from a nearby college. When I approached her about attending a local college to get my EMBA, she felt it was a great idea. She thought the degree would challenge me to learn new management skills. Not only did my direct boss have to approve my taking graduate coursework, so did the Division Manager. I had no problem getting his approval as he had an EMBA from the college I was looking to attending. He provided me with a list of internal contacts who had gone through the program so I could contact them to get an idea of their personal experience in the program. More importantly, my Division Manager stated that despite the*

*frustration, the degree was worth it. He pointed out that if you go for a promotion where a bachelor's degree is required, MBA preferred, you have a better chance of getting promoted as the EMBA acts as a ground breaker based on degree content.*

*I had a pretty structured life when I decided to attend graduate school for my EMBA. I lived by myself and really didn't have to worry about anyone to care for at home. My family was very supportive. As I mentioned earlier, I was the first one in my family to attend graduate school. They didn't question my decision as they knew it was important to me. As for work, both my immediate boss and Division Manager were very understanding when I had to leave early every other Friday to attend graduate school. Without the support of my family and work, I don't think it would have been possible to keep up the rigorous schedule of an EMBA program.*

*An EMBA requires a lot of dedication in an 18-month time period. You are a member of a group with a lot of management experience. The class projects are based on real-life experiences that require real-life solutions. There is no room for people who are unprepared for class.*

*I remember one of the first projects we did for the EMBA. It involved a case study that required us to develop a business plan. Our class was divided into small groups to work on this project. In my group was a meek and mild-mannered individual who did very little when it came to participation. In fact, the questions this person asked were questions that should have been directed to the class professors for clarification. This individual's lack of participation actually hampered the group to the point where other group members had to pick up the slack in order to complete group assignments. It*

*wasn't fair to us. Here, this person was going to benefit from what others in the group did, and that annoyed me. I decided to speak up about my concern.*

*When I spoke to others in my class, they all felt the same. We decided to approach our class professor about this individual. One thing about the program's class professors -- they were genuinely concerned about our experience. I remember how concerned our professor was when we approached him about this individual. He indicated it was important to the program that each student participates fully in all group projects, as what they took away from the each experience helped solidify their management skills and ability as a leader.*

*Our professor was instrumental in facilitating a meeting between the cohort and the EMBA's program coordinator so we could voice our concerns. There was no white-washing or covering up what had happened. The coordinator listened attentively. He reassured us that his major concern was satisfying the learning needs of the cohort members. They would look into the matter and take appropriate action as needed based on their investigation.*

*I don't know what happened after our initial discussion, except for the fact that this individual left the EMBA program. There were rumors that they were placed in the regular MBA tract at the college. The college didn't ignore the cohort. They were committed to making our educational experience one that we valued. They wanted us to become leaders and lifelong learners. As my one professor said, "leaders are not born, they are individuals who are avid learners and seek knowledge as a means of invigoration."*

*In the EMBA, business planning is a big part of the program. Strategic thinking is a key concept that has become a valuable management tool for me. The best way to describe the process is that it involves developing a business plan on what is possible within your environment. As a manager, you are taught how to identify the constraints within your environment and how to develop a plan that minimizes the impact of those constraints while delivering the end results.*

*For me, I learned that there is no one way. Once you have identified your limitations, you develop a plan will meet the needs of everyone involved. It is a process I use on a daily basis when working on a project or a particular task. It helps me to explain what is expected and how to communicate what is the expected outcome.*

*Most of the classes I took helped me develop as a manager, with the exception of one class. There was a bonds class that was a requirement of the program. This class was taught by an ex-FBI agent. Unlike the other professors in the EMBA program, his experience was limited to money laundering. The way he taught was by the book and in a monotone voice. I didn't get anything special from this class that I couldn't have learned by just reading the book. It was frustrating. I felt short-changed. It was a class that I felt could have been dropped from the program or taught a little differently.*

*As I mentioned earlier, an EMBA can be a tie breaker when it comes to validating someone's experience. There is a greater chance of being promoted as the degree carries a lot more clout than a normal MBA. My reason for getting my EMBA was to enhance my ability to become an executive. I had been with my current company for 15 years, of which the last five years as the Transportation Manager for its logistics area. It was a*

*department that I felt had achieved its maximum potential. I couldn't see moving any further as it had no potential for growth in the near future.*

*I was intrigued with the area of information technology. I had just graduated with my EMBA when a position opened up in that area. Although it was not at a management-level position, it was a business analyst position that would allow me to utilize the strategic planning I had learned in graduate school. It was an area that not only involved planning how information would be delivered, but how it was used throughout the company's network system. I learned how to use Oracle, which is a highly structured programming system that works on handling heavy duty computer networking.*

*The knowledge I have gained thus far will help solidify my ability at moving up in my company. I don't see myself one day become the chief information officer or chief operating officer. Those positions are occupied by individuals who have around 15 to 20 years' worth of senior management experience. Many have been with the company for 30 to 40 years and are in their 50's or 60's. They are not going anywhere in the near future.*

*Even if a position opened up at that level, they are more likely to be filled by a polished and refined individual. In other words, an individual who reflects the company's culture that has been present for years. Individuals who play by the 'old boy's network rules' by maintaining traditional management practices that lock out people on the basis of diversity or race. These individuals are willing to conform to what is considered "right" according to the company. It is very traditional or hierarchal. Everyone is straight-laced. The culture is not like someone like me. I am someone who has a sense of humor and likes to joke a lot. The culture at the top is very "stuffy." For someone like*

*me to move up, the company's culture would have to change. This would require those in senior management to retire and be replaced by younger individuals who are more open-minded and have a sense of humor.*

*Despite that being the case, I do see the EMBA leading to a position that is either a Director or Vice President level position within my company. It is a position that will allow me to influence others around me to be open to change and more open-minded so our organization can change as needed. I want to be able to use the skills I learned in graduate school to use the diversity within the company to create a nucleus that will help the company achieve its strategic goals with more ease. I feel this will happen in the next five years as many of the positions above me will be vacated by those retiring. Until then, I must be patient.*

### **Leah**

Leah is a former Ph.D. graduate who initially worked in public education. She talked about how her initial goal was to fix the public school system. Eventually she left education to pursue a job as a consultant in the corporate world. Leah stated her reasons for leaving her job as an educator was based on her skill set. While she could diagnose what needed to change, she felt she lacked the ability to actually make it happen.

Leah went to work for a consulting firm that had a number of projects with a prestigious executive at a Fortune 500 company. While there, she worked on creating educational modules for training and development in exchange for learning how this company executed leadership change. Eventually, she ended up working in Australia for a company where she was responsible for organizational change. Once her stint as a consultant ended, she had to make a decision on what she was going to do. It was at that

point she decided to go back to graduate school to pursue her EMBA. Leah wanted to understand how to translate theory into action.

Currently, Leah works for a Fortune 500 retailer in the Midwest. Initially, she was hired as a consultant after completing her EMBA from a college in North America. She is currently works for this same retailer in enterprise planning that deals with day- to-day operational activities. Leah believes this degree helped her in understanding how to run an organization through the eyes of a CEO. The next few pages provides a brief summary of Leah's EMBA experience as taken from her transcribed interview.

*I initially started out in public education where I earned my Ph.D. I went into education thinking I was going to fix public schools. I wanted to change education for the better. As an educator, I worked with teachers on setting goals that focused on the educational plans set for our school. Our school was like a business. It had a business plan with strategic goals.*

*One day, I realized that I could technically diagnose what was wrong with an educational plan, but I didn't have the skill to guide teachers to achieve that goal because I really didn't understand myself what the meaning was behind the plan. More importantly, I didn't know who I was. In the end, I decided to leave education and pursuing consulting work in the corporate world.*

*My first stint in the corporate world involved working as a consultant for a prestigious executive at a Fortune 500 Company. I agreed to work for this company provided they taught me what I wanted to know -- how a leadership model was developed and executed in an organizational setting. In return, I developed educational programs that focused on teaching the leadership model they developed. I worked for this Fortune*

*500 company for about a year, when took on my next challenge. A small cable company in Australia was looking for someone to develop and coach its workers on a new transformational plan they were ready to embark on. It was intriguing. I hadn't done much traveling away from home. Now, I would have to travel for four to six weeks away from home. I talked with my husband about the job and we agreed to try it out for a while to see if I liked it.*

*The job was very intense, as it involved leading a cultural transformation for this company, strategizing organizational goals and developing financial benchmarks that measured profitability. I was able to use what I had learned at my previous consulting gig to create the change needed and educate the company to move toward profitability.*

*Despite leading this transformation change, I was a bit apprehensive about whether I was doing the right thing. I had not had any formal training outside of my first consulting gig on business. During that time period, I learned how companies organized themselves and the importance of group dynamics being the catalyst for profitability.*

*The company thought I was doing a great job, in fact, and invited me to take the role of COO by the end of the first year. My husband and I had a long conversation about the benefits and disadvantages of the job. After a long conversation, we decided it was something I couldn't turn down as it was a stepping stone that could enhance my career in the corporate world. Luckily, my husband worked for a company that had international locations all over the world. He was able to take a position with his firm's international division in the Pacific.*

*By the end of the eighth year, the company I had been working for as COO had become a solid performer and no longer needed my services. I had been thinking about*

*doing something different for the past year. I loved the job I had been doing, but wanted to do something different. I know it wasn't going to be as a consultant, even though the company I worked or had another position for me. I talked with my husband about where we were and the fact that we wanted to start a family someday. Even though we loved Australia, we decided to move back to the States. Luckily, my husband was able to get a transfer back to our old home town out West.*

*During this time period I decided to take a sabbatical to think about what I wanted to do next. As I mentioned earlier, I knew how to set goals and put a plan together, but I didn't understand the nuts and bolts behind the theory. I wanted to be more competent in this area if I wanted to help others in senior management in the future. I decided I needed to go back to graduate school. I spoke with my husband about what I wanted to do. He is a great guy and very supportive of what I do. He told me if I thought this is what I needed to do, then I should pursue it. I took his advice and started to look at graduate programs.*

*I had looked at a MBA versus an EMBA. In the end, I decided to go for an EMBA. There were three reasons why I chose this degree. The first one was that I didn't want to take any more tests. An MBA required taking the GMAT, while the EMBA did not. Second, I didn't want to spend another two to four years in school. Almost all of the EMBA programs I looked at were on an accelerated time table of 18 months. Finally, it was the level of experience required for an EMBA. The EMBA program I was looking at required at least five to seven years of management experience -- which fit my experience.*

*The graduate school I had chosen was noted for its "thought leadership" in North America. In fact, the dean of the business school was a strategist I had used while I was working for this small cable company in Australia. I was interested in learning from him, as the college was known for its design thinking in North America. I wasn't interested in going to a graduate business program in the States. They didn't appeal to me at that time. I wanted an opportunity to study with an international clientele after working in Australia. The EMBA programs in the States were too homogenous for me. The college I chose had a tremendous amount of talent internationally as there were people from all over the world. The overall composite of my cohort was 70/30 -- in other words 70% male and 30% female students respectively. I was the only American in the group.*

*Financially, I didn't need to seek the approval of anyone to pay for this degree. Over the eight years I had worked as a COO, I was paid a substantial salary that allowed me to afford to pay for the degree totally. When you sign up for the degree, you know it is for 18 months, but you don't realize how intense and crazy it is until you start. On the weekends, I would fly from my home in the States to graduate school. I rented an apartment and would stay for two weeks at a time in order to go to class and to study.*

*While attending graduate school, I developed a strong working relationship with some of the EMBA faculty. When I entered the program, I did so with the lens of a CEO. I thought, "If I was a CEO, why would this matter?" I had worked with a lot of senior executives in the past. I wanted to make sure I could understand what I was taught in practical terms so I could translate it to help others I might work with in the future. I would ask my professors to clarify the theory they were teaching.*

*I remember I had this economics class. Economics can be very theoretical when it comes to formulas. For example, "If this goes up, and this goes down..." I got that. But to understand it in practical terms I would say, "That's so interesting! Can you help me understand this in a practical sense?" My economics professor went out of his way to provide an answer that was easy to understand.*

*In another instance, I had a special project I wanted to do on the role of a CEO. I decided to ask one of my professors, who was the Vice Dean of the business college and a former CEO of a company. I went up to him and explained to him the nature of my project. Even though I had acted as COO, I asked him if he would be interested in helping me by giving me advice on the role of CEO. He not only spoke to me about the role of a CEO, but gave me additional reading assignments related to the role of a CEO. I found him to be truly interested in helping me understand the role of an executive so I could explain it to others.*

*Currently, I work for one of the largest retailers in North America. I have to give credit to the EMBA program for getting a position with this company. It wasn't the degree that helped, but the timing of a certain event that helped me get the job. I was in a strategy class about to begin a case study session when our professor asked, "Does anyone know anything about Acme Company?" I piped up, "I love Acme!" I proceeded to talk about the company and how I loved to shop there and the affordability it was for a consumer's pocket.*

*As I sat there I noticed a woman watching me talk about the company. It turns out this person was the Vice President of Acme's Organizational Effectiveness Division. She had been invited to our class to sit in our strategizing in order to ensure our plans*

*that were developed met Acme's overall goals. The case study that we worked on was based on a current situation that Acme was trying to resolve. All plans that were submitted were reviewed to see if they met Acme's model. In fact, any plan that did fit Acme's criteria was taken back to senior management for possible implementation. Ours was one of them.*

*During our strategy class, this individual approached me and proceeded to talk with me about the company and its challenges. That initial conversation led to further conversations a few months later. Upon completing my degree and the birth of my daughter, I went to work as a consultant at first for this executive, eventually assuming a full-time position and moving to the Midwest. I came in at a Director's level (Vice President) as far as pay was concerned, but was given a title that was slightly below that of a Director.*

*At Acme, one's management position is based on how many people you manage. At that time, I was not managing people, but consulting, involving training and organizational change through activities or conferences. Today, I deal with the day-to-day operational activities within the organization. I have a team of five people that I manage. We work on enterprise planning that deals with strategic growth and how to plan organizational goals that are submitted to senior management.*

*For me, the overall EMBA experience was not meant to enhance my career development as much as it was to understand and translate business theory into an applicable format. I am wired for theory and need to understand the concept behind each theory in order to feel more confident in my business skills. The case studies that were used throughout the program contained practical knowledge that was essential for*

*any executive to know. It was the type of knowledge I learned could be utilized in any business setting -- especially in my current job. I don't think I would have felt comfortable utilizing what knowledge I had prior to attaining an EMBA. Not only did I gain valuable knowledge, I also enhanced my career development. It was a win-win situation for me.*

### **Doris**

Doris appears to be a middle-aged individual of Asian descent who works for a large financial institution listed on the Standard and Poor 500 (S&P 500) in North America. Doris defined an S&P 500 company as the same companies that occupy the Fortune 500 or Fortune 1000 list. Only in this case, an S&P 500 companies are U.S. based companies only. They are companies that have significant profitability and have maintained this profitability for at least four consecutive quarters. More importantly, they have a substantial amount of liquidity.

As a manager, Doris is in charge of the Portfolio Services for an area that spans over five continents, managing a total of 260 people. Doris has managed people for over 20 years. She stated her main reason she went for an EMBA was due to boredom and the need for a challenge. She attended a university in North America that is highly recognized for strategic planning and innovative leadership. In fact, it is the same university she attended while an undergraduate.

Doris stated she was very lucky she had the support of those at home at work while attending graduate school. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for her to continue what she is doing today - especially as a woman. More importantly, the EMBA program was very structured, making it easy for Doris to obtain her degree.

Classes were structured where everything was provided for each class. If there was something needed, there was always someone available at the college that could provide the necessary materials needed for class.

Doris reflected on two experiences she encountered while in EMBA program. One focused on the role of an executive and the political awareness needed to achieve a goal in the boardroom. The other experience revolved around her becoming a role model for her daughters regarding the importance of education.

As to how this has impacted her career development, Doris pointed out the degree didn't help her career mobility as much as validate her role as an executive. She plans to continue to work as a division head with the current company she is working for. The degree was a personal pursuit - a challenge she saw to improve herself on a personal level. The next few pages provides a brief summary of Doris' EMBA experience as taken from her transcribed interview.

*I had been managing people for over 20 years by the time I decided to go for my EMBA. It depends on what stage of your career you are at. For those that are relatively mid-way through their career, an EMBA probably helps them more career-wise. As for myself, I was looking for a different challenge. More importantly, I was looking for accreditation. Regardless of what stage you are in your career, having that degree (EMBA) helps validate you when it really shouldn't. What should matter is what you know and what you can do. However, this isn't apparent when someone looks at your resume in lieu of a job. It stands out more on paper than the experience you have.*

*I received support both at work as well as on the home front. You cannot work full-time without receiving support on both ends. It is very difficult -- especially for a*

woman. Unfortunately, women have certain role expectations, whether it is as a wife or as a mother. If you have to do an EMBA, there are a lot of normal responsibilities you are required to fulfill that now had to be done by other family members.

I would work full-time and come home every day from work where I had to study. I had very little time to help my teenage girls as a parent during this time. My husband helped my daughters with their school work as needed and would attend school function whenever necessary. Both my husband and daughters did the household chores -- from the cleaning, to the shopping and cooking. It is a good thing the EMBA was short-term. I don't think I could have made it as a parent, working full-time while going through a regular part-time MBA.

The program's workload was insane -- especially for someone holding down a full-time job. The university I attended made it easy as everything was provided administratively. It is a part of the fees you pay for the degree. When we went to class, the material was available for us. If I needed a copy of something I didn't have, all I had to do was ask an administrative assistant from the program and they provided it immediately. I learned the importance of prioritizing and juggling many things at once. That was the key to success -- you had to learn on how be efficient in order to handle both home, work and school.

The most significant event I can remember while going for my EMBA involved a program presentation regarding one's conduct during a board meeting. We had a CEO from a company come in to conduct a session on how to present yourself during a board meeting. He talked about how you would want to be perceived. How you would package yourself. How you would communicate.

*That presentation stuck in my mind. It opened up a window I wasn't privy to. I have never been invited to a board room meeting. Here, we had a chairman of the board from a company was telling us how they would judge you and what they expected to see. It provided me with an understanding on how senior management worked when it came to decision making. I thought I knew how to act. It opened my eyes that there is more than knowing how a department operates. There is the other side that teaches you how to act politically as an executive when negotiating organizational goals.*

*I mentioned earlier that I had two teenage daughters at the time I went for my EMBA. Every night I came home I would study late at night. My daughters would watch as I studied and were surprised I wanted to pursue my EMBA, despite working full-time. I recalled a conversation we had on the important of education and learning. I told my daughters that my father (their grandfather) was not very keen on women going to school. My family had immigrated to Canada when I was an infant during the communist revolution in China.*

*My father was a very stoic individual who strongly believed in the traditional Chinese roles. Men were seen as the main breadwinners and major contributors for supporting a family. Women were seen as important for maintaining the family nucleus. To my father, tradition played an important role in everyday life. These values played an important role on how one interacted with others. It gives an individual a sense of personal identity and a sense of self-worth.*

*My mother adhered to the traditional Chinese role as a wife and mother. She was a soft-spoken woman who also understood times were changing. Here, women were seen*

*as being economically capable of being a major breadwinner. It was the same trend that was happening in China at the time they left.*

*She had many disagreements with my father on the issue of a woman's role. He felt a woman didn't need a lot of education and was against my going to college. My mother countered that while it was important to maintain our Chinese tradition, it was also important to acknowledge that times were changing. It was no longer economically feasible for women not to be educated in today's economy. It was a long uphill battle, but my mother won by being steadfast in her beliefs.*

*My mother made sure I did well in school. I fed off of her motivation, striving to do better than my peers in order to stand out. My scholastic excellence helped me get the funding I needed to pay for my education.*

*I stressed what my mother had taught me to my daughters. A college education was the key to many career opportunities. My undergraduate degree helped me secure employment that has led to my current position as a manager. It has provided me with the ability to provide the resources that helped my daughters ensure their own financial mobility*

*Both of my daughters took my conversation to heart. They were proud of me, and at the same time, thought I was crazy! I became a role model for both of my daughters like my mother did for me. They went to college to pursue careers that helped them be successful on a professional basis. Hopefully, their education will provide them with the mobility that will help their own children move further up in society so they can become a voice for society as a whole. On a funny note, there was one point in time during a two-*

*month period where both I and one of my daughters over-lapped attending the same college.*

*As for my career development, the degree did not have an immediate impact. Three months into the EMBA, I was offered a promotion. I took the job and continued with the program. I really can't say whether my pursuing an EMBA had an impact of getting this promotion. I know there were no discussions as to my career development with management prior to entering the program.*

*Yet the skill sets that I learned have helped me over the past few years. The degree has taught me how to think and act as an executive when it has come to the political side of the job. I learned the importance of one's presence helps on how you carry yourself and how others perceive you. It gives a person confidence. Once people see that confidence in you, they see the possibility of moving up the corporate ladders. In other words, the degree helps validate you in the eyes of your constituents. Currently, I sit on an executive committee that involves strategic planning for our organization. At times I have had to negotiate on strategic planning with senior management. I am grateful for learning about how to conduct myself when working with upper management. I have learned how to act politically correct in order to validate my role as an executive.*

*As I mentioned earlier, the EMBA gives a person confidence -- especially for a woman. Women do not apply for an EMBA because they don't see themselves as an executive. As a result, they do not apply for the degree. It is the same mentality they use when looking at applying for an executive position. Women will cite they do not apply for these position as they can only do seven out of ten tasks associated with the job. They will state they are not qualified to do the job since they cannot do three of the tasks*

*associated with the position. If you ask a man, they will apply, citing they can do seven out of the ten tasks. It is a mindset women have as a result of the encouragement they have received from family, personal friends and the workplace -- especially the workplace. A company's culture validates women and their success. It needs to tell women to stop doubting yourself. Stop thinking about the things you cannot do.*

*When I look back at my EMBA experience, I can say that I already had the technical skills needed to perform my job. However, I would not have learned the executive skills I needed to act in front of a board or senior management. The skills I learned while attending the EMBA program provided a lot of insight as to how I should view myself as an executive. It is an experience I hope more women would chose to pursue. Hopefully, one day the EMBA will become a regular staple of graduate education for women.*

The next chapter, Chapter Five, will involve a discussion on the themes derived from the narratives of these women as they relate to the research questions. Chapter Six will include a discussion of the conclusion drawn from research that was done in relation to the literature review, concluding with the practical applications and suggestions for future research on the impact of the EMBA degree and the career development of women who are interested in senior management positions.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The purpose of this study was to understand how an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) has influenced the professional development of women who have earned this degree. The researcher utilized a narrative approach in order to understand this phenomenon. The process of restorying was used during the data analysis phase for deconstructing the stories of each participant. As each story was transcribed, they were organized into a particular framework that allowed for key themes to be analyzed (Cresswell, 2013). This process helped shed light on the following research questions:

1. What were the women's experience in the context of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree?
2. How does the experience of completing an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program influence women's professional development?

The stories of the study participants spoke to how each participant's journey to attain their EMBA impacted their career development. The themes that were identified and grouped together as to their significance helped the researcher uncover the

importance of executive education for women in middle management and its effect on career development.

### **Emerging Themes**

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the themes of this study. As each transcript was read, statements were highlighted and then transferred to separate pieces of paper. Those that were related were reviewed for their significance, whereby a theme and all additional subthemes were identified. As these themes transpired, they were transferred to the initial research questions in order to ensure that data answered the relevant questions that had been developed at the onset of this study. There were three major themes that emerged during this study and are identified as follows: a) *Validating the Decision to Return to School*; b) *Essential Support Builds Confidence*; c) *Curriculum Design Influenced EMBA Program Choice*. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the analysis of data that support the themes cited above.

#### **Theme One: Validating the Decision to Return to School**

For the participants of this study, the decision to return to school was based on the concept of validation. At home, it was important for these women to feel that their decision to earn an EMBA did not interfere with how they perceived their role as a wife and mother. At work, the EMBA was seen as a tool that was recognized by many of the participants' organizations as the key that would eventually lead to a position in senior management.

The concept of validation is based on the self-efficacy these women had when they made the decision to earn their EMBA's. Self-efficacy is a part of Alfred Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, where the events within an individual's environment affects the

decision one will make over time (Bandura, 2008). The cues or symbols that are encountered within an individual's environment are interpreted and reinforced by those with whom we interact (Pajares, 2002). They help develop our perception of what is possible through our observations and modeling of prior experiences. It is the concept of acceptance and acknowledgement that is experienced within one's environment that validates the expectations an individual assumes as a member of society. An analysis of the data focused on the concept of validation that emerged throughout this study and its effect on the participants on a professional and personal basis, which is reflected through the sub-themes entitled *Validation of the EMBA Degree and Personal Life Validation* emerged from the participants' narratives. A discussion of these themes is reflected by the various excerpts from the participants in the next sections.

### **Validation of the EMBA Degree**

*An EMBA is worth more than an MBA as there is the word 'executive' attached to the degree--an association of management experience attached to the degree.*

*Phyllis*

*An EMBA was a requirement to move further up the senior management pipeline. My company saw as being essential for leading in the twenty-first century.*

*Anka*

For most of the women, the decision to go back to graduate school was tied to the importance of earning the right credentials to lead. Wilson (2005) discussed how the credentials for senior management have been established by men who have occupied positions of authority. This information is communicated throughout the management pipeline so those within the system understand the credentials they need to advance. An organization's culture affects women's self-efficacy as to how they perceive themselves within their work environment. Organizational culture may be based on the concept of

"the old boy network," where men are viewed more favorably than women when it comes to management decisions (Dimovski, Skerlavaj & Kim Man, 2010). Rudman and Glick (2001) stated that the theories of management are gender-related. These themes are not only descriptive, but prescriptive and guide our perception of how people should act in the work place when it comes to an individual's career development. In other words, there are a variety of internal controls based on societal values that play heavily in how men and women are viewed within their organization as to their career development, especially at the senior management level. This relates well to the idea of a glass ceiling that is prevalent in many organizations when it comes to the career development of women (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Anka's story is a good example of the necessity of validating her skills as a manager within her organization. Over the years, she had moved from a branch manager of an office within her company, to the position of Vice President and eventually Senior Vice President. Despite her success, she wanted to do more and move further up the senior management chain of her organization. As Anka said:

*I had spoken to my boss about assuming greater responsibility. We both agreed if that were to happen, I would have to solidify my business foundation. An EMBA was seen as the best choice to handle this situation.*

She further said how, "*It was a degree that was recognized by my organization as a key for advancement. They say it was a tool that provided the latest business skills needed in today's business world.*" It did not matter that Anka had over 17 years of banking experience and had moved up the ranks over time. There was an "*invisible barrier*" that existed within her organization. She understood that barrier and realized the only way to

break that barrier was by earning the credentials that stated she had the qualifications to lead.

Luckily, Anka received the right encouragement from her boss. Her boss had cited how her own inability to move further up the senior management pipeline was based on her own belief that she lacked the "right" credentials needed to lead. This encouragement had positive impact on Anka's self-efficacy as it helped Anka believe her decision to get an EMBA was validating her as a manager so she could move up a pipeline that was heavily dominated by men. As Anka put it:

*There were men who had less experience or credentials than me, and yet they were more likely to move up the pipeline without having to prove themselves.*

The idea of having to prove one's self was consistent with what Lee had mentioned during her interview. Lee had commented that her reason for making the decision to go back to graduate school was based on what she had observed within her own work environment. When Lee had decided to move to the management side of the business, she knew it would require additional skills if she were going to lead others. For this to happen, she felt it was essential for her to obtain the validation her company required in order to be recognized as a leader. As Lee pointed out:

*On the operational side of the company, there were no women in senior management. In fact, throughout the company's senior management staff there was only one woman. That woman was the Vice President of Human Resources -- a field heavily dominated by women. If I wanted to manage on the operational side of the organization, the EMBA would help solidify my move into a field heavily dominated by men. It was an important step that I felt I needed to take in my life.*

Lee had received reassurance from her own boss, Elizabeth, that her decision to return to graduate school was a valid one. Elizabeth spoke about how the organization's

culture valued credentials over experience. She felt an EMBA would give Lee the edge she needed if she decided to move into a senior management role. Lee stated how Elizabeth knew first-hand the importance of graduate education, citing how she had talked numerous times about how "*the lack of not having a graduate business degree hurt her ability to move further up the organizational ladder.*" In her case, the decision of not finishing school was due to getting married and having children. It was something she regretted not pursuing later on. I knew she was right." Lee went on to talk about how she did not want what happened to her boss to become a personal fate for her.

For Lee to break the "barrier" to the operations side of her company, the EMBA degree was the credential she needed. Like Anka, the degree was seen as a catalyst that could help her move up the management pipeline into a senior management position. The reassurance Lee received from her boss regarding her choice was essential for her career development as it bolstered Lee's self-efficacy. She knew this was the degree necessary for her to succeed.

Michelle's narrative echoed the same perceptions that Anka and Lee had mentioned. She worked for a Fortune 500 Company whose culture had created an invisible barrier within the management pipeline for women managers. Michelle had been in the Information Technology (IT) sector of her company for over 13 years, holding a variety of administrative positions. She was at a dead end when it came to moving into an upper-level management position. Michelle talked about how the IT department had "a ceiling that limits your growth." Despite her interest in moving up, she was overlooked many times when it came to being promoted into a higher management position. She watched as many of her male counterparts with less

experience and knowledge had moved up the pipeline. This frustrated Michelle, affecting her own self-efficacy as to how she perceived her own ability and skills. Luckily Michelle had the resilience she needed to discover how she could enhance her career development.

Michelle had developed a close relationship with a female colleague by the name of Ruth while working on a couple of collaborative projects. She considered her indirectly a mentor, a person she could depend on for professional advice about her career development. Ruth was the only female within the upper management circle of the organization who had a prestigious job. The department Ruth ran was responsible for twenty percent of the company's overall profitability in a very competitive environment. Michelle admired Ruth, citing:

*She understood how to 'work' the system in order to showcase whatever she worked on with upper management. In fact, many of the male colleagues in senior management admired her. Ruth did not take a back seat to anyone.*

During their meeting, Michelle told Ruth about her career aspirations, citing the frustration she had encountered over the past few years. She went on to state how she wanted her advice as to what she could do to help her career development. Ruth listened attentively as Michelle let out her frustration. Once she had finished, the first words she said was, "*been there, done that.*" In other words, Ruth he had been in the same situation Michelle was in years ago. She had learned early on that if one wanted to be a leader, the person must engage in a ritual process that is set forth by the organization as a requirement. Ruth suggested getting a graduate degree in business to help her career development.

Michelle knew Ruth was right. She could not continue to work in her current position with the hopes of one day being promoted into management. It was not realistic in the environment she worked in. She explained:

*IT (Information Technology) is heavily dominated by men -- very little women move up in this department. Those that remain in IT feel their career isn't going anywhere. There is a ceiling that limits your growth. This is not so much the case in other department there the representation of gender is a little more evenly distributed.*

Going back to graduate school was the key to Michelle's career development, as it would allow for her to move further up the management pipeline of her organization quicker than waiting for something to materialize in the future. The organization Michelle worked for viewed the experience she had acquired over the years as part of the required skills needed to manage. Specialized business and leadership skills were the other half of the credentials her company had established as essential to manage in the twenty-first century. These skills were seen as being acquired through graduate education. As Michelle stated, "*I realized that if I wanted to move further up the management pipeline I had to go to graduate school.*"

At first, Michelle thought a Master of Business Administration (MBA) was the key to moving up that pipeline. After all, it had helped Ruth with her career development. She was in a graduate program at a local college for a short time when she realized it was not the key to her career development. She found this out while talking to her next door neighbor. She ran into him one day and they began to talk about graduate school. Michelle listed as he talked about the EBMA. She stated how:

*He talked about how the coursework was intense, but the experience of working with other managers on day-to-day management practices as being priceless for anyone wanting to lead.*

After talking with her neighbor, Michelle realized it was the degree she needed to enhance her career development. It was the type of degree that provided the essential credential recognized by her organization as the skills a leader should possess. Luckily, she was able to switch from an MBA to an EMBA at the local college she was attending without experience a financial loss. More importantly, she was able to transfer some of the MBA classes taken to the EMBA track.

The idea of having the right credentials ties to the concept of validation that Anka and Lee had cited earlier. An EMBA was the validation these women felt they needed to solidify their position in the management pipeline of their organizations. Executive education was seen as a symbolic representation of entitlement. This entitlement is based on what organizations have communicated to the educational institutions that develop graduate business programs. Executive education programs reflect the cultural values of many of our organizations in today's economy. The skills that are taught are reflective of what is valued by the practitioners who work in the field (Dimovski, Skerlavaj & Kim-Man, 2010). As Georgette stated:

*An EMBA is worth more than an MBA as there is the word 'executive' attached to the degree -- an association of management experience attached to the degree. An MBA is seen as a 'nuts and bolts' degree on business. If you want to hire a manager, you don't want one that only has a 'nuts and bolts' education, but one with management savvy.*

Phyllis also referred to the same concept Georgette had mentioned during her interview. She stated how an:

*EMBA program is geared to the individual as an executive as it allowed students to combine newly-learned skills with their management experience that guides them to manage others.*

She went on to state how her boss had told her that:

*If you go for a promotion where a bachelor's degree is required, MBA preferred, you have a better chance of getting promoted as the EMBA acts as a ground breaker based on degree content.*

In other words, executive education offered these women the opportunity to learn skills that were recognized by their organization as a sign of leadership, and hence, led to a greater chance of being promoted. According to the participants, it was a degree that had significant clout in today's global economy.

Doris and Leah also cited the importance of an EMBA degree as a means of validating women in the workplace. In Leah's instance, she cited the importance of how an EMBA program provided the essential skills needed to lead in many organizations. She mentioned how this was one of the reasons she chose an EMBA. The graduate school she had attended was known as being on the cutting edge for being a "think tank" on the latest management theory. According to Leah:

*An EMBA from this college validated my knowledge as a woman that I would have the leadership skills to train other executives on how to lead in today's business world.*

It was a degree that Leah had stated would provide the knowledge that would help teach executives how to achieve organizational goals. Leah mentioned "*that knowledge that helped teach executives how to achieve organizational goals in today's complex economy.*" As for Doris, while her reasons for earning an EMBA were personal, she also understood the importance of the degree as a means of validating women as executives.

She mentioned how:

*A piece of paper with the words 'EMBA' lends credibility to the idea of a woman having the ability to lead on the basis of what society believes is important, more so than the experience a woman possesses as a manager. It is a degree very few men possess.*

For most of the women who participated in this study, earning an EMBA provided the validation they needed to move up the corporate pipeline of their organizations. They were willing to earn the degree as they felt it would enhance their career development in the senior management circle of their organizations. The degree was seen as the tool that could break the invisible glass ceiling they had experienced over the years. It was a degree that very few executives possessed as a manager. The participants talked about the importance their organizations had attached to earning this degree, as it represented a source of entitlement for leadership.

Not only was it important for the participants to have a sense of validation about this particular degree at work, it was important to have a different type of validation from their spouses and children in order to face the challenge of graduate school over the next few years. The validation they received from their families provided a sense of control on the home front that a deviation from the role expectations they had incorporated over the years could tolerate adjustments on a temporary basis. It was the re-assurance these women needed if they were going to handle the task of graduate school.

### **Personal Life Validation**

*Unfortunately, women have certain role expectations, whether as a wife or mother. If you have to do an EMBA, there are a lot of normal responsibilities that are required to be fulfilled that now have to be done by other family members.*

*Doris*

*I was in a unique position of trying to be a mother and father to my son. There were times when my parents would take my son for the weekend so I could study or participate in the group activities as needed. If they hadn't, I would have found it difficult to keep up with the hectic pace of the EMBA. I would have felt guilty if I didn't help my son to grow up with the same type of nurturing I had received when I was his age.*

*Georgette*

The concept of validation in their personal lives was as important for these women as the validation at work to pursue the degree. Without it, more than half of the participants (five out of seven) would have been hesitant to go to graduate school. Linda Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise relates well to what these women experienced on the home front. According to Gottfredson (1996), individuals will assume or avoid a career based on gender-role stereotyping. The term "circumscription" refers to a woman's process of eliminating a career that is unattainable on the basis of socially accepted roles (Scharf, 2002). In other words, women will modify their career choice on the basis of limited environmental factors that has a bearing on their self-efficacy (Pajares, 2002). The term "compromise" refers to the various influences women encounter within their environment throughout their life. Those influences range from family, friends, and the accessibility to certain career avenues. Their influence plays a role on how women view their social roles, as there are various cues that have been ingrained into their schema, thereby affecting the decisions they make in life (Gottfredson, 2005). Overall, women's career development is related to the internal and external barriers that affect them. These barriers can be gender-role orientation, employment inequities, or family responsibilities that complicate and restrict women's career choices and advancement (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

For this study, half of the participants were either wives or mothers who saw their role responsibilities as being important components of the validation they needed from their families while in graduate school. In this particular case, Anka felt she had to have the ability to organize and execute a course of action she performed on a regular basis for her family. This control was essential if Anka was going to maintain a sense of

accomplishment in her personal life as a wife and mother. For instance, Anka talked about the importance of her family becoming "*self-sufficient*" as she was going to go to graduate school. She stated how she was a Type A personality who felt it was important to be in control of the events that happened both at work and at home. As Anka put it:

*Before I entered graduate school, I felt it was important to talk with my husband about the changes that were going to have to happen. No longer could I do the cleaning or shopping that I had done in the past on weekends. Luckily, my husband is very supportive and fits my Type A personality. We had a discussion on how we would have to outsource these tasks so that I could study or spend quality time with my family on the weekends.*

She had mentioned how she would have felt guilty if she could not be the "soccer mom" on the weekends. It would have been hard to concentrate on pursuing her EMBA without feeling a sense of guilt for not being able to perform the duties she had routinely done prior to graduate school. These were the same duties that she felt she had internalized while growing up. As Anka put it, "*I wanted to make sure my family had the same nurturing I had when I was growing up.*" Without a sense of support, she would have been forced to compromise on her career development in order to maintain the balance that reinforced her personal self-efficacy (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

Georgette also spoke about the importance of maintaining stability within her home environment while pursuing her EMBA. At the time she went to graduate school, she was a single mother, raising a son who had just entered high school. Georgette cited that it was important for her to maintain a sense of validation as a parent as she was in a "*unique position of trying to be both a mother and father to her son.*" She went on to further state how she wanted for her son to be able to "*explore the possibility of having a*

*strong family nucleus where he felt loved and felt good about himself."* For her, this could only be accomplished by providing the nurturing she had received as a child.

Georgette made sure that her son was enrolled in a variety of weekend school activities such as youth basketball, baseball, and hockey so he could develop as she put it "*a sense of belonging to a group.*" She went on to say how "*my family provided the necessary nurturing my son needed by taking him to all of the extracurricular activities he was involved in while I was earning my EMBA.*" It was a sense of re-assurance she need while in graduate school, as it allowed for her to concentrate on earning her degree. As she mentioned:

*There were times when my parents would take my son for the weekend so I could study or participate in the group activities as needed. If they had not, I would have found it difficult to keep up with the hectic pace of the EMBA.*

Georgette further stated that without the help of her parents, earning an EMBA would have been hard, as it would have been difficult to validate her role as a parent. As she has stated, "*I would have felt guilty if I didn't help my son to grow up with the same type of nurturing that I had received when I was his age.*"

According to Gottfredson (2005), the guilt Georgette mentioned during her interview would have forced her to think about what was important -- her career or her son. As Georgette said, "*I would have found it difficult to go to school and provide the support my son needed as a parent.*" She stated that without her family's support, she would have been forced to compromise on her future. Georgette stated that:

*By the time my son would have been old enough to be on his own, it would be years down the road and too late for me to consider going back to school. I wanted to establish my career now so I could enhance the financial position in my life now when I knew it was possible.*

For her, graduate school enhanced the image she had of herself and the growth potential it would provide for her and her son on a long-term basis. Doris echoed the same sentiments as Georgette during her own interview.

Doris stated that women need to maintain a sense of normalcy as there are role expectations they are expected to fulfill as prescribed by society. She went on to say that *"women are expected to nurture their families, and yet as a modern woman, help provide the financial support as needed."* Doris' statement reflects how she perceived her role expectation as a woman in relation to her family unit. For her, women are seen as the main source for nurturing the family. According to Doris, the family is the nucleus of our society. It is a place where there is the passing of the traditional values used to educate others as to the roles that are acceptable and what is possible on the basis of gender (Gottfredson, 2005). As a woman, Doris needed the validation of her family to go beyond the role responsibility she felt was needed at home. As she put it:

*You cannot work full-time without receiving support at both ends. It is very difficult, especially for a woman. Unfortunately, women have certain role expectations, whether as a wife or mother. If you have to do an EMBA, there are a lot of normal responsibilities that are required to fulfill that now have to be done by other family members.*

Doris went on to mention how the coursework for an EMBA was "insane" for anyone holding down a full-time job. The support her family provided helped with the various "hats" she wore at home. Her husband helped with their daughters' school work, attending any meetings for their daughters as needed. Both her husband and daughters handled the household chores such as the cooking and cleaning as needed. This was the support Doris needed as a wife and mother so she could concentrate on the insanity of graduate school. It was the validation she needed to complete her EMBA without

"compromising" on her personal goal. This relates to the socialization process Gottfredson (2005) has stated women like Doris experience as a child. Doris spoke on this process when she talked about her parents. As she stated:

*My father was a very stoic individual who strongly believed in the traditional Chinese roles. Men were seen as the main breadwinners and major contributors for supporting a family. Women were seen as important for maintaining the family nucleus. To my father, tradition played an important role in everyday life. These values played an important role on how one interacted with others. It gives an individual a sense of personal identity and a sense of self-worth.*

Tradition played an important role in Doris' life as it related to her own "self-concept" as a woman (Gottfredson, 2003). Doris grew up during a time of significant change. World War II had just ended and there was an economic boom that was happening as a result of the automobile and super highway. Women were entering the workforce, taking on a variety of jobs. Doris spoke of how her mother saw women becoming important contributors to the family household when it came to income. She was a strong-willed woman with very little schooling. While she followed her cultural role as a woman, her mother also knew that the changes that were happening at that point in time was the beginning of the foundation of financial freedom for women. New careers were opening up to women that had been non-existent prior to the war. They were careers that required additional education outside of a normal high school diploma.

Doris' mother understood the importance of higher education. She would stress this to Doris while she was growing up. Every day she would talk to Doris about what was happening in school. Her mother made sure she kept up on her studies. For Doris' mother, education was the key to the financial freedom. As Doris, stated her mother taught her "*there is never enough education to become financially independent.*"

*Education for a woman means you never have to depend on anyone for financial support."* This is the same message Doris told her own daughters one night when they asked her why she was earning her EMBA. In fact, she was their role model, encouraging them to go to graduate school later in life. As Doris stated: "*my daughters might have thought I was crazy, but they took heed to my advice and now they said that it is something they will pass on to their own daughters in the future.*"

Doris needed the support of her family to validate her dream into a reality. Without their support, she would have given up on her personal goal of becoming the first individual from her family to go to graduate school. As she put it, "*the value of her family far outweighed the value of the degree.*" For Doris, the degree did not assure her any further movement up the corporate pipeline. She was already in a senior management position within her organization. Therefore, she was willing to forgo the personal challenge in order to maintain a sense of balance within her family nucleus. Doris' own experience is a part of what Gottfredson (2003) has labeled the "compromise" process that involves the internalizing of what is possible from her own personal standpoint.

As for Leah, she was in a relationship whereby both her and her husband, Don, had been focusing on their careers before starting a family. She spoke on how they were two very strong and independent individuals who had made a five-year plan as to where they wanted to be in the future. Don validated Leah's decision to earn an EMBA by agreeing for her to live in an apartment away from home while in school, especially while she was pregnant with their first child. This validation reassured Leah that Don believed

earning an EMBA was an important journey for her on both a personal and professional basis as cited by Leah during her interview:

*Don was one of very few men she knew who believed women should be paid on an equal basis for the same job performed by men. Overall, he felt that women needed the necessary credentials that would break the glass ceiling that existed within many senior management pipelines of our global organizations.*

Don believed it was important for Leah to earn her EMBA if she was going help train future executives on how to be open to women in senior management. It provided a renewed sense of confidence that validated her decision that earning an EMBA was an important venture as a woman on both a personal and professional basis.

The other participants of this study, Lee, Phyllis, and Michelle, were single women with no significant relationships at the time of this study. For them, the validation they received at home was in the form of the acceptance they received from their families while earning their degree. These women spoke on how their parents were proud of what they had accomplished on a professional basis as a woman. They briefly spoke of the support they received validated their belief that the difficulty they experienced while earning the degree was worth it.

In Lee's case, her parents provided the support that validated her decision by Skyping her each weekend to make sure she was in good spirits and in good health. They would provide her with an update as to what the family was doing so she did not feel detached. Phyllis mentioned how her parents would invite her over on a weekly basis for dinner, making sure she took home leftovers that would last the whole week. These weekly dinners helped her forget the stress associated with work and school. Michelle spoke of how she would go to her mother's home for dinner with both her mother and

younger sister Alia. This allowed for her to reconnect with her sister on what she was doing in school. Michelle talked with Alia about her dreams and interest as far as her career development. It was something they looked forward to on a weekly basis. Michelle spoke on how she was a role model that helped Alia develop her own career roadmap by providing the validation that role expectations were not static based on a society's interpretations, but change over time as set forth by her own example of earning her EMBA. She went on to tell her sister to keep her mind open when it comes to her career development.

The decision to go back to graduate school was validated by what these women encountered both at work and at home while in the EMBA program. The concept of validation as a theme relates well to the next theme, which was support. In essence, the support the participants received at this point of their lives helped them gain the confidence that was needed to earn their EMBA.

It is important to note that the next section involving the emergence of the theme *support* did not have a sub-theme similar to the support received at home. The support the participants received while earning their EMBA is considered entwined in the sub-theme *Personal Life Validation* which was discussed earlier. It is a concept that the researcher felt did not stand alone as it is tied to the societal influences of what the family nucleus grants as acceptable roles for a wife and mother. Doris is a good example of how validation and support are intertwined. Her family was willing to handle the duties that had been bestowed on her by society on the basis of gender and role expectations. The support they provided automatically validated her role as a mother and wife that helped her not to compromise her personal goal of earning her EMBA.

In the next section, the theme of support highlights how this concept helped these women gain a sense of confidence on both a personal and professional level while in the EMBA program. The concept of support was an important aspect of what these women felt was important to their success which is highlighted in the next section.

### **Theme Two: Essential Support Builds Confidence**

In this section, the theme of support was seen as a foundation of the confidence these women experienced from the beginning of their journey when entering an EMBA program that lasted throughout and after their graduation. Thus leading to the theme, *Essential Support Builds Confidence*, which was further divided into the following sub-themes: a) *Support at Work*; and b) *Support of Graduate Cohort*. These sub-themes help explain how an EMBA helped the personal and professional development of these women.

#### **Support at Work**

*When I approached my new boss, he was very open and thought the EMBA was a good choice, stating I would benefit from working with other executives. He looked at the draft I had prepared and went over it, re-writing it to show how the degree was job-related and how the wording was important in order to get the plan approved.*

*Georgette*

*My manager had a traditional MBA from a nearby college. When I approached her about attending a local college to get my EMBA, she felt it was a great idea. She thought the degree would challenge me to learn new management skills. Not only did my direct boss have to approve my taking graduate coursework, so did the Division Manager. I had no problem getting his approval as he had an EMBA from the college I was*

*looking to attending. He provided me with a list of internal contacts who had gone through the program so I could contact them to get an idea of their personal experience of the program.*

*Phyllis*

For the women of this study, support was essential to bolster their confidence while in graduate school. The support they received helped these women focus on their career development so they could succeed at whatever they attempted. Gottfredson's Theory (1996) illustrates the importance of gender roles in relation to their career development and how this affects the way these subjects viewed the support they received while in graduate school. Over the next few pages, this concept will be discussed in relation to the participants of this study.

Anka stated her boss was instrumental when it came to making sure she left work on time to get to graduate school. She described how she learned to put in a normal eight-hour day on the job as needed, saying, "*I would arrive promptly at 8:00 a.m. and leave promptly at 5:00 p.m. in order to get to graduate school.*" Over time, it became a ritual that Anka incorporated into her daily work schedule. Graduate school taught her the importance of handling issues that needed immediate attention. This reinforced her confidence that managers did not have to sacrifice their personal lives in order to succeed. It was possible to advance their career development while maintaining a sense of balance at home. Anka said during her interview:

*I no longer felt I was responsible for staying beyond a normal eight-hour time period to prove myself as I found myself doing the same amount of work I would have done had I stayed beyond a normal day. I wish my co-workers had the confidence to realize that you can be just as effective in an eight-hour time period as you can working a 12 to 14 hour day. It wasn't a requirement for these individuals, as much as it was a guilty conscience that guided them to work those hours.*

She went on to further say how other female co-workers were supportive at times, picking up meetings she could not attend or finishing up ones that went might go beyond the five o'clock on the nights she had to leave for graduate school. They looked up to her

for direction as to their own career aspirations, hoping to use her success as a roadmap to plan their own future.

Lee's experience is similar to what Anka mentioned. She indicated how the support she received at work was two-fold. First, it was financial, as her company agreed to pay for a portion of her degree. Secondly, Lee cited the importance of the support she received from her boss, Elizabeth, while deciding on going back to graduate school. Elizabeth acted as a mentor who guided Lee as to the importance of an EMBA. Lee is the only participant of this study to outwardly state her boss acted as a mentor. The mentoring Elizabeth provided played a crucial role in her career development. It provided her with a network in which to communicate and reinforce her beliefs that she had the skills and knowledge to succeed as a manager. Furthermore, Lee felt that without her boss' help, the skills and knowledge she had acquired would have gone unnoticed in upper management when a director's position opened up. In essence, Elizabeth showcased Lee's talent so she wouldn't remain hidden within the management pipeline of her organization.

The mentoring Lee received is similar to what a few of the other participants had cited in this study. For instance, Michelle said she sought the advice of a female executive, named Ruth, to provide advice on how she could get her graduate degree approved. Ruth was instrumental in getting Michelle to talk to someone further up the management pipeline of the organization. She had suggested Michelle talk with Mark who was the Director of the Information Technology (IT) Department within the company about graduate school and her career aspirations. Michelle had never gone

"*outside the box*" to push for something she wanted. It was a calculated risk, but it was necessary at that point in time if Michelle wanted to advance her career development.

Michelle had already been rejected by her Team Leader for tuition reimbursement for graduate school, who declared "*it wasn't job-related.*" She was willing to talk to Mark if she thought it would help get the necessary financial assistance needed to pay for the degree. In the end, the meeting Michelle had with Mark proved to be significantly important as to the type of support she would receive at work while in school. Mark was down to earth and refreshing, interested in helping Michelle succeed in her career advance. He mentioned how he saw her as a motivated individual who was dedicated and enthusiastic. Going for a graduate business degree, in his opinion, was a good fit for Michelle's career development. It did not matter what Michelle's Team Leader felt as to the validity of the degree, what mattered was how it could help Michelle and the organization grow on a long-term basis. Mark re-assured Michelle he was there to help her. Michelle stated:

*He didn't ask me why, but hinted that he knew my boss could be a problem as he wasn't the type of person that liked to be over-ruled when it came to any decisions in his department. He proceeded to ask me if I was willing to move to another section of IT working for another manager he knew was open to my career aspirations.*

At first Michelle was hesitant to leave the department she had been with for her whole career, and yet she realized that Mark's support was providing a life line to a greater career opportunity. She took him up on the offer and transferred to another section of the IT Department. Once transferred, her request to go to graduate school was approved. The new job was exactly the type of support Michelle needed as cited in the following passage:

*The new job I was given required me to travel overseas a lot. My new boss worked around my school schedule, granting the extra vacation time I needed so I could attend the EMBA's initial boot camp and to attend any other classes. I was able to make up any additional time granted outside of my normal vacation schedule.*

If Michelle had not received the support she had from both Ruth and Mark, it would have been impossible to succeed in her quest to attend graduate school. She talked about the importance of their help in providing her with the confidence she needed to succeed. In fact she cited that without their support, she would have experienced a low point in her self-esteem. She referred to this by citing how many of the women within her department experienced "*barriers*" while trying to enhance their career development. It would have been impossible for Michelle to have maintained a sense of balance within her work environment without having a sense of control over the variables that affected what went on around her. If she had not taken the free "*jail card out*," she would have eventually given up on the dream of obtaining her EMBA. Michelle's experience replicates an experience that is the same in every respect to what Georgette had mentioned about the type of support she received at work.

Initially, Georgette's request to go to graduate school was denied. The reason for the denial was, as her boss stated, "*it wasn't job related*." Luckily, her boss was replaced by a Division Manager who had just relocated from the company's European headquarters. Georgette waited a few weeks before deciding to approach him on the issue of graduate school.

Georgette spoke of how easy it was to approach this person as he was more relaxed and easy-going. As she stated:

*There is no micro-managing with him. He felt if you got the job done, there was no need for you to tell him or for him to question you as to what you had done. However, if you needed his help, he was always available.*

When she approached him on the issue of graduate school, Georgette stated, "*he was very open and thought the EMBA was a good choice stating I would benefit from working with other executives.*" She went on to talk about how he provided additional support by looking at the business plan Georgette had prepared for human resources, re-writing areas of the plan to reflect how the degree was job related. As he stated, "*the wording was important to get the plan approved.*"

Since then, Georgette has found her boss supportive in her career endeavor by providing her with the product development projects that can enhance her career development. The projects Georgette has been involved in have received noticeable attention at the senior management level, which she hopes will help her move further up the management pipeline. The support she has received has helped her develop a sense of confidence that she will one day achieve the dreams of becoming an account executive for a major advertising firm.

Phyllis had attended a couple of MBA classes when she decided it was not the degree for her. She had looked at an EMBA and realized the coursework was the key to moving into an upper-level management position. In order to accomplish this task, it was important for her to get her employer's support that the degree would enhance her career development. Phyllis realized she would have to talk with her boss if, she, "*was going to make it happen.*"

In a meeting scheduled with her boss, Linda, she mentioned how she wanted to one day move into a Vice President/Director's position. Phyllis went on to say how she

had taken a few MBA courses and realized they would not enhance her career development. When she spoke about earning an EMBA, Linda agreed it was the right choice, as *"it would enhance her management skills as a leader."* In fact, so did the Division Manager. Once Phyllis' boss had approved graduate school, the request went to the Divisional Manager for final approval. The Divisional Manager thought Phyllis' request to for an EMBA was a great idea. Years earlier, he had obtained his own EMBA. Phyllis went on to say how, *"He provided me with a list of internal contacts who had gone through the program so I could contact them to get an idea of their personal experience."*

The support that Phyllis received from her boss and the Division Manager were essential for her to earn an EMBA. As she stated, *"If I couldn't have left early every other Friday, it would have been impossible to keep up with the rigorous schedule of an EMBA program."* Their support helped Phyllis enhance her career development, making it possible to one day be possibly promoted into a Vice President/Director's position.

In Leah's and Doris' position, support was not an issue at work. Leah had just finished a job as a consultant when she decided to take a sabbatical from work in order to earn her EMBA. As for Doris, she was the Senior Vice President of Portfolio Services of a Standard and Poor Company in charge of 260 people that spanned five continents. For her, support was minimal as she was in an upper-level management position when she decided to earn her EMBA. As she put it:

*I didn't have to worry about having to report to anyone about my decision to earn an EMBA. After all, I was paying for the degree as it was a personal goal. All I had to do was make sure I left early enough on Fridays in order to attend the classes.*

It is important to point out that the support Anka, Lee, Michelle and Georgette received are concrete examples of mentoring. Mentoring played an essential role in the development of these EMBA graduates at work, as it helped these women understand how they could advance their careers while maintaining a sense of balance on the home front. Segarra (2013) stated that mentors act like a personal board of directors, validating decisions women make throughout their life about their careers. This validation instills a sense of confidence within women that empowers them to succeed within any organization they work for in corporate America. Mentors help women establish their credibility as a leader by guiding them on when and where they should exercise their authority in organizations where there is a significant presence of second-generation bias against women in leadership (Hermaia, Ely & Kolb, 2010).

Anka, Lee, Michelle, and Georgette stated their bosses mentored them to gain the recognition they needed to be seen as an ideal leader. They talked about how these individuals provided them with the job assignments that allowed for them to enhance their careers to move up the corporate ladder into positions of recognition by senior management. The mentoring these women received provided them with the emotional support that influenced the belief that they had the talent and stamina to succeed in moving up the management pipeline of their respective organizations that would one day lead to a senior management position.

Overall, support was essential at work for most of these women to believe they had the talent to succeed within their organization. The concept of support at work and validation they received at home helped create the balanced life these women needed while pursuing their dream of moving up the corporate ladder. It helped solidify what is

called by Gottfredson (1996), the "self-concept" of how these women viewed themselves within their environment.

Once the participants had made the decision to attend graduate school, the experiences they encountered within the program profoundly impacted their personal and professional development. Most of these changes can be attributed to the support these women experienced while a member of their graduate cohorts. The next section highlights how the cohort influenced the changes these participants experienced while they were in the EMBA program. They provided the network these women felt was essential to their success on a personal and professional basis.

### **Support of Graduate Cohort**

*Our cohort group was diverse in nature, having different management styles and experiences. Despite that being the case, we learned how to bond as we went through the program. We were very supportive of one another and very understanding when it came to working on class projects, towing the line for one another when it came to getting assignments done.*

*Lee*

*Over the 19-month period, the group projects helped me understand that team members of any organization develop as a unit. It takes time, as it did with our cohort. Despite that being the case, we learned that an effective group is like a well-oiled machine, understanding each other's diversity and yet understanding the importance of working one toward achieving a goal.*

*Michelle*

Over half of the women in this study were very vocal as to the support they received from their EMBA cohort at their colleges or universities. Those who spoke about this support discussed how these individuals played a significant role in helping them develop their overall level of confidence. They provided the study participants with a network of individuals that could be used as a sounding board for them to reflect as

needed. Bierema (2005) pointed out how women need networks, as there is a lack of such structures available for women within many organizations. Their cohorts acted as networks that helped these women assimilate much easier into their organizational culture, giving them the collective power and confidence that can advocate organizational change in cultures that are male dominated.

Anka spoke fondly of her graduate cohort group, citing how each member learned how to understand and appreciate one another, both on a personal and professional level. The group not only was a source to discuss new management ideas, but acted as a sounding board to voice personal concerns or to ask for opinions as to a course of direction. Anka went on to say how:

*At work you always have to be on guard, making sure you complete all tasks as assigned. You can't discuss anything that bothers you without it coming back to harm you. It is all political. At home, no one understands the significant events you are experiencing at work or in school. The group was the focal point of strength. It allowed us to be free and open with one another -- a place to talk about our fears and aspirations. It was our sounding board.*

For Anka, the group was a place to be heard without fear that her views would be looked at negatively. Bierma (2005) further pointed out that women who participate in networks at work are viewed negatively by others within an organization as they are seen as going against an organizational culture that is predominantly male-oriented. Yet, networks are important as they allow for an organization's stakeholders to reflect on their contributions and their future career development. Anka went on to say that not only did the cohort listen to each other's problems, but that they encourage each other to think about the next step in their lives as cited by the following passage:

*We challenged one another to think about what was the next stage in our careers -- whether it be with our current employer or another career. This*

*was something I could never do at work. If you had aspirations that involved a career outside of work, you didn't talk about it without facing the consequences of doing so. My organization wanted workers that are totally committed to them. Those that are not committed are eventually 'flushed out.' You conform or you are seen as an outsider, where your career hits a wall. Again, it is all political and you have to learn how to play the 'game' if you want to survive.*

The group allowed for Anka to reflect on who she was and where she wanted to go. It was something that was not available in her organization. She went on to state that *"the lack of such a network limits the ability for women to gain the confidence to succeed and grow as an individual."* Networks are important as they provide a blueprint for future analysis, which in turn, affects how an individual views him or herself in light of the emphasis of most organizational cultures being male dominating in nature (Schein, 2007).

Anka reflected on this concept when she spoke about a boss she had worked for years prior to graduate school. She stated he would cut a person off who was trying to answer a question in order to impose his own opinion. According to Anka, it was his way of putting a person down -- especially if they were a woman. Back then she would have bit her lip, not saying a word, as she was afraid her emotions would have given him the control to dominate a situation. She went on to say:

*If I had the group back then, I think it would have been easier for me to find a way of talking to him about what I was feeling without letting my emotion getting the best of me. I would have felt more confident of who I was as an individual.*

Tharenou (1995) cited that internal networks, like the cohort, helps one to develop accepted values and practices that enhance a worker's knowledge, skills and credentials

within their organizational culture. For Anka, the group was a nucleus of strength that allowed for her to become resilient and confident.

Lee stated the EMBA cohort became a second family to her. She was initially from the West Coast, where a majority of her family still resided. She saw the group as being very supportive of one another, where each one knew a lot about each other's family members and the experiences they encountered both on a personal and professional basis. As Lee put it, "*We acted as a sounding board for each other, where we could talk about life in general seeking advice on personal or professional challenges.*" It is a bond that is still very strong today, where they keep in contact with each other on a regular basis. In fact, they played an instrumental part in Lee's life when she hit 40 years old.

Lee had been a director for her organization for about two years and was about to hit 40. While it was a great experience managing people, it was also one that was intense and stressful. Lee did not want to continue working a rigorous schedule of 60 hours a week, tied to a desk. To her, it was a job that provided an unhealthy life style. She wanted more out of life.

Lee credits the cohort for helping her create a personal vision of what she wanted to do. She had been thinking about changing her career to do something that was life rewarding -- becoming an entrepreneur/humanitarian. Lee wanted to utilize her experience as an industrial designer by focusing on creating habitat structures in large urban settings with limited space. It was something she felt was strongly needed in today's society. Despite her aspirations, she knew she could not discuss her dreams with anyone at work as they could not relate to her personal aspirations.

Lee utilized the cohort members to discuss her future plans. She stated how:

*I had spoken to my cohort group for the past year about my goal. I wanted to retire in order to pursue a career as an industrial designer, focusing on creating habitat structures in large urban centers.*

*As she cited, "I wanted to be an entrepreneur with a humanitarian twist. This was something I strongly believed in."*

Lee saw the cohort as her personal cheerleading team. She talked to them frankly about how she could make her dream come true. She stated how they listened to her, providing the help and encouragement she needed to plan the next phase of her life. Lee cited how:

*The group helped me realize my dream was financially possible by helping me develop a business strategy that would make it happen. When I felt I couldn't follow through, at times, they would provide me with positive feedback that it was possible, that I had to believe in what I was doing.*

The consistent positive reinforcement Lee received during this time period helped her craft a vision that eventually become a reality.

Shortly after her fortieth birthday, Lee resigned from her position at the Fortune 500 Company, debt-free and with the money she had saved, allowing her to set up a consulting firm where she is now developing working relationships with a variety of endowment foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Lee has started designing urban habitat spaces for cities across the globe that have limited living quarters. She stated that *"the challenges are huge, but the rewards are satisfying."*

As Bierma (2005) pointed out, the networking associated with Lee's cohort helped her share her story and provided her with a sense of inspiration to pursue a dream. It helped her understand what she wanted as a woman and develop the necessary plan that

helped her achieve a sense of confidence to pursue a career away from the organization where she had worked for the past ten years.

In another instance, the cohort was seen as a network for helping these women develop management and communication skills needed as a leader in the twenty-first century. The cohort challenged the confidence of some of these women as cited in Michelle's narrative.

Michelle talked about the apprehension she felt before entering an EMBA program. She was not quite sure if she could handle the rigor of the coursework. She discussed how her cohort laid the foundational groundwork that helped her develop her confidence as a manager, especially during the initial boot camp for the EMBA.

As Michelle pointed out:

*The group I was assigned to was very intense. There were a lot of strong personalities. Instead of sitting back, I learned how to open up with others within the group, talking about the importance of working together to complete our assigned project.*

She went on to say how she learned that as a manager, it was not that important having an "exact" answer as it was coming up with a logical explanation as to how to solve a problem -- especially when she was presenting to a mock senior management group that consisted of the EMBA faculty that were former senior-level executives. As Michelle stated:

*The initial presentation helped me in not only developing my confidence in knowing I had it in me to do this level of work, but understanding the importance of building relationships with my peers that help achieve a goal.*

This was an important discovery for Michelle. The EMBA cohort helped Michelle learn a style of management she felt was necessary as a leader in today's

economy. The cohort allowed Michelle to express her views on management issues that was prevalent in many organizations. She stated the cohort members listened attentively to what she had to say, providing constructive criticism as needed. This allowed Michelle to develop the confidence in her management skills despite being a woman.

Michelle talked about how she had worked in the information technology sector for her organization in a department that was heavily dominated by men. As such, it was difficult for women within the department to express their views on policy and procedures implemented without fearing consequences of going against the "*status quo*" management. As she had stated, "*the management style tended to be suffocating.*"

The cohort allowed Michelle to decompress this experience in order for her to gain confidence as a leader. Chen, Doherty, and Vinnicombe (2012) stated that networks provide the emotional and professional support that women need in order to advance their career development in many organizations. They provided the feedback needed on crucial issues women face as a manager. This reflects what Bierma (2005) had stated about the importance of networking for women. Women need networks where they can receive constructive criticism that allow them to gain the confidence they need to lead.

Phyllis and Georgette also spoke on the value of the cohort acting as a sounding board to develop their management technique. In Phyllis' case, her cohort was made up of a variety of managers from various industries. As a group, they would provide management techniques throughout the group assignments. The strategies offered helped Phyllis synthesize a style that was reflective of her organization's culture, where it helped motivated employees to achieve strategic goals.

Phyllis went on to mention how she would take ideas generated from the cohort back to work in order to implement them within her organizational structure. Afterwards, she would go back to the cohort and talk about the results of what she had implemented, sighting various successes and seeking input on areas that fell short. The group members acted as a source of knowledge, offering suggestions if something did not work or complementing her when something worked well. The feedback she received reinforced the confidence she had in her ability as a leader. As Phyllis put it:

*They accepted me for my managerial experience, never judging me when I was leery on a new approach I had implemented. They would say, 'I needed to trust my judgment and never doubt my ability.'*

Georgette also mentioned how the cohort members influenced her ability as a manager. In her case, the cohort members taught her the importance of communicating as a key to becoming a leader. She mentioned:

*As a manager I have learned when to question what is important in order to become more interactive with the projects I handle on a day to day basis .I have learned how to step back and analyze the stakeholders involved in order to become familiar with the working habits of my group members. Understanding the chemistry of a group is important in order to motivate them to achieve organizational goals.*

The various techniques Georgette learned while in the EMBA program helped her understand how to develop a strategy that could be used within her working environment. She mentioned how the cohort was a "*vast source of knowledge that was unavailable to her within her working environment.*" She learned how to value their management input, as many of them valued her knowledge as a manager and considered her on an equal level as a leader.

Not only did the cohort provide a network of support, they also provided an array of knowledge needed to manage in today's economy. Leah spoke on this knowledge by

citing how she chose the EMBA program in order to get an "*international flavor*" that was unavailable in the United States. She talked about how her cohort was unique on the basis of its diversity, with members from all over the world. These individuals provided management knowledge based on their culture. The cohort helped Leah develop a style of management that not only reflected her personal identity, but one that acknowledged the importance of diversity and its effect on achieving strategic goals on a global basis.

Doris also spoke on the diversity of her cohort by citing how the various management styles that were presented by those within her group helped her understand the importance of developing a management style that reflected the value of the stakeholders involved. In her case, the cohort provided a network of knowledge that she used as a basis for developing a management style that reinforced the importance of utilizing diversity as a means of achieving organizational goals on a global basis. For her, this was a critical concept that helped her as a leader managing a division that spanned five continents. The management styles she was exposed to helped her develop a better understanding of how to motivate her subordinates to achieve the goals of her organization.

The support these women received at work and from the cohort members were essential for these women to earn their EMBA. This was crucial for most of them, as many of these women were seeking to advance along the management pipeline of their organizations into positions that were traditionally held by men. At work, it was essential for them to receive the support they needed to feel the degree would advance their career development. In the case of the cohort, the members acted as a personal sounding board for the participants to reflect their thoughts and ideas that Anka and Lee

had mentioned earlier. In other instances, such as Georgette, Michelle, and Phyllis' case, the cohort's diversity in management styles helped them develop their own management style. The support the participants received from their peers helped reinforce their confidence as a leader. The cohort provided the constructive feedback and support that the management practices these women utilized were reflective of the leadership skills needed to lead an organization in today's global economy.

The confidence they displayed is a by-product of how the EMBA curriculum is designed and administered. The design not only involved the development of the cohort and support associated with this group, but the manner in which the program was administered. The curriculum and those associated with its implementation was seen as another reason these women chose this educational track as a means of enhancing their career development.

The next section of this chapter will discuss the themes as to how curriculum influenced these women to pursue an EMBA. I have entitled that theme as *Curriculum Design Influenced EMBA Program Choice*. The sub-themes that emerged during this portion of the study were a) *Convenience and Duration*; b) *Core Content*, and c) *Program Instructors*. As the stories unfolded, the participants spoke on how the EMBA curriculum, was a major factor why these women chose this program for their career development.

### **Theme Three: Curriculum Design Influenced EMBA Program Choice**

The final theme that emerged during this study was the concept of curriculum design. The EMBA degree influenced the participants of this study to choose this program on the basis of the following sub-themes: a) *convenience and duration*; b) *core content*; and c) *program instructors*.

## Convenience and Duration

*I chose an EMBA due to the shorter timeframe required to complete the degree and the fact that the classes met on Saturdays. A traditional MBA met two days a week and could take two to four years to complete.*

Georgette

*Almost all of the EMBA programs I looked at were on an accelerated time table of 18 months. Finally, it was the level of experience required for an EMBA. The EMBA program I was looking at required at least five to seven years of management experience -- which fit my experience.*

Leah

Most of the women who participated in this study cited convenience and duration as one of the reasons they pursued an EMBA. Georgette pointed to this very reason as cited in the following passage:

*I chose an EMBA due to the shorter timeframe required to complete the degree and the fact that the classes met on Saturdays. A traditional MBA met two days a week and could take two to four years to complete. This was something I could not do. I am a single mother raising a son. It was easier for me to find someone to watch my son on Saturdays than it was during the weeknights.*

Although Georgette's career development was crucial to her future goal of becoming an advertising executive, she also knew she had a responsibility as a parent and had to maintain a sense of normalcy between both worlds as a manager and a mother. Doris alluded to this same reasoning when she mentioned how she had to outsource some of her daily responsibilities as a parent she did on the home front. As she pointed out:

*It is a good thing the EMBA was short-term. I do not think I could have made it as a parent, working full time while going through a regular part-time MBA.*

Leah also chose an EMBA program on the basis of convenience and duration. She wanted to start a family over the next few years and did not want to be tied down with school. Yet, she wanted to learn more about the theory behind the field of

management. She had just finished a consulting job as an acting Chief Operating Officer overseas in Australia when she decided to take a sabbatical to determine the next phase in her life. For her the decision was easy, go back to graduate school to get either an MBA or EMBA so she could reinforce her management experience. As she stated:

*By the end of the eighth year, the company I had been working for as COO had become a solid performer and no longer needed my services. I had been thinking about doing something different. I knew it wasn't going to be as a consultant, even though the company I had worked for had another position for me. I talked with my husband about where we were and the fact that we wanted to start a family someday. Even though I loved Australia, we decided to move back to the States. Luckily, my husband was able to get a transfer back to our old home town out West.*

For Leah, her intentions for going back to graduate school was not only to get an understanding of the "nuts and bolts" behind the theory of management, but to interact with other managers who had similar management experience. Her goal was to learn advanced management theory and practices that would help her emerge with a broader perspective and the tools she needed to create an impact, whether it was on a consulting basis or in the role of a manager within an organizational setting. As she stated:

*I had looked at a MBA versus an EMBA. In the end, I decided to go for an EMBA. There were three reasons why I chose this degree. The first one was that I didn't want to take any more tests. An MBA required taking the GMAT, while the EMBA did not. Second, I didn't want to spend another two to four years in school. Almost all of the EMBA programs I looked at were on an accelerated time table of 18 months. Finally, it was the level of experience required for an EMBA. The EMBA program I was looking at required at least five to seven years of management experience, which fit my experience.*

This passage reflects how an EMBA satisfied Leah's quest for knowledge while also matching her personal needs in the short run. It allowed for Leah to gain a sense of control over the balance she would have in her life, while allowing her to make plans for

the future. Celestino (1999) has cited this is a major reason EMBA programs have become increasingly popular in recent years.

The other participants of this study also cited their reasons for choosing an EMBA was on the basis of the degree's convenience and its duration. In both Anka and Lee's instance, they saw their time as managers being limited outside of work. Despite that being the case, both understood the importance of advancing their career development if they planned on moving up the management pipeline of their respective organizations.

The EMBA was well-suited for both of these individuals as it not only provided the coursework that was defined as being essential to lead, but the timeframe was designed to fit their schedule as managers. As Anka stated, the EMBA "*fit my work schedule*" as it was for an 18 month duration and offered on weekends, where she was still able to spend time with her family as needed. In Lee's case, the shorter duration helped her move faster into a senior management position than if she had pursued a regular MBA degree. As a result, she was able to gain the financial freedom that allowed her to be an entrepreneur by the time she had reached the age of 40 years old.

Michelle and Phyllis also spoke on this same concept, citing how the duration helped in aiding their career development so they could move further up the management pipeline at a faster rate than by earning an MBA. The fact that the degree was short-term allowed for these women to develop a personal plan that temporarily affected their work roles at times, but also allowed for them to contribute to their organization's goals.

While the convenience and duration of an EMBA is one aspect that has appealed to these women, it was the core content of the EMBA that was also cited as a major reason why these women chose to pursue this degree. The curriculum was designed in a

manner that helped the participants of this study learn the skills they needed to make significant contributions to their organization.

### **Core Content**

*EMBA is geared to the individual as an executive as it allowed students to combine newly-learned skills with their management experience that guide them to manage others.*

*Anka*

*The case studies used throughout the program contained practical knowledge for any executive to know.*

*Leah*

The curriculum was seen as a vehicle that provided hands-on experience to real-life management issues. Most EMBA programs through which these women matriculated were students recruited from middle and upper-level management positions from a variety of different organization. This recruitment approach was seen as a method of allowing students to not only learn new management skills, but as a way to exchange knowledge with other students in order to reinforce their management skills (Boyatzis, 2008). This was apparent by some of the statements the participants made while talking about the EMBA curriculum. For instance, Anka talked about how she had discovered that:

*The coursework taught for an EMBA program was done by instructors who worked in the business sector and taught real-life examples from the field.*

More importantly, she went on to say how the:

*EMBA is geared to the individual as an executive as it allowed students to combine newly-learned skills with their management experience that guide them to manage others.*

In fact, she talked about how the group case projects she was involved in was instrumental to building her management repertoire. Interacting with managers from a variety of business organizations allowed for the exchange of new ideas on how to manage in the new millennium. She spoke about how the skills she learned from the EMBA program helped her in her daily management decisions. Anka felt this was critical to her success in securing a promotion to Senior Vice President.

What Anka cited is comparable to what Boyatzis et al. (2002) discovered when researching the development of EMBA programs. According to Boyatzis et al. (2002), it is important for the core coursework to teach managers how to develop a management standpoint that not only is reflective of the individual on a personal basis, but one that can be used to educate others how to compete in today's environment. The focus is on transformational and lifelong learning. EMBA graduates are taught how to lead by developing a learning organization that can succeed in the twenty-first century. Boehner and O'Neal (2010) have stated how executive education students work with a variety of management representatives to develop the analytical skills needed to compete in today's business world. Bell (2003) pointed to the importance of case studies and instructors acting as facilitators as factors that help EMBA students derive solutions to real-life problems. In fact, Anka talked about how the case studies she encountered in graduate school provided a guide to the various management situations she encountered on a daily basis.

Michelle also cited the same experience Anka had mentioned. She had spoken to her next door neighbor, who had obtained his EMBA, about the degree and what she could expect if she decided she wanted to earn this degree. Her neighbor stated the

*"students were encouraged to share their management ideas throughout the program."*

Michelle went on to say how her neighbor spoke on how *"this helped an individual to incorporate what they knew and any new ideas into developing their own leadership style."* As Michelle listened, she realized an EMBA degree was the type of degree she needed if she was going to become a leader.

Michelle cited her recent success moving up the corporate ladder as being due to the fact the EMBA program had taught her the management and soft skills she needed to lead. As she put it:

*I went in as a project manager coming out a business manager. I learned how to develop the people management skills needed to lead. I am confident in the decisions I make on a daily basis.*

She went on to talk about how the skills she learned helped her move from the IT to the financial side of the organization. Since then, she had been promoted three times and her salary has increased by over 40%. Michelle stated her movement up the corporate pipeline and the increase in salary was due to the negotiating skills she learned while in graduate school.

As Michelle put it:

*I learned how not to sell myself short, citing my strengths and what I could bring to each job. I wouldn't have even attempted to pursue the position I have been promoted to if I didn't have the knowledge of going after what I really wanted.*

According to Bell (2003), learning sessions that are action-oriented help managers develop a blueprint that allowed them to react, develop, and reflect on their management decisions. In Michelle's story, it not only has helped her develop as a manager, it has also instilled confidence in her own ability to prove her management skills and how it could impact the bottom line of her organization.

Lee talked about the same concept that Anka and Michelle had pointed out, but went a step further by talking about the importance of the student's competency as a manager as being a pre-requisite for obtaining an EMBA. When Lee decided to go back to graduate school, she had looked at the differences between an MBA and EMBA. After speaking with a few friends who were attending an MBA, she "*discovered that the caliber of student who attended this type of program lacked the solid management experience*" she had. Lee wanted to reinforce her management skills, not re-learn what she already knew as a manager. Therefore, an MBA was out.

Lee spoke to a few work colleagues about their experience in an EMBA experience. Those she spoke to talked about how:

*Each individual they were associated with had a depth of management experience and would exchange with each other on how they utilized their management style in the workplace.*

More importantly, she spoke fondly of what the program coordinator at the local college she attended spoke about the caliber of the EMBA students who attended the program.

She stated:

*The average age of an EMBA student was around 39 years old and had around seven years of management experience. I was convinced this college's program had what I was looking for. I decided to pursue an EMBA at that college.*

For Lee, the program not only reinforced the importance of learning the "*nuts and bolts*" of management, but also reinforced the importance of the individual learning who they were as a leader. There was a great deal of focus on the concept of emotional intelligence. In an EMBA program, graduates learned the importance of emotional intelligence by learning how to understand the holistic and emotional characteristics that are tied to the leader as a person. She went on to mention the importance of an individual

being able to create and understand their personal vision as it affects how they manage and motivate others. This personal vision is tied to a leader's credibility. Lee pointed out that:

*Credibility plays an important role in determining whether others are willing to follow you as a leader. In order for others to follow a leader, the leader must understand who they are and how they identify themselves to the organization they work for. Only when a leader understands who they are, can then lead others to achieve an organization's goals.*

The concept of credibility that Lee referred to as a manager mirrors what Gosling and Mintzberg (2004) have cited about the importance of reflection. Gosling and Mintzberg (2004) believed it is important for a manager to reflect on any given situation in order to determine what course of action they should take. This requires a manager to look at a situation's social context in comparison to their personal and professional beliefs in order to determine what course of action they should take. A manager chooses a solution that not only identifies with their personal beliefs, but acts as a motivator that helps lead subordinates to achieve organizational goals. It is a process that fits well with the concept of emotional intelligence that was taught in Lee's EMBA program. According to Lee, this part of the core curriculum played a crucial part in her development as a manager. Michelle referred to this concept as the "soft skills" she sought to develop while in the program.

Phyllis had taken a few MBA courses when she realized it was a program that was not for her. She stated:

*The classes I took were not what I expected. In fact, they were boring. The coursework was geared to teach business skills for those with no prior business experience. I wanted a graduate degree where the content matched my experience and taught me skills I could use to move upward.*

She decided to look at an EMBA program. Phyllis discovered an EMBA was the right choice for her if she wanted to enhance her career development. As she pointed out, *"the coursework taught for an EMBA program was done by instructors who worked in the business sector and taught real-life examples from the field."* Phyllis felt it was a degree that could help an individual with the newly-learned skills and management experience guide others to achieve organizational goals. It was just the program she needed for her career development.

Phyllis spoke about how the strategic planning coursework became an essential component of how she manages on a daily basis. It helped her identify a variety of interactive variables within her environment in order to develop a solution that not only solved a problem, but reflected her own credibility with those she managed. The following passage reflects the importance of this concept:

*In the EMBA, business planning is a big part of the program. Strategic thinking is a key concept that has become a valuable management tool for me. The best way to describe the process is that it involves developing a business plan on what is possible within your environment. As a manager, you are taught how to identify the constraints within your environment and how to develop a plan that minimizes the impact of those constraints while delivering the end results.*

As a result, Phyllis learned of the importance of communicating to her subordinates on what needed to be accomplished to achieve organizational goals. Yet, she also understood the importance of recognizing the needs of those she managed on a daily basis. Phyllis pointed out how:

*Workers will not follow a leader who does not understand their needs. They become complacent and wonder why they should if they are not going to reap any benefit from doing a particular task. Understanding an individual and their chemistry helps when motivating them to achieve a goal. They need to feel an important part of the solution, where they mean something.*

For Phyllis, strategic planning lends well to the concept of emotional intelligence cited as being an essential component of a leader's chemistry. Boyatzis (2008) cited the importance of understanding one's self in relation to those around them. Instructors of most EMBA programs focus on how leaders need to understand who they are and how their personal beliefs align with the organization they work for (Boyatzis & Saaticouglu, 2008). Leaders are driven by their personal values and philosophy. These values lead to a calling or mission that drives one's motives to succeed. Phyllis reflected this concept during the interview by saying, "*You can't lead others if you don't believe in what you are doing. You need to know who you are before you can lead.*" It was a revelation Phyllis has depended on for guiding her on a daily basis, both in a personal and professional manner.

In Georgette's case, the management issues that were presented in the group projects helped her as a manager to synthesize a variety of new ideas within her own environment in order to manage her subordinates. These management ideas were relevant to her on a personal basis, as they looked at what she believed were her personal traits and how they compared to the organization she worked for as a manager. This self-evaluation process helped Georgette understand who she was and how she could motivate others to follow strategic goals.

Leah and Doris also referred to the process of self-evaluation as a component of re-vitalizing a manager as a leader. The program they attended was noted for its "*thought leadership*" process. It was a process that focused on the importance of culture and how diversity plays an important role in the way an organization achieves its strategic goals. The cultural beliefs of each participant played an important role in showing how these

women developed their management style. It helped these women develop a sense of credibility as to how they wanted others to view them as a leader. This was considered an important concept of executive education in the twenty-first century.

For most of the women of this study, the curriculum of an EMBA program taught them the importance of becoming outstanding leaders for the twenty-first century. The coursework reflected what Senge (2006) has cited as characteristic of a good leader 1) one that has the cognitive or intellectual ability to understand systems thinking; 2) one that has the ability to adapt as needed; and 3) one that has developed the network relationships on a personal and professional level that can help them manage; and 4) one that has the self-confidence to manage those around them.

The participants of this study pointed out how the education they received has helped them become managers that can help their organizations succeed on a daily basis. Boyatzis (2008) cited that managers must be able to handle the needs of an organization on both a personal and professional basis if they are going to achieve the visions and values of any organization they lead. For these women, the EMBA programs they attended reflected that concept. The program not only educated them on the essential components of managing, but instilled confidence in their ability to achieve their organization's goals.

The development these women experience was due to the role their instructors had played while teaching the program's curriculum. The participants cited how their instructors taught them the critical skills needed to lead in the twenty-first century. They provided instruction on the tactics needed on both a personal and professional level that

could help them cope with various factors within their environment. The next section of this study will discuss the emergence of this theme.

### **Program Instructors**

*The coursework taught for an EMBA program was done by instructors who worked in the business sector and taught real-life examples from the field.*

#### *Phyllis*

*While in graduate school, I developed a strong working relationship with some of the EMBA faculty. I wanted to make sure I could understand what I was taught in practical terms so I could relate it to help others I might work with in the future. I would ask my professors to clarify the theory they were teaching.*

#### *Leah*

Rojas-Mendez and Ahmed (2004) reported that EMBA programs are more successful when these programs utilize educational techniques that reflect the environment of the learner. The techniques utilized to convey knowledge should be a reflection of the visions and values of both the learner and the organization they work for. Many EMBA programs should use instructors that understand this concept, employing management tools and techniques that are essential to lead in the twenty-first century (Boyatzis, 2008).

Lee pointed out how her instructors focused on the emotional intelligence concept of a leader's development. She went on to say how this helped her craft a vision as a leader that was essential for guiding others to achieve organizational goals. As she stated, "*the program focused on life management skills, learning to know who we are by crafting a personal vision that related to our leadership style.*"

In Lee's instance, the instructors she interacted with helped her understand who she was and what she wanted on both a personal and professional level. This is a crucial

concept that is reflective of executive education - especially EMBA programs. Students need to understand who they are if they wanted to lead others. Leaders who understand themselves tend to exude enthusiasm, optimism and genuine concern for those who work around them (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). As Boyatzis and McKee (2005) point out:

Great leadership comes as a result of hard work and a bit of luck. It requires discovering our own noble purpose, living it every day and being fully aware of ourselves and other people as human beings -- mind, body, heart and spirit (p. 202).

For Lee, the EMBA instructors helped her develop a style of leadership that not only reflected what was essential to lead, but a style that was attuned to the needs of her subordinates. She went on to say how:

*They helped me understand what I valued in life and how to care for those around me. I learned the importance of re-evaluating the purpose of what I wanted in life*

The instructors helped Lee craft a vision that not only focused on becoming a leader, but to look beyond and determine what was important to the graduate student as an individual. For her, she was determined on eventually becoming an entrepreneur/humanitarian in the field of industrial design. Even though she assumed the position of Director of Global Design shortly after graduating with her EMBA, Lee eventually resigned to start her own industrial design consulting firm. What Lee had experienced while attending the EMBA program is a reflection of what Senge (2006) stated is the making of a good manager. Those who are good not only understand the system in which they work, but are driven by their own personal vision and beliefs (Senge, 2006). Boyatzis and Saaticouglu (2008) further stated that good leaders have a sense of calling or mission that directs their motives and personal traits. For Lee, happiness was not being a director for life, it was a means to finance her dream of

becoming the entrepreneur/humanitarian that designed urban dwelling structures for third-world urban centers. In order to finance this dream, it was essential for her to perform her duties as a Director if she was going to finance her dreams for the future.

Anka stated how the instructors she encountered taught her the importance of developing a more balanced life as a manager, free of guilt for not working beyond a normal eight-hour day. For many years, Anka worked at least a ten-to-twelve hours a day as a manager. As she stated, "*this was the norm for many of the managers who worked around me.*" She equated the role of a manager as being long tiresome hours that worked to achieve an organization's strategic goals. Her instructors taught her that the lack of a balanced life created chronic stress. As a result, leaders tends to forget their deeply held values and sacrifice themselves to get the job done (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

Anka learned how to develop hope and compassion in order to renew herself as a manager. She learned from her instructors that, as a leader, one can only control the factors within their reach and cannot stress about what they cannot control, as it does not devalue their worth as a leader to anyone within their organization. This was an eye-opening experience for someone like Anka. For years, Anka had mentioned how she was "*conditioned,*" as she put it, to work long hours as a manager. Her organization did not look too highly when managers left when the subordinate did. As she put it, "*it was highly frowned upon.*" The standard was for many managers to work beyond five o'clock, usually leaving by seven or eight o'clock at night.

She credits her instructors with helping overcome her guilt, by leaving promptly at five o'clock each night to have dinner with her family. She learned it was okay if she did not finish each project the same day it hit her desk. According to Anka "*Having a*

*balanced life between work and family did not make her look less worthy in the eyes of senior management or the subordinate she worked with."* She went on to say how she:

*No longer felt guilty not staying late as I did many years ago. I wish my co-workers, who are mostly Baby Boomers, understood you don't have to feel guilty. I still see many of them stay beyond a normal eight hour day.*

Anka, learned that as a human being, there is more to life than work. Goals can be accomplished if you prioritize and delegate as necessary. She learned that as a leader, this concept did not matter if you were a man or a woman. What was essential was the importance of understanding leaders are human. Being human allows a leader to display compassion when leading. This was an essential component that Boyatzis and McKee (2005) have cited is necessary for leadership in the twenty-first century.

The other women who participated in this study credit their instructors with teaching them the management skills they needed to function within their organization. For instance, Michelle spoke on how the initial EMBA boot camp she had attended helped not only to develop confidence in her decision-making skills, but understand the importance of working in group relationships. There was no "exact" answer that was essential when working on a project, as much as there was the importance of learning to understand the chemistry of a group. As Michelle pointed out, the group projects that were guided by the instructors were instrumental in the following manner:

*Over the 19-month period, the group projects helped me understand that team members of any organization develop as a unit. This was something my instructors had stated was important for any leader working with people within an organization.*

She went on to further say how:

*We learned that an effective group is like a well-oiled machine, understanding each other's diversity, and yet understanding the importance of working as one toward achieving a goal. This was*

*something I had not experienced while working in the IT department. I realized that I had the ability to develop the people skills that would lead others. I should not short-sell my abilities.*

Michelle talked about how her instructors were instrumental in helping her understand how individuals will follow a leader when they understand the direction needed to achieve an organization's goals and can convey that to those around them. The lack of communication between management and the field can lead to a lack of understanding the direction an organization is moving within their environment. This coincides with what Boyatzis and Santicioglu (2008) have stated about the importance of small study group that are guided by instructors. Groups that are guided by instructors provide cohort members an opportunity to learn from one another (especially the instructor) the professional experience and insight that can help an individual to lead others (Boyatzis & Santicioglu, 2008).

In other instances, some instructors were also essential in providing constructive feedback on the various operational theories that were needed to act as leader. Leah pointed out how she had gone into the EMBA program she attended with the lens of a CEO. For her, it was important that the instructors clarify the theory they taught in order for her to teach other executives in the future. In one passage she talked about this concept in relation to learning economics as cited below:

*I remember I had this economics class. Economics can be very theoretical when it comes to formulas. For example, 'If this goes up, and this goes down.' I got that. But to understand it in practical terms I would say, 'That's interesting!' Can you help me understand this in a practical sense?' My economics professor went out of his way to provide an answer that was easy to understand.*

In another instance, Leah talked about how her interactions with one of her instructors helped explain the role of an executive. She had talked to him about the project that involved the examination of the role of a CEO. Leah mentioned how:

*I went up to him and explained to him the nature of my project. Even though I had acted as COO, I asked him if he would be interested in helping me by giving me advice on the role of a CEO. He not only spoke to me about the role of a CEO, but gave me additional reading assignments related to the role of a CEO. I found him to be truly interested in helping me understand the role of an executive so I could explain it to others.*

What Leah had cited about her instructor ties to what Boehner and O'Neil (2010) have stated about instructors developing a program that is a results-oriented one, whereby students are challenged to use their critical thinking and analytical abilities. Leah had the experience and knowledge she had acquired as an executive during her consultative segment of her career. The instructors she studied with provided insight into the theory she felt was important and necessary if she was going to use it to help others understand. They gave intuitive examples that were realistically based on their own experience as executives. As a result, Leah felt challenged and revitalized at having the option to use her critical thinking skills to develop an idea as to how a senior level executive should perform. EMBA students who are challenged tend to develop leadership skills that are transformational and help create learning organizations that can survive in today's complex economy (Senge, 2006).

Doris also referred to the concept of transformational learning when she stated how one of her instructors was instrumental in getting a former CEO to talk to her EMBA cohort about the dynamics of the events that happen occur before, during, and after a

board of directors meeting. It was significant to her as having an impact as to how an executive should perform at a senior-level position. As she put it:

*We had a CEO from a company come in to conduct a session on how to present yourself during a board of directors meeting. He talked about how you would want to be perceived. How you would package yourself. How you would communicate. That presentation stuck in my mind. It opened up a window I wasn't privy to. I have never been invited to a board room meeting. Here, we had a chairman of the board from a company was telling us how they would judge you and what they expected to see. It provided me with an understanding on how senior management worked when it came to decision making. I thought I knew how to act. It opened my eyes that there is more than knowing how a department operates. There is the other side that teaches how to act politically as an executive when negotiating organizational goals.*

This experience showed Doris how management strategically negotiates goals at the senior management level. It was a process Doris had no knowledge of prior to going for her EMBA. Her instructor was instrumental in helping her gain an experience that acted as a lens she could use as a manager when negotiating strategic goals for her own organization. This concept reflects well with what Bell (2003) had stated about the goal of any EMBA program, which is to provide unique educational experiences to managers who are seeking to enhance their managerial skills.

Phyllis alluded to this concept when she spoke about how her instructors were committed to providing an educational experience that not only was valued as a manager, but on a personal level as well. She went on to comment how:

*They wanted us to become leaders and lifelong learners. As my one professor said, 'leaders are not born, they are individuals who are avid learners and seek knowledge as a means of invigoration.*

Education was seen as a way of creating leaders through the idea of transformational learning. Phyllis' words reflect what Senge (2006) had stated on the importance of education within an organization's culture. Executive education is seen as a tool that

values the importance of learning to change goals as needed in order to survive in today's complex economy (Senge, 2006). In Phyllis' case, her instructors helped her understand innovative management ideas that not only involved theory, but also how to utilize and synthesize them into an organization's culture in order to achieve strategic goals.

In Georgette's case, her professors were instrumental in providing the instruction that taught her how to negotiate goals on the basis of the stakeholders involved. The knowledge they possessed was not based on textbook theory alone, but on their own experience as a manager in the field. In fact, Georgette went on to state how the group projects were based on real-life encounters. These projects helped her learn how to deal with a variety of management issues that a senior manager might encounter within their environment. Negotiating was the key to ensuring that strategic goals were met on a timely basis. It is a process Georgette has found helpful while working on a variety of divisional projects across the globe.

### **Summary**

Thus far, Chapter Five has focused on the themes that emerged during the analysis of the data collected from the participants of this study. Validation was an important theme as it helped these women decide that earning their EMBA would not affect the role expectations these women had at work or at home. The support at work and from those individuals associated with the graduate cohort helped these women build the confidence they needed as a leader. The cohort acted as a network, whereby the women could use for feedback and re-assurance on whatever they were confronted with at home or at work. More importantly, the curriculum designed was seen as a major reason why these women chose to earn this degree.

Chapter Six will discuss the implications of how the experiences of these participants can help benefit other women in management who are interested in looking at an EMBA for their career development. The goal is to offer recommendations that can help educational institutions attract women to enroll in their EMBA programs.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The experiences described by the participants of this study support the literature as to why they chose an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree for their career development. At the same time, the data supported the importance of how an organization's culture affected the advancement of these women within the management pipeline of the organizations they worked for. One of the most interesting development was the emergence of the importance of networking that helped these women develop a sense of confidence as a leader. This chapter will begin by summarizing the research design of this study, followed by a discussion of the main study findings. Finally, I will conclude with the implications for practice and future research.

#### **Summary of the Study**

In order to inform succession planning and career development within an organization, it is important to understand the experience of women who seek EMBA's as a part of their professional development. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand how an EMBA impacted the professional lives of women executives who attained this degree.

A qualitative research design was used as a vehicle to understand the meaning of these women's experience and how it impacted their career development as managers. A

narrative approach was used to understand each participant's story. This approach allowed for the voice of each participant to connect themselves to their social, cultural and institutional experiences (Moen, 2006). Furthermore, it helped shed light on the identity of each participant and how they viewed themselves through the process of restorying (Cresswell, 2013).

Restorying allowed the researcher to organize each participant's story into a particular framework in order to analyze for key themes on the basis of time, place and scene (Cresswell, 2013). As a researcher, I was able to corroborate ideas on the basis of a particular phenomenon, which aided in the process of coding for themes that added depth and insight to the voices of those who participated.

The participants for this study involved seven women executives from Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 companies who had obtained an EMBA. The participants were drawn from Association to Advance Collegiate School of Business (AACSB) colleges that offered an EMBA program. The AACSB is an accredited higher education organization that focuses on the development of excellent education programs. More importantly, graduation from AACSB programs are viewed as providing cutting-edge knowledge in the field of management (Executive MBA Council, 2015).

Two research questions guided this study:

1. What were the women's experience in context of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree?
2. How does the experience of completing an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program influence women's professional development?

The interview consisted of three major questions that focused on whether the EMBA had fulfilled the career expectations of each participant, followed by a question that centered on the support these women received while in school. The last question focused on the type of support the participants wished they had received while earning their EMBA. The final section of the interview focused on a personal experience related to the EMBA that not only was important to them personally, but an interaction that had a profound impact on them as either a person or as a manager. This question had ten questions entwined within this section of the interview in order to understand the significance of each participant's experience. Analysis consisted of creating a narrative story for each participant, which was then analyzed by the researcher to determine the prevailing themes related to the research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This was done for each individual participant, and the themes were analyzed across all the participants.

A number of findings emerged in response to the research questions. The first finding answered the question "*What were the women's experience in the context of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) degree?*" All of the respondents cited their reason for choosing this track over a conventional Master of Business Administration (MBA) was on the basis of its education and curriculum content and design. More importantly, the participants talked about how it was a degree that was recognized by their organizations as providing the necessary skills to lead in the twenty-first century.

The second finding, also associated with the first research question, was the importance of the graduate cohort. Five out of the seven respondents pointed to the

graduate cohort as playing an integral role in their lives. In most cases, the cohort acted as a network of support, providing advice on a personal and professional basis. The mentoring the participants received from the cohort members helped these women gain confidence as leaders. The other two participants pointed to their cohort's diverse leadership that helped them incorporate a management style that included the diversity of all stakeholders involved.

The third finding that emerged from this study answered the second question, "*How does the experience in context to the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) program influence women's professional development?*" All of the respondents cited how their organizations considered an EMBA as the validation needed to lead in the twenty-first century. The degree was cited as providing these women with a greater sense of financial independence, as six of the participants were promoted to key management positions within the upper-level management settings of their organizations. The seventh participant was already in a senior management position at the start of her EMBA. Upon the completion of her degree, this individual assumed greater responsibility on a committee reporting to her organization's Board of Directors.

### **Conclusions and Discussions**

This section will discuss the three primary conclusions centered in the themes of: 1) *Validation of the EMBA Degree*; 2) *Essential Support Builds Confidence*; and 3) *Curriculum Influenced the Choice of an EMBA Program*. Overall, the following conclusions emerged from this study are highlighted below:

1. The choice of an EMBA program can impact a woman's career trajectory in positive ways.

2. The success of pursuing an EMBA depends on multiple levels of support, both organizational and personal.
3. The design of the EMBA curriculum is key in attracting female students and providing them with the best leadership skills.

Below is a brief summary of the conclusions that were highlighted by the previous bullet points.

### **Validation of the EMBA Degree**

The theme *Validation of the EMBA Degree* exemplifies how societal influences within the participants environment that validate their reasons for earning an EMBA. The validation that emerged from the narratives of this study point to the concept of a woman's belief to successfully complete a task is tied to the observational learning and social experiences a woman encounters within their environment over time.

The literature review for this study indicated that the career development a woman chooses is tied to their self-efficacy. In fact, the influences of family, friends and the accessibility to certain career avenues available will influence what career path a woman chooses over time. These variables influence how women view their role in society and the control they have over their career development (Gottfriedson, 2005). Gottfriedson (1996) has stated that the various cues ingrained into a woman's schema will affect the career choices a woman will pursue over time.

Bandura (2008) stated an individual's strong sense of efficacy will enhance human accomplishments. In other words, people who experience a high-level of assurance as to their capabilities will be more willing to approach a difficult task based on their mastery of prior experiences. Therefore, a woman who experiences a high-level of assurance as to her capabilities as a manager will be more willing to earn an EMBA for her career

development. Failure to receive any assurance leads to a sense of disequilibrium, resulting in the creation of an avoidance of pursuing a particular task like earning an EMBA (Bandura, 1998).

This concept was apparent by how the participants mentioned the importance of the validation they had received both at home and at work, resulting in an effect on their personal self-efficacy. Without such validation, the participants would have been forced to opt out of going to graduate school in order to maintain a sense of balance within their environment. Georgette's story is an example of this aspect when she spoke on the importance of the support she had received from her family to raise her son while in graduate school. It was the validation Georgette needed at that point in her life as a working mother. Without a sense of validation, she would have been forced to "compromise" on her career development in order to maintain a sense of balance in her life (Gottfriedson, 2005).

As for those women whose family nucleus consisted of other members outside of a husband or children, validation was just as important to them as well. The validation they received from their parents or siblings provided them with a sense of balance that the choice they had made of going to graduate school was a good choice, as it provided a security blanket that would enhance their career development.

At work, the EMBA was seen as a validation tool that provided these women with the credentials associated with leadership in the twenty-first century. Boehner and O'Neil (2010) cited the importance of developing executive education programs that reflected the needs of the clients, utilizing specific knowledge and practices that focused on creating organizations that can compete in today's globalized economy. For this to

happen, executive education must focus on developing leadership skills that can create management effectiveness (Conger & Xiu, 2000).

### **Essential Supports Builds Confidence**

The second theme, *Essential Support Builds Confidence*, pertained to the importance of how the support the participants received at work and from their cohort members in graduate school was essential at bolstering their confidence as a manager. The findings of the research conducted for this study show how the support they received at work as in the form of the mentoring these women received from their bosses or other influential managers they were associated with. Segarra (2013) points out that members act like a personal Board of Directors that validate the decision a woman will make throughout their lives. As a result, it instilled a sense of confidence that empowered these women to succeed. Mentors help women establish their credibility as a leader by providing a blueprint on how they should exercise their authority within an environment where there is a presence of bias against women in leadership (Hermania, Ely & Kolb, 2010).

Most participants viewed the cohort as another source of support, providing a network these women could use as a sounding board. Bierma (2005) cited how women need networks, as there is a lack of such structures available to women within most corporate organizations. Networks are important to women as they allow for them to assimilate into a male-dominated culture while giving them the collective power to act as a catalyst that can advocate change within the organizations they work for. They allow for women to reflect on who they are in comparison to the organizations they work for, allowing for them to create a personal vision relative to their organization. Gosling and

Mintzberg (2004) have said it is important for a manager to reflect on their personal values in order to motivate others to achieve an organization's goals.

### **Curriculum Influenced the Choice of an EMBA Program**

The third theme, *Curriculum Influenced the Choice of an EMBA Program*, looked at how the design of an EMBA program was crucial as to why these women chose to earn the degree. One of the major reasons these women cited their choice for entering an EMBA program was its duration. The 18-month time period and condensed classes fit the work and home schedules of the participants. More importantly, the core content was seen as being essential in validating these women as future leaders. The group projects and class curriculum helped provide these women with new management skills that allowed for them to incorporate into their management schema in relation to their organization's environment.

Boehner and O'Neal (2005) have cited that the core content should be action-oriented, where the curriculum recognizes the importance of business as a profession. Therefore, EMBA programs should satisfy the needs of its stakeholders, while focusing on understanding one's environment in order to utilize an approach that will lead an organization to be successful in today's competitive environment. Rojas-Mendez and Almed (2004) went on to say how EMBA programs should reflect the environment in which the learner resides and reflect the educational preference of the student.

The literature review indicated how instructors in an executive education program facilitated solutions that are reflective of real-life situations within a work environment (Bell, 2003). In many instances, instructors were seen as delivering a program that was a results-oriented one, where it challenged students to use their critical thinking and

analytical skills (Boehner & O'Neil, 2010). Leaders who are unable to lead others find themselves being challenge by their competitors in a highly complex economy (Boyatzis, 2008). For leaders to be successful, they must truly understand who they are. This concept compliments Boyatzis' (2008) statement that effective communication is a by-product of understanding one's self in relation to their role as a leader.

### **Major Discussion of Findings**

Overall, there were a variety of factors that contributed to the reasons why these women choose to earn an EMBA. First of all, they had the support of key individuals within their organization that contributed to their success. These individuals were usually their managers or internal associates that acted as mentors. They provided feedback on the validation associated with an EMBA in relation to their role within their organization. These individuals understood the confinements of a male-dominated culture that existed within the confinements of their environment and how the degree would help combat some of these confinements as they strove to improve their career development. They were instrumental in guiding these women toward considering an EMBA as a part of their career development.

Another by-product of this study was the importance of the graduate cohort. As it was mentioned earlier, the cohort acted as a sounding board. At times, they provided advice on personal issues. Other times they provided management strategies that allow for the participants of this study to reflect and ingrain into their management schema. They provided peer mentoring that was not available to these women at work. Many of them spoke on how there was a lack of any mentoring or networks within their organizations. This was based on the fact that many of the organizations these

participants worked for had a firmly entrenched male-dominated cultures that did not look favorably upon a network for women managers.

Another concept that emerged from this study was the importance of the EMBA program itself. Many of the women who participated in this study understood how the degree validated their development as a manager. In fact, many of them cited how their organizations saw it as the criteria for developing leaders for the twenty-first century. The program was designed for individuals with management expertise. It was a degree that was more than just the "nuts and bolts" of management. The material that was taught was based on real-life cases within the management field by instructors with years of management experience. Many of the participants spoke on how the group sessions they encountered provided a blueprint for how to manage diverse groups in a complex environment.

In addition to the concept of curriculum design, the instructors were seen as a major focal point of the curriculum, utilizing management strategies and their experience to teach cohort members new leadership skills. Most of the participants spoke on how the instructors were interested in helping them develop as a leader. In other instances, instructors were seen as motivators.

Overall, the program was unique for many of the participants, from its design to the mentoring network associated with the program cohort. The experience these women encountered would not have been possible without the validation they received both at home and at work. It provided them with a sense of confidence that the achievement of this degree would enhance their career development as a manager.

## **Limitations**

Replication is essential for maintaining internal validity. The narrative process of restorying helped obtain as close as possible a real-life situation as to the phenomenon being investigated. The voices of the seven who participated helped understand a woman's experience in context to earning an EMBA. Despite the similarities in stories, the data cannot be generalized to all women managers with an EMBA.

For this study, there were a few limitations that emerged as a by-product of how the study was conducted. The first limitation was the number of participants used for this study. The number chosen to participate was seven individuals in order to accommodate for the time constraints associated with this study. It is a sample size that represents the minimum number of participants considered essential to conduct a qualitative study.

Another limitation that emerged was a lack of comparison on the basis of color and race. For this study, two out of the seven individuals who participated in this study were of a different color or race. In fact, one of them was a first generation Chinese descent who came to North America as a baby. The final limitation was how these participants compared on the basis of gender. For the purpose of this study, the focal point was on women executives within a Fortune 500 or Fortune 1000 firm.

The lack of participants on the basis of sample size, gender, race or color can be attributed to the qualitative process used to collect the data. Snowballing was used to obtain the participants for this study. It is a qualitative data collection method that depends on those who participate to refer additional candidates with the credentials associated with this study. Overall, snowballing provides control over the data a

researcher is seeking to collect. At the same time, it limits the collection of data on the basis of diversity as to race, gender, or color.

### **Future Research**

As mentioned in the limitations of this study, it is not certain how the impact of an EMBA affects women on the basis of color, race or gender to other women on a global basis. To better understand this phenomenon, it is recommended a comparative qualitative study involving women of color or race be performed. Again, the focus would be on women who work for large corporate mega-structures in North America. A study of this magnitude help in understanding if is a significant difference in social, cultural, and academic preparation from those gathered from the participants of this study. The criteria utilized to pick the participants were women executives from the financial and operational sectors of these mega-structures to allow for a good comparative study to determine if the results of such a study measure to the results obtained from this study.

In addition to recommending further research involving race and color, it is recommended another comparative study be performed on women within the corporate pipelines of mega-corporate structures in global areas such as Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. By focusing on these countries, data could be obtained on major competitors that contributed to our global economy. A study of this nature would help determine how women of race and color from these countries view the importance of executive education and whether it can enhance their career development within those global corporate pipeline systems. Furthermore, a study that focused on executives from Africa would provide data on how women of color fare in comparison to Caucasian

women executives who possess the same credentials and how they view their experience as an executive within the corporate pipeline of the organizations for whom they work.

As for the issue of gender, I recommend a comparative qualitative study be conducted in order to see how male and female managers with an EMBA have fared when it comes to their career potential as an executive. It is assumed that male executives in large organizations share a different experience in comparison to their female counterparts due to how organizations view leadership. Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Kim Man (2010) have pointed out how the "old boy network" is heavily entrenched within most organizational cultures. In essence, men are viewed more favorably than women when it comes to management. They suggest there are a variety of system checks that have been established within many organizations. That prevents women from achieving their true potential. Therefore, a comparative qualitative study would help in determine if societal pressure make a difference on how men and women progress within the management pipeline of the organizations they work for, especially if they have the same credentials as those of the participants of this study. Again, a study of this magnitude can help determine if gender or academic credentials, or a combination of both, play a bearing on how one progresses in their career development through the corporate pipeline.

Another topic that emerged concerned two of the participants who had moved into senior management positions after graduating with their EMBA, deciding to change their career development track. For instance, Anka, had stated that despite moving into a senior management, she was not interested in advancing further. In fact, she mentioned how she wanted to pursue "other avenues" outside of the financial industry. She went on

to say she might want to teach and talked about the possibility of going back to graduate school to obtain an Ph.D. in order to teach at a collegiate level.

Lee's decision to leave the corporate world is a by-product of the reflective processes she learned while in the EMBA program. While in the program, she learned how to re-examine her deeply-held values in order to understand her personal vision. Boyatzis and McKee (2005) have stated it is important to understand one's self in order to motivate others to follow. For Lee, she had determined her personal vision did not match the goals of the organization she worked for. Hence, her decision to leave. The graduate cohort reinforced Lee's personal vision, by acting as a sounding board and cheerleaders that gave her the confidence to make a career decision.

The examples provided by Anka and Lee lead to the emergence of a study that would involve women who have obtained an EMBA and then decide to leave their career as a senior-level manager. A study of this magnitude could lead to a discovery of why women who have worked for organizations for years decided to pursue a different career path. The information obtained from such a study would help determine if a woman's personal vision matches the organizations for whom they work, or if that vision is totally different that it affects how they motivate their subordinates to achieve strategic goals.

### **Recommendations and Implications for Practice and Research**

The future research recommendations that have been presented thus far is believed to help generate data on how higher education institutions can examine whether their executive education programs are fitting the needs of all stakeholders involved, especially the needs of women managers across the globe. It is hoped that studies of this magnitude not only aid educational institutions understand how they can attract women to

enroll in executive education programs, but also help them educate the senior management circles of various organizations that changes need to be incorporated into their culture in order to help retain and promote female executives to become the future leaders of these structures around the world.

My goal for writing this dissertation was to help educators understand why there are not more female executives considering an EMBA as a means of enhancing their career development. The data obtained during my research was aimed at providing insight as to why those who had achieved an EMBA did so and how it benefited their career as a manager upon its completion. This was a significant focal point of this study, as there is a great need for competent managers to help lead many organizations in the twenty-first century. It is essential for higher education to understand the importance of executive education and how it relates to recruiting competent managers within the management pipelines of these major organizations. There are many Baby Boomers who are leaving high-ranking positions now and in the next few years that need to be replaced by competent executives.

Women executives who are considering an EMBA find it important that they have the necessary support and balance to succeed. It plays a significant role on a woman's self-efficacy and the success they will achieve within their organization. Corporate America will have a better chance of surviving if higher education shows a commitment to women who are considering executive education as a means of enhancing their career. It will help organizations better survive by providing a pool of talent that can become the future leaders.

Based on the findings of the phenomenon associated with the participants interviewed, there are two major recommendations that will be suggested. The suggestions that are offered are geared toward women managers and prospective collegiate administrators in charge of EMBA programs. The following suggestions are intended to help attract qualified women managers to pursue an EMBA degree.

The participants spoke on the importance of support as a determining factor as to why these women pursued an EMBA. Strong ties at home and at work were essential for these women to succeed. The support they received from key individuals helped reinforce a sense of self-efficacy, and hence, their confidences in the ability to perform the role responsibilities they felt were necessary as a wife, mother or manager. A lack of support would have created a sense of disequilibrium, whereby they would have found it impossible to perform their societal duties without incurring a sense of stress. Bandura (2008) has stated the stress associated with the disequilibrium in one's life would have forced many of the participants to abandon their goals of earning this degree.

Support is the key to reinforcing a woman's sense of confidence. In order to attract women to consider an EMBA for their career development, it is recommended that higher education look at developing a peer mentoring network that would be geared toward females pursuing an EMBA. The mentors chosen for this task would be female managers that have graduated from an EMBA program. Utilizing former EMBA female graduates not only help attract future candidates, but also provide current students with a blueprint for success as a manager. College administrators would provide the qualified mentors instructional training that would help them guide female cohort members to succeed.

The guidance received from these mentors would probably bolster the self-efficacy of female managers, leading to a greater sense of confidence that could empower them to succeed within the corporate pipeline of their organization. As women move into senior management positions, their empowerment could lead to a greater presence of women at the senior management level, thereby leading to a change in the cultural structures of many organizations where the glass ceiling might cease to exist.

The concept of empowerment on the basis of a peer mentoring network relates to what Bierma (2005) states about how networks help women assimilate into a male-dominated culture while receiving the collective power and confidence that is needed to advocate organizational change. In other words, women would be more willing to seek senior-level positions as a result of the power and confidence they receive from a support system involving former EMBA women managers.

Peer mentoring serves as a sounding board for female students by providing support, encouragement and information as needed. It is a special relationship whereby an experienced individual provides advice and support that helps a novice individual to grow. Those who are peer mentors serve as role models to those they guide (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

The coursework for a peer mentoring network in higher education would consist of multiple training sessions over a period of time, focusing on the importance of mentoring students to succeed. The training would focus on acting as a sounding board for students to voice their concerns and to allow for them to discover their personal vision. This discovery is essential in order to create a leader that understand themselves and can motivate others to achieve an organization's goals (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

Each mentor would work with a maximum of four females from a cohort, starting at the beginning when a student enters the program to when they exit upon their graduation.

College administrators would set up a social media website that would be dedicated to EMBA mentoring. It would be a place where mentors and mentees could interact while in the EMBA program. Mentors would work with their assigned protégés and college administrators on a bi-weekly basis to ensure students were receiving the support they need to succeed (Terrion & Phillion, 2008). In addition, follow-up training sessions and meetings would be instituted in order to ensure these mentors were abiding to the college's administrative policies. These training sessions would allow for mentors to collaborate on ideas or changes that might need to be incorporated into the network to ensure its success. More importantly, to ensure that its integrity was maintained on a consistent basis (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

Once a female executive finished their EMBA, they would be asked to provide an evaluation of their mentoring experience to ensure it was successful in assisting in their career development. More importantly, graduates would be asked if they wanted to become future peer mentors themselves. The evaluation would also ask for contact information, whereby the graduate could be contacted later on to see how their career had progressed since graduation.

Utilizing a peer mentoring program as cited above can help academic administrators re-package how executive education is viewed on the basis of gender. Most educational programs are usually marketed with male-dominated features that focus management techniques that promote the maintaining of an organization's status quo of how leadership is viewed in society. By focusing on the needs of women executives,

academic administrators are stating how important women are to the success of organizations of the twenty-first century.

As was previously mentioned, mentoring provides students with a personal board of directors and a network that provides support as to what is possible while a student and beyond the confinements of the educational system (Segarra, 2013). Therefore, a peer mentoring network within a higher educational institution will allow for women to feel a sense of belonging and understanding that higher education values the importance of the social and cultural responsibilities women encounter within their environment. These responsibilities are a by-product of what society dictates and must be considered when helping these women become future leaders (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

In addition to formulating a peer mentoring network program at the collegiate level, it is recommended that organizations consider establishing their own internal mentoring network. College administrators would approach senior level executives within their community as a means of suggesting such a program. The targeted organizations would consist of Fortune 500 or Fortune 1000 Companies. The goal would be to seek their assistance at identifying women within their management pipeline that had the qualification for moving into a senior-level management position in the future.

The organization of such a network would involve both collegiate administrators and key senior level managers within these organizations. In most cases, Senior Directors of Human Resources and Chief Operating Officers would be utilized to develop such a program. Utilizing these key level executives would help identify female executives that would benefit from earning an EMBA. The uniqueness of such a program is that it would be a bi-partisan effort, where the goal would be to recruit the

talent that reflects the needs of all stakeholders involved. In this particular case, a program at the corporate level may utilize male role models as mentors if they identify with their female counterparts.

Senge (2006) has stated, a program of this nature would create women leaders on the basis of transformational learning, where the goal would be to meet the challenges of a globalized economy in the twenty-first century. It may be possible for educational institutions to seek government assistance on the behalf of all major corporations who participate in such a program. That assistance could be a tax credit for the development of all qualified women managers within their organization that participate in such a program.

The concept of transformational learning ties closely to Bass' Theory of Transformational Leadership. In this particular case, the knowledge gained from a mentoring network program at the corporate level might inspire women who participate to become energetic, passionate and enthusiastic about leading others to achieve an organization's goals (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). It might lead women to focus on sharing their vision with others in order to convince those they lead to follow through with completing an organization's goals (Akter, Ghaynas, & Adil, 2013). More importantly, it might help women understanding the importance of executive education and decide on pursuing an EMBA not only for their career development, but enhance their personal self.

It is believed that the development of such a program at the corporate level of a major organization might be impossible to fully implement based on a variety of organizational constraints imposed by an organization's culture. While the talent may be

present and ready for development, a woman may be hesitant to participate on the basis of the perception of how they are viewed by their peers. This perception is due to male-dominated management styles that exist within many organizational structures (Dimovski, Skerlavaj, & Kim Man, 2010). According to Bierma (2005), women are hesitant about joining such a networking program at work, citing how they fear that their participation in such a program might be viewed negatively by their peers as being "recipe swapping male bashers" (p. 216).

Despite the negativity associated with such a venture, it is a recommendation worth pursuing as its implementation might bolster the self-efficacy of women within the corporate pipeline. In fact, a women's network at a corporate level might encourage a more diverse organizational structure that would compete more effectively on a global basis with its competitors (Bierma, 2005).

### **Conclusion**

Executive education can help develop the necessary talent needed to help the hemorrhaging of talent leaving due to the retirement of many senior-level Baby Boomers. Hopefully, by suggesting peer mentoring on the part of former female EMBA graduates or the development of an internal mentoring network within many organizations will lead more women executives to consider earning an EMBA. More importantly, peer mentoring networks would help women develop a sense of confidence as a leader.

As women executives assume key leadership positions, they may be able to create the change that is needed in many organizations in the twenty-first century. Hopefully, this will mean the abolishment of the male-dominated ideology associated with who can lead and how society defines the importance of women in management (Bierma, 2005).

Furthermore, as women enter key leadership positions, they will be able to build the social capital needed within their organizations that will help break an organization's status quo when it comes to culture. As this happens, it will hopefully help women gain a greater sense of financial independence that can be passed on to women of future generations.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A



**Cleveland State University**  
*engaged learning*

*College of Education and Human Services  
Counseling, Administration, Supervision and Adult Learning*

### Consent Form

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in a research study titled "Executive MBA Programs: Impact on Female Executive Career Development" conducted by doctoral student Monica A. Butko from the PhD in Urban Education Department at Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, USA (216-687-4697) under the direction of Dr. Catherine H. Monaghan (216-687-5509), Leadership and Lifelong Learning specialization. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty, I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me.

1. The purpose of this study is to understand how an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) has impacted the professional lives of women who have attained this degree. Through my participation in this study I will be contributing to the knowledge in this area and I may gain some personal insights.
2. If I volunteer to take part in this study I will be asked to do the following things:
  - a. Participate in this study will require a personal interview with the researcher lasting from 45 minutes to an hour. A brief follow-up telephone interview may be necessary if the researcher needs to clarify information. The interview will be tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher.
  - b. The participant will be asked to review their transcript for accuracy. The amended transcript must then be returned to the researcher.
  - c. Interviews will be conducted off-site from the workplace.
3. No discomforts or stresses are expected beyond those of daily living.

- 4. I understand that there are no foreseen risks involved in this research.
- 5. The results of this participation will be confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form unless otherwise required by law. All publications from the research will use pseudonyms. The tape recording of my interview will be destroyed at the completion of the study and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in an office at the CASAL Department in the College of Education at Cleveland State University, 2121 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44115, for a period of three years, at which time it will then be destroyed.
- 6. The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the interview and project, and can be reached at 216-402-9387 or can be reached by e-mail at mbutko@att.net. Or, the participant may speak to the Principal Investigator, Dr. Catherine Monaghan, by phone at 216-875-9920, or by e-mail at c.monaghan@csuohio.edu.

I hope you enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences with others. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Consent Statement and Signature

**I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject I can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.**

=====

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
Monica A. Butko Phone: (216) 402-9387 E-mail: mbutko@att.net		

Name of Participant	Signature	Date

=====

**PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS LETTER AND RETURN ONE TO THE RESEARCHER.**

*Mailing Address: 2121 Euclid Avenue, JH 275, Cleveland, Ohio 44115  
 Campus Location: Julka Hall 275, 2485 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio  
 P: 216-687-4613 F:216-687-5378*

APPENDIX B

SELECTION CRITERIA QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How many years of management experience do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long has it been since you completed your EMBA?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your current title and current area of responsibility? How long have you been in your position?  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ Area of Business \_\_\_\_\_  
No. Years \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your geographic location?

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Did the EMBA program fulfill your career expectations?
2. What type of support did you receive while completing your EMBA?
3. What kind of support do you wish you would have received while working on your EMBA?

### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

Please tell me about a powerful experience you had related to the EMBA program you completed. This experience would be an event or interaction that you can recall vividly because it stands out in your memory as being important. For the purpose of this interview, it is an event or discussion where you learned something that was personally important to you. This experience may have occurred at any time during your attendance in the EMBA program.

**Use as much details as possible to describe this experience.**

1. What happened?
2. Who was involved?
3. In what ways did the social location of the event and the individuals involved affect this experience?
4. How did you react or participate in this experience?
5. What were your feelings?
6. What meaning did this experience have for you?
7. What did you learn from this experience?
8. What helped you to learn?
9. Did anything hinder your learning?

10. When you think back on this experience, how could that helped you learn even more than the knowledge you obtained from the EMBA?
11. How did this program affect your career development?
12. What could have been done to improve your experience and the effect on your professional career development?