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# Why Leader-Member Exchange Is Important to Business Thinking

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Linda Coto

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Why Leader-Member Exchange Is Important to Business Thinking

by

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MS, Walden University, 2010

BA, Lakeland College, 1984

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

Leadership style affects the workforce and is one of many vital elements in business operations. Prior research suggests that leadership style can affect production outcomes and employee turnover ratios, yet scant evidence suggests the effect of leadership style on business thinking. This qualitative grounded theory study investigated the extent to which a leadership style known as LMX theory drives business thinking. The information gained from this study, including the effect on business thinking, may enhance how companies coach their leaders to interact with subordinates and improve production outcomes. Participants came from either private and public-sector companies or agencies. The sample consisted of 26 participants who were asked about their supervisor's leadership style and its effect on their business thinking. Business thinking for this study was thinking derived from business processes, meetings, and interactions between subordinates and managers. Constant comparison allowed for the development of codes about employee attitude and leadership. What emerged was a grounded theory, suggesting that leadership style can challenge business thinking, specifically, that leadership style may trigger subordinates to change their business thinking when exposed to adverse direction. Divergent responses showed that collaborative leaders had subordinates who were progressive and interactive due to nonjudgmental focus. Positive social change can occur from this study through its use by public and private sector supervisors. Supervisors can incorporate the use of leadership style to develop improved business thinking among employee populations.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### Introduction

Hunt and Shehryar (2011) and Nishii and Mayer (2009) have noted that leadership is important for a strong business. Prosperous businesses have great leaders and strong subordinates (Fleck, 2010). Leadership style then should significantly effect company subordinates. In this study, I assessed whether leader-member exchange (LMX) management theory influences business thinking. I defined *business thinking* as a form of intellectual exploration, open-forum discussions about new business products and/or processes, and exchange-based conversations between supervisors and subordinates. LMX theory is a management leadership style that consists of mutual respect within relationships between subordinates and managers (Schyns & Day, 2010). A leader can include subordinates in more of the decisions and discussions using the more-inclusive approach that LMX style leadership represents (Sin, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2009). Burns and Otte (1999) explained that the inclusive approach is the act of uniting all members of a given team in decisions and implementing business transactions. Schyns and Day (2010) portrayed that the inclusive approach is a method of maintaining the leader-follower relationship while continuing to develop business innovativeness. Throughout this study, I used the words *follower* and *subordinate* interchangeably to explain the relationship between a manager and his or her nonmanagement employee.

Barratt (2004) described business thinking as functional thinking that runs across an organization and includes all departments. Leader and subordinate business thinking was, for this study, thoughts incorporated into actions, such as offering ideas during a

meeting or contributing an idea to improve a process, that change or affect business strategies (Blowfield, 2005; Williams, 2004). Business strategy through leadership influence includes the scope of business thinking, utilization of thoughts derived from business thinking, and assessing whether management actions alter business thinking between a leader and subordinate (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Later in this chapter, I define *business thinking* and *LMX theory*.

### **Background**

LMX theory defines the relationship between leader and subordinate. The leadership style known as LMX theory is recognized by the professional exchange relationship between the subordinate and manager (van Breukelen, Schyns & Le Blanc, 2006). Although Pelled and Xin (2000) noted many variances in LMX theory definitions, the principal take away from the exploration of leadership styles was that the leader subordinate relationship of respect and inclusion is central. Sparrowe, Soetjijto, and Kraimer (2006) explained the importance of the exchange approach to LMX style leadership and management. Sparrowe et al. further explain that the exchange approach can work regardless of location, team makeup, or employee level within the company. Leaders who include their subordinates in decisions can broaden the potential of each employee. This gives strengthened opportunity for the employee to cultivate business thoughts because of the respectful relationship with his or her leader (Cramer, Van Der Heijden, & Jonker, 2006).

Kang and Stewart (2007) showed that LMX style leadership was used as a value-added instrument incorporating beneficial leadership skills that improve processes and

outcomes. Processes and outcomes can include factors such as employee turnover rates, process efficiency, profit improvement, and new product development (Fleck, 2010; van Breukelen et al., 2006). Nishii and Mayer (2009) explained how groundbreaking business thinking could lead to increased sales because innovation leads to more marketable products. Nishii and Mayer showed findings affirming that companies receiving information through exchanges between their leaders and subordinates produced new ideas that led to sales from new demographics. Allowing the open idea can lead to increased sales through innovation originated from member exchanges (Fleck, 2010). This type of improvement along with sound financial practices could lead to higher profits (Fleck, 2010; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2011). The potential improvement of profits along with desirable outcomes explains why companies are applying LMX style traits to their leadership to become a more inclusive, highly desirable place of employment (Fleck, 2010; van Breukelen et al., 2006).

Van Breukelen et al. (2006) went on to rationalize how LMX style leadership is more inclusive than the standard leadership models of the past. LMX style incorporates leadership influence over subordinates but in a manner, that is inclusive, trusting, and productive (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Inclusion is an important leadership tool to gain respect from subordinates while enhancing business productivity and outcomes (Sin et al., 2009). Inclusion improves the relationship between leader and subordinate but, more important, decreases employee turnover through greater employment retention rates and job satisfaction (Beehr et al, 2006). Including subordinates in decisions to improve or change how a business operates has a two-prong effect on outcomes. The leader's first opportunity to interact in a new LMX relationship is to nurture a respectful relationship

with his or her subordinates making day-to-day operations less stressful (Sin et al., 2009). The second leadership opportunity is to enhance the subordinate business thinking proficiencies. An employee who is respected and allowed to interact in business decisions is more likely to improve his or her business thinking skills (Ayad, 2009).

Cramer et al. (2006) explained the concept of business thinking as thoughts used to enhance, change, or improve business. The business thoughts can come from leaders and subordinates. Cramer, et al. then explained how business thinking that develops into meaningful conversations between leaders and subordinates can enhance decisions made by leaders. The direct communication can encourage changes in current production methods, discussion of ethical violations, and employee recognition efforts.

Porter and Kramer (2011) described how businesses using employee concepts that result from skillful business thinking, has changed how products are manufactured at many companies. Companies can integrate ideas brought forth by subordinates in their workforce who cultivate innovation allowing for quicker product launch into the marketplace (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Changes to corporate processes can enhance the use of information more closely related to their targeted product sales. Fostering innovation and using accomplished business thinking skills can also improve employee relations, and encourage the workforce and develop the rapport coming from a positive work environment. Fleck (2010) explained how employee satisfaction can improve the quality of candidates applying for jobs in the company because the reputation of trusting, sincere leaders is encouraging to prospective employees.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Leadership is the act of leading people, whereas leadership style is the method for which the act takes place (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Leadership style affects the workforce both positively and negatively. The problem in many companies is that leadership styles lack the connection between business thinking and improved production outcomes. LMX theory focuses on the exchange that takes place between manager and subordinate and the importance that this association has on the overall business relationship (Nishii & Mayer, 2007). I focused on LMX theory, which alters manager and subordinate work style both positively and negatively (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Roberson, 2006).

A skilled leader understands how the interaction between themselves and their subordinate's changes and challenges how business operations take place (Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012). This is important because, as noted by Rank, Nelson, Allen, and Xu (2009) and Voegtlin et al. (2012), businesses in the 21st century need innovative ideas and committed employees to remain or become successful. A successful company could be defined as one with profitable and socially responsible leaders and subordinates dedicated to continual improvement of business objectives (Hunt & Shehryar, 2011; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Many leadership styles have proven successful and continue to enhance the profits of their employers. Herring (2009) explained that companies can continue using this idea so that leadership can add additional dimensions affecting employee retention and productivity, which could change profits. Leadership style is

shown to be the link between profits and a strong business model of success (Fleck, 2011).

Classification of leadership styles relate to subordinate relationships and interactions. One such leadership style, Laissez faire, is characterized as one whose leaders have a hands-off approach (Boies, Lvina, & Martens, 2010). Boies et al. (2010) further clarify that subordinates can become unfocused and lacking motivation when the leaders come across as apathetic. Subordinates want to understand their place in the corporate mission and need direction to gain this understanding (Fleck, 2011). The Laissez faire leadership style is hands off while permitting the subordinate to figure out their own method for managing tasks. As Boies et al. (2010) and Fleck (2011) explained, this can be positive for many subordinates but some subordinates need additional input. The lack of input could reduce business thinking because the subordinate is unsure of how beneficial business thinking is derived. I will define *business thinking* later.

On the other hand, a leader who does not allow the subordinates to have a say in business matters may be reducing the potential business thinking and subsequent idea submission from a subordinate (Rank, et al., 2009; Voegtlin et al., 2012). Many leadership styles are autocratic and do not allow subordinates a forum to propose ideas. Rank, et al. (2009) described autocratic leadership style as authoritarian. Authoritarian leaders are known to reduce the self-esteem and positive attitude of the subordinates reporting to them through continued disregard of recommendations for improvement (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Rank, et al., 2009; Voegtlin et al., 2012). A leadership style that demonstrates inclusivity and embraces new ideas may improve corporate outcomes. I

sought to determine whether leadership style, particularly LMX theory-based leadership style, changes business thinking as defined in this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

My purpose in this research was to show how leadership style affects business thinking in the workplace. There has been inadequate-effort to determine whether leadership style of managers affects business thinking of subordinates. Because of this, my goals in this study were to explore the connection between the leadership style derived in LMX theory and business thinking.

LMX style encourages strong relationships between leaders and subordinates and idea generation is welcomed (Cramer, et al., 2006). LMX-style leaders have a more inclusive and more hands-on approach to developing subordinate work methods than do leaders with a more authoritarian style leadership (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). LMX leaders develop loyal and trusting relationships using strengths realized by the close working interactions with their subordinates (Kang & Stewart, 2007).

The company leadership style, as embodied in the actions of its executives and leaders, can change the dynamics of an entire team. I chose LMX leadership instead of other management styles because of the strong characteristics for inclusion of all members of the workforce (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). LMX leadership influences a company in positive ways through improved employee relationships and enhanced productivity (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). LMX leadership is inclusive because the supervisor is using ideas from many team members and developing teamwork proficiencies (van Breukelen et al., 2006). A diverse population of leaders and subordinates who engage in

skillful business thinking can be included in process development and business decisions can improve outcomes (Nag, 2005). LMX theory illustrates how to utilize the inclusive process of manager-subordinate interaction (van Breukelen et al., 2006). In my study, I examined whether business thinking in a workforce population is differentiated by the LMX leadership philosophy.

I used the grounded theory approach because in this approach, the participants can describe how management style affects their business thinking in the workplace (Glaser, 1998). The knowledge gained through the interviews conducted for this study may highlight traits that leaders embody, such as LMX theory qualities (van Breukelen et al., 2006). Grounded theory can be used systematically to derive coding and patterns to learn what subordinates believe about how their leaders affect their business thinking (Glaser, 1998). I chose LMX leadership traits because of the high-quality communication between the manager and subordinate as part of the foundation of healthy business practices in successful companies (van Breukelen et al., 2006). Other leadership theories were found, by researchers I have cited, to be based solely on fear or did not examine how a subordinate-leader relationship affects communication such as business thinking (Hunt & Shehryar, 2011; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; van Breukelen et al., 2006).

### **Theoretical Basis for the Study**

LMX, because of its collaborative and inclusive nature, was the theoretical basis my research. I chose this model to find whether leadership styles can influence business thinking. The subordinate uses business thinking, which is thinking derived from business processes, meetings, and interactions between subordinates and managers (Porter &

Kramer, 2011). Business thinking can potentially move corporate requisites forward through innovation that comes from positive business thinking (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). LMX leadership offers leaders an inclusive scheme to develop working relationships with all subordinates (van Breukelen et al., 2006). Managers driven by LMX style could change communication patterns inside their companies (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). The managers can develop methods that allow subordinates to become useful team members. LMX-style leaders develop trusting, loyal relationships with their subordinates, giving them tasks that complement their natural skill sets (Kang & Stewart, 2007). Kang and Stewart indicated that leadership using LMX style is based more on the relationship rather than the skills of the leader. The relationship becomes the cornerstone of the leader-subordinate working connection (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Kang & Stewart, 2007). Typical leadership styles embrace a trait approach where the leader's dominance over the subordinates is the tactic typically prescribed for completing work (van Breukelen et al., 2006). LMX style uses a transactional and process approach because of the way the leaders work with the subordinates based on individual capabilities (van Breukelen et al., 2006).

In this study, I sought to clarify whether leadership style affects business thinking in the workplace. Van Breukelen et al. (2006) and Kang and Stewart (2007) explained that companies must understand leadership effects before they can apply the characterizations to the corporate mission. In LMX style, the leadership design becomes part of the overall corporate mission because of the relationship between leader and subordinate (van Breukelen et al., 2006). Cramer et al. (2006) described how corporations develop their mission statements based on the high-quality working relationships a leader

and the subordinate have with each other. Companies who do not espouse strong leadership development may not delineate their leadership methods as pertinently as those companies who show leadership development as a basis for well-constructed leadership methods (Cramer et al., 2006; Kang & Stewart, 2007). Though this statement may be true, the challenge remains to find companies emphasizing the leadership style their company endorses.

Leaders using LMX style attributes tend to make subordinate differences a positive aspect of the working relationship (Kang & Stewart, 2007). Managers employing other leadership styles may see workers who are more outgoing as more intelligent and, therefore, equipped to lead a project (Cramer et al., 2006; Fleck, 2010; Kang & Stewart, 2007). Team dynamics can be affected by people who are more outgoing and open, and without a strong leader, they can quickly negate positive outcomes (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Mitchell, Nicholas, & Boyle, 2009; Schyns & Day, 1997). Leaders driven by LMX style elements can shift the emphasis from outgoing subordinates to individual subordinates by exploiting strengths to direct interactions. This progressive manner can include subordinates from every background and department by encouraging complete participation in meetings (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Companies can refine outcomes by using the business thinking of their subordinates. It is an act of inclusion when the people involved in the company are making pertinent decisions that affect company outcomes (Fleck, 2010; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Schyns & Day, 1997). Ross-Gordon and Brooks (2004) explained how leaders and human resources professionals are tasked with getting team members and co-workers to work cohesively and effectively.

Chapter 2 will detail research describing the direct connection to leadership and positive subordinate relationships.

### **Research Question**

Does the leadership style known as LMX theory drive business thinking?

### **Research Design**

A grounded theory study is developed by collecting data from interview questions. I collected the data for the study by conducting interviews with managers and subordinates. I used the interviews to analyze the leadership style used by the interviewed subjects (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). I used the interview questions to gather information about attitudes, experiences, and characteristics of leaders and their subordinates (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Business thinking was self assessed by subjects through a tool called structured reflection, which is designed to collect thoughts developed at the time the question is asked to invoke the strongest definition (Mair, 2010).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that participants being interviewed would give an unbiased opinion of leadership. I assumed that opinions should include how his or her skills are exercised and developed. It is important to know if the subordinates believe that their business thinking and ideas that result from this thinking are heard and sometimes used by his or her leaders.

I also assumed that the interviewees would be able to describe LMX traits that their leader possesses. The qualitative research format allowed me to explore the type of leadership traits that are displayed by the subject's leader but did not drive the participant to answer specifically to LMX style leadership responses. LMX leadership style was the chosen framework for effect but, in the end, may not be the deciding leadership style that plays the role in business thinking. Knowledge of this situation is important because it will help with the business thinking assessment of the workforce and its leadership efforts. I determined whether the effect of LMX style on business thinking can be validated effectively. Business thinking is a concept not often used in research because of its broad range of definitions (Cramer et al., 2006). Through constant comparison done during interview and analysis phases with the grounded theory methodology, the leadership style and subsequent challenge to business thinking was exposed (Glaser, 1998). Cramer et al. also indicated that definitions can often be explained as acting and not thinking. I had to assume the basis of business thinking came from the interaction and leadership style of the leader and not just the act of thinking on general terms.

The traits for LMX theory can be closely to other leadership theories where generation of trust drives managers and relationships (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). I designed the interview questions to ensure that displayed traits emulated LMX style leadership and no other theories.

Business thinking, as defined in the study, was an assumption based on the honest and forthright answers given by subject being interviewed. The subject's mood, stress level, and atmosphere may have affected answers given about their leaders and their business thinking deliberations. The grounded theory approach accounts for the variations

through constant comparison and categories that were exposed through interviews with subjects (Glaser, 1998). This approach required saturation of the topic to allow an accurate conclusion of the results, thereby reduced the level of bias due to circumstances (Glaser, 1998). The challenge in the research was the definition of *business thinking* and how it is measured in company performance outcomes. Mair (2010) developed a research tool to track “reflections” from students at a university. Thoughts of the participant were tracked and recorded for significance. With the data, and a solid definition of the type of thoughts, thought types were assigned by specified class schedule and level (Mair, 2010). The assumption was that self-reflection is categorically an effective measure of business thinking. The method can be used to determine the effect of leadership on business thinking.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Because I focused on LMX theory and whether this theory changes business thinking, I did not include other leadership styles in the study. I focused on leadership style and its effect on the workforce business thinking. This study included interviews taking place with both leaders and subordinates in varied subordinate/manager relationships. The interview questions were designed to get a baseline assessment of how leadership changes or does not change business thinking. My primary goal was to explore how management style enhances business thinking in the workforce.

### **Limitations**

Common factors limit psychological research. First, use of limited-scope interview questions did not allow for an assessment of overall cause and effect.

Subsequently, I could not test whether LMX style and its effect on business thinking of subordinates caused a successful organizational transformation. Second, interview answers were subjective rather than objective. Respondents changed how information was disseminated from their managers, producing response bias. Bias can be reduced in a grounded theory study using constant comparison and saturation of major themes exposed during the interviews with subjects (Glaser, 1998). Third, the use of interview questions to collect data regarding leadership effect did not fully explain leadership style's influence on business thinking. The subject being interviewed, with terminology, explained a leader's actions and responses. The use of limited business scope precluded specific results using both private and public-sector businesses of all sizes. Last, the limited population being interviewed resulted in inferences that may not specifically establish that business thinking is different because of LMX style alone.

### **Definitions of Terms**

I used the following terms and definitions in this study:

*Business thinking* is thinking derived from business processes, meetings, and interactions between subordinates and managers (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

*Inclusion* is a leadership representation that uses the services of all members of a team to accomplish the goal propelled by the relationship between subordinate and leader (Conger, Kanungo, and Menon, 2000; Kang & Stewart, 2007).

*Leader* in this research was defined as the person responsible for coaching in the workplace to promote and encourage the practices as set for by the chief owner and the stockholders (Fleck, 2010; van Breukelen et al., 2006).

*Leader-member exchange (LMX) style* posits that leaders have a relationship with their subordinates that consist of trust and team value with an inclusive element leading to loyalty and motivation (Nag, 2005; Parham & Muller, 2008; van Breukelen et al., 2006).

*Production outcomes* are defined in this research as profit levels, turnover rates, sales ratios, and productivity in a company environment populated by leaders and subordinates (Fleck, 2010; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007).

*Subordinate* in this research was defined as the people in a workplace setting responsible for performing tasks required to produce or promote products and services developed by the owner and leaders of the corporate setting for which they work (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Schyns & Day, 1997). The subordinate in this research took his or her directive from the leader.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study demonstrated how workforce inclusion using LMX style leadership changes business thinking, which, in turn, could enhance productivity and profitability within corporations. These findings may change the mission of a company and develop more inclusive and satisfied workforces. Companies are not currently known to impress upon their leaders the effect that their leadership style has on the business thinking of its workers (Beehr et al., 2006; Fleck, 2010).

### **Organization of the Study**

I organized this study into five chapters, including references. In Chapter 1, I introduced the problem statement, background of the issue, significance of the research

study, research question, theoretical background, definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations. I emphasized the importance of LMX style leadership and its effect on business thinking, significance of research, and plan and goals in this research study. In Chapter 2, I reviewed literature to support this research study. The literature included the theoretical background of LMX theory, the basis for business thinking, and leadership effects on personnel. In Chapter 3, I presented the grounded theory methodology and interview background, the population used, interview questions, and the way the answers to the interview questions were documented. In Chapter 4, I reported the research findings for the qualitative results gained in the interviews. In Chapter 5, I draw conclusions and make recommendations for further research. I close with statements focusing on the social significance of this research study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I describe corporate population, business thinking, and LMX theory. I explore LMX theory and its history and background as a significant element of business. In the literature review, I explore how corporations integrate leadership style as part of the mission of the company. I also explore how different leadership styles work with the subordinate population. Finally, I describe whether research relative to LMX style leadership can be linked to change in business thinking.

### **LMX Theory**

LMX theory is defined as a leadership method based on personal functions such as trust development and interactive team building used by the leader (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Kang & Stewart, 2007). Kang and Stewart go on to explain that a dyadic approach, employing leadership traits such as trust and loyalty, can help produce more effective interactions between leaders and subordinates. LMX theory is a management theory describing how leaders involve their subordinates in business decisions openly (Kang & Stewart, 2007). LMX describes LMX style leadership throughout this study. Gerstner and Day (1997) showed that, historically, LMX theory was revered by executives in several Fortune 500 companies because of the strong link between process and outcome. Because LMX theory is more process driven than authoritarian leadership styles, managers are better able to operate with inclusive behaviors because of their effect on productivity (van Breukelen et al., 2006). LMX theory describes a dyadic management style that consists of a social exchange between a leader and a member (Culbertson, Huffman, & Alden

Anderson, 2010; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). A leader has a quality relationship with each member of the team. The quality level depends on the collaborations between leader and subordinate. The quality level is determined by several LMX theory factors. Pelled and Xin (2000) explained that factors intrinsic in LMX include fairness and honesty while maintaining a positive interaction between a leader and member. The leader and subordinate contribute to the quality of the relationship with more influence from the leader (Culbertson et al., 2010; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Lee, Scandura, Kim, Joshi, & Lee, 2012). The leader's actions influence the relationship from a standpoint of power and direction. Subordinates inherently believe that the supervisor is the company representative (Lee et al., 2012).

The leader may have a high-quality relationship with all or some members of the team they influence, which is consistent with high LMX (Bhal, 2006). High quality per Bhal is a relationship that goes beyond the contractual agreement the subordinate obliges with employment. High LMX consists of mutual trust and strong support (Fairhurst, 1993; Kang & Stewart, 2007). Culbertson et al. (2010) explained that team performance is one of the many important expectations of having a high-quality LMX connection.

Fairhurst (1993) and Kang and Stewart (2007) explained that low-quality relationships infiltrate leader-member exchanges within a team. Low-quality interchanges between leaders and members show lack of loyalty, lack of professional respect, and limited member contributions (Culbertson et al., 2010). Subordinates in a low-quality relationship stick strictly to the contractual employment agreement without putting forth extra effort (Kang & Stewart, 2007). Bhal (2006) explained that the contractual

employment agreement as an important factor in an LMX style relationship. Bhal explained that high-quality LMX teams exceed the expectations of any employment contractual obligation. The leader may contribute to low quality by labeling employees as having low skill levels, which feeds into subordinate lack of effort (Pelled & Xin, 2000). Schyns and Day (2010) explained how leader and subordinate in a low-quality interchange is given to personal indifference. Schyns and Day indicate that a lack of interest exists because both the leader and member believe that the other needs more effort and input.

Leadership style is often established without direct rules placed in the organizational mission statement (Kang & Stewart, 2007). Kang and Stewart suggested that, companies with a very deliberate strategy to have a unique leadership style tend to establish it through hiring and education of its leaders. Burns and Otte (1999) explain that this deliberate action many times start with the human resources department. Human resources, as part of the hiring process, develop tools for trait recognition. Burns and Otte explain that trait recognition can help hiring managers consistently place candidates displaying high quality LMX style traits. High quality traits would include communication skills and agreeable personality (Suazo, Turnley, & Mai-Dalton, 2008). Suazo et al. explain how educating leaders to understand cognitive traits in their personnel will help facilitate a stronger high quality LMX style relationship. The education can be implemented as part of leadership development in company annual objectives agreed to by the leader and corporate executives (Burns & Otte, 1999).

Implementing a leadership style derived from LMX theory is driven by the company advocacy to have an inclusive relationship driven leadership team. If the desire is to embody this style, Nishii, and Mayer (2009) and Kang and Stewart (2007) describe the importance of having strong LMX style leadership policy that requires managers willingly work collectively with the entire workforce. Inclusive behavior, employee empowerment, and autonomy are important to LMX theory and strong leadership derived from this can improve company outcomes (van Breukelen et al., 2006). The challenge is for companies to be sure that the exchange continues to happen even when the population has changed.

Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Holcombe Ehrhart, & Singh (2011) describe how a company would first develop its mission statement and then a vision statement to incorporate values regarding inclusion and leadership style. The company, during this stage, can define the influence LMX theory driven leadership could have on corporate initiatives (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). The method used to evaluate and observe the mission and vision over time can be established by benchmarking derived from LMX theory characterizations (Lee et al., 2012; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). To support the statement that LMX style traits, such as inclusive behavior, can make a change to an organization, a corporation must acknowledge this has significance in their mission (Roberson, 2006).

A company that is profitable and satisfying their stockholders may wish to emphasize leadership style that includes LMX theory (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). The expense of implementing and maintaining LMX theory leader philosophy is a challenge.

The managers are required to interact with their subordinates more directly and involve them in decisions (van Breukelen et al., 2006). Adding to this challenge would be assuring stockholders that long-term thinking is better for the company (Herring, 2009). It will be important to show that maintaining the positive profit statement impact can only continue through leadership with LMX theory traits (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009;). Because the corporate missions and visions are more important to organizational leaders and not necessarily shareholders, it is important to factor in the diligence needed to keep shareholders accepting of long-term goals instead of short term gains (Fleck, 2010; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Profits, maintaining employee satisfaction, and retention drive a successful long-term growth oriented business (Fleck, 2011; Palmer, 2009). Van Breukelen et al. (2006) explain that while profits are the driving force that shareholders find important it is not the only factor they embrace. The standard a company has set forth for its leaders is an important discussion to have with the shareholders.

The basis of LMX theory is the inclusive behaviors managers display to keep their subordinates involved in decisions (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Business thinking is thought utilization for analysis, understanding, and developing ideas and information needed to interact and function at work (Facione, 2000). Business thinking is a process that leaders can target when looking at ways to increase creativity and highlight subordinates' skill sets needed for decision-based progressions (Facione, 2000). While business thinking is discussed in depth later in Chapter 2, it important to understand that key factors in LMX theory have been found to enhance the business thinking within a company (Nag, 2005;

Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Roberson, 2006). High quality LMX leaders embody subordinate autonomy and shift them into more conversational and thought based engagement (Denning, 2011). Open-ended communication allows people to develop open business thinking and present concepts to business operations within the parameters of their position. Using inclusion high LMX traits grants the company more access to ideas from their workforce (Roberson, 2006).

There have been numerous studies noting the effect of management style on employees' attitude. The effect can cause both positive and negative changes in an employee's reaction and attitude depending on the management style (Beehr et al., 2006). Nishii and Mayer (2009) explain that researchers have discovered evidence that a leadership style, known as LMX theory, influences employee output. According to Kang and Stewart (2007), a leader can develop relationships with subordinates that enhance the level of trust and reverence an employee has for their leader. Beehr et al. (2006) and Bernas and Major (2000) explain that LMX theory is closely related to an employee's level of satisfaction on the job. Job satisfaction is born of strong leadership traits that foster trust, loyalty, and acceptance (Beehr et al., 2006; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). This type of relationship can lead to improved work satisfaction and output. On the other hand, Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008) portray how leaders treat employees from a power position tend to have subordinates who do their work with fear and tend towards more average or less than average output. Sin et al. (2009) explain that much of the research still emphasizes that many leader-subordinate relationships are inconsistent and lack effective inclusion LMX style leaders have developed.

An aspect of LMX style leadership that could influence company change is managers who take a more severe approach with this leadership style. Kang and Stewart (2007) describe how managers under LMX style leadership can have what is known as an in-group and an out-group. This thinking from the employee perspective might be much like high-school students when being part of the popular “in-group” was more desired than being part of the “out-group”. Managers who utilize the “in-group” for projects could be impeding the project. When a manager has a distinct “out-group”, the subordinates who feel as though they are designated as part of this group may not give ideas that could enhance a project (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Subordinates who do not trust their manager could be less comfortable and less willing to work hard (Fleck, 2011).

An LMX style leader is one depicted as trustworthy and powerful (Beehr et al., 2005). A follower in this theory would be described as goal oriented and performance directed (Kang & Stewart, 2007). An effective leader, using LMX leadership style, will enhance employee loyalty to the company and encourage an employee who feels compelled to excel in their given career (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Sparrowe et al., 2006). On the other hand, the manager exploiting LMX style leadership could negatively use “in-group” and “out-group” for project specific cases utilizing the strengths of each subordinate without causing dissention (Kang & Stewart, 2007). With this form of “ingroup” and “out-group” behavior, the manager is not making subordinates feel excluded from all projects (Fleck, 2011). The narrow-minded manager is not considered one who portrays traits of LMX style leadership (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007).

Poster (2008) and Day and Greene (2008) describe in detail how leaders use the principles derived from LMX theory had high quality successes in productivity because the subordinates were free to express ideas and options for doing the job. In an organization where business thinking is openly sought, a leader who wants to develop proficient subordinates can find methods to allow open communications (Kang & Stewart, 2007). Roberson (2006) and Day and Greene (2008) determined that openminded leadership can drive corporate change. The unrestricted thinking and two-way communication improve how employees consider their own personal satisfaction on the job (Richard, Barnett, Dwyer, & Chadwick, 2004; Roberson, 2006). The aim of this study is to describe unhindered business thinking and LMX theory principles through the eyes of a subordinate or leader. The ambition is to find out if there are profit and productivity successes and failures of companies with high regard to leadership.

Poster (2008) explains the importance of leadership direction and its effect on company mission and goals. The LMX style in business is a way for leaders to connect with their subordinates regarding work habits and actions. Leaders can encourage change and develop improvements in productivity often through the help of their subordinate's idea generation (van Breukelen et al., 2006). LMX style leaders have great influence over the subordinates' day-to-day work environment. Today and historically, LMX theory upholds that leadership style affects subordinate contributions at work (Lee et al., 2012; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Sin et al., 2009). Businesses can guide their workforce in the open dialog by promoting strong teamwork between leaders and subordinates, utilizing ideology that comes from LMX theory focused leadership (Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

### **What is Business Thinking?**

Business thinking consists of the ability to generate an idea or solution coming from analysis for suitability, adjustment, and capability to repair or change an issue (Moberg, 2001; Sandelands, 2009; Sinclair, 2004). Business thinking requires analysis of situations and requires creative, planning, skepticism, and filtered outlook to be effective (Moberg, 2001). Business thinking is in no way related to a person's intelligence (Moberg, 2001). Business thinking is one of many skills used to develop, maintain, enhance, or improve issues, environment, and attitude of personnel in a work situation (Facione, 2000). Moberg describes how business thinking comes from the context of the business being conducted. Business thinking is also the development of ideas from leaders and subordinates collaborating for one common goal (Aghazadeh, 2004; Brislin & Kim, 2003; Chrobot-Mason, 2004). Of the many definitions of business thinking, no one characterization defines the true essence of its importance to promotion of sound business practices. The company mission and vision statements highlight advancement of directives and how goals will be met (Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2011). The goals can be met with a good business thinking process that embraces employee idea generation (Fleck, 2011). This underscores whether the achievements of the mission and vision fulfill prerequisites of the principles (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Jayne and Dipboye verify how specific corporate operations have led to the satisfaction of goals through specific guidelines established with the mission statement.

If business thinking is openly sought, a leader develops the subordinates to be better workers and keep this strategy in their arsenal (Kang & Stewart, 2007). A business

with firm boundaries of protocol, or open lines of communication between leaders and subordinates, are likely to get consistent unchanging results (Moberg, 2001). This result is not always in the best interest of the business objectives (Moberg, 2001). A firm that has permeable boundaries of protocol is more likely to have more analytical thinking (Moberg, 2001). While openly sought business, thinking does not guarantee better financial results, the opportunity exists to reject or accept ideas generated in this manner (Sandelands, 2009). Business thinking is one avenue a company uses to encourage idea submission from members of their workforce so the company exhibits product or process development (Ungaretti et al., 2009). For the purpose of this study, business thinking will be explored and defined to decipher whether the ideas that come from this thinking impacts the business bottom-line in a positive manner. The bottom-line includes profits, productivity, and business development (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009). Ungaretti et al. (2009) explain the importance of business thinking for design innovation, social responsibility, and corporate relations. The results of their business thinking can improve from an open, respectful exchange between managers and subordinates (Porter & Kramer, 2011; van Breukelen et al., 2006). Williams (2004) explains that exceptional business thinking can lead to exceptional business ideas.

Ideas generated from business thinking can be sought by leaders in many ways (Sinclair, 2004). The leader can respond with detachment from the situation, antagonism, subversion, and even a reaction of resistance (Sinclair, 2004). The response, on the surface, may seem like a method of intimidation. History can predict how a strong leader gives the subordinate feedback and the subordinate reaction to a specific situation

(Bailey, et al, 2009). Sinclair (2004) explains how reliable leaders with historic validation will sense when subordinates are holding information back. Sandelands (2009) explains that not all leadership reaction has to come from a place of positive reinforcement. Subordinates' history with the leader can include desire for attention given from a reactionary leader (Sandelands, 2009).

Business thinking is developed through historic background, impression of leader, and impression of corporate vision (Bailey et al, 2009). Moberg (2001) explains that historical events can galvanize idea filtering based on the reaction of leaders. Christensen (2010) describes filtering as a reaction to a situation requiring an answer. A person's negative experiences with their leader will be less likely to use business thinking easily to generate ideas (Christensen, 2010). Christensen goes on to explain that opportunities that motivate employees to grow, learn, and contribute can be accredited to leader encouragement. If the employee believes their business thinking is skewed and ideas being presented are ignored, they are less likely to think freely and clearly (Christensen, 2010; Sandelands, 2009; Sinclair, 2004).

Publicly held companies and government agencies have developed procedures to keep diverse business thinking and inclusive behavior in their organizations (Shad, 2010). Idea generation coming from skillful use of business thinking is a trait that profitable companies can use to improve market share and productivity (Betz, 2002; Fleck, 2011; van Breukelen et al., 2006). Idea generation can come from brain storming sessions, information-gathering meetings, and community based experiences. The importance of business thinking is brought out here as a method where subordinates comfortable with

their leader are more apt to discuss ideas that come from the use of this trait (Fleck, 2011; Nag, 2005; Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

There are gaps in research relating to the development of business thinking by subordinates placed in specific leader-subordinate circumstances (Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008; Beehr, et al., 2006; Sparrowe et al., 2006). Blowfield (2004) explains how corporations can develop business plans around the ideas driven in company meetings and brainstorming sessions. The circumstances, noted in the Blowfield (2004) research, help establish the reason for investigating the effect of LMX style leadership on business thinking.

It is counterintuitive to have leadership framework that does not advance business-thinking initiatives from their entire work population given today's business and social climate. Porter and Kramer (2011) supposition is that businesses are tasked with developing products that are useful for society. Their workforce, through their use of business thinking, is instrumental in developing products both useful and meaningful to society. Societal progress has advanced faster than business progress (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Ungaretti et al., 2009). Herring (2009) and Porter and Kramer (2011) explain that the demographics of the United States have changed and companies are tasked with producing products that are viable and relevant. Responsible businesses demand cognition of the population purchasing their products (Fleck, 2011; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009).

Ungaretti et al. (2009), and Porter and Kramer (2011) emphasize that educational institutions teaching business curricula have not kept up with the global importance of the

effect of business thinking on innovation. Ungaretti et al. (2009) clarify that because business thinking is crucial to innovation, the teaching of this is a focal starting point for students. Miri, David, and Uri (2007) explain that thinking skills give more than simple idea generation to student's futures. Miri, David, and Uri go on to say that, students with well-developed business thinking skills can process information better and have better adaptive potential in their corporate jobs. Good thinkers in school will be good business thinkers that keep businesses profitable and relevant (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

A company can move toward being a healthy growing profitable company through business thinking initiatives (McCuiston, et al, 2004). Business thinking that is open and available will help generate new concepts and viable solutions for opportunities of improvement in production (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Business thinking can come from having inclusive leaders in the workforce (Roberson, 2006). The business thinking and inclusion will not define whether a company utilizes LMX style as a leadership style. The goal of this study is to see whether the business thinking and inclusion are linked to the leadership style known as LMX theory. The company can allow the employee population to drive changes with the use of business thinking.

Strong business thinking is also related to employee motivation and initiative (Facione, 2000). Motivation can have a direct impact on the retention levels a company realizes with employees (Cramer et al., & Jonker, 2006; Facione, 2000). Outcomes including retention of employees can affect company profitability (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). For a company to remain profitable, it is important to maintain or improve profits and market share (Betz, 2002; Fleck, 2011; Jayne &

Dipboye, 2004). Betz (2002) explains how business thinking from the workforce changes how companies look at product development, product marketing, and product utilization. It is easier for a company to understand the market they are trying to reach when subordinates in the company can give ideas to enhance knowledge about product use and what makes them purchase specific products (Betz, 2002; Fleck, 2011).

Companies who allow workers input about the direction of the company are not necessarily inspiring strong business thinking skills. The challenge in this study may be to determine whether LMX style leadership cultivates business thinking in a subordinate or leader. Presumably, strong leaders who include subordinates in the decisions will generate strong business thinkers because the subordinate reduces negative thoughts that cause a lack of participation in corporate brainstorming. Business thinking in leaders may be cultivated by success in results of increased productivity and higher retention rates (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

Ungaretti et al. (2009) explain how changes in thinking have led companies to make changes in their leadership. The issues brought about in their research highlights the need to explore whether LMX style leadership can change business thinking in subordinates. Ungaretti et al. (2009) emphasize how businesses traditionally have used thinking in their business. Businesses, especially those based in the United States, appoint managers who find ways to handle problems with the corporate prescribed manner of handling subordinates (Ungaretti et al., 2009). Nishii and Mayer (2009) explain how businesses use tried and true methods for handling issues as they arise, leaving no room for new ideas or suggestions. The corporate leadership style tends to stay the same unless

there is a problem being reactive not proactive (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Research from Nishii and Mayer (2009) and Kang and Stewart (2007) emphasized how companies were managed with self-contained roles and did not have nontraditional employees make decisions or suggest changes for solutions. Managers in traditionally run companies rely on deductive and inductive reasoning to fix problems because anything new is considered risky and careless (Ungaretti et al., 2009). LMX theory, because of its more collaborative approach, is counter to more traditional authoritarian methods. Because of this, companies can hire high quality leaders to improve business thinking by allowing new ideas into the formula (Ayad, 2010).

Typical entrepreneurial thinking says that leaders make choices and suggestions and subordinates follow along with the plan (Cramer et al., 2006). When companies uncover business issues, LMX style leadership can establish collaborative leader subordinate relationships to correct issues that arise (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Companies with entrepreneurial style leadership resist allowing subordinates to assist with business decisions because the leaders are guided to drive decisions (Ungaretti et al., 2009). Ayad (2010) explains that companies using a more entrepreneurial style run processes that have worked traditionally because it is better for flow. Ayad goes on to say fear of making changes, even small unnoticeable changes, and make managers in this type of system nervous. The changes could cause potential disruption of the process and with those financial losses (Ungaretti et al., 2009). Cramer et al. (2006) explain that changes can cause financial losses in the short term. Additionally, unlike the entrepreneurial style leaders, the LMX style leadership finds positives in change. Cramer et al. explain that

LMX style leadership allows an exchange between leader and subordinate that opens discussions to seek the most appropriate action when making a change.

### **Does LMX Style Leadership Affect Business Thinking?**

The role of good leaders will encourage the use of all traits to do their jobs (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; van Breukelen et al., 2006). The question of the study is to show whether LMX style leadership can develop and maintain good business thinkers.

Ungaretti et al. (2009) describe that leaders who utilize their skills to gain loyalty and confidence from their subordinates help the business gain more than simple profits. The business is rewarded with long-term effects that can change the direction of the company and develop new products that keep the company vital and relevant (Porter & Kramer, 2009; Ungaretti et al., 2009).

Measuring LMX style and its effect on business thinking becomes an important factor when determining whether leadership style changes how thoughts are formed. Mair (2010) explains that having a strong leader can hamper or help thought processing. Facione (2000) utilized results from a study showing how leadership practices strongly affect whether subordinates develop and improve their thinking skills. Facione goes on to explain that people are born with different levels of thinking disposition but that a strong leader with encouraging esteem-building actions can improve how subordinates utilize their original thinking disposition. Ayad (2010) explains how leader-subordinate dialog and the importance of being able to ask questions to get to answers are important conduits to better business thinking utilization. The intimidated subordinate will be less likely to bring thoughts to the table in a brainstorming session or when asked for contributions

during meetings (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Intimidation changes the brain activity, and normal thought development is hampered by poor self-esteem and negative self-talk (Mair, 2010). The attitude of the leader, while not the only trait that is noticeable to subordinates, is an important nonverbal factor that can change how subordinates react to comments (Williams, 2004).

Nonverbal factors can be as important as verbal factors when a leader is interacting with subordinates (Roy, 2001). If a leader is presenting ideas to the group with eyes pointed to certain subordinates, it can come across as disingenuous when an assignment is given to a subordinate not in the line of sight (Roy, 2001). The nonverbal traits of the LMX style leader will be displayed toward every subordinate in the same manner (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Because of this factor, nonverbal communication becomes just as important as verbal communication. The effect of LMX style leadership on business thinking can be an even more effective finding thinking about meeting quality (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). In the end, the communication between a subordinate and leader drives changes in the company both positively and negatively. It is important for companies that want to do well to determine whether leadership style suppresses business thinking in the subordinates.

### **Why Is Leadership Important to Business?**

Leadership can change the environment in which subordinate's work (Boies et al., 2010; Coloma et al., 2012; Fleck, 2011; Hargis et al., 2011). What the business values comes out through examples set by leaders (Palmer, 2009). Leaders are an important asset for the business because of the impact they have on production and human capital

(Fleck, 2011; Nag, 2005; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Palmer explains that businesses with strong moral leadership tend to have a stronger business model. Leaders can challenge their subordinates to utilize their business thinking to show methods of innovation needed to maintain or gain profits (Fleck, 2011; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Vance (2010) explains that while companies find it hard to quantify exact profit numbers relating to LMX style leadership, evidence supports positive profit reporting resulting from leader-subordinate relationships in a high quality LMX relationship. Vance explains that subordinates led in the high quality LMX style relationship follow through with leader requests more consistently. This follow through supports company profit statement improvements and process consistency and developments (Vance, 2010).

Palmer (2009) explains that subordinates feel more loyalty toward leaders who willingly help them grow in their careers. Subordinates tend to leave a company when it is not meeting their career needs (Herring, 2009). Kang and Stewart (2007) and Nishii and Mayer (2009) illustrated circumstances showing employees who came to the aid of a leader whose productivity numbers had decreased after a series of issues in their workplaces. The facilities had major issues and production was far below the expected units required to keep the company profitable (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). When the subordinates gathered to assist the leaders to find solutions for issues, it was evident that loyalty was important to the subordinates (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Employees go to great lengths to protect and assist a leader who has shown, over time, willingness to keep the workplace environment collaborative and professional (Cramer et al., 2006; Coloma et al., 2012; Fleck, 2011; Hargis et al., 2011).

Holt and Marques (2012) explain that a leader who empathizes and involves subordinates in decisions tend to have subordinates who become more loyal and understanding resembling those in a high quality LMX relationship. Kang and Stewart (2007) explain how loyalty to leader comes through as an unwavering, highly motivated effort from the subordinate. The relationship, or exchange in LMX style leadership, comes by way of trust and understanding the leader's requirements of their work. Through this trust, the subordinate submits their ideas more readily (Fleck, 2010; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Since business thinking requires a level of deliberate processing, freely incorporating business thinking into their decisions should be a natural progression in this process. This study determined the connection between business thinking and the LMX leadership theory. The information from the research indicated that leadership style can predict subordinate-supervisor interaction (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Loyalty in a high-quality LMX relationship is one reason a subordinate would desire development of their business thinking as a manner to support the leader. Knowing the leader will support their ideas and work, the subordinate will be more immersed in finding ways to utilize their business thinking. Bernas and Major (2000) and Kang and Stewart (2007) explain how loyalty is a far-reaching trait with positive or negative ramifications on the subordinate-leader relationship. When used properly, loyalty can help form a team atmosphere to improve company outcomes to a position of profit and gains in market share (Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007). When loyalty is utilized in a company setting in a manner that marginalizes some subordinates, the team can suffer and productivity reduced through

lack of cohesion and direction (Cramer et al., 2006; Bernas & Major, 2000; Fleck, 2011).

Bernas and Major (2000) clarify that companies strive to benchmark a relationship between subordinate and leader that comes from a sense of positive devotion and loyalty.

Businesses have challenged the measuring strategy used to show a positive effect from leadership on their bottom-line (Montgomery, 2008). Montgomery also noted that measuring strategy, for this example, is a method, consisting of statistical analysis of productivity process enhancement, turnover ratios, profitability changes, or employee well-being, to determine whether specific leadership attributes are effective or ineffective as a means determining corporate business change. Montgomery explains that though educational institutions continue to emphasize leadership strategy; the tools companies use to incorporate measures to improve and quantify strategy is weak. Researchers search for the perfect leadership style as a captivating scheme to enhance growth and improve employee retention (Cramer et al., 2006; Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009). Herring (2009) challenged the notion that expense over profit to gain social acceptance through company leadership initiatives, in the end, may enhance the outcomes of long-term performance. In the end, if a company incorporates long-term thinking into their vision, it could enhance their ability to develop open-minded thinking, the type that composes strong business thinking.

Corporations have reasonable concern to keep stockholders satisfied and the need to remain profitable (Herring, 2009). Publicly held corporations satisfy the stockholders and their employee population with profits and growth. Companies should find meaningful ways to make profits, while continuing to grow and satisfy their customers

and employees. The desire to have a profitable stable company is the goal of the stockholders and corporate executives (Sue, 2001). Obtaining ways to get to this profitable status come through a variety of initiatives. Adding programs that encourage change and growth is a common way to enhance outcomes (Herring, 2009). When a company contemplates the addition of a program, including one to enrich leadership skills for process enhancement, justification of the expense is necessary. The company remains fiscally responsible to its employees and stockholders when analyzing how expenses and programs affect the bottom-line and whether specific actions make the company viable. Implementing strategic changes, such as a change in leadership development, in corporate strategy does not guarantee program success or profit statement success (Herring, 2009). Roy (2001) indicates that a program that develops resilient leaders can change the entire disposition of the company. LMX style leadership, because of the strong leader-subordinate element, has a development strategy as part of its core foundation which could justify a strategic change in corporate mission (Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 1994). Since profitability is a core reason a company seeks to improve business, changing leadership development strategy would seem to be a natural progression with LMX style leadership being a strong contender (Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Roy, 2001). Program justification when considering leadership changes should be analyzed in depth to assure the change will be productive to the company's future (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009). Ayad (2010), Denning (2011), and Ungaretti et al. (2009) all surmised that business leaders can develop and enhance business thinking by their leadership approach. This study may show whether LMX style leadership is a

leadership structure that leads to the type of development needed to change business thinking.

A leader's training can enhance the skills that make their manager-subordinate relationship strong (Herring, 2009). Leaders who develop skills that enhance employee relationships can improve the overall environment through loyalty, trust, and furtherance of inclusive behaviors (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009). Herring (2009) described a process of company development methods to attract diverse populations of people. The process involved longer-term thinking than many American companies incorporate into their normal planning (Herring, 2009; Nag, 2005).

Boies et al. (2010); Coloma et al. (2012) and Hargis et al. (2011) concluded that leadership skills are 80% learned and a leader is born with the other 20%. Whether this can be proven or not, training can develop leaders to be mindful of traits that can enhance a relationship with subordinates (Boies et al., 2010; Coloma et al., 2012; Rank et al., 2009). Pelled and Xin (2000) demonstrated how trust and positive association are developed and leaders can be trained to encourage employees enough to gain trust and loyalty.

Production outcomes drive company success (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Production outcomes such as employee retention can bring long-term rewards because people with longevity tend to have a stronger understanding of company objectives (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). People in a stable inclusive setting reward companies with a higher retention rate (Fleck, 2011). Roberson (2006) notes that people

in a business climate that offers a system to accept suggestions tend to be led by leaders with a more inclusive attitude than in corporations where suggestions are not welcomed.

Herring (2009) explains that when a company underlines leadership traits as a motivation for improvement, the action can negatively or positively affect commercial success. An environment prone to non-trusting leader-subordinate interactions negatively affects outcomes with high turnover, lower productivity, and reduction in profits (Fleck, 2011; Holt & Marques, 2012; Palmer, 2009).

The value of strong leadership needs to be the center of discussions and meetings with shareholders. The discussions can keep executive leadership aware of factors that keep the company profitable such as high retention rates, strong productivity data, and new product development (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Company representatives can pinpoint results from year to year records. Surveying leaders and subordinates can give strong indicators of things that are working and give representation for things that are not working provided openness and honesty are displayed (Gerstner & Day, 1997). LMX style lends itself to the elements of trust and loyalty which would lend itself to productive and honest survey answers (Coloma et al., 2012; Fleck, 2011; Hargis et al., 2011). Survey results could be presented to stakeholders to offer year-to-year results. This could represent hard reasons why specific leadership processes are important even to the stakeholders.

More importantly than identifying internal results, tracking results from companies whose public records are available can help leaders gain valuable insight (Herring, 2009). Companies can benchmark their own results to results of companies

with similar backgrounds. Being aware of what happens in their industry is noteworthy when presenting future expenses to stockholders who may want to focus solely on profits (Fleck, 2011; Kang & Stewart, 2007).

Leadership is an important aspect of running a fiscally sound business and per Ayman and Korabik (2010), the definition labeling leadership traits is largely culture neutral. There are cultures where leadership style is inconsequential and does not play an important role (Shore et al., 2011). Shore et al. determined that leadership style can be culturally different, but leadership traits are vital and analogous in all cultures. Shore et al. also, explain that leadership style in some cultures influences all aspects of people's lives. Where some cultures have a strict code of respect for leaders regardless of the leader's actions, there are cultures where the leader's actions will reduce or improve the employees respect level (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Shore et al., 2011). Corporate leaders have an obligation to be aware of the cultural demographics within their facilities. Leadership approaches can be more specific to the needs of the company with better awareness (Fleck, 2011). Leadership should not be one size fits all for these reasons. Culture can be a strong factor in an inclusive environment. However, it is not the only aspect of making an employee feel they belong (Fleck, 2011; Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999). Chang and Tharenou (2004) explain that culture can play a role in subordinate reactions, but is neutral regarding the action of a leader toward a subordinate. Boies et al. (2010) explain that leaders should avoid projecting their cultural norms on their subordinates. A leader is the company designated person assisting the subordinates

to finish the job duties (Boies et al., 2010; Coloma et al.; 2012; Chang & Tharenou, 2004).

Hargis et al. (2011) rationalize when a leader encourages subordinates through inclusion, the positive behavior of the subordinate progresses. The employee individually may have increased motivation, more trust toward leaders, and more commitment toward overall corporate goals. Leaders have an enormous impact on employee behavior and in the end company outcomes (Coloma et al.; 2012; Hartel & Brown, 2011). With this impact, the company places a large degree of focus and importance to having strong leaders (Voegtlin et al., 2012).

Companies should consciously recognize the importance of leadership and the effect leadership has on the employee population (Iles, 1995; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Poster, 2008). If company leadership does not include the workforce in many decisions, the attitude of subordinates might be less than accepting of new developments (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Ospina & Foldy, 2009; Poster, 2008). The importance of leadership transparency was emphasized when subordinates judge leaders (Ospina & Foldy, 2009).

Van Breukelen et al. (2006) have shown in their research how leaders who lead with LMX style leadership can influence the company bottom-line and can reduce turnover when practicing its collaborative principles. The research has not revealed that having a top management team utilizing the principles of LMX style leadership can enhance profit and productivity along with the effect of business thinking used by subordinates. Burns and Otte (1999) explain the differentiation used in LMX style leadership relates to the uniqueness of the relationship between the leader and

subordinate. Understanding whether the leadership of the company changes the employee dynamics will be important for the future. The dynamics are important to understand because the workforce, to be successful, needs leaders who are willing to include their subordinates in the daily decisions (Fleck, 2011; Herring, 2009;).

### **Summary**

The chapter has explored and defined LMX leadership theory, leader-subordinate dynamics, business thinking, and why leadership is important to business. The literature signified many links between subordinate actions and leader interaction (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Lee et al., 2012). The literature gaps are with LMX style leadership effect on business thinking. Leaders have a formidable effect on subordinate actions throughout a workday (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). The basis of this study is to determine whether LMX style leadership changes business thinking based on definitions in current literature (Cramer et al., 2006).

Leaders, because of their impact on business outcomes, have an important role in developing subordinates to assist in business processes. Blowfield (2005) indicates the importance of adaptable leadership and long-term corporate goals. It is not enough for large historically financially successful corporations to rest on leadership and business processes that worked in the past (Ayad, 2010). It is important to keep a constant analytical eye on productivity and leadership to maintain a successful and profitable corporation (Fleck, 2010; Herring, 2009).

Finally, the exchange between leaders and subordinates is an important connection and consistency is needed to develop and implement the goals and objectives

of the executive leaders. This important linkage will help the company evolve and continue growth and profitability goals (Herring, 2009). Leadership of an organization can be the cause of organizational problems but can also be the important link that keeps the company profitable and productive (Fleck, 2010; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Chapter 3 showed how grounded theory was the framework used to analyze collected data to answer the research question in Chapter 1. The grounded theory research will cultivate the knowledge determining whether LMX style leadership changes business thinking.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### Introduction

In the literature review in Chapter 2, I provided information about LMX theory and business thinking. This information consisted of the findings of researchers in the fields of LMX theory, business thinking, and leadership styles (Culbertson et al., 2010; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). The literature review revealed several definitions for *business thinking*. The “why” approach devised by Ayad (2010) described how managers and subordinates get to root cause. Bailey et al (2009) suggested that business thinking requires the ability to analyze and interpret results based on strategic context. The main theme in business thinking is the analysis and expression of ideas about a process or task relating to business operation (Christensen, 2010; Denning, 2011; Sandelands, 2009).

The research provided in the readings used for the literature review was balanced between qualitative and quantitative methods. Leadership style was analyzed as a relationship catalyst using qualitative methodology to examine the results (Bhal, 2006; Culbertson et al., 2010; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Analysis of performance issues and productivity relating to leadership quantitatively determined leadership influence on corporate outcomes (Lee et al, 2012; Naidoo et al, 2011). The articles on leadership focused on the leader and subordinate’s viewpoints but did not ask specifically about business thinking as defined in this study.

With the myriad of methods applied, the gap in the literature is how or why employee business thinking changes from one leadership style to another. Kang and Stewart (2007) and Gerstner and Day (1997) made a case that leadership style, if high

quality, can affect the productivity of subordinates through loyalty and motivation. Kang and Stewart and Gerstner and Day also showed low-quality leadership style influences subordinate desire to be at work and test efforts when asked to perform tasks. With this in mind, how and why leadership style changes business thinking could be important analytical tools for executive teams to use in their businesses.

Qualitative design method is used to explore human issues by asking questions (Creswell, 2009). Corbin and Strauss (1990) explained that analysis in a qualitative design such as grounded theory begins the moment the first data are collected. Constant comparison is the foundation of strong grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Qualitative design for this study allowed understanding of how leadership style is perceived by subordinates (Kang & Stewart, 2007). With role theory, Kang and Stewart (2007) used interview data to determine LMX function in leader subordinate roles. Qualitative design allows examination of human factors that change how one looks at a leader's role in his or her work lives (Naidoo et al, 2011). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) explained that, through open coding, the researcher can gather terminology leading to categories that eventually lead to theory. Bryant and Charmaz maintain that grounded theory is the best use of qualitative design if looking for emerging concepts in research.

Quantitative methods test hypotheses and gather data about variables and their effect on each other (Creswell, 2009). Though phenomenological research methodology has been used for LMX research, the qualitative design has been most effective for research determining leader and subordinate causal data (Beehr et al, 2006; Lee et al,

2012). Corbin and Strauss (1990) explained that grounded theory method develops a theory using interview questions. The interviewer seeks answers that explain the basis for events taking place in someone's working life. The responses can many times explain phenomenon taking place in specific situations. With grounded theory, the constant comparison of data obtained in interviews and observations leads the researcher to understand the phenomena being revealed (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Distinct differences exist in qualitative and quantitative research methods. Because of the differences, a qualitative research method was chosen and determined how leadership style challenges a subordinate-leader relationship. The research was conducted using LMX style did not involve knowing how business thinking was used in subordinate-leader relationships in the LMX style team dynamic. In summary, the reasons for conducting this research as a qualitative study were that (a) the researcher sought to answer research questions and not test a hypothesis, (b) the topic involves exploring human interactions, (c) the variables are unknown, and (d) the flexibility of the grounded theory approach allowed the researcher to explore emerging themes.

### **Research Problem**

There was a gap in the literature studying business thinking and leadership style known as LMX style. Furthermore, the question of whether LMX style leadership affected business thinking had not been explored. LMX style has strong recognition as a leadership style that can have a constructive effect on subordinate actions on the job (Kang & Stewart, 2007; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). The exploratory nature of this grounded theory research study determined whether the idea that LMX leadership method could

enhance business thinking, as defined in this study, could be utilized to improve corporate outcomes.

This qualitative study was designed to explore the problem of leadership and business thinking and the research question sought to generate a theory to understand it. Grounded theory constant comparison and thematic analysis approach helped determine the conclusion. The use of questions to collect human responses about leaders in the subordinate's specific workplace allowed me to explore leadership style and its relationship to an individual subordinate through personal experiences. This approach, using open coding, allowed me to determine themes (Augustijnen, Schnitzer, & Van Esbroeck, 2011). Corbin and Strauss (1990) explain that grounded theory data comes from theoretical explanation gained during interviews and observations. Using personal questions, the study resulted in an emerging theory, which was the basis for using grounded theory design.

### **Research Methodology**

Grounded theory is structured using theoretical ideas to gain new categories and their properties (Glaser & Strauss, 2006, p. 105). Grounded theory is said to be fully utilized when following the four stages outlined by Glaser and Strauss (2006, p. 105-113). Grounded theory is a constant comparison method for which categories emerge and theory develops (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). Glaser and Strauss explain that categories must be integrated so the theory can emerge. This eventually leads the researcher to delimiting the theory from the uniformity in the emerging categories. In the end, following the steps

allows the researcher to write theory based on the data developed and obtained throughout the process (Glaser & Strauss, 2006, p. 105-113).

Glaser (1998) noted, “Grounded theory is well-suited to discovering the participants’ problem and then generating a theory accounting for the processing of the problem” (p. 11). The researcher begins with questioning participants in the field and ends when the theory emerges and is complete (Watson, 2008). Grounded theory is research that is done without a preconceived direction in place (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 2009; Glaser, 1998). Grounded theory, because of its constant comparison, can yield a discussion or propositional theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). Glaser (1998) explains that the data will “speak for itself” (p. 123) and knowledge from this data will make the researcher more sensitive without controlling the outcome.

### **Study Design Justification**

There are five methods of qualitative inquiry: narrative research, ethnography, case study, phenomenological research, and grounded theory (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) explains that during the 1990s and more recently, qualitative research has become more robust. More articles and books are available describing techniques and design for qualitative research (Creswell, 2009, p. 12). Corbin and Strauss (1990) reveal the rigors of grounded theory while flexible, are required procedure because it helps the scientific field maintain its sense of strength through analysis. Grounded theory, since Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed it, has gained ample recognition for the solid results coming from studies that develop a theory using data. Constant comparison of data coming from interviews and observations allows the theory to develop (Glaser, 1998). A theory

developed from patterns in the data is a stronger basis for recognition than one given from forced entry into an already developed theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2006).

A narrative research is an inquiry into the life or lives of a specific person or persons (Creswell, 2009). The researcher will tell a story based on the knowledge outlined by the participants about a distinct research topic to gain chronological knowledge about the topic. The result is a collaborative study that concludes with views that explain a chosen topic.

Ethnography is a study directly related to a cultural group in a native habitat. The study is a prolonged and lengthy process. The process involves the collection of data through interviews, direct observation of events, and personal encounters (Creswell, 2009). The lens of the research is through the chosen cultural group.

A case study is a study based on a specific program, process, or incident to gain knowledge from individuals or a group (Creswell, 2009). The study seeks to gather information over a specified period to gain insight into the objective being studied. There are many methods of inquiry that can be used such as interviews, surveys, or activities (Creswell, 2009).

Phenomenological research is done to track a particular phenomenon or experience (Creswell, 2009). The participants are interviewed to determine lived experiences that direct patterns of occurrence (Creswell, 2009). Researchers in many cases add their own life experiences to research to frame the trustworthiness.

Grounded theory is a process that a researcher determines a general theory involving a process or human action (Creswell, 2009). Through interviews and data

collection, the researcher can formulate specific categories, and their properties to generate an emergent theory (Glaser, 1998). The theory emerges through constant comparison from transcribing data collected from the interviews. A theory develops from a well-saturated data collection. Glaser (1998) and Creswell (2009) both explain that through individual responses and experiences from the participant, the researcher is better able to determine categories and properties when working to get an emerging theory.

All the strategies have been considered for this research study. It has been determined that grounded theory will fit the study best. This research study is not seeking an explanation for a phenomenon. The study is not centered on a cultural group or personal narrative. A case study needs specific events or objects to be studied, of which this study has none. The research study is exploring the question about potential connections to LMX and business thinking. There is no hypothesis to test at this stage. The participants will be given open-ended questions to understand better the implications a leader has on the subordinate business thinking and events related to work environment. The topic to date, has not been studied, and the grounded theory will begin the process of investigating business thinking in the hope of initiating a theory on business thinking and LMX style leadership. The intent of this study is to explore issues surrounding business thinking and LMX style including knowledge from participants who can relay historical background. Kang and Stewart (2007) have successfully explored LMX style leadership and the linkage between high and low-quality relationships leaders have with their subordinates. With this research study, an exploration of potential change in subordinate business thinking, relating to their supervisor leadership style, was initiated. The

grounded theory method best allowed a research study meant to gather information directly from people in the field.

### **Population, Sample, and Setting**

Sample participants were to be comprised of non-managerial subordinates and leaders in publicly held corporations doing business in the United States. The participants were asked the same questions to gain perspective from both the subordinate and leader rank. The sampling design is theoretical sampling allowing the responses from participants to lead to the theory that will emerge (Glaser, 1998). Through constant comparison, more questions or fewer questions could be required to reach what Glaser and Strauss (2006) call theoretical saturation. Saturation was defined in the following manner (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1998):

The point where: 1) no longer finding emerging relevant data in a category; 2) the category development is dense and at a point where new data can no longer add to the theory; 3) the relationships between categories are validated and verified.

In many grounded theory research studies, participants number approximately 2030. If saturation is not reached it will be deemed necessary to interview additional individuals, the process would continue until saturation is reached and a theory emerges.

### **Research Question**

The central issue question in this research is:

1. Does the leadership style known as LMX theory drive business thinking?

Questions to determine leadership traits of leaders:

1. Explain the working relationship you have with your supervisor.

2. How do you feel when your supervisor questions either your actions or your attitude about a work project?
3. Explain the type of effort you put forth on the job when it comes to your work for your supervisor.
4. Explain how you and your supervisor work on assignments together.
5. Explain what motivates or challenges the work you do with your supervisor.
6. Explain how your manager makes you emotionally feel at work.

Questions relating to business thinking:

1. How does your company and/or supervisor accept suggestions or recommendations on the job?
2. How do you work on projects or ideas at work during business hours? Do you do anything different because of requirements your supervisor has? Does this process differ from the way you work on projects or ideas at home? Does your supervisor change the way you think?
3. Explain a time when you felt you had a good idea for your business. Did you know what steps to take to present your idea? If you do understand the steps did you feel your idea was taken seriously when you presented it? If you do not know the steps who would you ask to find out what to do?

### **Ethical Protection of Research Participants**

The research did not pose risks to the participants. The participants were provided with a letter of consent and knowledge that their research responses were completely voluntary. The participants were allowed to withdraw from questioning at any time they

did not feel comfortable with the line of questioning. As a researcher, I was in control of all recordings, written communications, and transcripts, which are held in a locked file at my home office. The IRB approval was # 08-06-14-0102465.

### **The Role of the Researcher**

The study had just one researcher, a student at Walden University. The researcher was responsible for all processes related to data collection. The researcher was the sole person responsible for sample selection, transcribing data, completing interview and all questions related to the study. When data was received and transcribed, the researcher wrote the results of the interview, and its subsequent theory.

### **Procedures**

As part of the procedures, the researcher was responsible for selection of participants and providing information relating to the study. The study consisted of data collection and analysis along with validation of findings in a progression that followed grounded theory procedures.

A. A search for publicly held business organizations was done using the Internet and the regional yellow pages in Dane and Waukesha counties in Wisconsin, and Prince William County in Virginia. The two geographic locations were chosen because of the diverse makeup of publicly held companies. Using the Internet, the search was conducted on the websites of publicly held organizations. For each site, geographical information for Wisconsin and Virginia was used with geographical designations: zip codes and city names within each county. A yellow page search for publicly held

corporations in large metropolitan areas was sought. A list of corporations was developed using the search results for each location category.

B. Human resources professionals with more than 3 years of overall experience in human resources whose names were identified for each business on the list.

C. A letter was sent to the selected human resources professional with detailed study communication, a notification that the study will be done confidentially, and a consent letter. The study communication requested participation by non-managerial subordinates for this study. The notices explained that a follow-up telephone call will be made. Invitees were provided with an e-mail address for researcher communication.

D. A telephone call was made to the human resources professional to make introductions. The telephone call introduced the study and inquired about potential interest in participation in the study interviews.

E. Following the initial questioning, the human resources professionals along with non-managerial subordinates were invited to participate. Upon acceptance of the invitation, the schedule for a formal interview date and time was verified.

F. Each interview was scheduled to include a sufficient time lag to provide abundant time for audiotape transcription and comparative analysis. The subject's first interview was scheduled within one week of acceptance of study participation and receipt of the study information in the mail.

G. Data collection and analysis took a minimum of seven weeks from the start of the first interviews. Grounded theory, because of the rigorous sampling and data

collection is not concluded until the category is saturated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is estimated that data collection and analysis was completed within a period of two months.

### **Data Analysis**

Grounded theory is qualitative research simultaneously doing data collection using the constant comparison of data after each interview (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 2006). Data is coded and through this exposes patterns occurring in the data by revealing classifications or categories or properties of categories (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). The categories start out as extensive (open coding) but are eventually collapsed into smaller elements. Using axial coding, relationships are used to develop an account of events. The relationships help to evaluate and construct a theory which can be validated (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 1998).

Grounded theory, through the interview process, will result in large volumes of data (Glaser, 1998). Glaser describes that to do constant comparison, the researcher must devise coding for themes that reveal themselves during interviews. Throughout initial open coding, the analysis determines word meanings and variations that will help cluster ideas. The information is constantly being compared to other interview responses and become common in the comparison process. Constant comparison begins during the interview and can be done when reviewing the lines, sentences, and paragraphs of the interview data in the transcripts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1998). Subsequent interviews follow the same procedure using the constant comparison technique. This procedure is what differentiates grounded theory from other methodology. Categories, properties, and subcategories reveal themselves during each comparison process. By

using axial coding, the researcher can determine if a relationship between business thinking and leadership style exists. It may be necessary for additional sampling to assure that the core category is close to being saturated (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2006). The categories and subcategories are interrelated, and the identification of relationships becomes more evident. The final task in data analysis is sorting the notes and memos to group comparable categories together based on similarities. This formulates the initial stages of developing the framework for the theory.

The categories are clearly defined to allow for rigorous theory development (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 1998, Glaser & Strauss, 2006). This helps to gain a clear view of the core category and begins to form the substantive theory. The pilot study, data collection and analysis begin with Chapter four.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of the research is to show how leadership style affects business thinking in the workplace. There has been inadequate effort to determine whether supervisor's leadership style affects business thinking. The goal from my research was to determine if there is a connection between the leadership style known as LMX and business thinking using grounded theory. In addition to this, the research study considers questions to determine leadership traits of participant's supervisors and questions relating to business thinking.

The participant responses were compared after each interview. The participant's interview data helped reveal the themes and the need to improve leadership research with information about supervisory role in changing business thinking. The literature review posited the justification to explore the focus on business thinking.

Prior research described supervisors who were adversarial in nature and how they affected employee productivity and turnover both positively and negatively. Most of the effect was negative and business outcomes such as turnover and other quantitative factors were affected adversely. The links also showed that LMX leadership style could affect outcomes both positively and negatively. Most of the affects were positive because productivity and employee loyalty improved. There were negatives with employees who felt left out in some of the activities used with the LMX leadership style (Kang & Stewart, 2007). Because of this, there is not one leadership style that can magically make subordinates work with their supervisor and have no issues. As noted in the literature

review per Cramer et al. (2006); Coloma, Gibson, and Packard (2012); Fleck (2011); Hargis, Watt, and Piotrowski (2011) the leadership style known as LMX fosters trust and loyalty which lend itself to positive work relationships. Of all the leadership styles researched, positive productive relationships come from more rational and not reactional leadership styles. As the literature review found, the main theme in business thinking is the analysis and expression of ideas about a process or task relating to business operation (Christensen, 2010; Denning, 2011; Sandelands, 2009). Nevertheless, the link between leadership style and business thinking was not explored directly as evidenced in the literature review.

The resulting data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach. The coding analysis software Atlas.ti was used to input and analyze the data from the participant's research question responses from written transcripts and recorded replies. After each transcript was entered, memoing took place to include data written by the researcher to note body language, verbal tone, and stories given voluntarily by some participants. A few participants told stories but did not want the information as part of the transcript, so that data was struck from the transcript. Once each transcript and memo was entered, the documents were coded using In Vivo and free coding available from the Atlas.ti software. The coding included stages of In Vivo coding (using the participants' own words to get specific codes from the first review of each interview transcript (Saldaña, 2009). The coding also included free coding which is the use of a one-word description for a phrase or sentence. This coding allowed the researcher to narrow down the interview and memo data into topics that soon became themes when used as part of the broader picture. During

this stage, constant comparison was used to compare each transcript and memo as interviews took place. The process of constant comparison is defined as reading and analyzing data by going back to analyze data each time more is added to the transcripts (Glaser & Strauss, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). Once all the transcripts were entered and coded, the secondary method of coding called pattern coding was used to establish a pattern regarding responses.

Subsequent sections describe the methodology in more depth. All the codes obtained in this research came as a result of the interview responses noting the supervisor-subordinate relationship. Some codes came from elements of body language, verbal tones, and memo notes. The memos and interviews highlighted leadership style through answers specified with question responses and its participant defined relationship to subordinate business thinking.

### **Research Questions**

The central issue question in this research was: Does the leadership style known as LMX theory drive business thinking?

I used the following interview questions to determine leadership traits of leaders:

1. Explain the working relationship you have with your supervisor.
2. How do you feel when your supervisor questions either your actions or your attitude about a work project?
3. Explain the type of effort you put forth on the job when it comes to your work for your supervisor.
4. Explain how you and your supervisor work on assignments together.

5. Explain what motivates or challenges the work you do with your supervisor.
6. Explain how your manager makes you emotionally feel at work.

I used the following interview questions relating to business thinking:

1. How does your company and/or supervisor accept suggestions or recommendations on the job?
2. How do you work on projects or ideas at work during business hours? Do you do anything different because of requirements your supervisor has? Does this process differ from the way you work on projects or ideas at home? Does your supervisor change the way you think?
3. Explain a time when you felt you had a good idea for your business. Did you know what steps to take to present your idea? If you do understand the steps, did you feel your idea was taken seriously when you presented it? If you do not know the steps who would you ask to find out what to do?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The research study was chosen because of the gap in the literature regarding leadership effect on business thinking. The interviews were a systematic approach allowing the researcher to gather information about participant roles and outlooks within their organizations. During the initial coding process, in the researcher's case In Vivo and free coding, the first codes were established. Interviews, along with In Vivo and free coding, allowed for acquisition of 97 separate and unique codes. Because many of the answers were very short, the number of codes were far less than many qualitative research projects acquire. The researcher, through constant comparison, made sure to

check on codes to be sure the entire element of the answer was included. The constant comparison, used by the researcher, was used to check new codes to authenticate the developing theme. Each transcript was coded and compared after the transliteration was completed. Free coding authenticated specific words used to describe a feeling or action the participant described. The codes were acquired from the transcribing process of the interview transcripts, and were the impetus for the evolution of themes. The codes, through constant comparison, confirmed the consistency of the responses from participant interviews. The codes that came resulted from the interviews were used to define leadership style and reactions and actions toward work environment and settings. The codes were also used to determine the theme the research exposed throughout the interview process. Pattern coding was used to analyze the 97 codes into themes that encompassed the direction the interview and memo data took. When using pattern coding, the researcher had 14 distinct code patterns relating to a theme of the supervisor to subordinate relationship. The 14 themes were then analyzed again using pattern coding again to get themes that are even more concise. The initial coding allowed the pattern coding to develop into subjects more easily defined as themes. Pattern coding allowed the researcher to take the initial codes and ascertained similarities. The codes that developed from pattern coding, gave the researcher a better understanding of the effect of leadership on the subordinate relationship. This understanding helped form the final resulting theme used to show how specific leadership style can, at the very least, make subordinate's think about their own business thinking process. Using the coding techniques and analysis procedures found in grounded theory descriptive works, themes and concepts

were developed (Saldaña, 2009, p. 185-187). This was done by condensing like words to a main themed definition.

The final theme resulted in business thinking that is challenged by leadership style, specifically by leadership styles adversarial and collaborative. The pattern code analysis confirmed how many of the recurrences were similar in definition. Because of the similarities, the final theme was acquired. The final coding resulted from the evidence that showed adversarial leadership style could change business thinking in many cases. Secondary evidence in the final coding that helped develop this theme was that more collaborative leadership style generally left participant business thinking unchanged. The final theme that developed from the coding process was that leaders influenced their subordinate's business thinking. The influence was both changed and unchanged thinking by subordinates based on the leadership style of their supervisor. In either case, the leadership style influenced business thinking. All subordinates, whether changed or unchanged business thinking, were affected by the leadership style of their leaders. The responses to questions directly stated the relationship, elaborated throughout the research.

Participants that had leaders who they considered difficult to work with, described their leader with negative terms. Subordinate participants with more negative supervisors produced code words such as malicious, insensitive, and non-listening. Subordinates with a supervisor who did not listen wanted to keep the peace and did not want to make waves in the workplace when it comes to challenges and opportunities.

Supervisors judged as respectful and understanding, were portrayed positively by their subordinates. Subordinates, who described positive leaders during the interview,

used words such as empathetic leader, understanding, and one who wanted subordinates to feel respected and appreciated. Leaders described as having good listening skills, had subordinates who wanted to work hard and make the leader look good.

Based on the participant interview responses in this research, the qualitative grounded theory research portrayed that leadership style can challenge or inspire business thinking. While the responses did not show this 100% of the time, 24 of 26 respondents fell into one of the two outcomes. With a broader study using more diverse populations, the responses could make a more valuable determination of which specific collaborative or adverse leadership traits influence or challenge business thinking. Because the sample population was small and the questions limited, the responses were more direct and less descriptive. Broader questioning could lead to broader responses. Supervisors have influence over employees in ways they may not comprehend. Holt and Marques (2012) describe how leaders can, in the observances of their subordinates, come across brash and tough. The harsh attitude and impetuous questioning can leave the subordinate feeling rejected, untrusted, and disparaged (Kang and Stewart, 2007). Participant 25 high-level male participant elaborated that his business thinking was negatively changed because his authoritative leader made him feel that his ideas were not valuable and this made him lose confidence in his idea generation. He went on to say that his confidence and self-esteem changed his format for thinking on the job. The gap in the literature identified how leadership style has not been recognized as a challenge or inspiration to business thinking.

Several themes emerged during initial coding when constant comparison during

the interview process was utilized and memos were written to supplement the data. During the initial coding, each of the interview, answers were coded to determine whether there was a link between the answer and the research questions. Each question had responses that uncovered specific codes that were utilized to get to the final theme in the research. The process of constant comparison allowed each interview to add to the depth of the coding similarities. These codes through the later pattern coding allowed for evaluation of question-to-question results. Some of the questions were directly related to each other while other questions did not give additional evidence supporting or not supporting the direction the theme was developing. In subsequent research, the questions that netted no additional evidence or linkage would be removed from the questioning. Pattern coding was then used as a secondary code process and was done using the initial codes and research obtained through the interview process. There were two distinct patterns affecting business thinking that arose during interviews and subsequent coding. The interviews did reveal two discoveries relating to the research regarding leadership and business thinking. The subsequent sections will describe this in more depth. Many codes came from outlining the supervisor-subordinate relationship. The memos and interviews highlighted leadership style and its participant-defined relationship to subordinate business thinking.

### **Data Collection**

The research study was chosen because of the gap in the literature regarding leadership effect on business thinking. The interviews were used to gather information about participant roles and outlooks within their organizations. Twenty-six interviews

with private and public-sector males and females were conducted between October 2014 and August 2015. The purposeful sampling group included participants from both private and public sector in multiple states in the United States. Participants' career level ranged from early career to retired with specific age not being tracked. Organizational types represented in the study were both private and public sector and included global energy resources, higher education, government, banking, and consulting firms. Following approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), approval # 0806-14-0102465, the researcher began contact efforts with the 20-30 participants identified in the researcher's dissertation proposal. Participants were recruited from a closed LinkedIn group for Human Resources professionals. Respondents contacted the researcher through posts on LinkedIn and were based on voluntary request. Because the LinkedIn group was private, the respondents could contact me with the email address mentioned in the LinkedIn post. The participants who offered to participate, were notified by email to outline the terms of the research study, and explain further steps. The terms of the research stated that participants were required to have three years' minimum in the field of human resources. The human resources field is responsible for working with employees of all levels in an organization. Because of this broad interaction within their organization, this field was chosen to represent the participants needed for this study. This was the only requirement to participate since gender, location, and business type were not considered for the purposes of this research. This information was given to the participant so they understood the direction the research had intended to take. Participants were also requested through the Walden University participant pool but no participants

resulted from this recruitment effort. The participant pool is a tool available to Walden University students for use in recruiting for dissertation research. Participants from the pool agree to participate in the interview process to expand the data available. The participant pool posting was listed on the Walden University participant pool website and solicited participants with three or more years in human resources as the LinkedIn account requested. After two weeks, the participant pool posting expired and was removed having received no responses of participation.

All participants received the consent form to participate, some in person and some through email. No one declined the interview and everyone followed the interview protocol as described in the consent form. Using the approved interview procedure, data from in-person and telephone interviews was recorded electronically using the voice recording feature on the iPhone 5 and Samsung Note 4. The recordings were downloaded and saved to an external hard drive as noted in Chapter 3. The first interview procedure engaged people through 11 in-person interviews that were recorded using the iPhone 5 or Samsung Note 4 voice-recording feature and saved using the method described for the interviewed candidates. For the in-person interview, the researcher did hand written accounts of the participant responses. Using the same interview procedure, fifteen interviews were conducted by telephone, recorded using the iPhone 5 or Samsung Note 4 voice recording feature, and saved using the method described for telephone candidates. The telephone interviews were recorded with the researcher hand writing notes as the participant responded. All the telephone and in-person interviews were transcribed, edited, and transcribed and recorded in the Atlas.ti software database the same day they

were conducted to preserve the integrity of the sentiment being established when the interview took place. The participants were given the researcher's telephone number as a method to contact with further information if they felt it was necessary. All the data, recordings, and interview hand written notes, and transcribed interview answers are also stored on the private computer of the researcher as noted in the IRB application. The computer used is locked by password and stored in a locked office. The scanned and then shredded consent forms, signed by candidates, are stored on an external hard drive in a locked safe in researcher's home office as noted in the IRB application.

### **Memos**

Memos were written when information was necessary to explain the context of interview responses. In depth, details about coding and specific codes will be given later in this Chapter to provide more about the research itself. Glaser (1978) described how memos could elevate the researcher's records to a conceptual level. Interpretive memos were written at each juncture in the collection process. These memos help to record and document the processes by which the researcher interprets data and assigns codes to text. Memos were added to the researcher's notes as it related to the answers given by the participant after each interview was concluded. The researcher is aware of and will note where bias was a portion of the memo dictation and therefore coding. Some participants discussed reasoning behind their responses that was their story used to describe how and why they felt the answer was as given. This information came from the open-ended questions that elicited this type of response. Memos added value to the coding analysis by including valuable perceptions directly from the participant about their supervisor. The

memo coding can include researcher-comprehended bias (Saldaña, 2009). Bias was avoided by constantly checking the flow of the conversation. This was to be sure nothing was added to the questioning that was not part of the original line of questioning. The researcher made no commentary unless to state the next question, clarify a statement, or to interact with the participant in a manner of self-interest about their story. Most of the interaction came by way of the researcher asked questions and the participant related answer. The memos included information given by the participant about work environment and relationships within their workplace. The researcher also observed body language and vocal tones. The researcher felt this data was important enough to include in the research memos because it added to the overall impression of the participant subordinate-supervisor relationship while on the job. Participant basic demographic information and notes about employment history came from the in-person or telephone interviews and were used in the memo documentation. Observations of body language and verbal inflection perceptions became subject to researcher bias that came from historical working relationships in the researcher's past. Personifying mood and vocal inflection is recognized as subjective and relates to the distinct timeframe and the perception the researcher had of these characteristics. Nevertheless, this along with the interview answers gave a general perception of the relationship between the supervisor, subordinate, and company. In this research, the memos became a transcript of information written to record body language queues that included discomfort from this line of questioning during the interview or when speaking of the relationship between them and their supervisor. It also included notes about vocal tones that elevated or

decreased while talking about their work relationships. The telephone interviews had no manner to get body language queues because the use of FaceTime and Skype was not implemented as part of the interview process. This information was heard and seen during the interview process when the participant was giving direct responses in-person. The telephone interviews allowed for more in-depth analysis of vocal tone since there were no body language queues to observe. The memos included information the researcher could glean from the feelings and activities surrounding the work they do for their supervisor. The researcher recognizes and is accountable for the bias that comes from the nature of these observations and feelings. Expressions showing pain or joy in some of the participant's reactions were seen during the interview. The expression of pain came from participants whose supervisors were particularly harsh to work with. The joyful appearances came from participants who were fond of the relationship between them and their supervisor. The participant memo information will be included later and given a separate category. Saldaña, 2009 explains that a researcher's code and creativity are unique to each project. Knowledge gained from the observations during the interview process prompted the use of memos from participant comments and actions, all of which were used to code data. The participants described activities their supervisors at their company or agency did while responding to the unique research questions being asked. Grounded theory postulates that all data can be used as part of the research (Glaser, 1998, pp. 8-9). Realization of this, meant choosing to add to the depth of the research data by using additional memo observations. Memos written from information given by each participant helped explain their answer with more depth. A few participants chose to

include narrative descriptions about interactions with their supervisors. The added narrative data was not solicited. Some of the participants wanted to speak of their relationships and others chose to respond only to the question not giving additional stories or information. The researcher did write memos about these participants recording this noteworthy lack of additional information.

The researcher used the memo data specifically to enhance resulting data and get additional codes to verify the saturation of the topic. Participants gave a wide variety of experiences in addition to responses to the question. It was with the additional details in the participant's response, supplementary codes were developed and used to add to the analysis of the results. The information from the memos that were not part of the original questioning, served as supplements to the question responses. The study questions did not get as in depth to explain the details of on the job activities. This questioning would be a great addition for future research. The memo data from the supplemental responses resulted in richer coding. The additional questioning could also improve on and reduce researcher bias by taking responses directly from the participant rather than the observation of the researcher.

## Codes

### In Vivo Coding

The free codes and In Vivo codes were used to establish a pattern from responses. In Vivo codes in Atlas.ti are those codes that are generated by phrases collected in the interview. A specific phrase can summarize the response from the question. In Vivo coding was used when the entire phrase was necessary to conclude the premise of the

answer. The researcher also used In Vivo coding from the Atlas.ti application when the participant used a sentence or phrase, which was concise and could be used to quote participants. This method allowed enhancement during the comparison process with a more complete definition because the code involved a phrase or sentence rather than a one-word code. A phrase can be a good explanation for something ordinarily described with one word. The In Vivo code is from a direct response the participant gave using only his or her own words. Participant 11 contributed a specific example allowing for In Vivo coding. She described her supervisor's actions stating, "She is different than the "boys club" so they don't want ideas that breach that". It was necessary to keep the entire phrase together because the statement could change if words are removed and paraphrasing the activity could remove the full extent of the comment. In the end, this statement was used to get to a very specific code, categories describing supervisor's leadership style, showed that the phrase helped put in contextual form the reason behind the pattern code. It was also used as a quotation to emphasize a specific leadership trait within the participant's organization.

#### Free coding

Another method of coding exercised, was called free coding. Per Atlas.ti coding software, the method of condensing phrases and passages into descriptive words is called free coding. Through constant comparison and memo input, the free coding method was put in place. The free coding was used to code participant responses and memos so themes could begin to emerge. Free coding is applied to a phrase or sentence to get a single word concept. This single word becomes part of the constant comparison. This

method was used when the phrase or sentence had words that were unnecessary in the coding process. An example of free coding came as a result of the quote “my boss is someone who acts rude and arrogant when dealing with me”. This phrase was free coded to “adversarial” since the terminology most described actions of the supervisor and the additional words did not add to the meaning. Specific coding examples will be used later in the writing in sections specific to the analysis.

### Pattern Coding

Pattern coding was used to start narrowing down like codes to themes that were conceptualizing similar denotation. There were 97 individual codes analyzed to begin the process of placing the codes in a category to develop pattern responses. The following paragraphs will explain the process used to achieve pattern codes, which eventually led to the dominant theme resulting from the qualitative questioning.

### Pattern Code Relationship Style

The first of fourteen patterns established was relationship style. The codes that related to relationship style were placed in the pattern description bearing this name. A few participants used the phrase “have to anticipate” when describing how they interact with their supervisor on a regular basis. Participant 6 explained that because her supervisor did not take time to explain tasks or communicate with her the expectations of projects, she was always required to anticipate what he wanted and needed.

Participant 2 explained that her supervisor gave her projects but would give very vague timeframes. The supervisor would specify that the project was not urgent in nature so she could work on it at her own pace. Inevitably, she found over time she had to

anticipate this changing rapidly and that the project was critically timed though he did not express this. The use of the phrase “have to anticipate” had negative connotation with the participants using it but their overall supervisor-subordinate relationship was not necessarily a completely negative rapport overall.

Also, noted as a relationship style, was the subordinate participant feelings of separation from their supervisor. The participants who felt separation from their supervisor described it as a workplace that held the supervisor-subordinate relationship as one of hierarchy. Participant 2 felt separated because she was expected to research things without any interaction or guidance from the supervisor. She felt she had to make her own path when it came to project work but she explained that she can do this without guidance because she is her own person. Her only cautionary feeling was that she needed to keep her superiors aware of her activities even as they trusted what she did. The properties of this separation speak to the hierarchical design of the supervisor-subordinate roles in her public-sector agency.

Participant 15 described the relationship with her supervisor as separated because she was expected to read between the lines and handle her team and projects with little or no guidance. She described her supervisor as having a lack of engagement that made their relationship tense at times. The definition separated was used in both the positive leaning and negative leaning question responses. This code was used in both leadership style traits exposed during this line of questioning.

Participants described the relationship with some of their supervisors as balanced. Participant 26 described the balance he and his supervisor have when describing how

they interact with each other and leverage ideas and opinions off each other. Neither one of them was ever afraid to say something that might offend the other if there was no agreement on an issue. He felt their communication was always held at the highest level. Balance was used as a term in the positive collaborative relationships. The participants who responded more negatively about their adversarial supervisor-subordinate relationship did not describe it as having balance.

#### Pattern Code Productivity

The second of fourteen pattern codes were productivity. This pattern described the process for activities completed within the workplace. The code project planner fit this pattern because the participants using this response described the type of activity surrounding the process improvement and development. Participant 9 described her supervisor as someone who passed projects down for the subordinates to complete, based on his own planning efforts. Input was not allowed from subordinates even if steps could be eliminated or changed. It was because of this action she felt her supervisor was a project planner.

Participant 6 described her supervisor as a project planner who was very methodical in his thinking because he was a former engineer. The engineering field in her mind was more black and white and human resources were far more colorful. She always felt the projects were given with no allowance for diversion like rigidity of an engineering project. In this atmosphere, she felt it harder to get from point A to point B because the terms were always engineering terms rather than from human capital activity.

Subject matter expert was a part of productivity pattern because the supervisors described in this manner were helpful with the procedures developed to get a manufactured product out the door. Participant 11 described how she and her supervisor think alike. She explained how her work ethic and historic actions to get things done mean people always come to her when they want projects completed. Participant 11's business thinking does not change because her supervisor allows her to be a decision maker and subject matter expert with the legal aspects of the job. Participant 11's supervisor continually allowed her in on many of the major decisions that were made for company business and operations.

Participant 17 described her supervisor as someone who always made her feel inadequate and would yell at her in meetings; so, she stopped going to him. She felt he was the subject matter expert so she changed her business thinking to match his and avoid any kind of argument or confrontation. The business thinking was not directed at the subject matter expert. Vocal inflection increased for both changed and unchanged business thinkers, but the participant whose supervisor was collaborative sounded joyful and the participant whose supervisor was adversarial sounded scared.

Another code used as part of productivity was training leader. The leaders who were collaborative generally trained their subordinates because they could take care of work on their own if they had all the tools to do so. Participant 17 described her supervisor as someone who would not give instructions when he gave project work. It always made her anticipate what she needed to do to finish her project. Her supervisor was adversarial and confined her to be directed on everything she did.

Participant 5 had an adversarial supervisor and felt directed with her work. She felt she had to change her business thinking because her supervisor would never respond to requests for information. She used what she thought was knowledge her supervisor would use and not the knowledge she thought would be best for the request. This supervisor was not considered a training leader. Participant 5 felt her supervisor would rather keep her in the dark than to have her know anything that was going on. She did not provide any training or development to enhance her job skills. They rarely interacted and there was no direction given when it came to any work that was being done.

Participant 7 felt like her supervisor took training seriously when he would show interest in some of her projects. She said his kind of training was to give her the project to work on but allow her to come to him and ask the questions to get the information she needed to finalize the project. Her business thinking was changed because he wanted the diversity of thought in the organization. Though most leaders who were good training leaders tended to be collaborative, she did not feel he was a collaborative leader simply because he just was not the kind of leader to share knowledge needed to do the work. He was what she called a great teaching leader through his strong attitude with their output of work. He was a former engineer and handled business much like the analytical manner an engineer handles projects. He held projects and details close and did not share readily. Participant 7 also said she was always directed with the work but felt like there were many learning opportunities. Being a training leader was not related to changed business thinking directly and was evident in leaders who were both collaborative and adversarial.

The activities used as training were different with each leadership style. Participant 5 and 7 both felt directed with their work but also felt there were training opportunities with the way their leader supervised them.

#### Pattern Code Leadership Style

The third of fourteen patterns established was leadership style. There were many codes used to describe leadership style during the interviews. In the end, they pointed to either adversarial leadership style or collaborative leadership style. Fourteen of twenty-six participants described their feelings on the job as directed. In addition to feeling directed, Participant 7 described feeling that there were no interactions with her supervisor. Participant 7 goes on to say that the lack of interaction tended to make her irritated at work and that she was completely separated from the process. Her business thinking changed because her leader directed what she did rather than allow her to challenge her own business thinking with changes that could make for beneficial changes in the organization.

Participant 25 described being directed with his work also. He described how his supervisor would frustrate him and irritate him when he was working on something for him. He described his leader as heavy handed and elusive. Participant 25 changed his business thinking simply to get projects done to his supervisor's liking. It was easier to change than to try to find his supervisor and get him to agree with his new ideas. Participant 25's leader would be considered adversarial with traits that caused emotional stress on his subordinate.

Participant 6 described her leader as someone who let her do her work autonomously but was there for her when she needed him. He would always ask her how she would do something with a project or process. She felt like her leader motivated her because he would allow her to give input for processes and projects. Her supervisor was a collaborative type leader and she felt like she had a stake in the activities of her employer. She did not change her business thinking because she felt her supervisor appreciated her own thought progressions on productivity and process.

Participant 3 feels she has a very strong relationship with her supervisor. She described her supervisor as one who would always listen to her ideas and many times allow her to make changes where the process would improve. Participant 3 felt like she respects her supervisor because she motivates her and makes her feel important. Her supervisor handled their activities collaboratively. The actions of her supervisor made her feel that her business thinking did not change. She felt, because her ideas were utilized in some cases, that she could offer her own ideas.

The codes in the leadership style developed into two very distinct groups. The supervisors described as those who direct subordinates, make them feel irritated and incompetent and generally did not listen, were adversarial. The supervisors, whose subordinates felt motivated, understood, and included in many processes, were those who were collaborative. The participants whose supervisors were adversarial generally did not want to make waves so they changed their business thinking to mirror their supervisors such as those described by participant 25. The participants whose supervisors were collaborative generally felt it was acceptable to offer new

ideas that came from of their own business thinking such as those described by Participant 3.

#### Pattern Code Emotions

The fourth of fourteen patterns established was emotions. The participants described multitudes of emotions. Sometimes the supervisor's leadership style did not change what would frustrate the subordinates. The subordinates with collaborative leaders described their frustration as a desire to do more work for their supervisor. The subordinates with an adversarial leader would get frustrated because they could not do things to the supervisor's liking or because the supervisor did not appreciate their work. Participant 9 stated how her supervisor would make her so frustrated because no matter what she did it was never good enough to get a positive reaction. She felt she had to look for another position because her supervisor was making her feel so incompetent she would take it home and carry the stress.

Participant 18 described feeling nervous when he had to speak to his supervisor. She made him feel that way because she was always busy, and he felt like his comments and questions were not worth her time. The nerves often made him frustrated because it was hard to get work done without the correct answers he needed from his supervisor. He changed his business thinking because it was easier to match her style than to infuse his own style into the work. Participant 9 and 18 had adversarial leaders, though not the same degree of adversity.

Participant 11 described feeling appreciated and comfortable with the work she does for her supervisor. She always felt like her supervisor went out of her way to

make her feel competent and important. It was because of these feelings she would not change her business thinking. Her supervisor made a point of always telling her how appreciated her ideas and suggestions were. Her supervisor made sure the company always rewarded the employees. Participant 11 said as a subordinate she received extra benefits, like time off or lunches, in addition to company products that were given to the general employee population.

The adversarial leaders incited emotions that made the participants more nervous, stressed out, and frustrated. The collaborative leaders provoked the participants to make ideas and suggestions. The participants of collaborative leaders described being appreciated, motivated, and competent.

#### Pattern Code Discussion

The fifth of fourteen patterns established was discussion. The leaders very distinctly separated as those who discussed their projects with detail or were those who passed the project and expected the subordinate to pick up and run with it without much interaction. Participant 2 described how her supervisor would give her a project and not interact much. It was because of her work ethic her supervisor acknowledged that she always comes through with a finished successful product. This style often made Participant 2 feel separated because the supervisor did not interact and assumed she had no questions which was not always true. There were times she had hoped for more interaction and direction.

Participant 11 discussed the many times her supervisor would just come in her office to discuss specific projects just to be sure they were on the same page. She

described her supervisor as someone who trusted her work so much that she would use her ideas for projects over her own. Their discussions were always that of peers rather than supervisor-subordinate relationship. Though she respected her supervisor and never crossed a line of authority, Participant 11 felt like the relationship between her and her supervisor was friendly and sister like. Participant 11 did not change her business thinking.

Participant 4 said her supervisor never discussed anything with her. He would give her projects but any details needed had to come from her team leader. The supervisor liked a hierarchical office structure and would be offended if someone questioned how things were done. Participant 4 did feel like her supervisor was collaborative because he gave her projects. She did not change her business thinking because typically, she could make suggestions to the team leader and they would on occasion be accepted.

Participant 21 felt his supervisor was fair and just but that he was not one to prompt discussions on projects and ideas. He felt like the work was to be done on his own, though his supervisor fairly distributed the work, she was a positive impacting leader. He did not change his business thinking because the amount of time he spent on his own projects allowed him to articulate many of his thoughts into ideas that worked. Leadership discussion practice appeared to be strongly related to business thinking that did not change as evidenced by the very similar discussion style of the supervisors of Participant 2 and 5. The participants with adversarial supervisors did not consider any type of discussion as most felt separated and directed.

### Pattern Code Policy Style

The sixth of fourteen patterns established was policy style. Supervisors had distinct policy style in the way they held the organization charts within their companies or agencies. Participant 22 described a dotted line reporting relationship since they were both able to challenge various sections within the business. He reported to his supervisor for reviews and evaluations but could do projects without his approval. He did know his supervisor saw everything he did so it was never an issue of making a solo decision. His supervisor would analyze his work each time but let Participant 22 do his own work. He did not have to change his business thinking because his supervisor, even with critiques, was not overbearing.

Participant 4 described the hierarchical nature of the way policy was formed. She rationalized that ideas and suggestions could never come directly from her to the supervisor. The supervisor did her evaluations and recommendations but the team leader gave most of the direction within their office. In her description, it was easier to do things because the team leader was usually more willing to listen to ideas and was always willing to go to the supervisor when she felt it was a good idea coming from Participant 4.

Participant 15 defined the supervisor-subordinate relationship in terms of using process improvement to teach subordinates new methods to do activities. They showed the older out of date process to show how the new activity improved the procedure. The supervisor established a policy that required this type of activity for change. Participant 26 cited how his company would evaluate their procedures on

occasion, so this activity made sense for the company. His supervisor always felt they needed to do this to keep up with innovations. Participant 26's supervisor was described as having an open-door policy. Five of the participants who described their supervisor as collaborative stated an open-door policy. Hierarchical style policy was commanded from a much more directed authoritarian style leadership while collaborative leaders tended toward unrestricted policy.

### Pattern Code Thinking

The seventh of fourteen patterns established was thinking. Business thinking was the reason leadership style was investigated. The research was to determine whether leadership style would direct business thinking. Of the 26 participants, 18 changed their business thinking and eight did not. Participant 1 her changed business thinking happened because her supervisor wanted the idea to look like it was his. This made her feel no sense to offer ideas of her own thinking since he would take credit and not show appreciation for her contributions. She felt her supervisor was not interested in what she had to say unless it benefited his own interests. Participant 1 went on to explain how she would rather change her business thinking to avoid having to explain everything necessary to make a change. While she and her supervisor were in meetings, if she had new ideas, he would take credit but have her explain the procedure since it was not his original idea and he did not understand it. This frustrated her because she wanted credit for trying to make improvements to processes.

Participant 25 said it was easier for him to change his business thinking than to go through the hassle of trying to change his supervisor's mind. His supervisor was very good at criticizing things he did, because of this he did not offer anything that would easily be picked apart. He remembered a few times when he had an idea and his supervisor would tear it apart. This would hurt him and to avoid that feeling, he went along with his supervisor's ideas even though he did not always agree with them. His changed business thinking allowed him to have limited conflict and must less opposition to his work.

Participant 26 felt his business thinking was unchanged because his supervisor would unresponsive if he did not offer input. Subordinates could think about their value within the corporation or agency but 18 of 26 participants were unable to keep their business thinking unchanged due to supervisory actions and attitudes. As evidenced by Participant 26, business thinking would be unchanged for someone with a supervisor that looked for new ideas and suggestions.

Participants 1 and 25 changed their business thinking because of the relationship between them and their supervisor. Participants 2 and 26 did not change their business thinking because of the relationship between them and their supervisor. Relationship style did influence how business thinking was directed in the workplace.

#### Pattern Code Design

The eighth of fourteen patterns established was design. In the beginning, corporate and agency design were used to determine the method for how changes take place. The workplace was often supervised by leaders who allowed subordinates to be

self-driven project planners. In other organizations, the supervisors wanted to oversee all decisions leaving their subordinates to handle the project using methods passed down to them. In this instance of companies with methods passed down, the subordinates were not motivated and results driven. The supervisors were not described as transparent when they were considered adversarial. The adversarial leadership style led to a more hierarchical designed administration. The collaborative leadership style was more an open-ended evolving management.

Participant 25 did not feel engaged in the process because his supervisor would hand down projects but would never explain the reasoning for the project. Participant 1 alleged her supervisor liked to go into meetings looking like he developed all the ideas. He would take credit for the work that was done. He never involved her in the methods for how changes took place. The design of the business mirrored the changed or unchanged business thinking results. When a company or agency was more hierarchical and vague, the participants such as 1 and 25 changed their business thinking because of organizational procedures.

When the company or agency was transparent and open-minded, subordinates such as Participant 11 felt her business thinking should not change to keep the business innovative and fresh. Her unchanged business thinking produced new methods to do processing that allowed for increased profits. The corporations and agencies whose subordinates could express themselves with their own independent business thinking appeared to have a much more stable workforce. While turnover specifics were not given, there was a distinct difference in the subordinate's desire to

perform at their workplace. Participant 2 and 11 had no desire to leave their places of employment because they had enthusiasm to improve and enhance their workplaces.

#### Pattern Code Meeting Style

The ninth of fourteen patterns established was meeting style. Fourteen of twenty-six participants did not describe how meetings took place because their workplace did not thrive on this process. Three participants described meeting style that was supervisor driven. Participant 1 had a supervisor who came to a meeting with little or no information but expected her to respond when he was questioned and do so in a manner that made it look like he developed and completed the needed information. This action led to changed business thinking by Participant 1 so in meetings it did mirror her supervisors thought process.

Participant 11 described how she and her supervisor met every day to discuss the hot topics needed to get the day started. This style continued her unchanged business thinking since she could continue to offer suggestions and changes needed to improve the business. Her suggestions were often used in high-level meetings that her supervisor led in her company. Participant 11 implemented, on her own, many of the improvements that came from suggestions she offered to her supervisor during the open meetings they held every day. The feeling of pride she gained made her feel that she had an obligation to continue to offer proposals.

Participant 26 said he and his supervisor did not have meetings due to the geographic distance, but they would discuss things over the phone on conference calls. He explained that most of what they do would constitute brainstorming. It was

informal and when processes were agreed to, he was given the approval to act.

Participant 26 did change his business thinking but the meeting style does not appear to be a reason for this since he and his supervisor brainstormed on the conference call.

With all participant interviews, there did not seem to be a consistent method to test whether meeting style drove business thinking.

#### Pattern Code Collaboration

The tenth of fourteen patterns established was collaboration. Many of the examples in this code pattern were described in leadership style. The addition of the collaborative coding pattern was because participants felt their supervisors asked for input, were professional, and were project planners. The supervisors with the collaborative style listened to their subordinates. Participant 26 felt good working for his supervisor and described him as someone he could respect. He felt like 100% of his effort was directed at pride in his work. The supervisors in this pattern tended toward the participants with unchanged business thinking as evidenced in the other patterns from Participants such as 2, 4, and 11.

#### Pattern Code Adversarial

The eleventh of fourteen patterns established was adversarial. Many of the examples in this code pattern also came out in other patterns established. The supervisors in this pattern were described as leaders who did not work with their subordinates other than to pass projects down the chain. This leader made subordinates feel directed, incompetent, and allowed for minimal input. Participant 25 always felt incompetent

working with his supervisor. His supervisor was not big on complements and did not give him credit for good ideas and process improvements.

Participant 9 was so stressed over working for her supervisor that she planned to change jobs. The supervisors in this pattern tended toward changed business thinking with subordinates who feared talking to the supervisor. The subordinates would rather change their business thinking to get through a day without conflict. This activity was evident in the other pattern coding. Participant 9 would rather change her business thinking and follow through with ideas her supervisor directed than to try to make changes that would be criticized and cut apart. She felt her supervisor was always looking for her mistakes. The adversity drained her and made her have less energy and joy with the things she did outside the job.

#### Pattern Code Changed Business Thinking

The twelfth of fourteen patterns established was changed business thinking. This was the reason for the research. The determination was to find out if LMX leadership style directed or changed business thinking. The supervisors who changed their subordinate's business thinking were described as angry and detached. The LMX leadership style did not promote anger or detached attitude. Though not specified as LMX leadership style in this research study, the supervisors espoused the qualities common to LMX theory leadership style. A more authoritarian or adversarial leadership style would be described using the terms angry and detached.

Participant 5 changed her business thinking because the relationship with her supervisor was non-existent. She simply went through the motions to get the job done.

Participant 5 went to her job to complete the work given to her. She did not do extra work and did not offer suggestions. She changed her business thinking to match everything she knew her supervisor wanted. Her explanation was that she gave up and did not do anything for her supervisor other than required work. She went on to explain that because of prior criticism about suggestions she had made, she chose to stop discussing anything.

Participant 19 changed his business thinking because he felt like his supervisor's ideas were the best. Participant 19 changed his thinking because he felt like he agreed with his supervisor's business thinking. He wanted to please his supervisor and do the work requested of him and in the manner the supervisor liked. The changed business thinkers had body language and vocal tones that displayed nervousness which differed from participants whose business thinking did not change. This observation was from researcher notes and could be biased by historic background working with supervisors of this nature.

#### Pattern Code Unchanged Business Thinking

The thirteenth of fourteen pattern codes established was unchanged business thinking. The supervisors in this category used an open-door policy and a more collaborative method for working with their subordinates. Evidence from other patterns were codes like motivated, professional, and coach, this leader involved their subordinates in decisions and project development.

Participant 11 described her supervisor as someone she would not change her business thinking with because this supervisor would be disappointed that she stopped offering her good ideas. The supervisor felt her ideas were important to the success of the

business. Because her supervisor praised and used her suggestions, Participant 11 continued to offer them. The supervisor continued to reward her successes by respecting her ideas and suggestions. The company had many of the suggestions she made in place.

Participant 2 felt similar because her supervisor gave her projects because she always completed them on time with few mistakes. This was an important aspect of why she felt comfortable applying her own business thinking and the thought processes that went with this. She went on to elaborate by saying her supervisor was always appreciative of her ideas and suggestions even if they were not always implemented. Participant 2 knew that in a bureaucracy, things would not change easily no matter how good the idea was. She did not ever want to change her business thinking since this was the essence of the motivation she had in her career.

Participant 23 did not change his business thinking because he felt his ideas would suit his supervisor if they helped with the bottom-line of the company. Because he had a history of good decision-making, the supervisor rarely interacted with him. The participants with unchanged business thinking were the minority given only eight of 26 responded this way. Eighteen of the twenty-six participants noted some sort of intimidation or adverse action by their supervisors and because of this did not fall into the pattern of those who did not change their business thinking. They did not feel free to offer ideas like their counterpart participants such as 11 and 23.

#### Pattern Code Research Reason

The fourteenth of fourteen pattern codes established was why this was researched. The supervisor is an important part of any business as they can give direction and offer

ideas other personnel may not understand. They can take conflict and turn it into something productive and well developed. As many of the interviews showed, an adversarial supervisor can harm the relationship the subordinate has and the approach the subordinate took with the work being done. Participant 9 described how frazzled she felt working for her supervisor. This made it difficult to come in and be productive. It made her think of ways to avoid doing anything for her supervisor because of the difficulty.

Participant 4 on the other hand enjoyed the work with her supervisor so much it made her even more motivated to do harder more productive work. She did not want to let her supervisor down and wanted to get things done to make her supervisor look good. She felt a humble friendship that did not cross the line of supervisory respect. The supervisor and Participant 4 both knew the work could not be influenced by the friendship. After many years of working together, this line has never blurred. The two have a respect for business and the responsibilities that involves.

Participant 16 felt that because her supervisor made her feel more like a partner it made sense to work harder and smarter for the benefit of a better stronger company. This pattern came to the fore because it was an important development that supported the literature review findings. This pattern development started the process of showing the importance of leadership on business thinking.

## Data Analysis

### Discoveries

#### Leadership defined through discovery

The interviews from this research study netted many codes showing how leadership roles and interactions between the subordinate and supervisor are an important relationship within the workplace. It is no longer enough to direct activities to get a specific duty concluded. The research study showed a trend and eventually a theme that a leader could direct business thinking. What the research study did not show was that the LMX leadership style directed business thinking. In this paper, the term adversarial is being used to describe leaders that are more authoritarian since it encompasses more of the adverse and negative terminology used by the participants describing their supervisors. Authoritarian leaders were those leaders often described in a manner relating to a more adversarial tone. Information from the participant interviews was used to explain that the leaders who were not well liked had participants that described them as non-responsive, demeaning, frustrating, and adversarial. These supervisors for the most part changed the participant business thinking because work relationships were strained and made coming to work difficult when not properly handled. The supervisors who had the best relationships with their subordinates were described as open-minded, collaborative, and professional. These subordinate participants did not change their business thinking because of the free open nature of the business.

Coding allowed the researcher to determine whether there was a distinctive change to business thinking within the subordinate-supervisor relationship. The codes

started to separate by specific supervisor-subordinate relationships. The participants whose business thinking was changed described their supervisor relationship in words such as elusive, unengaged, and condescending. Participants whose business thinking was unchanged described their supervisor as collaborative, coach, and partner. The codes were described above through pattern codes.

Of the 26 males and females interviewed, eight of the participant's supervisors were considered collaborative and trusting. In many cases, the supervisors were described as trusting when there was a more collaborative exchange between supervisor and subordinate. Five participants commented about the appreciation they had for their supervisors. They categorized the supervisors using words such as adoration, admiration and respected. The five participants who admired their supervisor were female. The significance of an all-female commentary on admiration was noted because the candidates were all early in their careers. The male participants who were early in their careers did not describe adoration as a factor. This was also significant because of the openness that developed through a strong collaborative supervisor-subordinate bond that made for an enhanced work relationship that was more personal. There was a fondness factor that was not seen through any of the other interviews whether male or mid to late career females. The male participants who enjoyed the work rapport they had with their supervisor did not describe the relationship with the more feminine words or phrases. The males did use the word respected but it had a different articulation and manner used. Researcher bias could have played a role since female vocal tones were more understood as a female researcher.

Participant 22 described his female supervisor as his “second mom” and respected her because of her collaborative nurturing nature. He did not change his business thinking to suit her needs because she always wanted to get his “buy-in when presenting suggestions for improvements to their processes”.

The males tended toward describing their supervisors using less emotional more business-like words and phrases overall. Participant 20 described his supervisor as guarded and methodical. The participant felt that he needed to change his business thinking because his supervisor lacked response if he tried to come up with innovative ideas. Participant 20’s supervisor was “responsive only when it was his idea being acted upon”. This reaction is what Participant 20 felt changed his business thinking. He felt he had to comply with the initial duty assignment. He felt it was easier to do the job as his supervisor expected rather than challenge the method expected. This was, once again, a subordinate “keeping the peace” to do his job just as Participant 5 described later.

A collaborative supervisor, as described by Participant 23, was patient, tolerant, and understanding which consistently allowed him to continue the use of his own business thinking. This participant genuinely felt that his supervisor was impressed that he brought so many ideas to the business. His supervisor was quick to compliment when things were going well and easy to critique, in a professional manner, when things did not work out.

Participant 11 described her supervisor as someone she trusted to listen to her ideas, someone who understood her thinking, and someone who allowed decisions to be made based on a collaborative effort between the two of them. Her supervisor was

perceived as having a real appreciation for the work she does. The supervisor-subordinate relationship for this participant was respectful and interactive with positive meetings and encouraging comments. Participant 11's supervisor came to her to inspire decisions that she had to make. The supervisor wanted to be sure decisions were in the best interest of the team.

Participant 25 described his supervisor as "accusatorial and uncooperative". He felt his work relationship was always strained and difficult to work through.

Comments from the participants about authoritative supervisors with adversarial traits were negative regarding the working relationship and related directly to the research utilized in the literature review. Participant 9 described her supervisor as a controlling leader who wanted no comments or independent thinking when it came to working with her. Participant 9 explained that everything she did was under the microscope and it was just easier to "roll over and play the game". An adversarial supervisor was more related to a change in business thinking based on interview responses. Participant 9 said she was always at odds coming to work. She knew she would never get credit for anything and her supervisor caused conflicted feelings. In the end, she always changed her business thinking to match the supervisor's business thinking so she could go on to the next project. She did not feel it was worth a fight she would never win.

Participant 1 described her supervisor as authoritative but disconnected. She explained that he always wanted to go to meetings to look good but would never allow her to make decisions that did not result from his own actions. She called her supervisor

an attention seeking overbearing manager. She explained he tried to be nice so she would not feel badly, but it never came out as genuine or real.

Participant 22 described his supervisor as the “anti-authority”. He said she was so understanding and would never consider ruling by being an authoritarian leader.

This differed from participant 19 who said his supervisor was authoritarian and unapproachable. He did not feel she was doing it spitefully, but he knew he could never go in to see her spontaneously. Participant 19 described her as a supervisor that wanted things her way no matter what. Participant 19 felt his answers had to mirror his supervisors so there were no disputes.

Participant 5 described her supervisor as argumentative and adversarial every day. She could not remember a day that she went to work without comments that made her feel insignificant and useless. Participant 5 commented that it was so much more pleasant and relaxed working when her supervisor was out of the office. She went on to explain that she could get more high-quality work done in this uninterrupted setting. The participant knew her supervisor changed her business thinking because of the willingness in herself to give up any type of idea to improve the business functions to “keep the peace” with her supervisor. Participants describing supervisors in an adversarial manner tended toward less contented feelings.

The theme referring to collaborative supervisors came from coded interview statements using words such as interactive, open-minded, positive, and professional. Participant 11 described her supervisor as tough but always willing to listen to her comments, suggestions, and issues with an open mind. She said it was this attitude that

allowed her to keep the business thinking she came into the office with. She never felt the need to change her business thinking because of something her supervisor said or did. She showed great sense of pride when portraying her work and business.

Participant 6 wanted to keep working with her supervisor as long as she was in her career. She expressed her work and her career direction as a “problem solving humanistic approach to human resources activity”. Nine of twenty-six of the participants who had collaborative supervisors disclosed traits such as respect and loyalty when depicting the relationship with their supervisor.

The research study resulted in the conclusion that adversarial supervisors changed business thinking. The participants described their changed business thinking by describing the adversity they faced. The interviews also showed that the participants felt that changing their business thinking led to poor supervisor-subordinate relationships. The negative terms used in the interviews led to the conclusion that the terms used to describe adversity were related to an adversarial supervisor.

Collaborative supervisors did not change their participant’s business thinking per interview data from participants. The nine participants who quantified their supervisors as collaborative described an atmosphere in their businesses that allowed for development of good ideas and suggestions. While the results were not surprising, the theme that collaborative or adversarial leadership affected business thinking emerged consistently throughout the interview process. The interview data showed that participants felt that they could keep their own business thinking and its progression when their supervisor was open-minded and collaborative.

The researcher could surmise through memos and coding that the participant's supervisors affected their business thinking. The participants described how their supervisors either gave them encouragement to offer ideas and suggestions or discouraged them through actions and words. Each participant had their own story but the evidence showed how supervisors could affect business thinking either positively or negatively. 10 of the 26 participants doing human resources as part of their daily duties, clarified that subordinates are dealt with far more than the supervisors. Because of this, they may show bias regarding supervisor-subordinate relationships. Employee commentary about their supervisor could be one sided if the supervisor is not allowed to be part of the interaction with human resources. The participants offered accounts of workplace interactions that took place between them and their supervisors. Participant 25 affirmed this by saying "My supervisor gives assignments that don't seem oriented to fixing the many systemic issues within the functional operation of our group, rarely follows up on issues, and rarely acknowledges receipt of information or suggestions". Participant 25 very specifically noted his business thinking changed because of this attitude with his supervisor. The supervisor's actions, because of his lack of responsiveness, caused him to change his business thinking to keep projects moving. The participant specified the lack of cooperation he felt within the confines of his own career. This response is opposite of information in the literature review in Chapter 2 describing LMX theory as a management theory describing how leaders involve their subordinates in business decisions openly (Kang & Stewart, 2007). This supervisor clearly did not involve his subordinates in decisions. This adversarial type of leadership style did not

specify that an employee's business thinking was affected by the action but actions within this attitude shifted how the subordinate feels about the overall environment.

Numerous participants, with adversarial supervisors, were not hesitant when discussing how their supervisor changed their business thinking. Of course, with any study, there are outliers and this study was no different. There were participants with collaborative supervisors who did change their business thinking, though they were few.

Participant 5 had a more collaborative supervisor but she felt more directed than free to speak about changes she would like to see. Participant 5 was open and honest about the collaboration she has with her supervisor. The collaboration was described as an activity to allow her supervisor to give her work. The definition was from Participant 5's background not based on research descriptions of a collaborative leader. She felt she was just going to work to do the job and leave for the day without any goals or excitement. The participants with collaborative supervisors described leaders who were good listeners, easy to work with, and strong mentors. Collaborative supervisors did not appear to want their subordinates to change their business thinking to suit their own needs. The experiences of Participant 5, was determined to be an outlier from the participant's answers.

Participant 11 said she would basically do anything her supervisor requested "if it was legal". She finished by defending that her supervisor did not ever request or do anything that was illegal. Her statement described, very simply, how dedicated she was to be accomplishing their goals and objectives while making her supervisor look good. She

went on to say she did not want the impression that there may be illegal activity within the confines of an interview.

Depth was added to the research study about the supervisor-subordinate relationship by determining if subordinate business thinking was changed by the LMX leadership style. Evidence that adversarial leadership style changed business thinking started to emerge as interviews were conducted with 26 random participants. Of the 26 participants, 18 had supervisors considered to be adversarial leaders. Four people characterized their supervisor as both adversarial and collaborative. A few participants felt that projects were collaborative but the managerial style was adversarial. Based on responses given by the female participants, supervisors were more adversarial when their supervisor was male. The male participants' supervisors were more collaborative when their supervisor was male. Using the entire participant pool, the male supervisors were most likely to be considered adversarial regardless of participant gender. The use of the terms collaborative and adversarial leadership style came from the responses in the interviews while coding the interview responses.

The following table shows participant detail and how they are described throughout the research study. Participant and their subsequent numeric definition are noted by their gender and career-level. The term “participant and their number description” will be used throughout the research.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

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Participant Number (Male)

Participant Number (female)

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Early-career	Participant 18, 19	Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Mid-career	Participant 20, 21, 22, 23, 24	Participant 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
Late-career	Participant 25, 26	Participant 12, 13, 14, 15, 16
Retired	N/A	Participant 17

Unlike human resources field, employees in other fields, based on data related to the literature review information, do not have to consider how supervisors in other fields react to their departmental subordinates because this information tends to be department specific and not shared throughout the organization. This information is from researcher historical career work and is biased because other fields may potentially have changed. The literature review emphasized how the overall organizational structure of the supervisor-subordinate dynamic relates to leadership style and does not necessarily come from the field involved in human capital activities such as human resources, which the research study targeted. Cramer et al. (2006) accentuated the high-quality working relationship of leaders and subordinates not specifying career fields.

#### Leadership Codes

##### (a) Collaborative Leadership

Cosner (2012) explained that a collaborative leader is one who can reform an organization and change processes to help and develop subordinates. She went on to explain that a collaborative leader involves his subordinates in decisions and processes to gain insight and knowledge that otherwise would be unknown. The participants who portrayed their supervisors as collaborative felt they could rely on the supervisor to give them complete details for a project. An example of this came from Participant 11, when the word open-minded was used to describe her supervisor. During comparison analysis,

this word led to the word collaborative. The word collaborative, described supervisors who were open-minded. This collaboration allowed Participant 11 the freedom to bring her ideas and suggestions to meetings and presentations. The supervisor was collaborative because they allowed open dialog regarding ideas and suggestions, furthering the use of the participant's information. To describe this element further, the supervisor used her ideas for a specific project. The supervisor felt this would be a good collaborative effort. The supervisor concluded that additional information provided by the participant permitted a perfect solution for an issue that plagued the office. Participant 11 also explained that her supervisor kept her involved in decisions. Her supervisor customarily wanted input when making decisions.

Participant 6 felt her supervisor involved her with every decision to be sure the decisions would trickle down to the subordinates in a way that allowed for easier buy-in for changes that were sometimes difficult. Participant 6 felt that her supervisor understood getting employee buy-in and its importance to success in the workplace. She indicated collaboration was a big part of this achievement.

Participant 21 said his supervisor rarely made decisions without consulting him for some input. He sensed his supervisor was considerate to his thoughts and ideas. Participant 21 always felt part of his company because he knew his input was regarded. He explained that his business thinking was something he felt made him an important asset to his supervisor. She respected and listened to his ideas. He recognized not every suggestion or idea would be used, but knowing they were considered held importance to him.

Participants described collaboration as being transparent. The subordinates describing transparency felt they were regarded as a team player who could readily contribute to the goals of the organization. Participant 18 felt the collaborative nature of his supervisor helped him understand the politics and composition of the organization. He later described that his supervisor was someone he experienced a comfortable exchange when going to him with questions. While he considered his leader collaborative, he also felt his tasks were targeted. He involved his supervisor when he desired his work move in the right direction. He felt his supervisor kept his motives transparent so it helped him understand challenges and motivations behind many of the company decisions. Participant 18 was decidedly impacted by this collaborative, cooperative, and very transparent nature of the working relationship with his supervisor.

Participant 4 described her supervisor as adaptable when information she gave him led to a better decision. She did not have to change her thinking process to suit that of the supervisor's needs. The supervisor was fair and understood her reasoning when submitting factual data. Participant 4's supervisor simply asked her to explain how she composed her answers. This was her interpretation for considering him a collaborative leader. Her experience was that he considered information she provided to him. This was information he might not have received on his own.

Participants often described their supervisor as interactive. The interaction often involved a casual conversation asking the participant about their "outside the office" life. Participant 3 described her supervisor as someone she felt genuinely cared about her well-being. She went on to say that, this personal side gave her additional motivation to

be productive and engage in her work. Participant 3 did not change her business thinking. Her supervisor “never wanted this effect on their relationship” and made sure she understood this point. She explained that her “boss” respected her opinion and while she would not always use the ideas, she still allowed their submission to “keep her honest”.

Participant 13 said interactions with her supervisor were necessary to feel the “train was on the right tracks”. She described a meeting she and her supervisor had every morning to discuss the past day’s events and determine the work for the coming day. She always felt her supervisor wanted to hear about everything regardless of positive or negative outcomes. Participant 13 felt very comfortable telling her supervisor when something bothered her “both personally and professionally”.

Participant 21 also described his subordinate-supervisor relationship as interactive. He felt she was “like a second mother to me”. Participant 21 said he could tell her “when things were bad in my personal life and if I needed some time away from the office to clear my head”. He said that she felt “she could do the same with me because she knew she could trust me to keep it to myself”. The interactive nature that the subordinates described seemed to describe a more personal yet professional relationship with the supervisor. Many participants described the relationship with their supervisors as more personal when the relationship was collaborative.

Collaborative leadership theme came from question responses by participants during the interview process. Supervisors were described using the following descriptions that relate to collaborative leadership. Collaborative leadership style had a lesser effect on business thinking than its counter adversarial leadership style.

(b) Collaborator as Partner

The supervisors described as collaborative had traits relating to being open. Subordinates who felt their working relationship was more of a partnership than a supervisor-subordinate relationship, often described themselves as being a partner. Participant 6 elucidated that project work was developed between the supervisor and herself. It was because of this she felt it to be more of a partnership than a subordinate supervisor relationship. The supervisor felt it important to work together on assignment work he gave her. She told that he felt at ease with project requirements and could avoid wasted time pursuing information that was unnecessary. She felt her supervisor had her best interest at heart and had a small amount of selfishness to get the projects done ahead of schedule. She felt his technique was different from many of the supervisors throughout the company and this was advantageous to his career also.

Participant 26 described a partnership as something that guided his career at the company. He felt his supervisor would listen to him about ideas and projects to find out if they could be utilized within the parameters of company policy and budget. He continually felt that his ideas were taken seriously. His supervisor gave him a level of respect he equated to “that of a partner in a law firm”. This allowed him to think freely and not try to conform to someone else’s ideas.

(c) Collaborator as Coach

Participants described their collaborative supervisors as coaches or mentors. The participant reason for the answers was because the supervisor allowed them to have input in decisions and processes used for day-to-day business. Hicks and McCracken (2013) state that a manager who acts as a coach, is there to help the subordinate become more

effective at their job. Eight of the twenty-six participants felt, because of collaborative leadership skills such as coaching, mentoring, and compromising, their business thinking was not changed. A few participants described freedom to incubate new ideas for processes and productivity when their supervisor did not micromanage or direct them too much.

Participant 6 described her supervisor as a “coach with a purpose”. She explained that his purpose was to give her skills so she could become a supervisor in the company as well. He wanted her to succeed and would always involve her in decisions affecting the process work. The learning opportunities he gave her were something she felt were useful in her home and business life. His method for explaining things allowed her to take in the critique without feeling harshness or meanness.

Participant 26 explained how his supervisor empowered him to make decisions for change of process or activity. He likened this example to a coach who gives his players the tools and knowledge to do their activity. The supervisor also gives them enough space to figure out what is best for their own success. He explained that his supervisor made him understand his mistakes and always used them as a learning experience. His supervisor did not shame him into doing his work a specific way. Participant 26 explained how his supervisor would let him develop processes and procedures that could help in the learning process. The organization philosophy considered that jobs were about learning and his supervisor was the coach that allowed it to happen.

(d) Autonomous Subordinates with Collaborative Leadership

Participants often described their supervisors as autonomous so they could make their own decisions. This freedom allowed say in operations and production goals. A retired female said she felt good when she could “make her own mistakes” and “learn from a manager willing to explain the mistake and willing to allow the process to continue”. She said this outcome made her feel defensive but it did not make her put her guard up to defend the situation. She stated that many times during prior circumstances, when she felt defensive, she would jump up and make a case for her actions. The supervisor described in her responses, allowed autonomy to do the job, but the support like a good team coach. “A defensive thinking habit is hard to break, but the thought came and went like a cold breeze”.

Participant 23 enjoyed the autonomy of being able to “act like he ran his own company”. He went on to illustrate how his department ran and how he could make changes. He could give information to his supervisor without much interaction or reaction. He liked the freedom and ability to make things happen with a swift approach. This freedom sometimes led to production issues, but for the most part, his team would rally for him and the supervisor would wait for the results. His supervisor would not criticize or ostracize him for specific decisions. They would meet to discuss what occurred and offer solutions and options, but would never force a course of action. Participant 23 described this as an especially collaborative method of leadership. He also never felt the need to change his business thinking because of this supervisor.

Hamstra et al (2014) explained that supervisors who allow subordinates a level of autonomy were those who had the most success with metrics relating to productivity and

retention. Participant 4 said her boss gave her complete freedom to do her job but to “keep him posted about her activities so nothing caught him off guard”. She felt this type of leadership style for her was satisfying because it gave her the tools to learn the system. She explained that she has made several missteps and mistakes but that her supervisor has been supportive throughout the process. Hamstra et al (2014) also explained that this leadership style is not one size fits all because some subordinates need to be managed more closely and are not self-driven.

(e) Calmness as a Collaborative Leader

Participant 3 described her supervisor as a calm person. She articulated that her supervisor would ask questions to find out why she was frustrated, sad, angry, or irritated by something or someone in the office. She continued by explaining that this supervisor, because of this, allowed the expression of thoughts and feelings when she normally would have held the comments in and continued her frustration. Participant 3 said her business thinking did not change because she knew her supervisor would never question a decision she made. Because of this, she knew she could think in a manner that allowed her to use her own logic and skill development without changing just for her supervisor.

Participant 11 described her supervisor as calm. She said no matter what was happening around them, her supervisor would remain calm, cool, and collected. She knew her supervisor, no matter how bad the issue or problem was, would speak with her and talk her through whatever was happening. She knew that his infinite wisdom and this calm demeanor was reassuring to her. Both participants, Participant 3 and 11, said their supervisor did not change their business thinking. Participant 11 said her business thinking never changed because the integrity her supervisor had. Her supervisor said she

would never be satisfied if her ideas and suggestions mirrored his unless the idea was made independently. She explained that her supervisor wanted her to make business decisions from information she has versus what she thinks should be done. She insisted that she wanted her to “think on her own two feet to grow and develop the business”. She allowed her to develop her own business acumen.

(f) Adversarial Leadership Style

There are many words used to describe an authoritarian style leader. During the interviews, multiple participants used the word adversarial when describing their authoritarian style leaders. Other supervisors, with an authoritarian edge to his actions, were described as condescending, angry, concerning, or contentious. The leadership style emanated from interview responses and the relationship between supervisor and subordinate. The main theme that developed during the interview process, related to the adversarial supervisor’s actions. During the interviews, four participants described being uncomfortable while working with their supervisors. Conclusions from body language and voice inflection came as a result of my own work history and memoing from the participant interviews. While researcher bias existed because of work history, the memos advanced support for the specific coding that resulted from body language and vocal inflection. Questions such as employee emotional when working with their supervisor, gave an in-depth consideration of the employees’ actual feeling while on the job. With the response about work-related emotion, very specific coding words were uncovered explaining the effect of supervisory leadership style.

The participant was more likely to be searching for a new position when the supervisor was authoritative. Participant 14 cited her reason to search for a new job as “being completely burned out and demoralized”. Participant 14 described why she felt changing her job might help her situation. She wants to find a supervisor who would not second guess her and cause her to feel so dejected. Even as an executive, she felt it easier, with her current supervisor, to change her business thinking rather than trying to confront her supervisor and offer a new solution to a recurring problem. She was determined to “get through her day unscathed and not berated”. She never felt the freedom to offer her own suggestions to improve a situation. She never felt comfortable enough with her supervisor to think on her own and instead used her “bosses” way of thinking. Participant 14 said it was “affecting her family life” and she “needed change before the impact was too much for her family life to change”. Participant 8, a mid-career female, quoted her reason to make a position change as “the desire to make a change before being involved too deeply in my selection of a company within my career choice”. She would never offer new ideas to her supervisor and would change her thinking to match that of her supervisor to avoid confrontations.

Participants who described an adversarial relationship with their supervisor described work as being done to make the supervisor look good. Countless participants, with adversarial relationships, also described the relationship as emotionless and directed. Many described how it was easier to change “how I think than to go through a long succession of arguments” in order to express the reason for offering potential change. Of four participants actively searching for new positions, all were female. Of the four

females looking for new professional opportunities, three were mid-level career professionals and one was in a high-level professional executive position. There were no entry-level candidates seeking new employment opportunities. The male candidates, who expressed displeasure in the working environment created by their supervisors, were not in a position or had no desire to seek new employment.

Participant 25 mentioned, “My employment with this company has been for 24 years and I will ride this out until I retire”. He went on “I have had several new leaders through my tenure and may have a new one in the future; the stress of a job search is not worth a career move”. Participant 25 added, “I am far less productive than I would be with a more collaborative leader due to knowledge about what will be accepted and expected since we can talk person to person not boss to subordinate.” Based on this interview and many others, it shows that a subordinate who changes their business thinking will be less likely to offer improvements to the company objectives. Participant 25 explained, “The majority of the working relationships I have had with supervisors I have worked with have been trusting, respectful, and professional because the supervisor allowed autonomous but collaborative interactions.” This male participant explained that this manager caused his brain to freeze. Participant 25 described this as “paralysis through analysis”. His adversarial manager made him afraid to feel the “wrath from mistakes”. He would offer no suggestions and do whatever the supervisor suggested he should do. He explained, “That changing to the supervisor’s desires make coming to work and leaving work a whole lot easier since there are no arguments about why it is not a good idea”. He stated that he felt like a robot doing his job.

Supervisors, whose leadership style was identified as adversarial or authoritarian during participant interviews, appeared to want control of every aspect of the job by micromanaging and controlling outcomes. From the interview responses, participants noted that few supervisors were willing to openly listen to ideas or invite brainstorming sessions to improve production or processes.

Participant 15 described her supervisor as someone who was “afraid to give compliments for work done well” but would be “quick to criticize even the smallest inconsequential mistakes”. She described being afraid to make mistakes and felt “disrespected” when she did a good job. Her supervisor took credit for her positive actions and “did not credit her with the results”. She did not feel confident enough to think of new ideas to improve processes or productivity. She felt that her supervisor changed her business thinking. This phenomenon happened because she did not want to derail progress and her supervisor would “get on her” about changes.

Participant 14 described her supervisor as one always looking for her mistakes. She went on to say, “I feel completely disparaged each time I step through the doors of the office. I would look for a new job, but after having been unemployed for four years, I am worried about job security so even having a bad manager is not enough to leave a job it took four years to find.” Because of this, she felt it easier to conform to the thinking of her supervisor rather than offer suggestions that would be “shot down” or “nitpicked at”. She changed her business thinking.

Voegtlin et al. (2012) explained that leaders have an ethical motive to treat their subordinates with respect. Gone are days when leaders could treat subordinates with

condescension and authoritarian rule (Voegtlin et al., 2012). Employees are less likely to remain loyal when they feel they are mistreated (Fleck, 2010). As a result of the research, data show that 15.3% of the participants were actively searching for new employment and a total of 22.2% gave indication that if circumstances were right they too would leave. This percentage of turnover can cost an employer money and productivity with steep learning curve costs and loss of productivity. The act of training new employees and the challenge this brings can cause delays in production because seasoned employees are diverted from their normal duties (Boies et al., 2010; Fleck, 2010). The financial best interest of the company or agency is to have leaders who treat subordinates with respect and integrity (Fleck, 2010; Rank et al., 2009).

(g) Collaborative but Adversarial Leadership

Three participants had leaders who were adversarial but still felt their leadership style was collaborative. Participant 22 said his leader wanted to hear the ideas but not act on them. He felt this described a form of collaboration even though nothing was ever done with the ideas or information. He would become frustrated and stressed by this effort but he still felt the supervisor was trying in part to listen. He later admitted that collaboration is typically a more dynamic and interactive process, but felt his activity incorporated this even though his supervisor was condescending and rude at times.

Participant 9 described her female supervisor as being collaborative but adversarial. The description of her supervisor corresponded with control of the situation the supervisor always required. She explained that “her supervisor wanted to come across as collaborating on ideas” but would “criticize and ridicule” ideas when given. She rationalized that it was easier to mold her answers and change her business thinking to

say something her supervisor wanted to hear. She felt, while a form of collaboration, there was never an actual collaboration of ideas. She felt controlled and directed every day.

(h) Autonomous yet Authoritarian Leadership

A peculiar manifestation with the adversarial leaders came from Participants 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, and 14 who stated that their supervisor, while being adversarial, gave little direction or guidance when assigning tasks. The description of this phenomenon had a wide range of meaning. Participant 5 said her manager “micromanaged” her but would not give guidance or assistance when it came to her attempts to improve the relationship. Akhtar and Fischer (2014) describe an authoritarian leader as having low autonomy with their subordinates because they want full control of everything and want finite details about processes. An unusual occurrence with several participants in this research study happens that they had both adversarial yet autonomous supervisors.

Participant 7 said her boss was “always hovering over her desk” yet when it came time to assist, the boss would “disappear for hours” leaving her to fend for herself during meetings. The “boss would come back and scream at her for making poor decisions”. This action left her confused and in fear of doing anything. She concluded that her supervisor changed her business thinking because she could not “offer anything new to the process designs without some form of confrontation”.

(i) Business Thinking defined through discovery

Business thinking, as defined in this research study, is thinking derived from business processes, meetings, and interactions between subordinates and supervisors

(Porter & Kramer, 2011). When initially interviewed, a few of the candidates regarded business thinking as any idea that was obtained while on the job and used for job related purposes. A few of the participants could not define or quantify the definition of business thinking. Because of this, they requested the study driven definition before responding. In all cases, regardless of participant response, a detailed definition was offered from the proposal, of the term business thinking for reference to the participant. Responses were not changed because of the added information and no participant questioned their response because of the definition. The participants replied in understanding of the definition of business thinking if they could not initially define it. Participant 8 offered the following after getting the definition, "I thought that might be the case but I did not want to respond for sure unless I was sure". Participant 8, who requested the definition, responded, "That makes sense" and made no changes to her answers.

Before asking to get the definition, Participant 19 responded, "I want to be sure business thinking has to do with thinking about things at work or what I do; if this is the definition, I definitely change my business thinking". The detailed definition from the proposal was necessary to be sure the participants understood how the definition was being used in the context of the research. The researcher added in all cases, that the definition from the proposal was in no way meant to change the participant's response or direction of their answer.

A small number of participants wanted additional descriptions of the specific terms business processes, meetings, and interactions between subordinates and leaders due in part to the participants own historical background. Because of this, a dialog

commenced to help the participant understand that the study did not individually define these terms in the confines of the project. With the detailed business thinking definition, participants responded to the question, either stating their business thinking changed or their business thinking did not change. Eight participants felt there was no change in their business thinking as it relates to their supervisor or the supervisor's actions. Twelve of the participants commented that they did not realize their supervisor would have any effect on business thinking, but were given to believe that this could be the case as evidenced by the responses provided. The participant realization was noted in written memos in the coding operations to keep a solid record of the evidence. While this memo information was not used specifically in the research statistics, the memos indicated this as a form of record for potential use in future research projects.

Of the participants interviewed, 18 participants felt their business thinking was changed as a direct result of their leader's actions. Eight of the participants did not feel there was any change in their business thinking as a direct result of the relationship between themselves and their leaders.

(j) Changed Business Thinking

Changed business thinking is derived from a subordinate who changes their business thinking related to business processes, meetings, and interactions that occur between subordinates and supervisors as defined in the research study. Per this classification, a subordinate will change their business thinking as it relates to a process or project they work on for their supervisor. This changed thinking can come from a

complete procedural change in project work or a change in a process from the supervisor's description of the effort.

The participants were straightforward about answering the question about business thinking regardless of their knowledge of the researcher's definition. The definition offered consideration into the reasoning for doing the research but did not add information about how they felt about their supervisor. Participant 1, who felt her supervisor changed her business thinking, said he was not a good leader and was so driven by his own supervisors that he would never "make waves by offering an idea from a young employee like her". After hearing this a few times, she felt it easier to blend in with his mindset and do her work, which led to the change in her business thinking.

Participant 8 felt frustrated and misunderstood offering anything from her own thought process that she just "gave in to the reality of having a supervisor". She said she just "wanted to do her job and be seen and not heard".

The changed business thinking process responses implied that subordinates were unappreciated, frustrated, and powerless. A few participants described the workday as something they do to be paid, and that is it. Some said being at work was the equivalent of being in a classroom with a teacher who did not want to hear anything outside the standard work procedures. Participants were consistent while describing their supervisors as adversarial if they changed their thinking. There was a pattern of giving in to make work life as stress-free as possible. This allowed for a relationship with their supervisor that was non-confrontational and unobstructed by design changes.

Numerous participants, who changed their business thinking, felt they had to change it to either fit in or not make waves. A few commented in side notes that they felt they would be a great contributor if given the opportunity with a supervisor who wanted to listen to them,

(k) Unchanged Business Thinking

Unchanged business thinking was thinking unaffected by a supervisor's input or guidance as described in the research Study. Subordinates in the research study who felt their business thinking was not changed, came across as secure, strong, and confident in the relationship they had with their supervisors. The research study did not explore whether this subordinate, by their very nature, is unaffected by leadership in any environment. The participant attitude could be explored further to determine the strength in character as a result of their own personality would be unaffected by a supervisory relationship.

For the purposes of this research, the subordinates were interviewed using questions directly related to the supervisor they work with at the time of the interview. Some participant's highlighted differences between supervisors they had had prior to their current supervisor. This information was used for memos but was not used in statistical distinction.

Participants whose business thinking did not change, described their leaders as being of the collaborative style. The supervisor was trusting, open, and a coach. The research study showed that only eight participants felt their supervisor did not change their business thinking. Unrelated to the research questions, but an important factor in the

research, were the high number of participants with adversarial relationships with their supervisors.

Participants often felt they could think, as in business thinking, as they wanted, because the supervisor would be fair and understanding about the point they were making. Participants described supervisors as supportive and collaborative in most cases. Participant 11 described her supervisor as always having an “open door and a willing ear”. She would adjust priorities to accommodate information being brought to her attention. This participant felt she did not have to change her business thinking to suit that of her supervisors just to fit in. Sometimes her ideas were not well received, but her supervisor was quick to explain the reasons she felt this way. The participant said she would always explain her position and reinforce the idea generation. Her supervisor wanted the participant to understand that her ideas were welcome and wanted.

Participant 20 described the relationship with his male supervisor as a partnership within a company. He felt he could always offer his thoughts on changing or keeping processes being used throughout the production process. His supervisor was always eager to get his opinion and no matter how many suggestions were used he should keep submitting them to keep the company “fresh and innovative”.

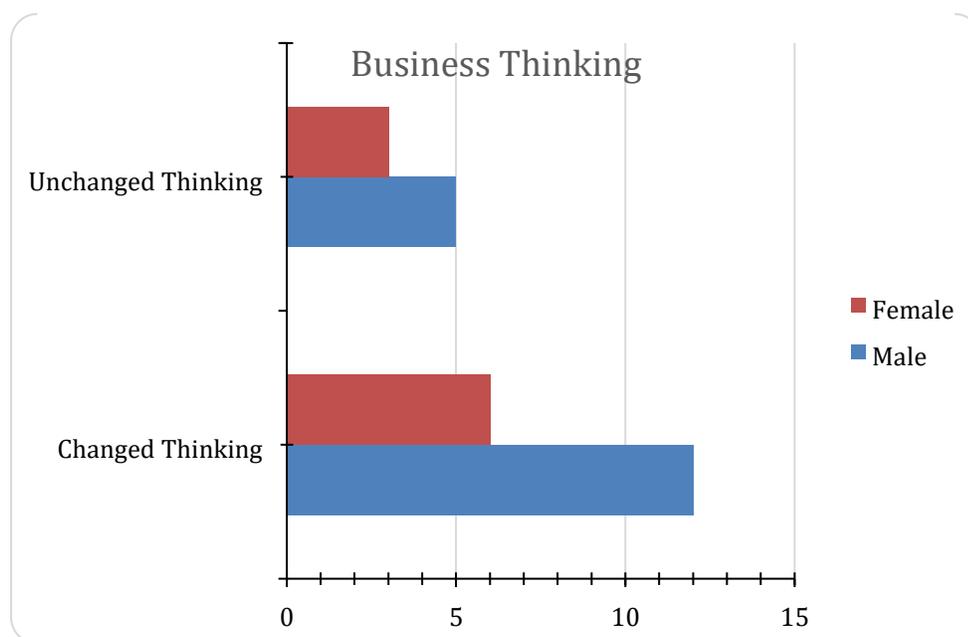
Through the research study interview process, not all unchanged business thinking came by way of a collaborative and helpful supervisor. Counter to most of the results, in an interview with Participant 2, the following was said:

“The leader doesn’t change my business thinking at all but it’s an added process because I have to answer to so many questions because he does

*not* trust me. I have to add to my business thinking which makes it more complicated.”

This participant was tallied as having unchanged thinking to keep with the spirit of the research, though this description is open for interpretation from the definition used in the research study. This response was contrary to the participants who said their adversarial leader would change their business thinking so it was worth noting that not all participants had an adversarial leader who changed their business thinking.

Men and women were twice as likely to change their business thinking than to have unchanged business thinking. Gender did not affect whether business thinking changed or did not.



#### Value of the Research

The participants in the study were enthusiastic participants with energy and excitement to participate in a project many of them called “interesting” and “innovative”.

The process was validated with 26 separate and complete interviews. The interviews

included male and female participants in multiple career level and multiple corporate categories. To validate the participant answers, I repeated the response given by the participant and requested the participant verification of understanding. While this method still is subjective, the responses were consistent over the population used for the study. None of the participants were related to each other and were not from the same location or company. Both generational and gender diversity was a part of this study but came from the random nature of selection and not used to determine study factors.

#### Evidence of Trustworthiness

Glaser and Strauss (2006) rationalize that codes must be consolidated into families of like definition. This strategy leads the researcher to get themes from the interview data that can be potentially formulated into a theory. The steps in the research were followed per information from *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, (Saldaña, 2009, p. 149-155). Following the specified steps allows the researcher to start developing a theory based on data obtained throughout the process (Glaser & Strauss, 2006, p. 105-113).

The research questions were the instrument used to collect information about human resources professional's responses about the work they do with and for their leaders (Glaser, 1998). The researcher asks questions in the same order and directly from the questionnaire to avoid inconsistent delivery of the inquiry (Watson, 2008). A response was not given unless requested by the participant (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 2009; Glaser, 1998). This strategy was used so as not to influence the participant response. It was important not to challenge answers, but important to ask for clarification if it was necessary to complete the full response. Each time an interview was conducted the interview was transcribed and compared to other interviews already in

place (Glaser & Strauss, 2006). The data from each individual contributor was unique and detailed to the workplace and career path of the participant (Glaser, 1998). The information from each interview provided a unique reflection of each type of corporate leadership strategy.

The research study explored the question about potential connections to LMX and business thinking. Because most participants did not know what LMX leadership style is, a set of questions was used to gather a general impression of their leader. This information would help reveal whether LMX leadership style was recognized. A question was asked to find out if the leader changed or did not change business thinking. Some participants gave their definition of business thinking but asked for clarification while others asked what the research study definition of this term. In all cases, the definition was provided. Because the topic has not been studied in depth, grounded theory was chosen to investigate business thinking in the hope of introducing a theory on business thinking and LMX style leadership. The knowledge received from participants can be used to relay current and historical background as it relates to business thinking and LMX style leadership.

The questions were not adjusted. Through constant comparison, a pattern developed showing that participants thinking was often driven by the leadership style of their leader. The individual responses and experiences from participants allowed for analysis of responses to find emerging patterns.

The procedures documenting the methods used for this research study consist of information noted in the dissertation proposal and approved in the IRB application. The

sample used included human resources professionals in a wide variety of companies and government entities in the United States. The participants specified where they worked, the position they held, and, though not requested, the relative rank within the company. Everyone was interviewed either by telephone or in person and was recorded to keep the integrity of the interview. The interviews were conducted in quiet office space in all cases. Because the results of this study came from many career levels and both genders, it could be replicated using the same questions and environmental considerations.

The ability to watch the participant's body language and more easily hear vocal inflections was a positive aspect of the in-person interviews. Negatively, the telephone interviews would not allow for judgement of body language and overall stance. Grounded theory allows the responses from participants to lead to the theory that emerges as data is collected and analyzed (Glaser, 1998). The interviews were conducted with randomly selected participants who sought to be part of the study. The study demonstrates evidence that could be repeated using another random sample of human resources professionals with the same variety of career experience (Glaser and Strauss, 2006). Because grounded theory is a flexible tool, the procedures followed give the study its intensity from constant comparison of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The procedures include interviews taken by the researcher conducted consistently by using a mobile telephone to record the responses. This procedure was used for both in person and telephonic interviews. Quiet surroundings were used to conduct both the in person and telephonic interviews for consistency of atmosphere.

## Interviews

The following questions were asked to find out about the participant's relationship and feelings about their leader within the workplace.

### **1. Explain the working relationship you have with your Supervisor.**

All participants responded to this question. The results were either positive or negative. The positively motivated responses contributed codes such as results-oriented and collaborative. The negatively slanted responses resulted in codes such as adversarial, leader directed, and emotionless. Participant 10 labeled her relationship as a "congenial work relationship – open door always". Participant 25 described his relationship as "uneasy and tentative". 60.61% of all respondents thought positively about their relationship with their supervisors.

As it relates to the responses given and the coded themes, authoritarian supervisors appear to change business thinking and collaborative leaders do not change business thinking. The results showed that a collaborative supervisor was more likely to keep the communications open and considering this, the subordinate would not change their business thinking. These supervisors were also said to be more inclusive when it came to sharing information and background information.

### **2. How do you feel when your Supervisor questions either your actions or your attitude about a work project?**

This question brought several codes, all of them resulting in some type of discomfort. Only one participant thought their supervisor questioning them was helpful. All other participants, regardless of the way they felt about their supervisor-subordinate

relationship, either felt incompetent, defensive, confused, or insecure about the questioning action.

While not described as a leadership trait, a supervisor who questions a subordinate about work related actions, for the purpose of this research study, made the subordinate feel incompetent. This action came in the form of many responses such as nervous, concerned, unappreciated, and even scared. The subordinates in all but one case felt some sort of stress over being questioned. Some of this came from pride in their work and some came from a normally defensive attitude as described by four participants. The research did not include questioning why the participant felt this way about being questioned or whether they feel being questioned about their actions in any situation might posit this type of response. For the purposes of this research study, the response is based unintentionally from the interview question. The participants who felt uncomfortable about being questioned did have changed business thinking but not in a percentage directly related to one another.

**3. Explain the type of effort you put forth on the job when it comes to your work for your supervisor.**

Just 34.62% of the participants felt projecting effort for their job because of their own motives. 65.38% of the participants felt that the effort they gave on the job was directly related to the work they do for their supervisor. The percentage of participants who thought positively about their supervisor almost matched the percentage of participants who felt their effort was related to the work for their supervisor. While this

statistic was not part of the main research question, it merited mention because of the relationship between supervisor and subordinate.

There is a relationship between an answer given by someone who feels all their effort is directly given because of their supervisor. Since this response seems instinctive, the researcher does not believe it can be defined as directly affecting the supervisor subordinate relationship. The response that a subordinate would change their effort based on their supervisor would appear to mirror the results of a change or non-change in their business thinking.

**4. Explain how you and your supervisor work on assignments together.**

Participants felt their supervisors had one of two tactics. Fourteen participants felt their supervisors directed their assignments by giving them directions and commanding the direction of the project. The use of the word directed did not always have a negative connotation. Just under half of the participants felt that their project work was collaborative or interactive in nature. Participant 24 stated, “He wants me to discover things that may have been done already”. He felt a sense of frustration even though he considered this an interactive approach. Though noted to have a collaborative supervisor, Participant 2 identified “things are either handed or passed down since they know I can execute the assignment”. Assignment work does not appear to have any relationship to the supervisor subordinate business thinking relationship. The assignment work does not appear to change subordinate business thinking which is causes this to be a non-factor

**5. Explain what motivates or challenges the work you do with your supervisor.**

Twenty or twenty-six participants want their supervisor to look good. This aspiration constituted a high degree of the motivation working for their supervisor. In

participants wanting their supervisors to look good, they included the sense of pride this effort gave them. A factor that came up as both motivating and challenging was personal effort in some configuration. Participant 7 mentioned her motivating factor “I just want to do a good job and be part of the team”.

Participant 10 remarked, “I do not know who is accountable, who celebrates, or who takes the burden”. She went on to describe this behavior as challenging to her productivity because she is there to do a job.

The participants who described their motivation as “here to do a job” were there to get things done in a timely fashion without interruption. Participant 19 described this as the ability to get the work done to the satisfaction of the supervisor. He went on to say, “If this means I have to change how I think I will change how I think to get the work completed.” Participant 10 theorized that she just wanted her supervisor to look good regardless of how the information came out. She also mentioned that if she had to change her business thinking to do so she would do it to preserve the dedicated relationship she has with her leader. Based on the responses of the participants, the change of business thinking is affected by the motivations and challenges on the job as it relates to their supervisor.

## **6. Explain how your manager makes you emotionally feel at work.**

One participant, Participant 26, remarked that he is “supported, happy, successful” when describing the emotion that comes because of his supervisor. Only 39% of participants felt emotionally appreciated or competent. 61.36% of the participants felt incompetent, unappreciated, or insecure. Participant 21, a mid-level male, described his

experience: “There were a few times when I felt demeaned and belittled, especially after all the good work I had done for the company up to that point.” While the percentage of participants feeling incompetent was close to the percentage of candidates who had a positive relationship with their supervisor, the numbers are unrelated because most participants with a positive relationship felt emotionally appreciated at the very least.

Just as with the supervisor subordinate relationship style, the emotions exhibited as a direct relationship to comments a supervisor makes enumerates a relationship between a supervisor and subordinate business thinking. The participants who felt appreciated felt less compelled to change their business thinking as it related to their supervisor. Participant 26 described that he would rather take the chance to be heard because of his own ideas, or as he noted the thoughts that came from his lengthy career experience, than to give in and change his business thinking to mirror that of his supervisor. While he respects his supervisor, standing up to be heard is more validating than trying to “give in at every turn”.

Some candidates felt compelled to change their business thinking to, as five participants described as, keep the peace. An executive, mid-career level professional explained that she would rather change her business thinking to emulate the reasoning and actions of her supervisor than take the lengthy discussion and exploitation required to try to implement her own business thinking and the ideas generated from it. The results in the emotions effect on business thinking seem counter to those of the change in business thinking resulting from an adversarial supervisor. While many participants would not change their business thinking because they have an adversarial supervisor, five

participants said they would change their business thinking to keep a peaceful relationship together. The researcher surmises that emotion and leadership style have two very different impressions on the subordinates as evidenced by the answers given.

The following are questions relating to business thinking:

**1. How does your company and/or supervisor accept suggestions or recommendations on the job?**

A total of 38.46% of the participants felt their supervisors listened to their suggestions and collaborated on getting the suggestion to company executive leadership. A balance of the participants felt their supervisors were unresponsive. While supervisors listened to participants in many cases, participants felt the executive leadership mainly derailed the suggestions.

**2. How do you work on projects or ideas at work during business hours? Do you do anything different because of requirements your supervisor has? Does this process differ from the way you work on projects or ideas at home? Does your supervisor change the way you think?**

Twenty of twenty-six participants described themselves as working on the projects they do at work similarly to those they do at home. However, twenty-two of twenty-six participants changed their work projects based on their supervisor's requirements. So, while their methodology for doing a project was similar, the process at work was more dictated by their supervisor's schedule and project requirements. At home, many participants felt they had more control of schedule and project requirements

than at work. Some participants had marital partners or family that dictated their schedule the same way their supervisor did so it was easy to keep the processes the same.

The participants who felt there were roadblocks in their way, changed their business thinking to find ways to work with their supervisor in a conflict free basis. Because this change in business thinking comes directly from the supervisor's adversarial leadership style, the results do not support the research question asking if LMX leadership style drives business thinking. There is evidence that supervisor involvement and leadership style does change business thinking but more in line with adversarial leadership rather than the more collaborative LMX style leadership.

Participant 1 described her supervisor as someone who wanted to "feel like he came up with the idea". Knowing this information, she would change her business thinking to suit the project and think more like her supervisor did to get him to approve the project and move forward. She noted that when she tried to be "innovative and original", her supervisor would ignore her requests. Over time, she revised her methodology to gain more project approval.

A collaborative and open leadership style, most times, led the participant to respond that their business thinking was unchanged. Participant 23 responded by saying his suggestions are usually approved because his supervisor feels he is inventive and unrelenting when it comes to project suggestions. This makes him feel that he can continue developing his own business thinking because anything less would disappoint his supervisor.

Participant 11 said her supervisor would be disappointed in her if she did not use her own brain to keep the processes fresh and beneficial. Her supervisor would ask for her input on things that came up in meetings to make sure that her own thought process was not flawed.

**3. Explain a time when you felt you had a good idea for your business. Did you know what steps to take to present your idea? If you do understand the steps did you feel your idea was taken seriously when you presented it? If you do not know the steps who would you ask to find out what to do?**

The participants responded with their actual ideas and projects that were accepted by their supervisors. The details were very specific to cases they were compelled to discuss. Though interesting, the question sidetracked the purpose of the interview about business thinking. Every participant gave the same type of answer. If they did not know the steps to take to do a project, they would ask their immediate supervisor or other coworkers for the information. This action would help them understand whether making suggestions was warranted within the context of their work. Four participants said the supervisors did not want them “wasting time” or “expending resources” when the procedures are based on legal and corporate developments.

Participant 2 and a majority of the other participants, did not feel that their supervisors took suggestions seriously.

Participant 5 said her supervisor would never even allow her to submit any type of change or suggestion. She stated that her supervisor always said, “We do not have time for petty suggestions”. Participant 5 said that she gave up any kind of business thinking

on her own because she knew that no matter what happened she would have to change her business thinking to fit with the policies and procedures already in place.

Participant 25 said his supervisor would call him out if any changes were made that were not approved by him. In his words, “he changed his business thinking to make things go along in a peaceful non-argumentative manner. He said his supervisor would never give him credit for a good idea so he just stopped offering suggestions. Participant 25 felt stifled by the methods to change processes used in his company. Through the interview process with participants, the reasons were related to corporate policy, company rules, or leadership control of project work. Because of the answers from this question, the researcher did not delineate the results numerically.

This question about not knowing the steps was not material to the research as all participants responded as not applicable.

### Summary of the Research

In summary, the goal of this research study was to understand the effect, if any, that leadership has on business thinking as defined by the researcher. The specific leadership style LMX was chosen due to its noted collaborative and shared responsibility style. The researcher wanted to challenge the effect leader-member exchange style leadership (LMX) has on the researcher defined business thinking. The participants gave honest and forthright answers knowing their supervisors and companies were anonymous as noted by several of the participants. This information was noted in memos, as the participants did not want this as part of the interview transcript. It was through this honesty that it became evident that the main themes of collaborative and adversarial

leadership styles came to the fore. Also generated was evidence that their supervisors generated many of the viewpoints the participants felt on the job.

Table 2

*Participant Position Level by Gender*

	Early career	Mid-career	Late career	Retired
Female	5	6	5	1
Male	2	5	2	0
Totals	7	11	7	1

Table 3

*Participant Gender by Business Sector*

	Private Sector	Public Sector
Male	6	3
Female	12	5

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

**Discussion**

Analysis of the interview data indicated that business thinking is changed when a subordinate has an adversarial supervisor and that the business thinking does not change when a subordinate has a collaborative supervisor. The researcher concluded that subordinates are more apt to change their ideas and suggestions to match their supervisor when there is more job stress related to their work. Subordinates suggested that a collaborative supervisor could change their business thinking because of supervisor

openness to make changes and listen to their ideas. Memos and information gathered during the interview process allowed for my research study conclusion. The participants were candid and open with their responses. It was construed that the anonymous manner of the interviews allowed for the open and candid responses. While the interviews were recorded, never during the entire recording or transcript was a name or place of employment ever stated.

In Chapter 2 LMX leadership theory, leader-subordinate dynamics, and business thinking, exhibited how and why leadership is important to business. Many research articles showed links between subordinate actions and supervisor interface. Many researchers demonstrated how these interactions caused changes in business outcomes but never described any connection between their relationships and their subordinate business thinking. The literature showed gaps with LMX style leadership and an association with business thinking. The participants showed the correlation that collaborative and adversarial supervisors had on their business thinking through interview responses and additional comments. The basis of this study was to determine whether LMX style leadership alters business thinking. While the traits for LMX style leadership did not come out in the interviews as such, the positive traits often associated with collaborative supervisors did not changing business thinking. This was unlike its change on business outcomes that the literature indicated. Blowfield (2005) showed that positive leadership was important to producing positive long-term corporate success. Fleck (2010) noted it was important for corporations to have good training programs to develop leaders who

understand how their interaction with subordinates can affect business outcomes such as turnover, profits, and productivity.

Interactions between leaders and subordinates are an important connection according to the research gathered during the literature review. It showed the need for consistency to develop and implement the goals and objectives of the executive leaders. Herring (2009) indicated that there was vital association that helps the company progress and stay goal oriented. Supervisors can cause organizational problems but can also improve relationships between themselves and their subordinates (Fleck, 2010; Herring, 2009; Kang & Stewart, 2007; and Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

#### Summary of the Findings

The overriding purpose of this study was to determine whether leadership challenged business thinking. To accomplish that objective, it became vital to find out about both leadership and subordinate work style and work life. Determining what leadership style is and how the leadership style known as LMX relates to business thinking assumed the importance of a connection during the literature review completed for this research study. During this process, it was also necessary to determine what participants felt business thinking was and how it was used during their workday. Another obligation was to find the type of supervisor the participant had to understand his or her leadership style. Determination of leadership style, was necessary to discover the qualities related to LMX leadership style. This leadership style designation was needed to arrive at the basic idea that leadership style influenced business thinking. It was important to cultivate information about the participant work environment measured by answers

given to specific questions. A model of questioning was established to gain a complete picture of the supervisor-subordinate relationship. After the essential phases were accomplished, the research process advanced. This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations that developed from this research study.

Two sections of questions were developed to determine both leadership style and business thinking definitions. The questions were asked during the 15-30-minute interviews. The responses allowed a determination on leadership style of the participant's leader. It also helped to gain information regarding participants' perceptions to express how leadership style affected business thinking. Participants were asked about their work and the environment to which they reported to each day. They were asked to respond to questions about their supervisor in an open and honest manner. Because the information was confidential, the perception was that the answers were authentic and forthright. The questions used for this research study and the data collected from the research questions addressed the research problem presented in Chapter 1 of this research study.

Like studies done by Nishii and Mayer (2009) and Kang and Stewart (2007), this research study determined that leaders with a more collaborative manner had subordinates who were more comfortable working with them. In the research study, they were loyal to the supervisor when that supervisor was more complimentary and openminded. Gerstner and Day (1997) determined that leaders who were inclusive and collaborative with their subordinates exhibited the leadership style known as LMX leadership style. The line of questioning used in the research study, while intended to find

the LMX leadership style was not successful in determining this leadership style through the simple format of the interview questions used.

### **Conclusions**

The conclusion of the research study shows, through the interview questions and subsequent data analysis, that supervisors have the power to affect how subordinates use their business thinking on the job. Some of the questions directed participants to explore how their supervisors made them feel while on the job. Other questions asked participants to explore project work and procedures done at their job. The exploration allowed them to cite circumstances where the supervisor changed or did not change their business thinking. There were many detailed stories that described how the supervisor made the subordinate feel and how important that juncture was to their potential business thinking strategy. The interview comments revealed that supervisors could be well served to be collaborative and open-minded with their subordinates to improve how ideas and suggestions are employed. Corporations and entities could target training programs to develop the listening and leadership skills of their supervisors. This component was discussed during many of the interviews with the participants. Some of the most adversarial supervisors had the least-developed listening skills and weakest leadership skills examined against those skills defined in the literature review. The adversarial leaders wanted their ideas and suggestions used even though there may be improvements to these very ideas. This supervisor could be going into a situation without taking into consideration the ideas and suggestions that could come from subordinate business thinking.

A notable development from the interview process was that subordinates sought to make their supervisors look good at work. This consideration happened for subordinates with both adversarial and collaborative supervisors. This development is an indicator of a subordinate-supervisor relationship that needs mutual respect. These findings suggest that training targeting the manner of supervisor-subordinate interaction. The reaction style that happens when a subordinate comes to the supervisor with a suggestion, could be explored in an alternative research study. The research study evidently found that the supervisors who made their subordinates feel incompetent had the most changed business thinking. The corporation with supervisors who feel that subordinates should not be allowed to make suggestions and bring ideas forth could reveal a corporation with other issues such as high turnover, low productivity, or little or no profits. The corporation may want to develop leaders who foster their subordinates' business thinking. According to the participant responses, subordinates changed their business thinking to match the supervisors' businesses thinking and the objectives of the company was second to that.

Not all businesses desire subordinate input or need it. The business leaders may want an organization with top down thinking where they believe subordinates can learn through repeat use of historic knowledge. An organization with complex design processes may feel wasted resources come from employees who spend time thinking of new ideas and suggestions. Participant 10 articulated that it was better for her to change her business thinking because there was no reason to have new ideas and suggestions since the processes they used work well. Perception from this type of response was that many of the bureaucratic organizations and larger fixed product line corporations seemed to follow this pattern of leadership style though this conclusion is not scientifically

identified. Further investigation of this area is an additional recommendation for research on the topic of business thinking and leadership style.

On the other hand, Participant 11 worked for a company and supervisor who wanted to develop their subordinates into independent thinkers because the product they sold and developed required new and innovative thinking to tap into the constantly changing consumer market. It was important that they had happy well-developed employees who could generate ideas for new products that could serve the market. The type of leadership required to have this atmosphere is collaborative and open-minded based on the results of the research study. The leaders described by the participants in the research study as collaborative came from educational institutions and corporations with multi-faceted product lines. The researcher perceived that because of the rapid changes that take place in this type of business, it is necessary to exploit ideas from subordinates and supervisors alike to remain relevant in the market. This company type seems more affected by younger and changing consumer values more than the energy corporations and government agencies with leaders who were more adversarial. This perception came from the interview responses of the participants in these industries.

Prior research expressed and concluded that leadership style changed how employees reacted through productivity, turnover rates, and profitability. There was no conclusion made about whether the subordinates in these corporations and organizations were given more credence to reveal their business thinking process. The gap in the research led to the design of this research study. It was apparent during the interviews that participants were eager to discuss how they felt when working with and for their

supervisors. Only a few participants did not give detailed responses to their questions. Going back to Chapter 1, leaders were described using the inclusive LMX leadership style because they “included” their subordinates in the decisions and meetings in the workplace. The participants in this research study spoke more about the relationship they had with their supervisor. This ensued because the questioning did not invite information about interactions with other subordinates. An improvement to this study might have been to interview multiple subordinates for one supervisor to get a more extensive record of the supervisor’s traits from different perspectives. Different age, career-level, and gender were potential influences in the responses of the participants in this research study but were not analyzed scientifically. The male participants were to the point about their relationships and did not use sugary language when describing traits their supervisor had whether a male or female supervisor was the topic. The female participants were more emotionally involved in their careers than the male participants.

The literature review revealed that leadership could realistically make a company have lower turnover, better productivity, and stronger profitability. This research study did not delve into the profitability, turnover, or productivity of the corporations and organizations the participants came from. The only answers resulted in responses to find whether the leaders affected business thinking. Additional work to determine whether business thinking is part of the criteria that changes profitability, turnover, or productivity, was not included in this research since the supervisor-subordinate environment can also alter these factors.

## **Recommendations**

The research showed that further study is needed to determine the traits all types of leadership style have on business thinking. The research could explore all career fields instead of only human resources. The conclusion of my research was that the use of only human resources professionals could be expanded to other career fields to get a more in-depth look from other career perspectives and may have caused a limited scope look at the leadership role on business thinking. Personnel working in the human resources field deal with employees as part of their career. The research could be further developed to find out if there is a racial, gender, or career-level component to the changes in business thinking. A mixed methods research study could develop factors to measure the actual depth of business thinking used and developed in the employee relationship in their work environments.

Recommendations for future research:

1. Studies of leadership style and business thinking based on additional occupations, using this model of questioning, would document whether other career paths have leadership that also challenges business thinking.
2. With the information from this research study, additional questioning related to reactions to specific job duties may enhance the knowledge gathered about leadership style.

3. Gaining more specific details about leadership styles other than LMX leadership style could enhance the depth of the information received regarding potential effect on business thinking.
4. Research that is related to business thinking from a supervisor's perspective could enhance the results by gathering information from the supervisor and subordinate perspective.

Recommendations based on this study:

1. A quantitative model of questions to gain information from direct measures of physical stresses related to on-the-job performance.
2. The use of participants from all experience levels in the field of human resources could change the results of reactions toward supervisors.
3. Employing only in-person interviews to allow the researcher to read body language which is unavailable through telephone interviews.
4. Assembling a line of questions leading to specific corporate product and customer markets to determine the importance of changed or unchanged business thinking.

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