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Women's Leadership in Philanthropy: An Analysis of Six Giving Circles

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WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN PHILANTHROPY:

AN ANALYSIS OF SIX GIVING CIRCLES

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Abstract

Women have played an essential role in the development of philanthropy in the United States. While their giving behavior and financial contributions have been studied extensively, other aspects of their philanthropy—namely leadership—have not been documented as completely. The giving circle—a new trend within philanthropy where groups of individuals pool their money, and through educating themselves about issues in their community, decide together where to award their funds—provides an ideal case for this study, as the majority of giving circle members are women. In order to gain a better understanding of women's leadership, focus groups were conducted with more than 35 members of six giving circles. This study asks the questions: What meaning, understanding, or insights about women's philanthropic leadership can be derived from the experiences and perceptions articulated by members of giving circles? What definitions, models, or new articulations of leadership can be discerned? and What are the implication of the stories of leadership that members tell for the formation, growth, and sustainability of giving circles? A multimethod analysis of the focus groups reveals that these women identify leadership in three primary ways: leading through relationships; leading with a focus on impact and change; and leading to create civic capacity. It is the third frame—leading to create civic capacity—that holds the most promise for an expanded understanding and a clearer articulation of women's leadership in philanthropy. The electronic version of this Dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to attend an annual meeting of the Women's Funding Network (WFN), a network of more than 130 organizations that fund programs and projects for women and girls both nationally and internationally. These funds give women the money and tools to transform their ideas into lasting change—in every critical area from combating poverty to achieving advances in healthcare, education, and human rights (www.womensfundingnetwork.org/about). Billed as a preconference to the Council on Foundations (COF) meeting, the WFN conference was smaller in size and shorter in length compared to the parent conference, but I found it more exciting than any philanthropy-focused conference I had ever attended.

The women I met at that year's conference were clearly excited to be part of the growing network of women's funds. They readily shared stories about their philanthropic work; stories as varied as the women. Some women were well known to me from the literature, as authors or scholars in the field of philanthropy, others were wealthy donors with names recognizable to anyone in most any field, but most were simply everyday people with a passion for helping women and girls. These women (and some men) were overflowing with energy. I was to discover that this energy came directly from the commitment and excitement around the work.

These WFN annual meetings provided the impetus for my interest in researching and writing a dissertation on women's leadership in philanthropy. By my second conference it was dawning on me that, when I looked around the room during the opening session, I was seeing a room chock full of leaders. It was true that some of the women were leaders because they were executive directors or founders of women's funds. Others were staff at a community, family, or national foundation. But I had the sense that far more of them were leaders simply by doing the work of this philanthropic network. Leadership for women is often at odds with traditional definitions of leadership and the evidence of leadership is often different than traditional practices of leadership suggest (Sinclair, 2007). I found myself considering questions like, What could the leadership experiences of these women add to the field of leadership studies? How did they think about leadership and how did their perceptions “match” the accepted theories from the leadership literature?

It was at these WFN conferences, in conversation with dozens of women over several years, that I began to put detail to my thinking about an area of research to explore. With my interest in leadership and a career in the foundation field, research at the confluence of women, philanthropy and leadership seems a natural. And as I delved more deeply into the literature, I found that scholars agree that much more needs to be known about many aspects of the current status of women in philanthropy (Capek, 2006; Eikenberry, 2006; McCarthy, 1991). One intriguing new idea, philanthropic giving circles, kept coming up in conversation during the WFN meetings. Giving circles, a new funding mechanism of special significance to women with its “hands-on, direct mode of giving” (Eikenberry, 2007, p. 141), seems especially ripe for research.

Statement of the Issue

Eikenberry, in *Giving Circles: Philanthropy, Voluntary Association, and Democracy* (2009), argues that “over the past hundred years, we have witnessed the ongoing erosion” of philanthropy’s ability to enhance civic engagement and community building. “Driven by the actions of large institutions,” (p. 2), and embedded in the larger context of modernization, philanthropy has become increasingly professionalized, rationalized, bureaucratized, and marketized. “The operations and approaches” (p. 29) of organized philanthropy has left the everyday person on the sidelines. “Formalization,” Eikenberry argues, “closes out opportunities for community participation” (p. 31). This has meant less opportunity for “democratic face-to-face, local citizen participation and social capital building” (p. 6) within philanthropy.

While the modernization of philanthropy has undoubtedly increased the capacity of foundations to provide services, it is said to come at the expense of “individual impulse, neighborliness, and community engagement” (Eikenberry, 2007, p. 36). People want to be part of a community but in their own way and oftentimes outside traditional structures (p. 54).

Recent trends in philanthropy point to an increasing yearning for engagement by everyday people (Eikenberry, 2007, p. 141) seeking to connect in meaningful ways with others in their community. Scholars suggest this recent trend may be merely an extension of similar calls for engagement in the political and economic life of society (Berg, 2007).

The market-like, scientific model of philanthropy that has emerged over the last century, Eikenberry (2007) argues, stresses “strategic development, risk taking, and competitive positioning” (p. 117). Historically, philanthropy has been under increased pressure from external forces, primarily Congress, for accountability. Because of their tax-exempt status, philanthropic organizations have been under fire to produce and “follow the money.” Scientific philanthropists believed that if only enough facts were unearthed and root causes explored, solutions to social problems could be found. “To understand society, we must measure it” became the credo of the new field of social science (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 241). This went along with scientific philanthropy beliefs that knowledge, not sentimentalism, would answer social ills. This seems to be incompatible with a model that should also stress the values of “community participation, due process, and stewardship” (p. 40). Participation should be meaningful in the sense that it links citizens to one another across social and economic differences, routinely engages them in civic relationships, and builds social capacity.

Over the last decade, a "new philanthropy" has emerged. Cobb (2002) suggests that changes in philanthropy over the past decades in particular are a response to "large-scale societal influences that include technological innovation, the creation of enormous wealth, new demographics, government retrenchment, and the (apparent) triumph of the market economy" (p. 125). While this new philanthropy allows for more flexibility, it also has the consequence of being subject to donor whims. Increasingly, in some forms of strategic philanthropy and donor-advised funds, the donor has wanted to manage the organization being funded.

This new philanthropy is less male, less old, and less top-down and strings-attached (Martin, 1994). It is characterized as guided by individual donors with an emphasis on collaboration. "Engaged philanthropy," as this new philanthropy is sometimes called, uses "unconventional modes of giving and volunteering" (Eikenberry, 2007, p. 3). It is characterized by at least these three attributes: "an increase in available funds, an expansion in the modes of giving, and a greater democratization of philanthropy" (Cobb, 2002, p. 125). Engaged philanthropy provides space and access for those who do not usually participate in philanthropy (Eikenberry, 2009), bringing "new money" to philanthropy. Manifestations of this new philanthropy include organizations like Kiva Microfunds that encourage small dollar-figure online giving, Heifer International that provides a mechanism by which people can purchase as gifts seeds, animals, and such for those in underdeveloped countries, as well as new giving mechanisms like market purchasing and venture philanthropy. Market purchasing has been especially successful for organizations like the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the preeminent breast cancer research fundraising organization. Venture philanthropy, another recent trend in this field, marries business venture capital ideas to philanthropy. Not to be confused as a manifestation of this “new giving” (Karlström, Brown, Chaskin, & Richman, 2009) is “embedded philanthropy” which will be explored in the Further Research section.

Another manifestation of the new philanthropy of engagement, often dominated by women, is the giving circle. A new funding mechanism within philanthropy, giving circles are considered a high engagement form of philanthropy. In most giving circles, a group of donors come together, pledge their money, educate themselves about issues in their community and collaboratively decide where to award their pooled funds. Most giving circles are associated, affiliated, or sponsored by a community foundation or a women’s fund. Others are much more informal and ad hoc. This dissertation is about leadership in these giving circles.

This kind of collective giving is not new, of course. People banding together to give their time, talent, and treasure has a strong history in the United States. For women especially, their historically limited control over their wealth hindered their ability to accomplish charitable ends individually. Gary (2005) suggests, for this and other reasons, women innately understand the nature of collective and democratic decision making (p. 103).

The emergence of the giving circle movement reflects women’s increasing ability and desire to give (Bearman, 2006; Shaw-Hardy, 2000). Research suggests giving circles represent an entry into philanthropy for many populations usually underrepresented, including women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and young people.

Beyond research to understand the giving circle landscape and the impact of donor-members’ giving, little academic research has been done on giving circles, (Eikenberry, 2007). Most of the research that has been done by scholars such as Bearman, Beaudoin-Schwartz, and Rutnick (2005) and Eikenberry (2009) has focused on gathering data through research surveys.

Additional interview and case study research has been conducted by Beeson (2006), as well as Eikenberry and Bearman (2009).

Only limited research has been done on giving circles and more is needed. One area that has been little researched is that of leadership. Why is it relevant to understand leadership within giving circles? It has been suggested that giving circles—as representative of this new form of philanthropy—are open to a wider, more diverse group of people (Bearman, 2006; Eikenberry, 2007). Giving circles may represent a philanthropic opportunity for those who do not think of themselves as philanthropists. If giving circles are to "democratize" philanthropy and open philanthropy up to participation by everyday people, then encouraging the formation and sustainability of giving circles is imperative. And essential to this mission is understanding the leadership of philanthropic giving circles.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand more fully the nature of philanthropic leadership through the experiences and perceptions of leadership as articulated by women members of philanthropic giving circles. Scholars see the possibility of giving circles as a way to engage those who have historically been on the margins of philanthropy, providing a means for enhancing participation

Women's leadership in philanthropy has a deep history though it is little known or understood. Characterized as the latest incarnation of women's philanthropy, leadership within giving circles is not likely to mirror traditional leadership. For example, women in leadership often face the barrier of language. A masculine bias still dominates the language of leadership and problems that appear to be leadership problems are often language problems (Van Nostrand, 1993, p. 62). Women are ambivalent about using masculine-identified words to describe their leadership practices, words like commanding, dominating, or asserting. Few women use the sports metaphors and military metaphors often used in the leadership literature (Perreault, 2001). Gabler (1987) suggests that voice is an important idea that needs more research and asserts that family roles, as metaphors for leadership styles, could be incorporated into the everyday language of leadership.

The examination of the various elements at play within women's leadership in philanthropy—traditional definitions and evidence of leadership, women's historical role in philanthropy, and the new philanthropy engagement movement—will provide an understanding of the context in which to study the leadership experiences and perceptions of today's giving circle member.

Questions for this study include:

- What meaning, understanding, or insights about women's philanthropic leadership can be derived from the experiences and perceptions articulated by members of giving circles?
- What definitions, models, or new articulations of leadership can be discerned? What are the implications of the stories of leadership that members tell for the formation, growth, and sustainability of giving circles?

Significance of the Study

Of what importance are the questions about leadership in giving circles for the field of philanthropy? While giving circles have exploded onto the philanthropic scene and have grown tremendously over the last 10 years, recent research suggests giving circles may also be "just a fad" within philanthropy (Bearman, 2006).

The Women's Fund of Greater Omaha has been trying to promote the formation of giving circles by offering free leadership training to women interested in starting a giving circle. However, while many were trained, few have actually started a giving circle, suggesting to some scholars that the leadership initiative must come from the bottom up (Eikenberry, 2007). Additionally, it has been suggested that the independent nature of the giving circle may run counter to accepted notions of organized philanthropy. It has been hypothesized that the success of the formation and ongoing operations of giving circles seems to depend a great deal on volunteer, grassroots leadership (Eikenberry, 2006, p. 529).

New knowledge about women's leadership within giving circles would strengthen the ability of giving circles to reach, perhaps even exceed, their potential as an engaged form of philanthropy. It is possible that giving circles could have a permanent effect on the practice of philanthropy. Giving circles have the potential to contribute to a more responsive and engaged philanthropy for the twenty-first century and to make philanthropy available to a wider segment of the population. Giving circles, and other "new philanthropy," could remedy philanthropy's undeserved reputation as an enterprise for only the wealthy.

Methodology for the Study

This study utilizes focus groups with members of six giving circles within the United States. The focus group, with its origins in market research, is a tool for studying ideas in group context (Morgan, 1988). As a method of inquiry, focus groups combine elements of both individual interviews and participant observation (p. 15). They are conducted in order to explore an individual's views, perceptions, ideas, and attitudes on a given topic (Morgan & Krueger, 1993, p. 7). Litosseliti (2003) describes a focus group as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p. 1).

I identified possible giving circles to study from contacts I had made through the WFN meetings. I received numerous offers of introduction to women who have founded or are members of giving circles from many of the women I met through the WFN. For many years I have participated in the annual conference of this group and have been embraced by this network of women in the philanthropic field. Additional focus group participants were also solicited through this existing network.

Limitations of the Study

The sample is of necessity a sample of convenience. The number of documented giving circles is small—Eikenberry (2009) suggests there are fewer than 600 in the United States. In comparison there are more than 1.5 million nonprofits in the US. There may be many more circles beyond this number, if the informal circles could be more readily identified. For this reason, identifying a sufficient number of giving circles, given the difficulty Eikenberry and Bearman had while conducting the research for their most recent report (2009), was of concern.

Because the giving circles that comprise the data for this research were self-selected, the findings from the research will not be generalizable to other groups. A focus group consists of a limited number of participants, and may not be a true representative sample of the larger group. Therefore, generalizing from focus group data is not possible. The responses from members of the group are not independent of one another, which further restricts the generalizability of results (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 17). However, while the results may not be generalizable or representative, they are indicative and illustrative (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 22) of the particular social phenomenon of leadership as perceived by these participants.

The opportunities that focus groups provide, however, outweigh its limitations. These opportunities and limitations will be thoroughly discussed along with the methodology. Because there is a dearth of research in this area, any research that will add to the body of knowledge of women's leadership within philanthropy, especially within the context of giving circles, would be welcome.

Not much is known about leadership within giving circles and it is my hope that whatever knowledge is gained through focus groups with members of giving circles will add substantially to the existing body of knowledge. Using philanthropy as the context, I hope this dissertation adds to what is known about women's leadership, also.

Descriptions

Organization of the study. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the perceptions and experiences of leadership, as articulated in their own voices, by women members of philanthropic giving circles. Women have a long history in philanthropy, beginning with the early colonial missionary movement, continuing with the Settlement House movement, through the scientific philanthropy era and the rise of big foundations. Their roles have ranged from silent partners to activists to researchers to donors. Women's leadership in early charitable philanthropy was outside the mainstream. Today, giving circles can be described as the most recent incarnation of women's philanthropic engagement through giving and volunteering, and the leadership indicated may indeed follow the historic precedence set by early charitable associations.

The primary research questions for this study are: What meaning, understanding, or insights about women's philanthropic leadership can be derived from the experiences and perceptions articulated by members of giving circles? and What definitions, models, or articulations of leadership can be discerned?

Literature review. This section will consist of two related literature reviews. The first review will focus on leadership; the second on philanthropy, especially women in philanthropy.

The first review provides a foundation for understanding the various theories of leadership essential to this study. Beginning with the earliest philosophers and the great man theory of leadership, then outlining the subsequent twentieth-century theories, the review concludes with current theories of "twenty-first century leadership." A review of women's leadership theories is provided as well. Grassroots leadership theory, of particular focus to this study, is also discussed.

The second literature review lays the foundation for placing women's philanthropic giving circles within the larger tradition of women's participation in philanthropy. Through the illustration of historical examples, the review presents a picture of women's leadership in philanthropy. I argue that the history of women in philanthropy reveals the history of women's leadership within philanthropy. Charity and missionary work, voluntary associations, the Settlement House movement, and the emergence of big foundations all provide examples of women's leadership roles within philanthropy. The review illustrates the often marginal, yet essential, involvement of women since the early beginnings of this country. Current scholarly literature at the confluence of women, leadership, and philanthropy is also discussed. Giving circles, as a new form of "engaged philanthropy," are introduced and the existing, though not explicit, research on leadership within giving circles is also examined.

Methodology, epistemology, and ethical considerations. This dissertation employs the focus group as methodology. Six focus groups with giving circle members were conducted.

While criteria such as levels of wealth, geography, organizational structure, and mission were originally to be considered part of the selection decision, the small number of available circles to interview precluded this consideration.

There are many reasons why the focus group is a legitimate way to derive understanding, meaning and insight from women's experiences and perceptions of leadership. The methodology is described and the appropriateness of the methodology discussed in this section. Limitations to the research methods will be discussed as well.

In addition to the focus group sessions, the participants also completed a brief questionnaire. I included this survey initially to gather more demographic information about the participants without using any of the focus group time to gather it. My purpose was to be able to add thicker description to the cases, using the information from the surveys to add detail to the story of the women of each circle. I knew my time with each giving circle during the focus group would be limited, and wanted to take advantage of each minute of time. By asking participants to fill out the demographic survey, I was able to focus my questions on issues of leadership.

Data. This section presents data from the focus groups in a rich narrative "case" format. I have thematized the participants' conversations about leadership within each giving circle, using the Text Analysis Markup System (TAMS) Analyzer coding process. TAMS allows for both absolute frequency and interview frequency analysis. Graphic representation of these measure are also provided within each case.

Implications. This section discusses the findings and their implications for leadership in giving circles. It offers insights into the perceptions and experiences of the leadership relationship on the part of all the members of giving circles, in their own voices, and situates the findings within the larger contexts of engaged philanthropy. Using the absolute frequency measures, three themes are identified. Implications of the findings for the formation, growth, and sustainability of giving circles is of paramount concern and is also addressed.

Further research. This final section outlines additional research that may follow from this study. This additional research includes: further research on the nascent grassroots movement within traditional philanthropy; further research on the role of informal associations in leadership development; and research on “civic entrepreneurs” and “embedded philanthropy” and the possible role of giving circles. Last, additional research on the use of Skype and similar technology to conduct interviews and focus groups would be a welcome addition to the field.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Leadership: An Introduction

To begin to understand the leadership that may characterize giving circles, it is essential to understand the various accepted theories of leadership and their place in an historical perspective of leadership. Examining existing theories of leadership will help us understand the leadership of giving circles within a larger context. Because this study focuses solely on women within giving circles, women's leadership theories will figure prominently. Within the leadership field, women's leadership scholarship has expanded the definition of leadership to encompass many additional and alternative conceptions of leadership (Sinclair, 2007), and has increased an understanding of what has been characterized as twenty-first century leadership. It is these emergent, alternative conceptions of leadership that I seek to uncover through focus groups with women giving circle members. Uncovering the rich, multifaceted nature of leadership within giving circles should be useful to scholars and practitioners who are committed to furthering the startup, growth, and sustainability of giving circles as an expression of the "democratization" of philanthropy.

Early thinking about leaders. It was not until the first half of the nineteenth century that the word "leadership" even appeared in the literature (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 12). But just because the word did not appear in the literature doesn't mean that society wasn't concerned with leadership. What we describe as leadership today began in the rich literature on rulership.

The earliest literature on leadership was concerned with identifying types of leaders and their functions within society (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 6). The earliest theorists sought to develop a comprehensive theory of leadership with a focus on the individual.

Thinking about rulership/leadership flourished in the classical and Middle Ages (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Beginning in the classical period, philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, Lao Tzu, Confucius, and Machiavelli weighed in on the characteristics of good leaders (Couto, n.d.) as they applied to politics and governing. These thinkers and philosophers never referred explicitly to what we, today, define as leadership but they wrote about rulers, heroes, and rebels in ways that would describe leadership theories in later eras (Burns, 2003, p. 8).

Plato suggested three types of leaders: the philosopher-statesman, the military commander, and the businessman (Bass & Stogdill, p. 21), all three representing authority figures. Burns (2003), in his writings, suggests that the authority belonging to philosophers and kings had its origins in more than just their expertise. Authority was seen as deriving from God, or from the innate nature of man (p. 24). Authority was synonymous with leadership. At this time in the history of classical Western and Eastern thinkers, only men, of course, had a public role. The realm of women was the home (Fletcher, 2001, p. 26; Jamieson, 1995, p. 16). Society functioned through a division of labor, with women acting in the private sphere as caretakers and men acting in the public sphere as leaders.

Aristotle pushed ideas about leadership a bit further than Plato and examined the constitutions of the city-states of his time. He sought to determine the proper and improper forms of government, and their implications for leadership. But still he saw leadership in political or authoritative terms. These early theories focused as they were on the individual, and did not consider the interactions between people or the situation.

Lao Tzu's philosophy was much more focused on the nature of the good life and the harmony of human life than Plato and Aristotle. The same was true in his writings on leadership. This kind of thinking reflects what we have come to characterize as an "Eastern" philosophy.

Lao Tzu gave us a tradition of searching for the interrelatedness of things, leadership being just part of his concerns.

Confucius, a contemporary of Lao Tzu and also characterized as "Eastern," suggested principles of public leadership that could be taught. He suggested that one purpose of leadership was to teach right from wrong and urged leaders to set a moral tone. Embedded in this approach is concern for and responsibility to the people being led, in marked contrast to Aristotle and Plato's concern only with the leader.

Machiavelli provided the first empirical study of political leadership (Couto, n.d.). He articulated the risks of leadership and spoke about the resistance of subordinates to leaders. He advocated leader traits such as steadiness, firmness, authority, power, and order and maintained that any means to ensure these traits were legitimate, even deceit or treachery. It is unfortunate that it is this emphasis on deceit and treachery that he is best remembered for today.

Until the twentieth century, studies of leadership remained primarily concerned with the political sector and moral philosophy. Studies of leadership during this time focused on the individual leader and his individual traits. The classical scholars spoke of leader*ship* but had in mind the traits of individual leaders. This way of thinking suggested that, "history was shaped by the leadership of great men" (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 26), and that people were born with the qualities that made them leaders. The great-man theory "placed value on the history maker or the person with influence" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 17).

By far the most critical bias in the great-man theory of leadership was the assumption that great men *do* make history. Most scholars of the time assumed that the "lives of great men had more to contribute to understanding society, history, and current events than did the lives of the great mass of people" (Burns, 1978, pp. 50-51). Thus leadership was implicitly defined as a function of position or power.

The qualities or traits of these "great men" of leadership were described as dominating, competitive, aggressive, manipulating, and achievement-driven (Hunt, Baliga, Dachler, & Schriesheim, 1988), traits that society stereotypes as male. This definition of the characteristics of leadership continued to dominate leadership theory for some time. In some ways, it can be argued, this definition continues to dominate theories of leadership today. Many people continue to define leadership as authority or position.

It must be noted, however, that throughout American history not all men were eligible for leadership. Most privilege, including leadership roles, was reserved for wealthy, usually white, males. Being male, in and of itself, was not the only prerequisite for leadership, but it was an essential one.

Twentieth-century theories of leadership. Many scholars have attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of the various theories and schools of leadership throughout the twentieth century (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Burns, 1978; Rost, 1993). These theories often overlapped and were rarely separate and distinct from one another. They were usually formulated in reaction to previous theories and sought to improve on them (Rost, 1993, p. 26); thus many leadership theories have common elements.

Trait theories of leadership came into favor in the 1920s and remained a dominant theme until the 1940s. Trait theory, a more sophisticated version of the great-man theory, suggests that certain clusters of characteristics differentiate leaders from followers and effective leaders from ineffective leaders (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 81). Northouse (2004) describes the trait approach to leadership as one in which people are born with the traits that make them leaders.

Why did the trait approach garner such acceptance? Northouse (2004) suggests the trait approach is intuitively appealing, and points to the many research studies that validate it. The trait approach also provides benchmarks for the evaluation of leadership. What are the negative aspects of the trait approach to leadership? Northouse suggests that there is no determinate list of traits and the situational aspects of leadership still play a part. A list of traits is quite subjective and not necessarily grounded in the research. Northouse further suggests that trait theory isn't useful for the training or development of leaders. If leaders are born and not made, then no amount of training can develop leadership, according to this theory.

Group-focused theories of leadership came to dominate in the 1930s and 1940s (Rost, 1993). Group theories of leadership used all the members of a group, the leader as well as the followers, as the unit of analysis. Heretofore in leadership theory, the unit of analysis had been the individual, or the great-man.

By the 1940s, situational theories, in direct opposition to trait theories, prevailed. Situational leadership can be defined as identifying aspects of a situation that influence a leader's behavior, thereby determining whether the behavior will be effective (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 1981). For example, the Hersey and Blanchard situational leadership theory, devised in answer to problems that were encountered when leader effectiveness was being measured, is concerned with two broad categories of leader behavior: task (or direction) and relationship (or support). A situational approach to leadership defines how a leader should behave in a particular situation based on a prescriptive approach. This theory suggests that, depending on the needs of the follower, the leader should be aware of the followers' needs and refine his behavior in light of his awareness and knowledge of the follower. This model of leader and follower behavior calls for very flexible behavior on the part of the leader. The situational approach to leadership suggests a leader is effective when they can exhibit the leadership style that is appropriate to the situation.

The situational approach to leadership, with its principle of no one best style of leadership, is recognized as a standard by many (Northouse, 2004). This approach to leadership behavior is rooted in relationships, not position or power, and has practical applications and a clear set of guidelines. However, little research underpins this theory.

Another situational theory of leadership is Fiedler's contingency model (Northouse, 2004; Yukl, 1981). This is essentially a situational approach with the addition of followers. This approach represents a shift in the research from only looking at the leader to looking at the situation in which the leader and followers work. This theory also suggests that it is important to match the leader's style with the situation. Fiedler developed this theory to explain the different effectiveness results for different kinds of leaders, characterizing some as "concerned with interpersonal relationships" and others as "occupied by the achievement of task objectives," emphasizing task-orientation. Fiedler was the first to rank the elements of leadership influence, and the relationship between the leader and follower comes out on top.

Yet another theory, House's (Northouse, 2004), path-goal theory with its four categories of leader behavior (supportive, directive, participative, and achievement-oriented) was developed to explain how the behavior of a leader influences the motivation and satisfaction of followers. A subset of contingency theory, this theory says a follower will be motivated if they feel competent, if they think their efforts will be rewarded, and if they find the payoff valuable. The leader's role is to help by coaching, directing, and guiding the followers.

The proponents of this theory intended it to be only a tentative explanation of the effect of leadership on follower motivation and satisfaction. While path-goal theory assumes that role ambiguity is dissatisfying to followers or subordinates in most cases, some scholars argue that not all people seem to like a job in which duties and procedures are specified in great detail. People with the desire to provide their own role definition and clarify their own path relationships may prefer a leader who allows considerable autonomy and who does not supervise closely. For these followers, the use of participative and achievement-oriented leadership may be more ideal. This tracks with literature that suggests women do not separate or compartmentalize the various aspects and roles of their lives.

Path-goal theory suggests if a task is difficult and a subordinate lacks the self-esteem and confidence to complete it, supportive and directive leadership may reduce the follower’s anxiety and increase confidence and determination.

Again, this theory has its detractors but, nonetheless, the path-goal theory of leadership provides a conceptual framework to guide scholars and researchers in identifying potentially important moderating variables of leadership. For example, the emphasis on flexible leadership is noteworthy. And the comparison between trait theory (with its emphasis on a leader’s characteristics) and the situational theories (with their emphasis on the relationship) opened the door for leadership development by a broader range of people.

From 1945 to 1960, the emphasis in leadership studies was on empirical research—what could be observed or experienced. Psychological theories of leadership at this time tended to define leadership as simply control or rulership (harkening back to the classical notions of leadership), while biological theories of leadership assumed leaders were male (Burns, 2003, p. 50). Other schools of thought included the personality school that suggested a one-way influence and dominance by the leader and the influence school of thought that recognized the need for a common goal and the element of relationship between leader and follower. The behavioral school in which the leader directs and coordinates the work of a group was prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, and the persuasion school, favored by political and social movements, appealed to emotions, not coercion. But by the early 1980s, the leadership literature was again preoccupied with typologies—defining leadership as skills-based, style-based, situational, or contingency.

Today, leadership theory is mostly concerned with leadership within business organizations, social institutions, and society, having moved away from the authority view of leadership. The *context* of leadership has become a consideration in developing leadership theory. Trends and issues in the larger society play a role in the continued exploration of leadership by scholars.

As this short survey of the literature shows, leaders, not leadership, has been the primary focus of much of the scholarship. Leaders have been defined across eras as rulers, authority figures, and men of power and influence. Their qualities include competitiveness, aggressiveness, and being achievement-oriented. In some ways, this theory of leadership is still prevalent. Other theories begin to appear in the literature, however, in response to the inadequacies of previous theories. These theories, including situational and contingency, are considered the "group theories" of leadership, with followers as well as leaders considered essential to understanding leadership.

Follett and relational leadership theory. Among the scholars writing on leadership in the twentieth century was the first woman in the US to write about leadership—Mary Parker Follett. Writing in the 1920s, she conceptualized a definition of leadership that was different from the prevailing theories of leadership of that time. She was among the first to theorize about leadership-as-relationship, not merely the individual leadership of trait-based leadership. She was a woman writing about and working in business at a time when her presence in the workplace was seen as an oddity. Her gender played a large role in the development of her ideas and cannot be overemphasized. Her writings were subsequently "lost" for many years and were only rediscovered in the 1980s (Graham, 1995, pp. vii-viii).

Follett defined the essentials of leadership as the ability to see the big picture and the relationships between the pieces as well as the ability to see future trends, requiring imagination and insight (Follett, 1987, p. 53). Beyer (1987), in her retrospective comments on Follett's writings on leadership, said, "Mary Parker Follett had much to say that anticipated later developments in the field of management" (p. 60). Bennis (1995) also acknowledged the influence of Follett, remarking that "Just about everything written today about leadership and organizations comes from Mary Parker Follett's writings and lectures" (p. 178).

For example, Follett was one of the first to articulate a theory of followership. Writing in *The Essentials of Leadership,* Follett (1987) says:

> And now let me speak to you for a moment of some thing which seems to me of the utmost importance, but which has been far too little considered, and that is the part of the followers in the leadership situation. Their part is not merely to follow, they have a very active part to play and that is to keep the leader in control of a situation. (p. 55)

She saw the role of the follower as being in concert with the leader where both are following the invisible leader—the common purpose. She says:

> Many are coming to think that the job of a man higher up is not to make decisions for his subordinates but to teach them how to handle their problems themselves, teach them how to make their own decisions. The best leader does not persuade men to follow his will. He shows them what is necessary for them to do in order to meet their responsibility, a responsibility that has been explicitly defined to them. Such a leader is not one who wishes to do people's thinking for them, but one who trains them to think for themselves. (Follett, 1987, p. 56)

She suggested that leadership as domination, either by a masterful or persuasive personality, "was going out of fashion" and "leadership is sometimes in one place and sometimes in another" (Follett, 1987, p. 53), foreshadowing what today we think of as collaborative leadership or leadership in place (Wergin, 2007). Her theory of participatory, people-oriented leadership has become a norm within the field of leadership today. She was clearly a woman before her time.

Modern leadership theory. Despite Follett's (1987) prescient writing on leadership, James MacGregor Burns and Robert Greenleaf are considered the fathers of modern leadership theory. Their scholarship sought to expose as mythical the great man approach to leadership and move the theory beyond the type, trait, and situational approaches to leadership, expanding the idea of leadership to include among other things, social change leadership. These two scholars were among the first to question the legitimacy of the traditional great man theory of leadership and question the status quo (Astin & Leland, 1991). As Heifetz (1994) would later assert as part of his much broader and more inclusive theory of leadership in the twenty-first century, "the myth of leadership is the myth of the lone warrior: the solitary individual whose heroism and brilliance enable him to lead the way" (p. 251). His concept of adaptive work, explained in more detail later in this section, contains the elements of values, beliefs, behavior, and learning as well as influence and authority. Most importantly, Heifetz presents a concept of leadership as people actively working toward tackling and solving their tough problems.

Burns (2003) and Greenleaf (1977), whether consciously or unconsciously following Follett's (1987) lead, were among the first modern scholars to begin to conceptualize a more inclusive idea of leadership, focusing as much on the importance of the follower as the leader.

Both Burns and Greenleaf wrote in response to the mediocrity they saw all around them. Their descriptions of a leader contrast with the agentic traits characteristic of the great man theory of leadership. For Burns (1978), this takes the form of two basic types of leadership—

transactional and transforming. Both are processes of leadership involving leaders and followers (p. 4). Greenleaf (1977) defines a leader as accepting and empathic (p. 20), a searcher and a listener (p. 9); as the one who points out a direction (p. 15).

Burns motivation in writing the seminal book, *Leadership* (1978), was to move beyond the biographies of presidents (as these made up the majority of leadership scholarship at the time) to begin examining a more theoretical approach to leadership. Burns central purpose was to generalize about the leadership process across culture and across time. In articulating his ideas about transactional and transformational leadership, Burns suggests the interaction of most leaders and followers is transactional, while transforming leadership is more potent (pp. 425-427). He describes transforming leadership as a reciprocal relationship (p. 61).

> The transformational leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transformational leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents. (p. 4)

Burns (2003) contrasts transactional leadership with transforming leadership by suggesting that transactional leadership occurs when "one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things" (p. 19), while transforming leadership occurs when:

> one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Power bases are linked, not as counter weights, but as mutual support for common purpose. (p. 20)

Burns' conception of leadership as relationship (at least in the context of transforming leadership) echoes Follett's ideas. Kellerman (2007, p. 4), a student of Burns', suggests *Leadership* was essential in drawing attention to the role of followers and the importance of leader-follower interaction.

Burns (2003) makes a further comparison by listing characteristics of the two types of leadership. For him, the chief monitors of transactional leadership are honesty, responsibility, fairness, and the honoring of commitments while transforming leadership is more concerned with “end-values such as liberty, justice, equality” (p. 426).

Like Burns, Greenleaf (1977) also focuses on the relationships within leadership. Rather than focusing on the individual, as traditional great-man, trait, or situational leadership theory does, Greenleaf asserts that servant leadership—with followers as important as leaders—is designed to make sure that other people’s needs are being served.

This is a radically different idea of leadership than previous theories had suggested. The notion that a leader could be a servant stood traditional leadership theory on its head. Until Greenleaf’s (1977) introduction of the idea of servant leadership, followers were seen as answering to leaders. Greenleaf suggested otherwise. His experiences in the 1960s and 1970s during the period of campus turmoil led him to believe that people were beginning to learn to relate to others in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways.

His theory of leadership champions the role of intuition—which he defines as judgment from an unconscious process—and its ability to bridge the gap between the information available and the information needed to make a decision. Greenleaf did not get the notion of the servant leader from conscious logic. Rather it came to him as an intuitive insight—serving and leading are mostly intuition-based concepts for him.

Greenleaf (1977) says:

> Intuition is a feel for patterns, the ability to generalize based on what has happened previously. Two separate anxiety processes may be involved in a leader’s intuitive decision: the anxiety of holding the decision until as much information as possible is in; and the anxiety of making the decision when there really isn’t enough information. Intuition in a leader is more valued, and therefore more trusted, at the conceptual level. (p. 23)

Greenleaf's (1977) thesis is that caring for persons is the basis on which a good society is built and requires leaders who have the capacity and ability to serve. In *Servant Leadership*, Greenleaf described the ascendancy of a more collaborative form of leadership which we have seen come to pass in the nearly 40 years since he wrote the book.

Additionally, Chrislip and Larson's (1994) research on collaborative leadership shares several key ideas with the work of scholars such as Burns (2003) (transforming leadership); Greenleaf (1977) (servant leadership); and Heifetz (1994) (leadership as a process).

Their findings parallel those of Kouzes and Posner in their book, *The Leadership Challenge* (2002) in five principle ways. For these scholars, leadership is about challenging the process through experimentation and innovation; sharing a vision through a common purpose; acting in concert with others to solve problems; modeling leadership through practicing what they preach; and encouraging commitment and action through attention to the "heart." All these scholars share a model of leadership that is very different from tactical or positional models of leadership. Chrislip and Larson (1994) further suggest that collaborative leaders are sustained by "their deeply democratic belief that people have the capacity to create their own vision and solve their own problems" (p. 146).

Women's leadership theories. Unfortunately, but perhaps not surprisingly, when women read the leadership literature they failed to find much that authenticated their own experiences. The early great-man theory of leadership ignored women entirely. It considered women, by virtue of their innate nature, ineligible for leadership. Women were also overlooked by the great-man approach to history (Astin & Leland, 1991; Rhode, 2003). When leadership theory is articulated as trait theory, a male bias is quite evident and women lose out. When leadership theory is articulated as authority, a male bias is again evident, and again women lose out. When we examine the work of scholars like Burns and Greenleaf, their consideration of gender is varied.

As many women read Burns' seminal work (and Greenleaf to a lesser degree), they were struck by the omission of women and leadership (Alexandre, 2007). Reflecting on the times in which Burns was writing, one must remember that he was trying to promote a new definition of leadership, one that was sure to meet opposition. Muddying the waters, so to speak, with a nod to women's leadership, might have done a disservice to the new concepts he was trying to introduce. Alexandre (2007) points out the absence of female subjects for Burns' case studies. While this is true, it should not necessarily be seen as a statement by Burns that women cannot lead. In the revised volume, Burns (2003) acknowledges the omission and makes amends for his previous gender blindness. Alexandre's second thesis, that Burns theory of leadership is a gendered one, is important to note. *Leadership* is a text that feminists can and do embrace. His theory of transforming leadership, with a focus on the relationship of leaders and followers, can be interpreted through a gendered lens. Although Burns refused to plant a flag in the ground concerning women's leadership, he may have ultimately done right by women scholars by leaving the story of women's leadership to their own telling.

While some scholars, like Burns, may not have explicitly addressed women's leadership, elements of various women's leadership theories can be observed in their writings. Burns' and Greenleaf's definitions of leadership (remember, they are writing in the 1970s) implicitly reflect attributes found explicitly attributed to women in later leadership literature. I have already mentioned Greenleaf's ideas about servant leadership and collaborative leadership. Though he doesn't address women's leadership directly, it is no stretch to align his ideas with contemporary writing about women's leadership. Greenleaf moved beyond the masculine traits of assertiveness, domination, etc. to embrace relational behavior.

Over the last few decades, many forces have served to promote scholarship on women in leadership. When women did not see themselves reflected in the existing literature on leadership, they began to examine their own lives and write about their own experiences. Lakoff (2000) suggests, "with the rise of the women's movement came a reexamination of male interpretations of women" (p. 36). Many women, newly employed in business and elsewhere, began to let their desire for leadership roles be known. Progressive businesses began to move away from a command and control leadership structure to a flatter, more networked organization, paving the way for more participation by women. "Feminine" traits, such as caring, communication, cooperation, support, helpfulness, gentleness, and sensitivity to the feelings of colleagues, became avenues for research in organizational leadership development (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Heller, 1982). The rapid technological, economic, and social changes in society began to place demands on all institutions to become change-adept organizations. The ascendancy of the "group" theories of leadership—situational, contingency, and path-goal theories of leadership in particular—paved the way for women to begin to situate their own experiences within these theoretical leadership frameworks. Women who had been marginalized or shut out from traditional leadership positions by virtue of their gender or position began to find alternative ways to express their leadership. They began to articulate their own experiences in comparison to what was accepted scholarship, theory, and practice.

Many leadership scholars began to realize there was much to gain by recognizing women's contributions to leadership and reducing the traditional male bias. Reading the literature on women's leadership—both theoretical and popular—reveals a question that is implicit in every theory of women's leadership. That question is, Can women lead?

What may seem like an inconsequential question is not because, unfortunately, the question is still being debated. Less than a decade ago, the editors of *U.S. News & World Report* ("Are women," 2001) asked,

> Have we indeed entered a brave new world where women will prove to be more effective leaders than men? Will they change the pictures in our heads of what a leader should look and act like? *Or is all this talk about women as leaders premature?* [emphasis added]. (p. 10)

Indvik (2004) addresses this question and comes to a different conclusion. "Among the earliest questions asked about women and leadership were, Can women be leaders? Most people would agree that the answer is a resounding 'Yes!'" (p. 267).

Campbell (2002) writing in the *Harvard Business Review* suggests,

> There is a deeply rooted belief that women are not competent and can't lead. That's because there's an overlap in people's minds between the qualities that we associate with leadership and the qualities that we associate with masculinity. There are all sorts of examples of this gender bias at work. (p. 20)

It is not unusual to see this question of women's ability to lead asked again and again.

Astin and Leland (1991) asked questions about women's leadership more than 15 years ago, questions that are also still debated today. They wanted to know why so few women were in positions of leadership and what the personal and institutional roots of gender differences might mean for women's access to leadership roles. They had questions about the legitimacy of the theories about leadership in terms of what they say about women and men. They asked questions about the role and structure of the larger society that prevents women from entering leadership positions.

The "different from/same as" argument. There is little agreement in the literature about how women lead and much of the debate centers on ideas of difference and similarity. In the history of feminist thought, there has long been a split between minimizers of male-female differences and the maximizers (Bem, 1993). Bem (1993) introduces three gender lenses within modern culture (androcentrism; gender polarization; and biological essentialism) that have come about as a way to organize this scholarly knowledge. These lenses of gender, she asserts, are assumptions about sex and gender that keep men in positions of power or leadership.

Androcentrism, the first of Bem's (1993) gender lenses, suggests that males and the male experience is the neutral standard and anything different from this is a deviation from the norm. It explains how power is traditionally operationalized as leadership and culturally and psychologically reproduced. In research that articulates the androcentric view, scholars suggest that because men have held leadership roles for so long they have defined the styles with which people are most comfortable (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2003, Sinclair, 2007). Men (and the ways they lead) are seen as the norm and women (and the ways they lead) are judged in reflection of this norm and are seen as deviant or lacking. Men have taken on the role of authority or leader while women have been expected to take on the roles of support, care, cooperation, and service (Rosener, 1995, p. 157).

The assumption of male leadership over the centuries, especially at the higher levels of power, has stereotyped women as dependent, submissive, and conforming; thus women have been seen as lacking in leadership qualities. As a consequence, women have been cut off from power positions as well as from the stepping-stones and the access routes that they might have used to reach leadership positions. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003) suggest that discrimination by men may be less crucial or less lasting than the consciousness of women themselves of their subordinate or "out group" status, though the one has influenced the other. This leadership bias persists.

A gender polarization lens, Bem's (1993) second type, suggests that social life should be organized using the perceived differences of men and women, thus the idea of separate woman's work and man's work. Bem suggests that this is a strait jacket not only for women, but for men also. But for some women, to admit that men and women lead no differently dismisses the relational qualities that are a traditional source of pride and, they believe, contribute to superior leadership performances by women leaders. Scholars in this camp maintain that the leadership styles of men and women are different, that women are less hierarchical, more cooperative, more collaborative, and that they enhance others' self worth (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1995, pp. 149-150). Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) suggest that women's leadership attributes are communal in nature. She includes among these attributes "concern for others; affection; helpfulness; kindness; sympathy; gentleness; speaking tentatively; not drawing attention to oneself; accepting others' direction; supporting and soothing others; and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems" (p. 783).

Follett (1987), writing more than 60 years earlier than most of these scholars, suggests women have "female strengths." She says:

> This approach builds on many traditionally female strengths including relational and nurturing skills. While this kind of leadership is closer to many women's upbringing as relationship keepers than the stereotypically masculine, hierarchical and directive style, relational practices reflect strategic business decisions on how best to lead. (p. ii)

Numerous other women scholars embrace this view of women and leadership (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996). Gilligan (1982) suggests a theory that stresses the importance of the inclusion of women's unique voices, experiences, and perspectives in the production of knowledge and culture. For Gilligan (1982), women's differences do constitute a style of leadership different from men's. This difference is characterized by the qualities of sensitivity, nurturance, emotional expressiveness, intuitiveness, and spirituality. Many women truly believe that they are more sensitive, more interpersonally alert, and less competitive than men, she asserts.

Biological essentialism, the third gender lens, suggests that both the gender polarization lens and the androcentrism lens are a "natural and inevitable consequence of the intrinsic biological natures" (Bem, 1993, p. 3) of men and women. As to be expected, not all women embrace the idea that women lead differently from men. For these scholars, to admit to differences between the way women and men lead may result in a rationale for excluding women from leadership positions and opportunities. The scholars in this camp maintain that leadership styles of men and women do not differ or that scholarship on this topic is of minimal interest at best (Alexandre, 2007; Indvik, 2004; Kark, 2004). They claim there is little difference in leadership styles and that the stereotype of women leading in an interpersonally-oriented style and men in a task-oriented style, is simply that—a stereotype and not corroborated by research (Kark, 2004, p. 162). They question whether this focus on "the female advantage"—to quote the title of Sally Helgesen's (1990) well-known book—actually benefits women. They suggest that identifying a female advantage may hinder women's struggle for equality because it strengthens the essentialist perspective of gender stereotypes and limits women's acceptance into positions of power and leadership. "A disadvantage of such a focus [on gender dynamics] is that individuals' sex can become the only or the primary attribute identifying them, rather than one of many attributes that may affect their worldview or experience" (Indvik, 2004, p. 213). Many feminists cannot abide the existence of a peculiarly "feminine" style of leadership because it opens the door to unequal treatment (Alexandre, 2007). Scholars in this camp believe women leaders can too easily be dismissed as "weak" and therefore inferior. The notion of a female advantage may simplify and reinforce this gender imbalance. Some scholars see the numerous barriers to women's leadership as evidence of this rationale at play.

The following example from the struggle for women's suffrage may help to illustrate the different avenues of thought. Minimizers believed that women should be given the vote because they are more like men than unlike men and thus able to make rational decisions like men; maximizers believed women should be given the vote because of the unique feminine attributes they bring to the debate that men cannot. What is most striking in this story is that *both* groups believed women should receive the vote, but a disagreement over the rationale for their beliefs so obscured the debate that women were left disenfranchised until well into the twentieth century.

Some scholars suggest that when leadership is seen as more of a process of leaders engaging and mobilizing the needs and aspirations of followers, women will be more readily recognized as leaders and men will change their own leadership styles (Brown, 2003, p. 50). But for now, the male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command and control.

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003) suggest research on social role theory may illuminate further investigation of this phenomenon. They believe social role theory provides a framework that helps explain the many complexities inherent in the empirical literature on leadership styles of men and women. They suggest that from the perspective of social role theory, leadership roles are only one of many influences of a leader's behavior. They suggest both gender and position are at play in the leadership roles men and women take on and that leadership positions or roles determine how an individual approaches a task. So while characteristics such as assertiveness, dominance, or aggressiveness are typically seen as "male" behavior, women can and do exhibit this behavior when the leadership situation demands it.

Communal characteristics (often defined as feminine), in contrast, are influenced by gender, with most women describing themselves in this way (Rosener, 1995, p. 150). Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003) suggest that it is this “role incongruity” of androcentrism that creates barriers to women’s leadership (p. 572).

Astin and Leland (1991), in their comprehensive historical study of generations of women leaders, asked “inheritors”—the generation who came after the “instigators” or founders—about style and strategy in terms of the collective. One women replied,

> I would characterize myself as somebody who tries to find strengths that everybody has and build a team that’s compatible, and to care about individuals as much as the project, and to care about how we do it as well as what we do. (p. 37)

Goldberger et al. (1996) are also in this camp and define women’s leadership as “connected knowing,” suggesting that while most formal educational institutions only teach a self-focused leadership, women’s leadership is a community-focused approach. These scholars define women’s leadership as a developmentally oriented approach to leadership, a tradition with “no name” (p. 414). Leaders from this less understood developmental tradition are more often women with less education and little or no institutional support. They define a developmentally oriented approach to leadership as:

> about how you nurture people, how you affirm people, how you help people to know what they know, how you help people to know that they have a culture and knowledge base to build on, how you help people to know that they are creative and that they have a creative base on which to build. (Goldberger et al., 1996, p. 422)

The authors go on to say that developmentally oriented leaders ask good questions and draw out people’s thinking, helping them to find their own direction. Dialogue is a central activity. Hands-on action projects are another foundational tenet of developmentally oriented leadership. Women are well suited, stress the authors, to this style of leadership.

Patricia Aburdene (1992), writing with John Naisbitt of *Megatrends* fame, defines leadership as entailing, envisioning, and articulating a new reality, persuading others of its benefits and inspiring them to embrace and actualize it. She suggests that women leaders encourage participation; share power and information; seek to enhance other people's self-worth; and get others excited about their work. She says, "Men see job performance as a series of transactions—rewards for services rendered or punishment for inadequate performance. Women leaders try to transform people's self-interest into organizational goals." (pp. 99-101). In Burns' (2003) terminology they are "transformational leaders."

A research study by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) found small, but significant, gender differences between men and women. However this study has been criticized as "using a simplistic conceptualization of gender," (Kark, 2004, p. 165) and failing to address the underlying mechanisms that may be contributing to gender differences. In another study using a sample of over 7,500 individuals, women were found to use the same controlling win-lose theories as men (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, & Beckhard, 1996). There is no definitive study that answers this question. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) themselves felt the same/different polarization argument was too simple and favored the more complex social role approach.

There is recent organizational literature analyzing and questioning the gendered nature of leadership theory. Some of the research contends that the presence of women in leadership or the exposure to female forms of leadership will not solve the major problems of the absence of women from the symbolic realm of leadership—its language, traditions and myths. It calls for the creation of a new symbolic structure, which considers the gender and power dynamics inherent in leadership (Lorber, 2001, pp. 175-176).

What these scholars' work is pointing to is the realization that there are no clear-cut principles in the consideration of women's leadership. There is no black or white, thumb up or thumb down. The scholarship is beginning to reflect the understanding that leadership as a field of study is continually in flux.

Rethinking leadership: Moving towards a twenty-first century leadership. In the last few decades the leadership literature has begun to move to what might be called a twenty-first century view of leadership; a move from an industrial age conception to a postindustrial conception (Rost, 1993). Among the defining characteristics of twenty-first century leadership is the idea of leadership as a process (Heifetz, 1994). Heifetz' book (1994) *Leadership Without Easy Answers* has become a seminal work on leadership, perhaps the best-known work in contemporary scholarship. Several of his concepts have relevance to this research.

Heifetz's (1994) most important contribution to the leadership literature is his concept of adaptive work. Heifetz defines adaptive work as consisting of:

> the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior. The exposure and orchestration of conflict within individuals and constituencies provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways. (p. 22)

He further explains:

> Influence and authority are primary factors in doing adaptive work, but they also bring constraints. They are instruments and not ends. Tackling tough problems, problems that often require an evolution of values, is the end of leadership, *getting that work done is its essence* [emphasis added]. (p. 26)

Rost (1993), in *Leadership for the Twenty-first Century*, outlines the essential element of his theory of leadership—the relationship between the leader and the follower. Rost emphasizes the role of followership and the leader-follower relationship. He sees most leadership literature as dealing with the "peripheries" of leadership. He includes in this definition theories of trait leadership, personality characteristics, leaders are born or made arguments, contingency leadership, situational theories of leadership and management as leadership. Instead he wants to emphasize leadership as a process, as a dynamic relationship. He sees a need for understanding the essential nature of leadership, for understanding the process by which leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve a purpose.

He wants to see leadership theory embrace the content of leadership and move away from a peripheral focus. Rost (1993) suggests a new postindustrial definition of leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real change" (p. 102). For Rost, this influence relationship must be multidirectional; it must flow in all directions, not just from the top down. This relationship cannot be based in authority or power. Rost is clearly moving toward a collaborative notion of leadership—what Frydman, Wilson, and Wyer (2000) describe as an environment where "individuals will come into leadership as their strengths and abilities are required" (p. 197).

Rost (1993) chastises other leadership scholars for not writing enough on leadership as a process and suggests, "Almost no research has been aimed at understanding the essential nature of what leadership is, the process whereby leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve a purpose" (p. 4). He suggests that more study is needed to explore the dynamic relationships that characterize leadership.

Northouse (2004) further suggests that leadership is available to everyone. Through his research, he seeks to "bridge the gap between the often-simplistic popular approaches to leadership and the more abstract theoretical approaches" (p. xi). He is critical of most leadership research suggesting that what seems to be important is research based on empirical data done according to the traditional, quantitative methods. For Northouse, leadership is emergent and comes from what a person does and how he acquires support from followers.

Proehl and Taylor (1997), in an attempt to move beyond the outdated man v. woman arguments, suggest that the definition of an effective leader has shifted. While early leadership theory focused on the ruler, the hero, or the charismatic decision maker, the literature on leadership has shifted to focus on the leader as designer and builder, roles that focus on the activity of leadership.

While some researchers have suggested that women are inherently more suited to these new twenty-first century approaches to leadership, Proehl and Taylor (1997) have a different take on this, suggesting, "the qualities that make for effective new-style leadership are a function not of gender, but of *complexity of mind* [emphasis added]" (p. 39).

Thinking outside the box of traditional approaches to leadership leads us to next consider women's leadership within philanthropy. The story of women in philanthropy is the story of women's leadership. By illuminating historical examples of women's roles in philanthropy, a richer understanding of the unique leadership of women's philanthropy will emerge.

Philanthropy: An Introduction

The history of American philanthropy is the history of the American republic, yet many scholars consider this history opaque (Bremner, 1960; Fleishman, 2009). The impetus for and outcomes of philanthropy are readily evident in every historical era, yet the field is little known or understood (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003; Lagemann, 1999; Light, 2008). Philanthropy is thought by many to be a world of rich, old, white men (Fleishman, 2009; Friedman & McGarrie, 2003; Bremner, 1960). This hasn't ever been so, but still the perception persists.

In the United States, philanthropy has its roots in charity and missionary work. Charity, with its religious overtones, “expresses an impulse to personal service; it engages people in concrete, direct acts of compassion and connection to other people” (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 31). Philanthropy, conversely, is the “application of reason to the solution of social ills and needs. It seeks to reform society, not necessarily aid individuals. Its object is to advance progress through the promotion of knowledge” (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 31).

These two definitions point to a tension between charity and philanthropy, with charity seen by some as self-defeating and philanthropy seen as providing the means for self-support. This tension has not always been so.

Charity was understood as benevolence in the Puritan era. Cotton Mather, writing in 1710 in *Essays to Do Good*, suggested “people should engage in a perpetual endeavor to do good in the world” (Bremner, 1960, p. 12). Charity took the form of ministering to the orphaned, widowed, aged, ill, and impoverished. Life in early America was harsh and unpredictable; if the colonies were to survive, everyone had a part to play. As Gaudiani (2005) explains “One hundred and twenty-five years before the sentiments of mutuality and commitment to equality were written into the Declaration of Independence, generosity, at *all* income levels, was a cultural norm in America” (p. 25).

The Great Awakening (1730-1740), a religious movement characterized by millennialism—a belief that the end was near and a better world was possible—played a large role in early charity. This movement embraced the idea of free will and abandoned the notion of predestination. The movement made religion a personal concern, beyond the teachings of the organized church, and thus brought about a rising interest in secular and humanitarian charity.

Reciprocity was a major defining concept of early charity. To the colonists, reciprocity meant donors and recipients needed each other, though "the roles of both were rarely acknowledged" (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 57). Early New England colonies were characterized by these relationships of interdependency and reciprocity, not the self-help "rugged individualism" of mythical American history. The care of the sick, elderly, and indigent operated through a combination of interdependence and self-sufficiency (p. 59). Eighteenth-century charity was more than simply giving; most everyone also participated in some way by volunteering. This included the poor, who were able to engage in piety and benevolence themselves. Charity wasn't the sole province of the wealthy (McCarthy, 2003, p. 4); a poor person could be just as charitable as a rich one.

Charities of this era were not all private entities either, born of the spontaneous cooperation of citizens that Tocqueville would find 100 years later and write about in *Democracy in America*. They were also public-private partnerships that required both citizens and government (Bremner, 1960). Public money could be put to use for charitable purposes because the social elite were also the governing elite. Early charities were the successful assertion of political will on the part of the elite, with the social and political spheres of American life joined together. Thus, charity in this era was an attitude that pervaded public institutions and private initiatives alike.

Besides reciprocity, the notion of sensibility also figured prominently in early charitable efforts. Barker-Benfield defines sensibility as a "benevolent consciousness of feelings or sympathy for humanity's suffering" (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 73). Considerations of gender were part of this definition of sensibility, thus introducing a separation that would later be manifested by the emergence of scientific philanthropy and the waning of organized charity.

Women in philanthropy. If it is true that the history of American philanthropy is opaque, then the history of women in philanthropy could be described as ethereal. Though the stories of women and philanthropy are many, as is true in most any social, economic, or political realm, they are not widely known (McCarthy, 2003). Much of women's philanthropy was marginalized and most often took the form of volunteerism. A group of women formed the first charitable association, the Female Society for the Relief of the Distressed, in 1793. It offered aid to widows and orphans in the form of money, time, and care. By 1800, additional women's associations had been founded, notably the Association for the Relief of Women and Children and the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. In the process of dedicating themselves to volunteer service through association, these women were also imposing their vision of a good society on the broader society. They were introducing social reform into charity (Andrews, 1950; Friedman & McGarrie, 2003; McCarthy, 1991). According to McCarthy (1991), "giving, voluntarism, and social reform provided the primary means through which the majority of middle- and upper-class women fashioned their public roles" (p. 4). Middle-class women were encouraged to claim an ever-widening share of responsibility within the voluntary sector as agents for reform. Always, however, this encouragement was tinged with the underlying warning to eschew the ways of men.

As a consequence, women's philanthropy was largely confined to women's causes and groups, and few American women had the courage or the funds to start institutions on their own (McCarthy, 1991, p. 16). For the women of these times, charity, philanthropy, and social justice work were entwined. By 1820, more than 2,000 benevolent societies and associations of all types dotted the country, with women's roles in them becoming more central.

One illustrative example of how these associations worked is the story of The American Benevolent Society (ABS). The women of the ABS, seeking to spread Christianity across the country, sold Bibles for cash. Unfortunately most women, especially rural women, had little cash. So in order to raise the money to purchase the Bibles, these rural women made linens and other household "white goods" in their homes to sell. Through their handiwork, they were creating an economy of their own—albeit an economy on the margins—outside the visible economy of men. It was through these kinds of activities and their membership in and engagement with these charitable and benevolent associations, that women entered public life (McCarthy, 1991).

Beginning in the nineteenth century, The Second Great Awakening was a catalyst for even more reform movements. In this era of religious, political, and economic change, clergy and women especially organized crusades to combat poverty, drunkenness, disease, slavery, crime, and other social ills. This era was also a catalyst for antebellum reform movements. This time of antebellum reform was complex and contradictory, but reformers of the time shared the belief that the world was perfectible. Though called simply "reform," there were elements of benevolence and charity in these efforts. These reform movements were energized largely by the work of missionaries.

Early missionaries lived with those whom they served. Their lives were entwined; each relied on the other in a symbiotic relationship. Benevolence was personal and hands-on and religious sensibilities figured in the relationship. For the recipient, charity was to result in personal as well as economic change or transformation. For the donor, charity meant empowerment through confronting their differences with the recipients. "Both donor and recipient were changed in the process" (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 15). A very different view of the relationship between donor and recipient exists today, of course.

Missionary work provided the venue for many middle-class and wealthy young women's introduction to charity, and the poor were most often the objects of women's benevolence. Young women of the time saw missionary work as a way to pursue an education, as the growing need for female missionaries and teachers legitimated the need for higher education. A young woman who planned to take up the "noble work" of serving others could attend college and not raise eyebrows from family and friends. It was perhaps the only "profession" open to her, besides motherhood. Indeed, Mount Holyoke Female Seminary was founded for the express purpose of educating female missionaries.

The idea of free will embraced by missionaries in this era meant that individuals were responsible for their own behavior and actions. It put an emphasis on personal values. Religious reformers focused on changing individual behavior and holding individuals responsible for their own behavior.

Ignorance and lack of respect for other cultures, unfortunately, led many missionaries to impose their worldview on others. This was in tension with the belief that all believers were on equal footing before God. Motivated by anxiety about their own unworthiness, many nineteenth-century missionaries appeared to measure benevolence more in terms of their own heroic acts of self-sacrifice than in terms of what the people they served said they needed or wanted. As a result, missionaries began to be subjected to critical attention by society at large. Many people began to question the whole concept of Christian missions and the expression of religious work as charity (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, pp. 68-69, 134).

Emergence of bureaucratized philanthropy. By the 1840s, in reaction to this critical examination, many national charitable associations became increasingly bureaucratized. Reformers, both religious and social, were losing much of their faith, energy, and enthusiasm for the possibility of individual transformation through charitable activity. Practical concerns began to take precedence. Reformers began to doubt the implicit assumption that charity and self-improvement were two sides of the same coin. Increasingly, reformers stayed aloof from those needing reform.

A class of professionals arose who made their careers through their expertise of "dependent care." Charity was beginning to make way for philanthropy. Bureaucratized charity meant that someone could contribute money to combat a social ill and not have to come into contact with the recipient of that gift. Humanitarianism was becoming an abstract, specialized affair. Philanthropy, as the application of reason to the solution of social ills, began to supersede the traditional personal ends of charity (Bremner, 1960, pp. 47-48). This evolution away from charity paved the way for the subsequent rise of scientific philanthropy (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 152) at the turn of the next century.

The beginning of the Civil War, suggests Bremner (1960), "roused the charitable energies and impulses of the American people and of American women in particular" (p. 77) and for a brief moment during these years, the American government became an instrument of philanthropy. As previously described, women, using their administrative and fund-raising skills learned through their participation in the benevolent charitable societies and associations like the ABS, had begun to coordinate soldier aid societies during the war. Modeling their work on that of Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War, women built organizations whose goal was to nurse soldiers, providing food and medical care that the government could not. The US government subsequently organized these existing women's organizations into the U.S. Sanitary Commission, essentially creating a public sector philanthropy. The Freedman's Bureau, organized after the war and built upon the decades of work by abolitionists, was also considered a public-sector philanthropy funded by tax dollars. As these examples show, for the first time in American history, secular white men, through the government, were beginning to embrace philanthropy. Moving away from the earlier dominance by the religious and women, secular white men were beginning to pursue social ideals through philanthropy.

The death and destruction experienced by the American people during the Civil War forever changed the culture of America. No longer politically naïve, people began to embrace scientific efficiency, discipline, and public service as antidotes to the war and its aftermath of political corruption, crime, and class differences (Bremner, 1960, p. 85).

In addition enormous population growth dominated the era between the Civil War and the turn of the century. Immigrants streamed into the tenements of large cities, bringing with them poverty, disease, and little formal education. Many philanthropists and reformers of the day—faced with this large group of new poor and uneducated Americans—didn't know what to do about them. They became increasingly aloof and removed from the immigrant problem, paving the way for the solidification of scientific philanthropy in place of benevolent and reciprocal charity.

This new professional cadre of philanthropic reformers set out to rationalize American society to the teachings of science. This also set up a dichotomy between philanthropy for social control and philanthropy for self-control. This fit between the values of discipline, sobriety, etc. (self control) and the needs of an urban, industrial, consumerist, economic society (social control) could be characterized as benevolence vs. coercion. In some ways it allowed reformers to ignore the larger social and economic forces that were at the root of some social problems (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, pp. 152-158).

Settlement House movement. The Settlement House movement of the early twentieth century was an exception to the increasing gulf between giver and recipient within philanthropy. The Settlement House movement sought to improve the plight of immigrants in an engaged way. Jane Addams is perhaps the first and foremost name that comes to mind when talking about the movement. Addams was a young, wealthy woman who used her time, considerable money, and talents to encourage ties of sympathy and personal interest between the rich and poor. In direct contrast to the nascent "scientific philanthropy movement," and the practice of "friendly visiting," the Settlement House workers provided encouragement and advice, not money, to those less fortunate. The idea of reciprocity, so much a part of charity and the missionary movement in colonial America, was still very much alive in this movement, though the superiority of the Settlement House workers was a given. Given the tension between reciprocity and self-help individualism, Jane Addams and the Settlement House movement sided with reciprocity.

At this time in our history, poverty was still seen as a weakness of character, body, or intellect. However, as hard data was gathered, often for the first time, from relief applicants by the friendly visitors of the settlement houses, it became increasingly clear that poverty-producing factors had little to do with character. The women and men of the Settlement House movement were beginning to see poverty as a societal problem (Bremner, 1960, p. 97) and that connectedness or civic-minded reciprocity was a far stronger quality than self-help individualism for relieving problems (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 16).

Jane Addams' Hull-House provided a leadership role for women within the realm of charity and volunteerism. Building on the earlier work of women's charitable associations like the Female Society for the Relief of the Distressed, the Association for the Relief of Women and Children, and the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children, Addams opened Hull-House on the theories that each class depended on the other; that young people, especially young women of means, understood and embraced their heritage of obligation; and that their education made them especially competent to alleviate some manner of suffering. These theories were the direct descendants of the missionary movement and the benevolent society movement in America. They shared many of the same sensibilities, attitudes, and goals.

Addams' position within turn-of-the-century feminism provides an example of the tightrope women of this era walked. On the one hand, she was a highly visible example of a strong, independent woman, carrying out the complicated task of administering Hull-House and taking an active role in national public debates. On the other hand, the promise that she held out, that "liberated women" would remain within their traditional roles as sacrificial caretakers of others, probably relieved traditionalists and contributed to her public idealization as "Saint Jane" (Addams, 1990, p. xviii).

Hull-House was very much a women's project, and its activities were largely directed toward women's needs, both providing an outlet for the energies and benevolent impulses of wealthy, educated women and relieving the sufferings of the urban poor. But Addams' view of women's "basic nature" remained very much within the nineteenth-century framework of gender stereotypes. As late as 1922, she was arguing, in *Peace and Bread in Time of War*, that women's natural role was that of bread-giver. Addams' essentialist beliefs (to use a modern feminist label) in women's natural intuitive powers and instincts toward benevolence and nurturance underlay not only her work at Hull-House but also her later antiwar efforts in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She was a rather unenthusiastic suffragist and boasted that in the Hull-House women's clubs, "there was a complete absence of the traditional women's rights clamor" (Addams, 1990, p. xvii). If the Hull-House women had the vote, they would refrain from using it in men's affairs and confine themselves to women's concerns:

> None of these busy women wished to take the place of men nor to influence them in the direction of men's affairs, but they did seek an opportunity to cooperate directly in civic life through the use of the ballot in regard to their own affairs. (p. xviii)

Addams and other privileged women like her were able to maneuver the chasm between a woman's traditional role in the home—concerned largely with children and family—and a larger public role within society, by cleverly focusing on children and family as well.

Critics of the Settlement House movement, including some progressives, characterized it as sentimental, emotional, irrational, and disorderly for giving directly to recipients (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 205). Perhaps the worst cut of all is that it was labeled "feminine." Settlement House leaders rejected this characterization, and sought to distance themselves from the emerging "scientific" philanthropy movement.

Emergence of scientific philanthropy, foundations, and nonprofits. The late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century saw Americans embracing scientific efficiency and its accompanying discipline in all sectors of their life—philanthropy included. Scientific philanthropy's mission was in direct contrast to the philanthropy of the Settlement House movement. The rise of professionalism and scientific or corporate models of philanthropy sought to rein in the charitable impulses characterized by the Settlement House movement. Scientific philanthropy was seen as a way to systematically investigate social problems by gathering facts and statistics and relying on experts for answers. Scientific philanthropy was to be based in empirical social science with a focus on education, medicine, and the promotion of social science; it would be fact-based and "muscular;" it would be unapologetically top-down; it was "meant to benefit those it did not consult;" and it would "tackle big problems in bold ways" (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, pp. 173, 220).

It was thought that scientific philanthropy could provide better organization for relief operations, more discrimination in relief assistance, and more attention to the individual needs of the persons helped (Bremner, 1960, p. 92). This was in response to the belief that the poor were benefiting from relief, and that idleness and begging were being encouraged. Scientific philanthropists believed that if only enough facts were unearthed and root causes explored, solutions to social problems could be found. "To understand society, we must measure it" became the credo of the new field of social science (Friedman & McGarrie, 2003, p. 241). This went along with scientific philanthropy beliefs that knowledge could and would answer social ills.

Until this time, philanthropy had been considered to be both the *work* and the *study* of social problems; the theory and practice of charity and philanthropy were one and the same. But by the early 1900s social science was becoming a mostly male academic discipline within higher education, while social work was becoming the purview of mostly women with its locus in the community (Snyder, 2001, p. 11). Unfortunately, the movement of philanthropy toward the scientific and academic through the discipline of the social sciences meant it was moving toward the practice of social work and away from the religious and charitable. Philanthropy no longer emphasized an awareness of or an appreciation of the dynamic of reciprocity involved in outreach toward others. But neither did it mean the end of arrogance and condescension toward others that had contributed to the demise of the missionary movement. The rise of scientific philanthropy relegated the Settlement House movement—especially because it was seen as sentimentalism—to the back burner. Scientific philanthropy was the triumph of "head over heart" (Bremner, 1960, p. 85).

The rise of scientific philanthropy, and its accompanying professionalization of both staff and mission, dominated philanthropy in the early twentieth century. The publication of the report *Re-Thinking Missions*, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, had suggested that benevolent societies and associations were poorly coordinated and networked and that there was much duplication of effort and overlap. This critical report eventually led to the emergence of secular leadership in the new philanthropic organizations, the federal government, and academic research. Religious conservatives instead assumed the leadership of American missionary work. Philanthropic organizations were making the transition from an agenda of ameliorative relief (settlement houses and missionary work) to centers of social-scientific investigation (foundations). They were helping to spawn the birth of a new technocratic, elite culture. Philanthropy was separating itself from religious and charitable humanitarianism and thus cutting off any role for the everyday person within it.

The turn of the century also saw the rise of many notable foundations. Recognizable names—Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford—as well as others, less well-known—Harness, Sage, Rosenwald, Milbank, Anderson, and Filene—became the first of the US big foundations. These foundations embraced the business-like methods of scientific philanthropy; they sought to be efficient and impersonal, with centralized decision making.

In addition to foundations, many new voluntary national organizations (what we today think of as nonprofits) filled the vacuum left by the demise of the relief societies. They included entities like the Boy and Girl Scouts, the National Tuberculosis Association, the American

Cancer Society, Goodwill Industries, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, and literally hundreds of other community chests and associations. These organizations were seen as providing the opportunities and mechanisms—previously the mission of earlier relief organizations—by which everyday people could contribute to social causes. These were the avenues through which anyone could participate, though from a distance. People were expected to be engaged through their checkbooks. Furthermore, these nonprofit organizations were as professionally run as the foundations.

This bureaucratization of voluntary benevolence echoed what was taking place within society as a whole. The belief that politicians, planners, and administrators could solve the problems of society was strong. Just as citizens were "sidelined" when it came to political participation by the belief that only experts (politicians) solved problems, so too was the average, everyday person dissuaded from participating or engaging in philanthropy.

Dominance of scientific philanthropy. The crash of the stock market in October 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression had lasting effects on philanthropy. Indeed the very nature of the role of philanthropy and the role of government in relief was forever changed during this era. Philanthropy's role became much more complex (Bremner, 1960, p. 163). With the creation of government programs like Social Security, Medicare, welfare, pension plans, and unemployment, foundations (and voluntary benevolence) was no longer expected to play a dominant role in relieving economic need.

The massive movement of government into areas that previously had been the prime responsibility of voluntary agencies and private philanthropy raised a question about the proper place for private philanthropy. Did philanthropy have a place at all? (Bremner, 1960, p. 42). In answer to these questions, the years between 1930 and 1965 brought widespread changes to the field of philanthropy. The Depression and the reforms of the New Deal were forcing foundations to reexamine their role in relief and to carve out new purposes.

World War II provided the new niche of research for which philanthropy was especially suited to fill. Foundations served as laboratories for experimentation where new and controversial ideas could be put to the test. As evidenced by the research done by foundations during these years, foundations have, over the years, shown a willingness to attempt projects that government and business were unable to carry out for political or financial reasons. Foundations found that they could perform a distinctive role in society because they were free from the influence of organized constituencies and shareholders. But it is this very freedom from government and society oversight that caused further problems for philanthropy.

In the years leading up to 1969, the American public began to demand meaningful tax reform and the closing of loopholes for foundations. To many people, foundations and charitable giving through voluntary associations were viewed as simply one way for wealthy individuals to avoid taxation. Everyday people no longer had a role to play in organized philanthropy. They were cut off from and thus suspicious of what was really going on in philanthropic foundations. There was also considerable media attention given to foundation involvement in “political” activities. News reports of grants to individual government officials and congressional staff members in the 1950s and early 1960s particularly angered Congress (Odendahl, 1987, p. 53). The public was suspicious of philanthropy, in part because little was known about how it really worked. Philanthropy had come a long way from the values of reciprocity and sensibility that had characterized early charitable efforts in the United States. It had become increasingly distant from the everyday person.

Emergence of social movement philanthropy. Activities undertaken by several foundations during the upheavals of the 1960s certainly were a factor in the Congressional investigations that resulted in the Tax Reform Act of 1969. Jenkins and Halcli (1999) define these activities and this phenomenon as social movement philanthropy—foundation grants to social movement projects, whether grassroots movement groups, professional advocacy and service organizations, or institutionalized organizations such as churches and universities that were sponsoring movement work (p. 230).

In the 1950s and early 1960s, social movement philanthropy had been almost exclusively focused on civil rights, specifically the African American civil rights movement. Civil rights protests first emerged with the Baton Rouge, Louisiana bus boycott, followed by the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott. Sit-ins at lunch counters in the South in the 1960s were followed by the "freedom rides" in which protesters boarded public buses in desegregated areas and headed South, challenging the segregation line. Finally, in 1963 and 1964 came the mass community campaigns that focused on voting rights opening the way for more systematic voter registration across the South (Jenkins & Halcli, 1999, p. 247).

During this nascent decade of the civil rights movement, a few large foundations played a significant part. They began to identify a key problem in American society—the underrepresentation of disadvantaged and unorganized groups in the political process. To insure that all groups would have at least some political representation, these foundations funded various advocacy and organizational efforts. Both the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) received foundation funds.

The women's movement later built off the mobilization and political opportunities that were created by the civil rights movement, and was able to mobilize quickly, bringing early philanthropic support into their movement also. With the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, the Stewart Mott Foundation provided a $100,000 grant to further the women's rights campaign. In contrast to the African American movement, the women's movement funding grew steadily from the end of the 1970s through 1990. This era of social movement philanthropy created a new set of professional advocacy centers, such as the Women's Legal Defense Fund and the Women's Law Fund (Jenkins & Halcli, 1999, p. 250).

The Ford Foundation, in particular, was a champion for both women's rights and the nascent field of women's studies. The foundation's work was initially focused on poverty and economic roles. That work soon expanded to sex discrimination in law and social practice, access to education and employment, and to health and family issues (Phillips, 2005, p. 163).

In education, grants supported the development of knowledge about women through the establishment of women's studies in universities and other research institutions and the development of gender-sensitive curricula. Grants also supported research on women's work and constraints on their advancement. Other funding expanded economic opportunities and improved conditions of work by developing and testing model programs, supporting self-help initiatives by women workers, and supporting legal action to combat sex discrimination on the job (Phillips, 2005, p. 164).

The Ford Foundation discovered early on that "while white professional women still experience discrimination, studies show(ed) remedies that result in significant advancement for white women do not necessarily serve that same function for women of color." In addition, "women of color, low-income women, and other diverse communities of women continue to face impaired opportunities to participate meaningfully in women's movements for social justice as well as in the general society" (Phillips, 2005, p. 170).

> The power of the women's movement is diminished because of the lack of full and equal participation by women marginalized by significant social factors such as race, class, and sexual orientation. . . . Transformative work cannot occur as long as women of color and low-income women provide the narratives, but do not lead and participate meaningfully in the setting of agendas, priorities, analysis, and policy recommendations. (p. 171)

Women's funding movement. While a few groundbreaking women in the early twentieth century had encouraged women of wealth to use their money to support causes such as the women's suffrage movement, for the most part, women donors operated in isolation from each other, and there was little funding—by anyone—for women's and girls' issues. With its roots in both the women's and civil rights movements, the second wave of feminism changed this, bringing in new money for women's concerns (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 16).

At about the same time, a small group of foundation program officers conducted a survey seeking to determine the amount of foundation giving to programs for women and girls. The survey documented that only 0.6% of foundation giving went to women. These survey results prompted this small group of women to create Women and Foundations/Corporate Philanthropy in 1977 (renamed Women and Philanthropy in 1995), with a mission to increase philanthropic dollars for women and to support women working in the field of philanthropy (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 17).

The first of the new wave of women's foundations was the Ms. Foundation for Women, founded in 1972. The founders of *Ms. Magazine* had such difficulty raising money for women's and girls' programs that they decided to donate the magazine's profits to a new grantmaking foundation. Not surprisingly, the challenges of supporting such a progressive feminist magazine meant there was little profit to help the new foundation. Organizers soon began raising money from foundation and corporate grants and individual gifts from women and men to support programs for women and girls.

Other foundations followed. The Women's Sports Foundation was started in 1974 by Billie Jean King to ensure equal access to participation and leadership opportunities in sports and fitness for women and girls. In 1975, Women's Way was founded when seven agencies serving women and children in Philadelphia banded together to form their own fundraising coalition. The Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation was founded in 1977 to advance the economic, political, educational, and cultural well being of lesbians. A few private foundations, created by women of wealth to support women and girls, were also established by 1980. The San Francisco-based Women's Foundation started in 1981 and quickly became a group to which other women turned for help in starting their own funds (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, pp. 18-19). By 1985, there were more than 35 women's funds in some stage of development. Among them were the first women's funds established in community foundations. One of these was the Minnesota Women's Fund (now the Women's Foundation of Minnesota), the first statewide women's fund and the first to set out to raise a multimillion-dollar endowment.

In April 1985, the first-ever conference of women's funds took place. More than 70 women from 20 funds came together to share experiences, learn new strategies, and explore the creation of a new association of women's funds. Issues like racism, classism, board diversity, effective fundraising strategies, and networking were the focus. The participants' enthusiasm and sense of purpose led to the formation of the National Network of Women's Funds (since renamed the Women's Funding Network), and sparked the growth of women's funds throughout the US and other countries. Following that first conference, women's funds grew at a rapid rate. In the last half of the 1980s, more than 25 women's funds were created. During the 1990s, another 65 new women's funds were formed, while at least 30 more funds explored the possibilities of starting up. Some of these were private foundations, which quickly began making grants; others were public funds (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 19).

Along with the growth in the number of women's funds came growth in dollars for the movement. In 1985, fourteen public women's funds reported raising \$4.7 million. By 1990, thirty-seven funds reported raising \$11.8 million. In just 13 years, 58 women's funds had raised \$45.1 million, illustrating the growth of the movement as a whole.

Women did more than raise record amounts of money; they also gave away record amounts. By 1990, thirty-three funds reported giving over \$4.9 million in grants and allocations. That figure grew to over \$14.7 million by 50 women's funds a decade later. Money from women's funds was being directed toward the prevention of violence against women and girls, economic justice, small business development, health and reproductive rights, civil rights and social justice, leadership and empowerment, arts and cultural expression, and general advocacy and services (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 21).

As Mollner and Wilson (2005) report:

> Women's funds demonstrate exciting new models for grant making, supporting strategies for change created and led by women who have experienced the challenges, who understand the issues, and who recognize promising approaches. . . . Women's funds have developed this model even further, bringing new voices to philanthropic decision-making. (p. 21)

Women's funds continued to grow despite a climate of severe government funding cutbacks, and the documented lack of substantive amounts of philanthropic dollars going to women's and girls programs, particularly those seeking to address sexism, racism, and homophobia and their effects on women's and girls' lives (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 15). Other obstacles included hostility and resistance, both to the ideas of raising money for women's concerns which were marginalized by society in general, and to the idea of creating specific funds by and for women, which were dismissed as having a "single issue" focus. While some foundations and individuals were highly supportive of women's funds, opposing views were strong in the foundation and corporate community, where some described women's funds as ineffective "do-gooders" and others as "too radical." So women's funds set about educating women about giving, encouraging them to use their power to create change through philanthropy (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 22). They continue to grow.

Long before diversity became a topic in traditional philanthropic circles, some women's funds made the commitment to create a model that championed diversity. The first conference of women's funds set out a framework of values around diversity and inclusiveness, and most of the funds sought to put these values into practice. For example, they were committed to funding programs that would address the issue of shared governance. They were also committed to ensuring the rights of women and girls and they offered access to women who had traditionally been outside the mainstream of philanthropy.

Twenty-five years after that first conference, women's funds continue to work to achieve a vision of becoming truly inclusive, multicultural organizations. Tensions around race, class, sexual orientation, disability, age, and other issues continue to be addressed. Many members of the network point to the fact that most executive directors are white as a sign that there is still a long way to go. While boards and staff are increasingly diverse, top leadership in most women's funds still reflects mainstream philanthropy (Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 24).

The Nexus of Women's Leadership and Philanthropy

There are few scholarly articles and even fewer books that specifically address women's leadership in philanthropy today. Less than half of this body of literature is empirical; most of it advocates a particular viewpoint. Some of the scholarly research focuses on leadership as it relates to volunteering (Caputo, 1997; Jenner, 1982; Markham & Bonjean, 1995). Leadership as it relates to fundraising is another focus within the literature (Lovell, 2005; Minter, 2005; Schwarzwalder, 1998). The professional staff development and leadership literature focuses on workplace issues like the glass ceiling and life-work balance (Conry, 1998; Gibelman, 2000; Preston, 1990; Pynes, 2000; Shaiko, 1996) while the board development literature (Bradshaw, Murray, & Wolpin, 1996; Moore & Whitt, 2000; Williams, 2003) focuses on identifying leadership patterns. The majority of the empirical research, however, focuses on issues of leadership and giving (Brown-Kruse & Hummels, 1993; Hall, 2004; Marx, 2000; Mesch, Rooney, Chin, & Steinberg, 2002), trying to answer questions such as, who's giving to what causes or what motivates women's giving. The subfield of this literature that is of primary use to this study, however, is the literature on leadership and voluntary associations.

Leadership through volunteering. Some scholars define women's leadership in philanthropy as volunteering. Black and Platt (1978), examining leaders in local voluntary associations, found that women leaders are judged more on the basis of their family ties than on their decision-making capabilities. This research, however, was done in the late 1970s and its findings are of limited use to researchers today. It does, however, provide a baseline of historical information.

Jenner (1982) sought to explore the nature and level of participation by a group traditionally known as volunteer leaders. She wanted to understand the factors related to satisfaction and tenure as well as the role of volunteerism in their work lives. She hypothesized that volunteer work may fall into three different categories that relate to differences in demands and participation. She defined the three roles of volunteer work as: consciously chosen primary work; supplement to primary work (employment or homemaking); and means to entry or return to employment. Her research revealed that an organization's purpose was the reason most frequently chosen by members to explain both joining and maintaining membership. Personal growth, community service, association, a sense of accomplishment, and the desire to be of service were also important factors in motivation.

Markham and Bonjean (1995) examined how class, gender, socialization, and member selectivity related to the importance members of a high-status women's organization attached to community problems. They wanted to know if there was congruence of members' views with the organization's class and gender composition and whether there was agreement among members from different backgrounds about the relative importance of community issues. They found that issues involving children and education were rated as the most important problems. Criminal justice and substance abuse were also given high importance. Citizen involvement, urban revitalization, race and ethnic relations, adult health and mental health, and aging were ranked low in importance. The respondents readily embraced issues that were in line with high-status women's historical commitments that did not threaten established power, and did not associate them with a liberal agenda or confrontational activism.

Caputo (1997) researched the factors associated with the likelihood that female volunteers focus their efforts on changing social conditions and that female activists volunteer. Her study sought to shed light on the contemporary relationship between voluntarism and self-reported social activism by identifying sociodemographics, organizational, and psycho-attitudinal characteristics associated with each of them. She found that most of the volunteer sample reported devoting time to changing social conditions while only one quarter of the activist sample was so inclined. Volunteers were more likely to be activists to the extent that they perceived what they did as making a difference. They were likely to be found in organizations reflecting their own affinity for activism. They also had higher scores on traditionality (signifying a more contemporary view about the role of women) than nonactivist volunteers, but lower scores than nonvolunteer activists. Nonactivists were more likely than activists to volunteer for churches while activists were more likely to participate in civic and political organizations.

Leadership through fundraising. Lovell (2005) and Minter (2005), in their research, each addressed questions about how to encourage charitable giving by women. Lovell found that educating women about finances and raising women's awareness of philanthropy were primary goals. Similarly, Minter identified four tactics to use to increase giving by women: strengthened engagement, involvement, opportunity for leadership, and awareness of philanthropy.

Schwarzwalder (1998) provided a case study of a successful capital campaign led by an all-women group of fundraisers. Never before had an all-women campaign been launched and Schwarzwalder suggests some of the reasons for its success: the campaign empowered women; the CEO was fully engaged; and value was placed on long-range planning.

Professional staff development and leadership. In one of the first articles to take on this issue, Preston (1990) found that women were attracted to the nonprofit sector because it provided workplace opportunities and responsibilities that women were usually unable to find in the private sector. Women would forego the higher wages the private sector potentially offered for the opportunity of better job advancement.

Shaiko (1996) found that organizations with annual budgets of less than $1 million were more likely to have a female director than larger organizations with multimillion-dollar budgets. Men were also more likely to direct business or economic related organizations while women were more likely to direct health or consumer organizations.

Conry's research (1998) revealed that men are compensated at a higher rate than women and that gender clustering or segregation by specialty continued to be a trend.

Gibelman (2000) found the glass ceiling still in existence, but saw the picture improving. Women were still overrepresented in direct service positions, but personnel policies were determined to be benign in regard to opportunities for internal advancement.

Pynes' research, also published in 2000, found there were more female than male chief executives and fiscal officers heading nonprofits. Board membership, however, remained a hurdle.

Board development and leadership. Bradshaw (1996) found that perceptions play a part in determining the participation patterns of women on boards or as CEOs of nonprofits. Moore and Whitt (2000) examined women's leadership patterns in relation to network patterns. Working from a hypothesis that large differences exist in the network patterns of men and women, they found that neither structural nor social network differences were significant.

Williams (2003) wanted to know the impact of women serving on corporate boards of directors. She found that women do impact a company's charitable giving, especially in the areas of community services and the arts. However, when public policy issues and education were examined, no impact was discernable.

Leadership through giving. Brown-Kruse and Hummels (1993), in an article published almost 20 years ago, found there is a statistically significant difference between men's and women's giving rates, with men giving at a higher rate. By the time Marx (2000) completed her research seven years later, she found contradicting data that indicated women are two times as likely to identify themselves as the primary household decision maker regarding charitable giving. Additionally, she found that women gave to human service organizations at the same rate as men. Mesch et al. (2002) found similar results, with men giving at a slightly higher rate but not a statistically significantly higher rate. Women, they found, gave more money when they did give. Hall (2004), however, found the opposite. She found that women gave less money relative to men. Hall suggested some of this may be due to generational differences, with older women donors giving less than their male counterparts. Rooney, Mesch, Chin, and Steinberg (2005) found similar results in their research but also uncovered a curious “interaction” affect between survey methodology and race and gender.

Voluntary associations and leadership. Black and Platt (1978) provide the most comprehensive study of voluntary associations and leadership to date, but the study is more than 30 years old and of limited use. They examined the degree of fit between three documented models of leadership (democratic, oligarchy, and leadership by default) and a specific voluntary organization. The results of their examination of the structural features of the organization, as well as a comparison of the traditional leaders with the “rank and file” members of the group, failed to conform to any of the existing models of leadership. It suggested to them, instead, a fourth model—leadership for self-development—in which leaders are motivated primarily by a desire to develop administrative and interpersonal skills. The authors warn, however, that there have not been enough careful case studies of voluntary association leadership to determine how widespread this leadership for self-development might be.

As this short treatment of the scholarly literature on women’s leadership within philanthropy shows, one problem with researching leadership within philanthropy is the many and various definitions of leadership used. Scholars who are writing on this subject do not share a common definition of leadership. In some of this literature, leadership is defined as decision making. In other literature, it is defined as the traditional positional or procedural leadership, and still other literature defines leadership as effectiveness.

The lack of common definition presents problems, suggesting that in order to understand leadership in giving circles, a more complete and comprehensive, authentic and richer understanding of leadership needs to be crafted. While any one of the definitions implicit and explicit in the existing scholarship is adequate, none tells the whole story of women's leadership in philanthropy. This dissertation seeks to expand on what is known about women's leadership in philanthropy, specifically leadership within the funding mechanism of giving circles.

Giving Circles

Giving circles share six major characteristics: they ask donors to pool their funds; they give away resources such as money and time; they educate members about philanthropy and issues in the community; they include a social dimension; they engage members in volunteering in the giving circle or with nonprofits; and they maintain their independence by not affiliating with any one particular charity (Bearman et al., 2005; Eikenberry, 2007).

Described as an outgrowth of quilting bees and book clubs, or sometimes described as a social investment club, many are hosted or sponsored by a charitable organization. It is estimated that between 68% and 75% are associated with a community foundation or a women's fund (Bearman, 2006; "Giving Circles," 2005). They can be formal or informal. Even though the majority of the giving circles that have been identified are hosted or sponsored by a charitable organization, this percentage is 1) no doubt skewed because giving circles connected in some way to an established charity are easier and more likely to be found, and 2) most often the host or sponsor involved merely acts as a fiscal agent for the group (Eikenberry & Bearman, 2009).

Guided by individual donors and emphasizing collaboration across groups and sectors, giving circles are a “hands-on, direct mode of giving and volunteering, with a focus on small organizations, issues, and grassroots problem-solving” (Eikenberry, 2007, p. 141). They provide a participatory experience for many donors, and offer the potential for relationship building between donors and recipients. Connecting and collaborating with others to make change and make a difference lies at the heart of the women’s giving circle movement (Walker, 2007).

The philanthropy of giving circles is small-scale and even women of very modest means can participate in a giving circle (New Ventures in Philanthropy, 2005). As one woman said of her participation, “You don’t have to be a Warren Buffett or Bill Gates to make a difference” (Bravo, 2007, p. 1).

Circles are considered a high-engagement form of philanthropy because donors engage in collective decision-making and educational activities (Bearman et al., 2005, p. 110). Researchers have found that many of the donors follow up individually with their own additional funding and involvement with the issue after the giving circle has awarded its funds. Some members may even make site visits to the community groups and nonprofits that are funded (Bearman et al., 2005, p. 110; Mollner & Wilson, 2005, p. 23).

In their current form, giving circles seem like a fairly new phenomenon, dating back to the early 1990s. However, collective philanthropy—individuals uniting through the act of giving—has a strong history in the US through voluntary, fraternal, or mutual benefit societies. What is different about giving circles is that they reflect participants’ growing economic power and increased ability to give money; their desire to do so in a collaborative manner; their yearning for engagement; and concern for their communities (Bearman et al., 2005, p. 109).

Of significance to this dissertation, giving circles represent a new trend of philanthropic engagement that is specifically attractive to women. While not all giving circles are comprised solely of women, 81% of them are women only groups (Bearman, 2006). Gary (2005) argues that women innately understand this form of collective and democratic decision making and embrace the respect and listening that it requires (p. 103).

It's not surprising that women are attracted to the concept of the giving circle, given women's historical role within charity and philanthropy as outlined previously in section. In past eras, women have had less control over their wealth or their earnings, so they created their philanthropic institutions with "small donations backed by infusions of volunteer time" (McCarthy, 1991, p. 174). These institutions were collaborative by nature because women did not have the economic clout to make much philanthropic impact as individuals.

> The philanthropic activity of women . . . calls into question the accepted notion of American individualism. While some white males indeed epitomized this notion, the concept was far less relevant for women. . . . They made their greatest public impact through collective rather than individual acts. (McCarthy, 2003, p. 162)

The philanthropy of giving circles is, in many ways, different from institutional philanthropy. Many giving circles are more democratic in structure and process than traditional philanthropy (Eikenberry, 2009). They expand who benefits in comparison with traditional philanthropy, providing options for women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, young people, and others whose giving has traditionally been outside of mainstream philanthropy (Eikenberry & Bearman, 2009).

Eikenberry, in her research, provides a helpful typology of giving circles. She categorizes them as: small groups, loose networks, and formal organizations (2009). She characterizes small groups as a giving circle with a small number of people who decide together where to give their money. The two major foci of small-group giving circles seem to be social and educational activities with the social aspects often taking precedence.

Loose networks are defined as a giving circle with a core group of people who do most of the ongoing organizing, planning, and grant decision making. Members tend to gather around a specific event, such as a potluck dinner or other fundraiser. There is no minimum fee to participate and the decision making often occurs in an ad hoc fashion.

Last, formal organizations are described as giving circles with a traditional membership organization structure with a board or lead group. They are usually larger in size and the cost to participate tends to be high compared to small groups and loose networks. There is also a strong emphasis on direct engagement with nonprofit organizations.

Beyond research to understand the giving circle landscape and the impact of donor-members, however, little academic research has been done on giving circles, (Eikenberry, 2007). Most of the research that has been done has focused on gathering hard data, with giving circles the focus of several research surveys, interviews, and participant observations.

By current estimates there are between 400 and 600 giving circles with more than 5,700 members with more than $100 million distributed through the giving circle method (Walker, 2007).

Toward identifying leadership in giving circles. Currently, only a handful of women are researching and writing about philanthropic giving circles. While most of the available literature advocates a particular point of view, some amount of it is empirical. Little of the literature speaks directly to the issues of leadership however. One well-known researcher, Sondra Shaw-Hardy (2009), has written a report about giving circle founders titled, *Women's Giving*

Circles: Reflections from the Founders, and I have met and talked with two other doctoral students who are studying giving circles, but neither is looking at leadership.

Table 2.1 compares the literature of giving circles with the scholarship in leadership studies across common concepts.

Table 2.1 Leadership Topics Expressed in Literature on Giving Circles

Giving Circle Scholar	Leadership Topic	Leadership Scholar
Shaw-Hardy	Change Transformational	Burns
Eikenberry and Bearman	Decision making—participatory and engaged	Follett, Astin, Aburdene
Berg	Discussion and debate that leads to decision making	Lakoff and Gilligan—language of leadership
Insight report	Engaged	Goldberger et al.
Eikenberry and Bearman	Impact	
Shaw-Hardy	Making a difference	
Bearman	Equal responsibility for guiding the group	Gilligan, Aburdene, Follett
Eikenberry	egalitarian, democratic	
Eikenberry	grassroots—activism and empowerment	Delgado Bernal, Robnett, Blackwell
Berg	community-based place-based	Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, Goldberger et al.
Hosting report	partnership	Helgesen, Rosener, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, Follett
Eikenberry Shaw-Hardy	volunteerism	

Though none of the scholars currently writing on the subject directly focus on the topic of leadership in their research, they do pay some attention to the issue. As Table 2.1 shows, Eikenberry defines leadership in each type of giving circle as decision making. In small group giving circles, leadership is often shared and all members are able to participate in the decision-making process. In loose networks, individual participants make funding recommendations but typically do not make funding decisions. In formal giving circles, the grant decision-making process typically involves committees or investment teams.

In addition, a careful reading of additional scholarship reveals some attributes and practices that parallel the scholarship on women's leadership outlined in this review.

By reading the literature on giving circles, and interpreting that literature through the lens of leadership theory—especially the literature on women's leadership—leadership themes do emerge. For example, both Bearman and Eikenberry, two of this handful of women scholars and practitioners who are researching and writing about philanthropic giving circles, suggest that leadership is practiced as collective decision making (Eikenberry, 2009). While this is a helpful and relevant qualification, leadership encompasses more. Bearman (2005) et al., in their research, further suggest that the practice of collective decision making is both participatory and engaged. They describe leadership as "ordinary women who have made extraordinary commitment to making a difference in their community" (p.113). They describe a giving circle leader as "someone with the idea or vision who in turn discusses that idea with others and builds excitement for the creation of a giving circle" (2005, p. 113). These characteristics of participatory, engaged decision making are echoed in the research by Follett, Astin, and Aburdene who suggest leaders work to bring out the best in others. Additionally, Bearman's research shows that 34% of giving circles have a flat leadership structure that allows all members to take "equal responsibility for guiding the circle" (Bearman, 2006, p. 10). This democratic egalitarian way of leading is described in the research of Gilligan, Aburdene, and Follett as a seminal characteristic of women's leadership.

Berg (2007), another member of this small group of researchers and practitioners, describes giving circles as “community-based groups.” As previously identified in this literature review, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003) as well as Goldberger et al. use this term to describe women’s leadership in their research. Even more intriguing, Berg defines leadership as “discussion and debate” by members, which leads to a decision. Here, the language of leadership as described by Lakoff (2000), and Gilligan (1982) may be referenced.

Hosting a Giving Circle: The Benefits and Challenges of Giving Together, a research report by Bearman (2007) from the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, suggests a new definition of leadership may be at play when giving circles attract groups of people who have not historically been active in organized philanthropy. The report suggests that leadership is partnership, a concept we find evidenced by the research of Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001); Follett (1987); Helgesen (1990); and Rosener (1995).

Yet another report (*Giving circles,* 2007) suggests giving circle leaders have strong value commitments. Goldberger et al. (1996) and Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003) all speak of values as an integral part of women’s leadership. Walker (2007) writing about connected or collaborative leadership, echoes Rost (1993) and his notion of a twenty-first century leadership.

Eikenberry’s research (2006) corroborates that “strong voluntary leadership is necessary for initiating a circle and incubating it through the start-up period” (p. 521). She suggests that the goal of giving circles is to educate and inspire women to become philanthropic leaders, additionally suggesting that a leader is a passionate individual. But if the noteworthy element of giving circles is that they are collaborative and employ shared decision making, why is leadership ascribed to a “passionate individual?” Again, it is important here to distinguish between leaders and leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2008, p. 24). This dissertation seeks to identify leadership within giving circles, not leaders in giving circles.

Distributed leadership. Given all that we can discern from a close reading of the existing research on giving circles, a particular theory of leadership may prove to be at play within giving circles. This is the theory of distributed leadership. Simply put, distributed leadership is an answer to the “solo or stand-alone leader” (Gronn, 2002, p. 423) theories of the early and mid twentieth-century. The distributed leadership perspective defines leadership practice as the interactions between people and their situation. It is an “antidote to the work in the heroics of leadership” (Spillane, 2005, p. 144). Some characteristics found in giving circles are also found in distributed leadership.

In distributed forms of leadership, leadership involves more people than those at the top of the organizational hierarchy. In distributed leadership, the leadership is handled by the group (Barry, 1991). But it is more than simply the leader plus the followers. Leadership, understood as distributed leadership, is found in the interaction of leaders and followers. Leadership is dynamic. It is not the actions of individuals but the interactions among individuals that reveals leadership.

Barry (1991) suggests that most other group-centered leadership theories define leadership as decision making with a dominating leader on one end of the scale and on the other, a leader who permits a group to make decisions within prescribed limits. For Barry, this model does not take into consideration the social leadership roles that are acted out in a group, roles such as the management of participation and conflict, that are integral to understanding group-centered leadership.

Barry’s (1991) model of distributed leadership is characterized as a

> collection of roles and behaviors that can be split apart, shared, rotated, or used sequentially or concomitantly. This in turn means that at any one time multiple leaders can exist in a team, with each leader assuming a complementary leadership role. (p. 34)

Barry suggests that it is this characteristic that truly differentiates this approach from the person-centered approaches of traditional leadership theories. The distributed leadership model emphasizes the "active cultivation and development of leadership abilities within all members of a team. It is assumed that each member has certain leadership qualities that will be needed by the group at some point" (p. 34).

Scholars have suggested that distributed leadership is the leadership of self-managed teams and that leadership roles and behaviors in the team are comprised of these four elements:

1. envisioning—creating new and compelling visions;
2. organizing—focus on detail, deadlines, time, efficiency and structure;
3. spanning—facilitating activities needed to bridge and link with outside groups; and
4. social—developing and maintaining the team from a sociopsychological position.

One form of distributed leadership, concertive action, has three patterns of interest. These patterns are:

1. spontaneous collaboration, where collaborative modes of engagement arise without forethought;
2. intuitive working relations, where a close working relationship among colleagues develops a deep, unspoken understanding between them; and
3. institutionalized practices, where structural and institutionalized relations regulate action.

Grassroots leadership. Eikenberry (2006) has posited a novel thesis that leadership in giving circles may be a "grassroots" kind of leadership. But what exactly is grassroots leadership? Defining grassroots leadership can be difficult because it often means different things to different scholars. The term "grassroots leadership" has been used by scholars in fields such as business, the social sciences, and even military science. However, the elements and characteristics of grassroots leadership are defined differently within each field.

In the business literature, grassroots leadership is defined as procedural and made up of "specific behaviors that anyone can learn" (Bergmann, Hurson, & Russ-Eft, 1999, p. 18). It emphasizes listening, building credibility and trust, doing what it takes to help the organization meet its goals, pushing for clarity, working in partnership, and involving everyone. Its structure is, by definition, organizational and its practice requires risk-taking. What makes this leadership grassroots? Bergmann et al. (1999) suggest leadership is grassroots because it can be performed by anyone, regardless of position. Entrepreneurship, within the business environment, is also often considered an example of grassroots leadership. Entrepreneurs are seen as people who test the boundaries, revel in accountability, make decisions themselves rather than waiting for others higher up the organizational ladder—people who lead, teach, and work in teams. Grassroots leadership is seen as the "best vehicle for creating a nimbler business" (Hammonds, 2000, p. 4).

Chetkovich and Kunreuther (2006) in their book, *From the Ground Up: Grassroots Organizations Making Social Change*, define grassroots leadership as *any* leadership within a grassroots, nonprofit organization. This leadership is described in much more traditional leadership terms, concerned with creating the vision, defining the mission, managing the board and staff, providing operational oversight, and fundraising. The process for developing organizational grassroots leaders tends to be ad hoc. Skills like relational or collaborative work are usually not taught and thus can be challenging and frustrating to grassroots leaders. The leadership described by Chetkovich and Kunreuther is defined in light of the organization;

leadership itself does not stand separate from the organization. As such, this treatment of leadership within grassroots organizations doesn't help much in defining and describing grassroots leadership for research within philanthropy. Research on nonprofits is not research on philanthropy (Markham, Walters, & Bonjean, 2001).

Even military leadership has, at least in one example, taken on the label of grassroots. LaBarre (1999) suggests the following elements of military grassroots leadership: empowerment that produces phenomenal results, a focus on the purpose, and outside-the-box thinking. Grassroots leaders communicate, listen, share responsibility, show respect for others, and create true change that is permanent.

Gendered grassroots leadership. Within the literature on grassroots leadership is a subset of literature that deals with gendered grassroots leadership. Since this dissertation focuses on women's leadership within philanthropy, it makes sense to rely on this subset of the literature for further investigation of the nature of grassroots leadership.

Characteristics of gendered grassroots leadership have much in common with the literature on women's leadership. Delgado Bernal (1998), for example, suggests a kind of gendered grassroots leadership is at play in community activism, particularly in the case of Chicana community organizing. She asserts it is important to reconceptualize leadership as that which places women at the center of analysis and does not separate the task of organizing from leading. She characterizes grassroots leadership as organizing and mobilizing. An activist notion of leadership, it attempts to provide an alternative perspective to historical narratives of who leads and who wields power. She utilizes a theoretical and epistemological perspective grounded in critical feminism.

Sacks (1988), on the other hand, identifies organizing and leading as two different tasks. She sees leadership as a collective process that allows alternative views of leadership to emerge within various contexts. She outlines five dimensions of grassroots leadership: organizing, developing consciousness, networking, holding office, and acting as spokesperson.

Robnett (1996), in a similar vein, explores the role of African American women in the civil rights movement, characterizing it as informal leadership. She says, “Gender provided a construct of exclusion (within the civil rights movement) that helped to develop a strong grassroots tier of leadership that served as a critical bridge between the formal organization and adherents and potential constituents” (p. 1667). This definition of women’s leadership within the civil rights movement echoes the way leadership is defined by McCarthy (1991) in her seminal works on women’s leadership roles within philanthropy.

> This area of leadership was the only one available to women. Consequently women, who because of their strong capacities to lead might otherwise have been a part of the formal leadership, contributed significantly to the extraordinary nature of the grassroots leadership within the civil rights movement. Within this context, the civil rights movement’s organization was gendered. (Robnett, 1996, p. 1667)

Robnett (1996) characterizes this informal grassroots leadership as: bridge building with the ability to influence others; occupying the space between the formal leaders and followers; dependent on networks, either institutional or interpersonal; and as having an interactive, one-on-one style.

Herda-Rapp (1998), writing about the leadership role played by Hattie Kendrick in the civil rights movement, introduces the concept of “behind the scenes” leadership to describe Robnett’s idea of informal, grassroots leadership. Herda-Rapp describes Kendrick’s leadership as “extra-organizational” or outside the organizational boundaries of formal titles and positions denoting leadership. Kendrick, Herda-Rapp contends, led by attitude, the use of narrative, and by example. Her informal leadership also served an instrumental function by providing advice and facilitating action. These factors contrast with the literature's conceptualization of leadership as static and formal (Herda-Rapp, 1998, p. 352).

In perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of gendered grassroots leadership, Blackwell (2006), writing about Lideres Campesinas (LC), suggests a model of grassroots leadership that stands traditional leadership on its head. At the heart of LC's leadership philosophy and practice is "individual and community empowerment" (p. 36). This model shifts the notion of leadership from an individual act to one of collective empowerment (p. 2).

As one participant in the LC explains:

> Before I saw myself as the leader of my community but after I saw that I just had a big head. Participating in the study helped me to understand leadership differently. The women did not need me to come around and help them. They were asking for information so that they could solve the issues and problems themselves. (Blackwell, 2006, p. 5)

This approach to leadership suggests that only the people in a community can make the changes they wish to see in the community. This model of leadership came from the realization that "it was not enough to study the needs of campesinas, if the women did not organize themselves to address those needs" (Blackwell, 2006, p. 7).

Blackwell (2006) further suggests that women practice a different kind of leadership that empowers others. It is not hierarchical in structure, but collective in practice. "Leadership is based on radical learning and a pedagogical tradition where information and learning is part of the processes of empowerment and collective action" (p. 37).

This model of leadership suggests that leadership skills are inherent as well as familiar, and seeks to remove the "mysteriousness" surrounding leadership. For Blackwell (2006) and the women of the LC, leadership is advocacy, most often aimed at family and community issues.

Two other aspects of grassroots leadership in this context are transformative learning and knowledge sharing. Blackwell (2006) suggests these can occur on two levels: individual members develop their own capacity and knowledge and the members as a collective educate themselves about a range of issues. Action, then, can also be viewed from these same two levels, individual and collective. Yet, while a wide range of actions are available, "much of it would be considered 'under the radar'" (p. 43).

This summary of the literature on leadership—especially women's leadership—and philanthropy—with an emphasis on women's philanthropy—provides the backdrop for this study of women's leadership in giving circles.

Chapter III: Methodology, Epistemology, and Ethical Considerations

The purpose of this study is to document the leadership perceptions and experiences of giving circle members in their own voices, and through analysis derive understanding, meaning, and insight about leadership in the giving circle environment. Because little is known about leadership within giving circles, a qualitative research approach is well suited to this study.

The study explores women's experiences and perceptions of leadership within philanthropy—specifically within giving circles—through the qualitative research approach of data collection via focus groups. (See Appendix A for the focus group guide). In addition, a short questionnaire seeking demographic and other information is also utilized (See Appendix B) as well as the websites of those giving circles who have them.

To facilitate the startup, growth, and sustainability of giving circles more knowledge about the way leadership is understood and practiced is needed. Research shows giving circles may provide a "gateway" of sorts to engagement for many people outside the mainstream of philanthropy—groups of people traditionally thought to be unengaged or shut out of philanthropy. A deeper and richer understanding of leadership within giving circles will contribute knowledge that will be helpful to those in the field who are hoping to ensure this "gateway" to engagement through giving circles is in place for generations to come.

This research reflects a constructivist viewpoint toward the research, whereby participants construct meaning as they engage the research questions. This approach to the research respects the experiences and perspectives of others and is at the heart of feminist research. Many feminist researchers express a commitment to realizing as fully as possible women's voices in data gathering, and preparing an account that transmits those voices

(Wilkinson, 1999, p. 66). At the data gathering stage, focus groups facilitate hearing the plural voices of the participants (Madriz, 2003, p. 373).

Because traditional social science has often rendered women invisible, Smith suggests that, as an antidote, researchers place the issue of women's daily-lived experiences at the center of the research process itself. She cautions all researchers to develop a special sensitivity to the meanings of gender in any particular research topic. She documents that prevailing institutional priorities and agendas often devalue women's experience in the world, and suggests, "the very formulation of the questions that animate a research project often implicitly contain hidden gender evaluations or perspectives" (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992, p. 221).

In focus groups, the collective testimonies of the participants have the potential to directly impact their individual and collective lives. The shared dialogues, stories, and knowledge generated by focus groups have the potential to help women develop a sense of identity and self-validation regarding leadership within philanthropy. The open-ended nature of the focus group method helps participants express their views, which are often marginalized, missing, or silent within the larger landscape of research on philanthropy.

Focus Groups Defined

Focus groups serve as a tool for studying ideas in a group context (Morgan, 1988). They have their origins in market research and were first used to produce insights for developing marketing strategies. Over the last decade, however, there has been a movement toward the use of focus group methodology in academic research (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). During the past few years especially, focus groups have gained popularity among feminist and postmodernist social researchers (Madriz, 2003, p. 365), and feminist qualitative research has been strengthened and broadened through the development of feminist focus groups.

Krueger (1994) defines focus groups as “people assembled in a series of groups who possess certain characteristics and provide data of a qualitative nature in a focused discussion” (p. 16).

As a method of inquiry,

> focus groups combine elements of both individual interviews and participant observation. Focus groups cannot really substitute for these two kinds of research, but they do provide access to forms of data that are not obtained easily with either of the other two methods. (Morgan, 1988, p. 15)

Litosseliti (2003) describes a focus group as “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (p. 1). They are conducted in order to explore an individual’s views, perceptions, ideas, and attitudes about a topic through group interaction. Transcripts of the discussion, as well as field notes, are the fundamental data that focus groups produce (Morgan, 1998).

Some Uses of Focus Groups

Of the various uses for a focus group (Litosseliti, 2003; Morgan, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) those that are relevant to this research include:

Table 3.1 Some Uses of Focus Groups

Type	Description
Discovering new information or brainstorming new ideas.	Participants discuss different angles of a problem and help to identify solutions.
Uncovering new, open-ended pathways for discussion (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 3).	Focus groups rely on the interaction among the participants. While this interaction is initially based on the topic, within reason the moderator must remain open to where the participants take the conversation.
Generating hypotheses and concepts (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 18).	Focus groups are appropriate for grounded theory development, where the aim is on discovering rather than testing concepts.
Obtaining different perspectives on a topic in the participants' own words.	Focus group data reveal the everyday language people use when discussing a topic, not the language of experts or researchers. Most scholars believe there is a minimum of "artificiality of response."
Learning how respondents talk about the phenomenon of interest.	This may facilitate the design of other research tools that might be employed in additional research (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 15).
Gathering information on participants' views, attitudes, beliefs, cognitions, responses, motivations, experiences, and perceptions on a topic.	In other words, why people think or feel the way they do. Focus groups, while useful for investigating participants' thinking, excel at uncovering why participants' think as they do (Morgan, 1988, p. 25).
Revealing participants' shared (and divergent) views.	Understanding of a topic while discouraging any disclosures that go beyond the legitimate aims of the research (Morgan, 1988, p. 7). I will say more about how I will balance this issue of disclosure later in this section.

Strengths of Focus Groups

Just as there are relevant uses of focus group, so there are relevant strengths of focus groups. Those strengths that are particular to this research include:

Table 3.2 Strengths of Focus Groups

Type	Description
Eliciting opinions, attitudes, and beliefs.	The data generated by focus groups are typically very rich, as people try to explain why they feel the way they do about the topic and as ideas build on one another. The focus group is an opportunity to gather data not available through individual interviews or surveys (Kleiber, 2004, p. 97; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 16).
Providing a certain ecological validity not found in traditional survey research.	This, however, makes "the data provided by focus groups idiosyncratic" (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 12) and therefore not generalizable. The open response format of a focus group does provide an opportunity to obtain large and rich amounts of data in the participants' own words.
Tapping into human tendencies.	People are social creatures who are influenced by the comments of others and make decisions after listening to the advice and counsel of people around them. Focus groups place people in situations where this dynamic can unfold (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 34).
Allowing the researcher to interact directly with participants.	This provides opportunities for the clarification of responses, for follow-up questions, and for probing responses. Participants can qualify their responses or give contingent answers to questions. This flexibility to explore unanticipated issues is not possible within the structure of a typical mail-out survey (Krueger, 1994, p. 35).
Observing nonverbal responses.	Focus groups offer the opportunity to observe gestures, smiles, frowns, and so forth, which might carry information that supplements (and, on occasion, even contradicts) the verbal response.
Providing high face validity.	In other words, the technique is easily understood and the results seem believable to those using the information (Krueger, 1994, p. 35).

Another advantage focus groups offer, but that is controversial, is the natural versus unnatural setting debate. Morgan (1988) suggests focus groups are:

> fundamentally unnatural social settings. Put simply, when there is a premium on the naturalistic ability to observe group behavior and when the opportunity to observe such behavior is readily available, some form of participant observation will be preferred over focus groups. (pp. 15-16)

Krueger (1994), on the other hand, asserts, “Focus groups place people in natural, real-life situations as opposed to the controlled experimental situations typical of quantitative studies” (p. 34). Morgan (1988), however insists,

> rather than arguing about whether focus groups are natural, it is best to consider where they fit within a range of data-gathering techniques. In terms of research methods, focus groups use more natural settings than some techniques (surveys) and less natural settings than others (participant observation). (p. 8)

Why the Focus Group Method?

Scholars suggest that, in all research undertaken, the research question should drive the method to be used (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 3). Put another way, the phenomenon in question should be studied in a manner consistent with the phenomenon being studied.

Among other characteristics, giving circles are hands-on, engaged, and collaborative in nature (Eikenberry, 2009), so it follows that a research method that capitalizes on these characteristics be utilized. Focus groups are both engaged and collaborative, with findings from the research being “literally created” with participation from giving circle members (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The focus group method is appropriate for several other reasons as well. Focus groups allow for studying ideas in a social group context; they can be considered a feminist method; they can mitigate the issues of power and hierarchy, as well as language and norms, that are present in many methodologies; and they can give voice to populations that are not always heard in society. “They tap into the real-life interactions of people and allow the researcher to get in touch with participants’ perceptions . . . in a way that other procedures do not” (Krueger, 1994, p. 238).

Focus groups as feminist. Focus groups are not necessarily a “feminist method,” or technique, for gathering empirical evidence. They are, however, a feminist methodology. In other words, the theory of knowledge and the interpretive framework that undergird focus groups can be viewed as feminist (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, p. 70).

Feminist research is not research about women but research for women, to be used in transforming society. Feminist research attempts to lessen the dichotomies that traditional research often imposes between thought and feeling, between the personal and the political, between the observed and the observer, between "dispassionate/objective" research and "passionate/subjective" knowledge. Rather than seeing research as a linear, one-way process, feminist researchers emphasize the contradictions and complexities encountered in their work (Madriz, 2003, pp. 368-369).

Consciousness-raising groups, a staple of the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, were, in fact, a collective construction and a source of feminist methodology. The similarities between focus group discussions and the consciousness-raising sessions common in the early years of second wave feminism have fueled the interest of feminist researchers.

The focus group methodology not only conforms to feminist principles but also offers the possibility of expanding and utilizing them in new ways. The distinctiveness of feminist methodology is located in a shared commitment to three goals:

1. to bring women into the research, to find what has been ignored, censored, and suppressed in the standard research focus on men's concerns;
2. to minimize harm, control, and exploitation in the research process by using research strategies that are more inclusive and less hierarchical than the standard practice of social research; and

3. to conduct research that will be of value to women and will lead to social change or action that is beneficial to women.

Focus groups provide a new way for feminist researchers to meet these goals (Montell, 1999, p. 67).

There is consensus that feminist research is characterized by researchers' striving to achieve and adhere to certain principles in their research. Focus groups have been shown to meet those principles. They challenge the norm of the rigid separation between the researcher and the researched; they promote the centrality of consciousness-raising as a methodological tool and "way of seeing"; they emphasize the empowerment of women; and they address concerns for the ethical implications of the research.

Focus groups not only encourage researchers to listen to the voices of those who have often been silenced; they also represent a methodology that is consistent with the particularities and everyday experiences of women. Women have historically used conversation with other women as a way to deal with their oppression. Hence, feminists are attempting to use and develop research methods geared toward facilitating forms of communication with women and among women (Madriz, 2003, p. 374).

Issues of voice. Focus groups are a form of collective testimony and can identify local theories and popular knowledge. They are sometime presented as an opportunity for "listening to local voices"—for learning the participants' own language and for gaining an insight into the participants' conceptual worlds. "Multi-vocal" conversations, in the form of exchanges with their sisters, female neighbors, mothers, and friends, have been used by women for generations. In a male-centered culture, some of these conversations have been characterized as idle talk or even gossip. However, these dialogues have traditionally been a major way in which women have faced issues in their lives. Thus testimonies, individual or collective, become a vehicle for capturing the socioeconomic, political, and human challenges that women face. The collective nature of the focus group empowers the participants and validates their voices and experiences (Madriz, 2003, pp. 368-369).

The interaction among participants within a focus group accentuates empathy and the commonality of experiences and fosters self-disclosure and self-validation. Communication among women can be an awakening experience for them. It allows women to validate their own experiences, and it allows them to build on each other's opinions and thoughts. The awareness that other women experience similar problems or share analogous ideas is important because it contributes to women's realization that their opinions are legitimate and valid (Madriz, 2003, pp. 374-375). Increasingly, feminist scholars are using group discussion or focus groups in an effort to provide a platform for women to use their voice, to speak, and to be heard.

Issues of hierarchy and power. Most traditional research methods are not appropriate for feminist studies. Feminists have advanced many arguments to justify their preference for ethnographic research over more traditional research methods such as surveys, questionnaires, and experiments. Even the one-to-one interview can produce a power relationship between the researcher and the participant because it is the researcher who dominates the whole research process, from the selection of the topic, to the choice of the method and the questions asked, to the imposition of the framework of the research findings.

Unfortunately, this can also be true for focus groups as the participants in both of these situations determine what they say and what they do not say which makes the researcher dependent on the goodwill of the participant. Focus groups can be a relatively less hierarchical method however, as they can shift the balance of power away from the researcher toward the research participants (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, p. 70). The participants themselves become the actors and agents of knowledge and social change (Madriz, 2003, p. 371) through the "horizontal interactions" among the group participants. The focus group strives for the "view from below" rather than the "view from above" (Wilkinson, 1999, pp. 64-65).

Although there is a potential for power relations to surface among the participants, if they do arise, these relations are the participants own power relations, in their own constructed hierarchies. The researcher is not necessarily in the power position.

Focus groups can allow participants a much greater opportunity to set the research agenda, and to develop the themes most important to them—themes that may diverge from those identified by the researcher. As Montell (1999) suggests, the result is that the information produced is more likely to be framed by the categories and understanding of the participants than those of the interviewer (p. 49).

In direct contrast to the goals of most feminist researchers, the reduced power and control of focus group research is typically identified as a disadvantage of the method in the mainstream focus group literature. However, even some mainstream focus group researchers recognize that this reduction in the researcher's influence can also be an advantage. Morgan points out that participants' interactions among themselves replace their interaction with the interviewer, leading to a greater emphasis on participants' points of view (Wilkinson, 1999, pp. 70-71).

Issues of language and norms. In this study, it is important to authentically capture the stories and narratives of women's own perceptions and experiences of leadership because women are one of several populations not always heard in society. Narratives and stories, as a social as well as a political construction, can be used to make and change the public and private meanings of language. Lakoff (2000) asserts that those who "make meaning of events, who determine what words mean, who can use what words to what effects have the power to define and thus create reality" (p. 38). She suggests gender is a "grammatical category subject to marking, with the masculine being unmarked and the feminine being marked" (p. 44). This concept of marking, similar to the concept of androcentrism (Bem, 1993), suggests that men as unmarked are normal and women as marked are "not fully human."

> If you are a member of a dominant group, your attributes are invisible, your role in making this the way they are is invisible. This process is called exnomination. . . . Exnominated groups are normalized; they become apolitical and nonideological. They just are; their rules become the rules. (pp. 53-54)

Lakoff (2000) suggests markedness can become "a kind of scapegoat . . . as if the language had created the reality and a change in language could change the reality of gender inequality" (pp. 45-46).

Van Nostrand (1993) further suggests that men "report talk" while women "rapport talk." She points out that men may use language to discredit or disparage women; she calls this "linguistic sexism." While women demonstrate communication skills that promote linking, men are preoccupied with trying to achieve personal rank using "male talk." Men use language as a vehicle for maintaining status. She asserts that we need to be aware of how men may employ nuances of speech as instruments of control or as a way to discredit women. This controlling behavior is often rewarded when more credence is given to (male) demonstrative, declarative speech patterns than to (female) qualifying, inquiring language (pp. 45-46).

Gilligan (1982) writes about much the same phenomenon. She suggests that women speak to create relationships, to synthesize and bridge, cooperate and nurture. Men, on the other hand, speak from a justice/rights perspective and seek power through competition (p. 169).

Fletcher (2001) also weighs in on the issue of language. She says:

> This helped me understand the complicated nature of the "silencing" dynamic I was proposing to study and the central role that language plays in that dynamic,

> particularly in determining what ideas can and cannot be expressed. . . . They called attention to how stereotypically masculine definitions and assumptions suppress certain aspects of organizational life, leading to unrealistically narrow views of concepts such as leadership and decision making. (p. 18)

Goldberger et al. (1996) frame the issue a little differently:

> That the homeplace women have developed a style of public discourse and public leadership that emphasizes listening and calls forth a highly collaborative dialogue is not surprising. This is quite consistent with the kinds of communication patterns that many women tend to establish. (pp. 416-417)

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) suggest that the “conversations girls and women have with each other are more like negotiations for closeness, with people seeking and giving support and confirmation” (p. 268) while Melendez (1996, p. 297) suggests that women must be able to cross barriers of culture and experience to exercise leadership and engage others in their vision. She asserts this requires exceptional communication skills that transcend culturally influenced styles of communication. Summing up the research on conversational styles among men and women, sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1990) says that from early childhood on, girls are apt to see themselves as individuals in a network of sustaining connections or relationships.

Lakoff (2000) warns, however, that a preoccupation with the different language styles of men and women can be problematic. She says, “Worrying about how people talk avoids the necessity of paying attention to what they say” (p. 78).

Focus groups allow the researcher to “pay attention” to what the focus group participants are saying and gather information about their perceptions and experiences with leadership in their own words.

Focus groups as social groups. Interaction among the participants is one of the most unique characteristics of a focus group. The focus group itself is a social context and “all talk through which people generate meaning is contextual” (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, p. 67).

Participants influence each other by responding to the ideas expressed and the comments shared in the course of the discussion.

During the course of conducting the focus groups for this study, I encouraged participants to react and interact with each other while responding to my questions. Collective sense-making can occur through the interactions between focus group participants (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, p. 67) and I strove to stay attuned and to encourage this as much as possible. While one-to-one interviewing might also be characterized as interaction, the key point here is that focus groups offer a stronger mechanism for facilitating this group interaction (Morgan, 1988, p. 18).

Morgan (1988) asserts,

> Focus groups are basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alternation between the researcher's questions and the research participants' responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of a moderator" (pp. 9-10).

Importance of context. Feminists have long criticized the "context-stripping" nature of traditional research methods where the reality of the human experience is lost. Feminists have consistently emphasized the contextual and avoided focusing on the individual in isolation, cut off from interactions and relationships with other people. Feminist scholars suggest the human experience is constructed within specific social contexts: collective sense is made, meanings are negotiated, and identities are elaborated through the processes of social interaction between people.

Focus groups meet this charge of decontextualization by being a contextual method—by providing an interactive social context within which meaning-making occurs. The social context of the focus group provides an opportunity to examine how participants engage in meaning-generation, how their opinions are formed, expressed and (sometimes) modified within the context of discussion and debate with others. In focus group discussions, meanings are constantly negotiated and renegotiated.

A focus group participant is never an individual acting in isolation. Rather, she is a member of a social group, all of whom interact with each other. In other words, the focus group is itself a social context.

The interactive nature of focus group data produces insights that would not be available outside the group context. This emphasis on the person in context makes the focus group an ideal method for feminists who see the self as relational, or as socially constructed, and who argue that feminist methods should be contextual (Wilkinson, 1999, pp. 65-70).

Limitations of Focus Groups

Arguments for the use of focus groups as a methodology when researching women's issues are extensive. This does not mean, however, that there aren't limitations to this methodology as well. The major limitations of this study are concentrated in the use of focus groups and their analysis.

Limitations of sample size. The major limitation is the small sample size or the small amount of data available on a small number of focus groups. While original plans for this research called for conducting focus groups with 12 giving circles, only 6 could be completed. In addition, the sample is of necessity a sample of convenience. Women who could participate in a face-to-face or Skype 90-minute focus group were most often retired or stay-at-home moms. Two of the groups were, however, held in the evening or late afternoon in an attempt to broaden the participation. Other limitations that will be addressed here include variables such as time and group dynamics.

Eikenberry (2009) suggests there are fewer than 600 giving circles in the United States. (In comparison there are more than 1.5 million nonprofits in the US.) There may be many more circles beyond this number, if the informal circles could be more readily identified. For this reason, identifying a sufficient number of giving circles, given the difficulty Eikenberry and Bearman had while conducting the research for their most recent report (2009), was of concern.

Because the giving circles that comprise the data for this research were self-selected, the findings from the research will not be generalizable to other groups. A focus group consists of a limited number of participants, and may not be a true representative sample of the larger group. Therefore, generalizing from focus group data is not possible. The responses from members of the group are not independent of one another, which further restricts the generalizability of results (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 17). However, while the results may not be generalizable or representative, they are indicative and illustrative (Litosseliti, 2003, p. 22) of the particular social phenomenon of leadership as perceived by these participants. The intent of focus group research is to find a range of feeling and opinion on a topic through observation, listening, documenting, and reporting the perceptions and experiences of the target audience. Establishing controls to ensure generalizability, as is done in quantitative research, is not appropriate (Krueger & Casey, 2000, pp. 199-203). The results of focus group research cannot be expressed primarily in numeric form but need to take on a descriptive style, thus the narrative approach of this dissertation, coupled with a frequency measure and analysis.

Part of the reasoning for the original plan of holding 12 focus groups was an attempt to align the data from the groups along the lines of the typology created by Eikenberry (2009). This typology suggests three types of giving circles. Eikenberry, in her research categorizes them as small groups, loose networks, and formal organizations. She characterizes small groups as a giving circle with a small number of people who decide together where to give their money. The two major foci of small-group giving circles are usually social and educational activities with the social aspects often front and center. Loose networks are defined as a giving circle with a core group of people who do most of the ongoing organizing, planning, and grant decision making. Members tend to gather around a specific event, such as a potluck dinner or other fundraiser. There is no minimum fee to participate and the decision making often occurs in an ad hoc fashion. Formal organizations are described as giving circles with a traditional membership organization structure with a board or lead group. They are usually larger in size and the cost to participate tends to be high compared to small groups and loose networks. There is also a strong emphasis on direct engagement with nonprofit organizations.

Linking the findings from these focus groups to this typology would have helped to solidify the typology in the literature. But, with only six focus groups to analyze, such a categorization could not be made. Instead, I have used the informational survey, originally meant to simply supplement the data, in a more prominent and consequential way. When I was unable to arrange for more than six focus groups, I found this biographical survey data was useful to add more description to the analysis. Additionally, I was able to use the information gathered from the surveys to compare and contrast the characteristics of my population with the population of several recent studies on giving circles.

In addition to the focus group sessions, the participants also completed a brief questionnaire. I included this survey initially to gather more demographic information about the participants without using any of the focus group time to gather it. My purpose was to be able to add thicker description to the cases, using the information from the surveys to add detail to the story of the women of each circle. I knew my time with each giving circle during the focus group would be limited, and wanted to take advantage of each minute of time. By asking participants to fill out the demographic survey, I was able to focus my questions on issues of leadership.

Consequently, when I was unable to arrange for more than six focus groups, I found this biographical data was useful to add another dimension to the analysis of the findings. I was able to use the information gathered from the survey to compare and contrast the characteristics of my population with the population of Bearman's (2006) recent study, *More Giving Together*. Not all the giving circles that participated had websites, but of those who did, this online information was also useful in composing the narratives that comprise the data cases.

The charts that follow represent the aggregated characteristics of the participants in these six focus groups as revealed by the short survey they completed. As a group, my research population ranges in age from 40 to 80. Ninety-one percent of the participants are white and 86% are married. Sixty-eight percent of the participants currently have no children living in the home and all participants hold at least a bachelor's degree, with half holding a graduate degree. The majority of the participants are either not currently employed, retired, or homemakers. Just 32% of the participants are currently employed either full time or part time. Of those who answered the question about household income, the range was from $100,000 to more than $1,000,000. Thirty-six percent of the participants did not answer this question. Fifty-nine percent of the participants consider themselves politically liberal or democrat. Approximately 59% of the population attends religious services monthly or weekly. Clearly 35% of the women have been in their community for more than 30 years. More than one quarter of them have been members of their giving circle for more than five years, but the majority have not held office. Not surprisingly, most of these women also hold membership in additional voluntary organizations.

Figure 3.1 Year of Birth

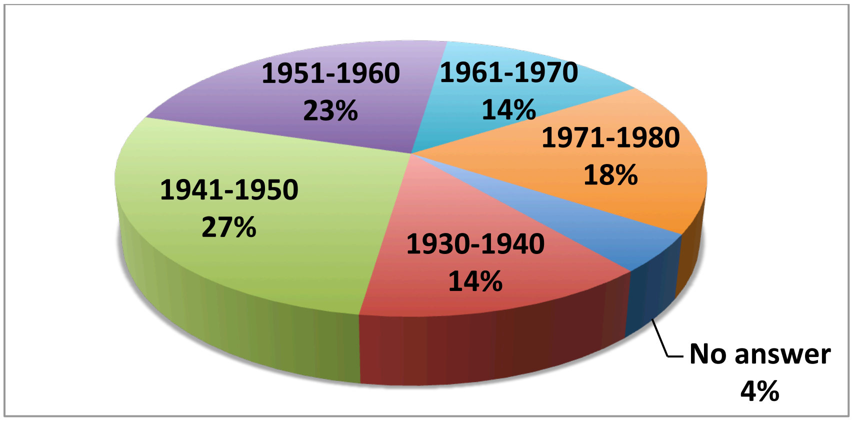


Figure 3.2 Race or Ethnicity

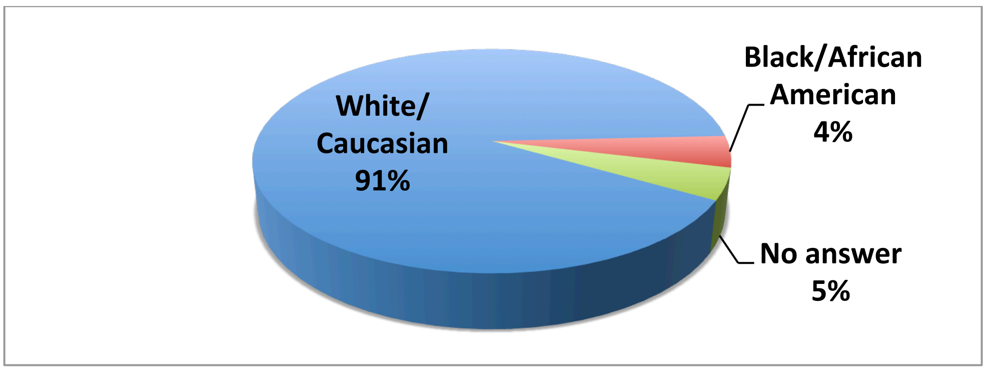


Figure 3.3 Marital Status

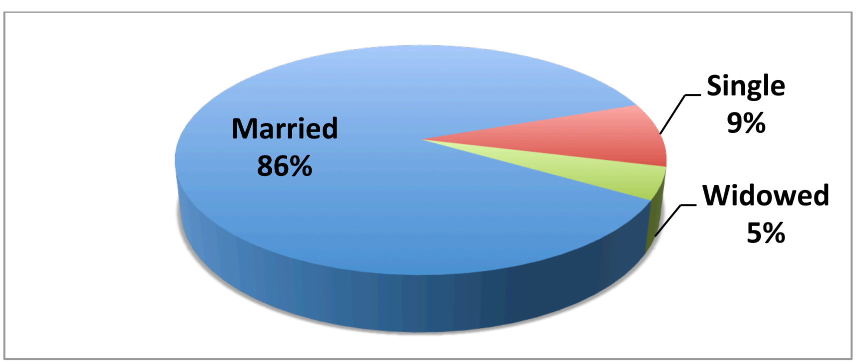


Figure 3.4 Children in Household

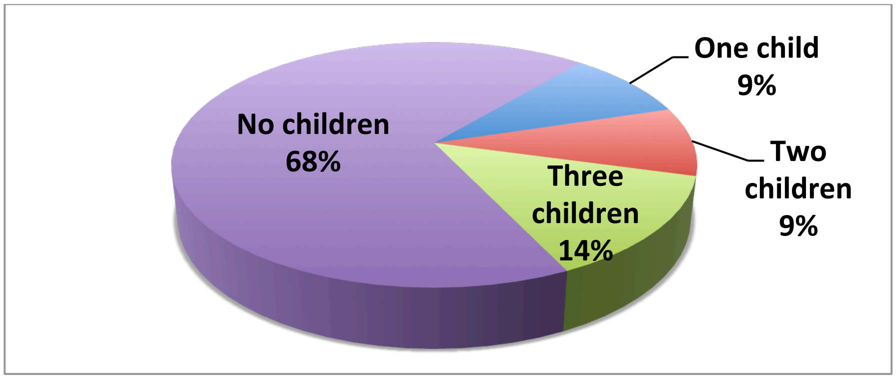


Figure 3.5 Education

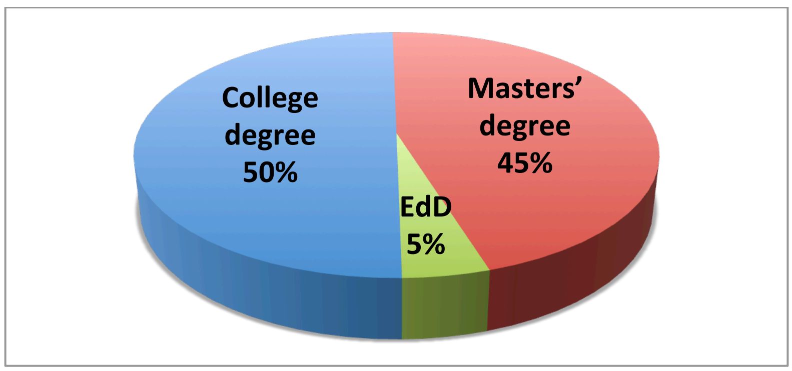


Figure 3.6 Employment

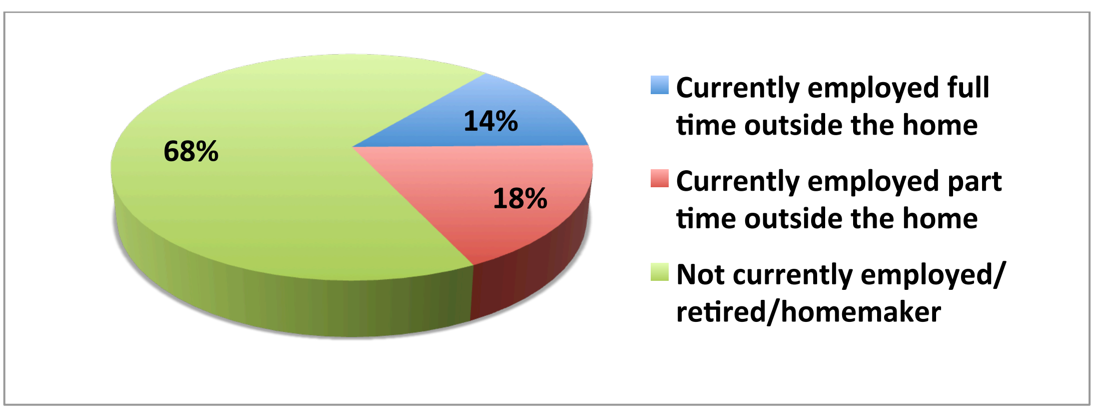


Figure 3.7 Household Income

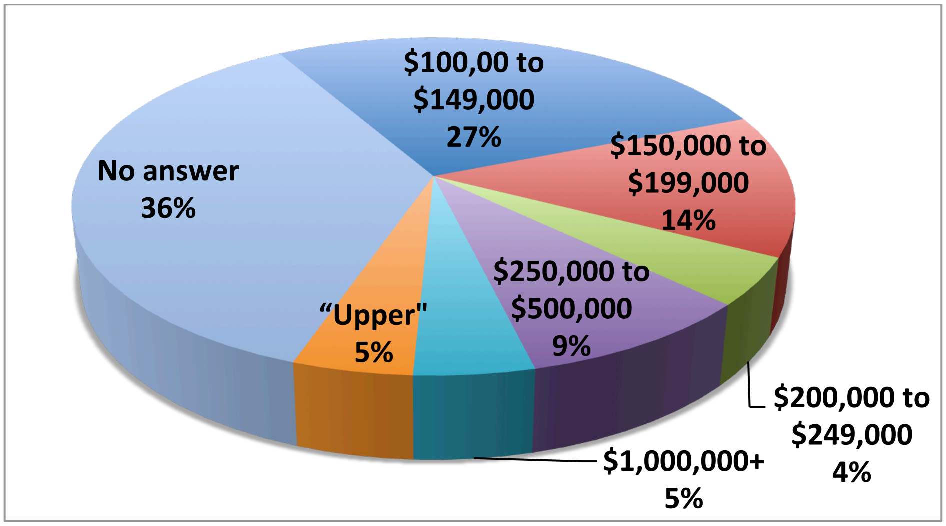


Figure 3.8 Political Views (Self-described)

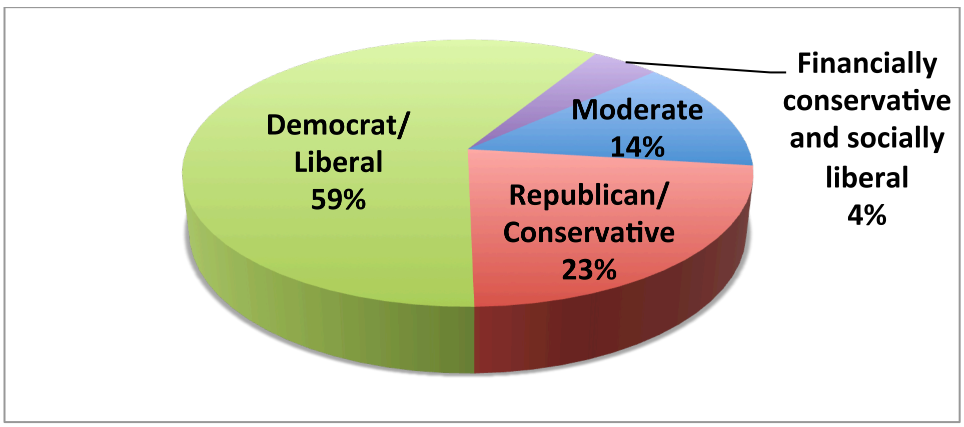


Figure 3.9 Religious Attendance

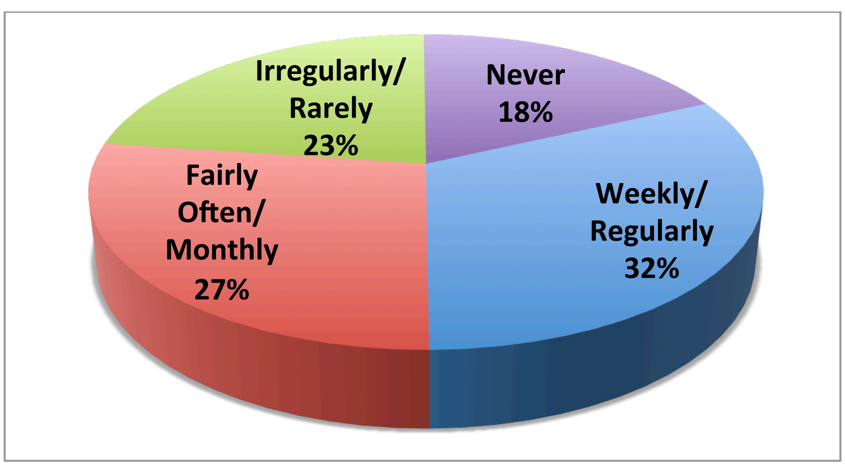


Figure 3.10 Years in Community

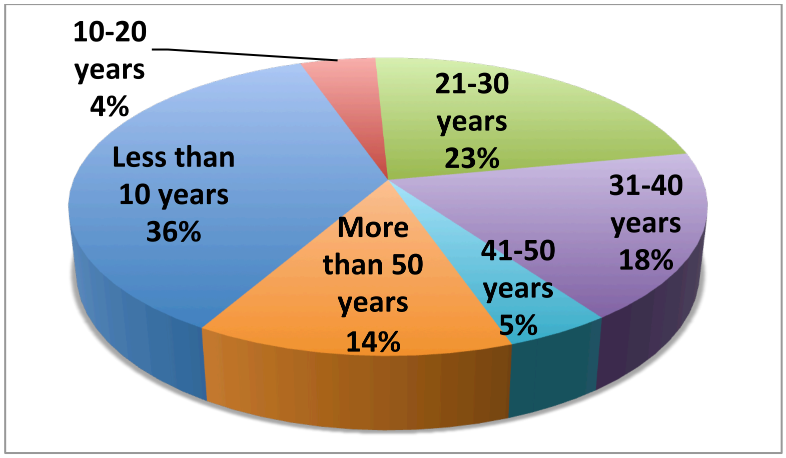


Figure 3.11 Length of Membership in Giving Circle

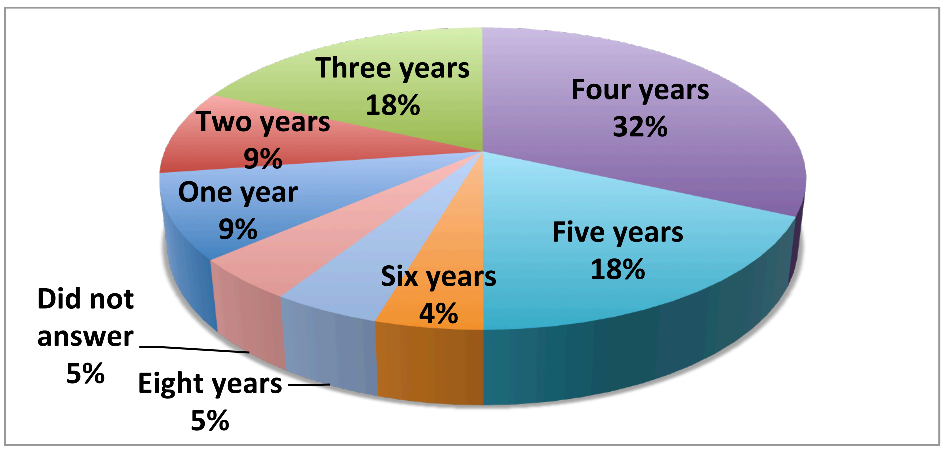


Figure 3.12 Elected Officer of Giving Circle

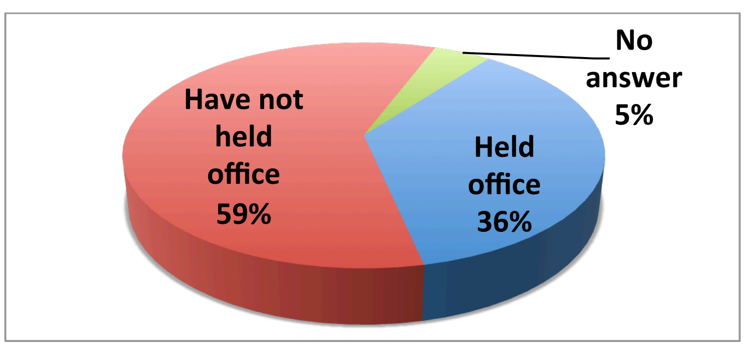
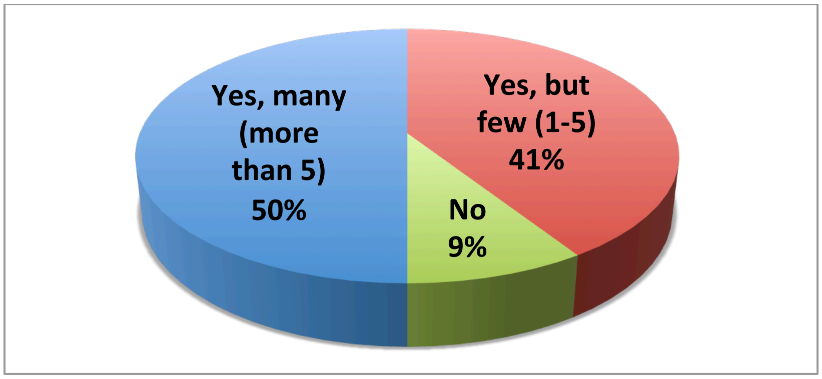


Figure 3.13 Other Voluntary Organizational Membership



These data reveal a population fairly similar to the giving circle population studies by Eikenberry and Bearman (2009) in *The Impact of Giving Together*. For this study, the researchers sent a survey to past and present members of giving circles as well as to a control group of "donors and public service graduate students and practitioners who were likely not in a giving circle" (p. 17). Following is a comparison of my sample to the sample from Eikenberry and Bearman's study. Using *only* the giving circle respondents' statistics and percentages, the data from my pool of participants are compared. As the reader will see, my pool, while much smaller, is quite similar to Eikenberry and Bearman's sample, yet my data contain a few notable differences.

- The total number of responses from giving circle members to the Eikenberry and Bearman study was 331. My sample includes 30+ members or past members of 6 giving circles of various types and sizes.

- The proportion of giving circle member survey respondents who were women was 82.8%. By design my group is 100% women. One of the giving circles in my sample, however, is a coed circle but only women members were interviewed.

- The survey respondents included significantly more people of diverse racial/ethnic identities (28%) than my data pool (9%).
- Survey respondents average age was 49.5 compared to 56 for my group.
- On average, the survey respondents attended religious services (1.91) slightly less frequently than my group (2.02).
- Regarding political orientation, giving circle survey members were more likely to describe themselves as liberal or middle-of-the-road (4.99) compared to my group (4.7).
- When it comes to education, the giving circle survey group was slightly less educated (2.49) than my data pool (2.52).
- The average annual family income of the giving circle members was around $106,500. Because so few of my participants completed this item on the survey form, it is not possible to compare the groups using this data.

Limitations of group dynamics. The rules of group dynamics are always at play within focus groups and individual behavior is thus subject to the group's influence. Social power—the potential or ability to influence others in a group setting—is an ever-present phenomenon that has important implications for small group interaction. An understanding of the nature of social power and how it can be used to advantage in the context of focus group interviewing was an important component of planning and conducting these focus groups (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 44).

As the focus group moderator, I remained aware of the possibility of leading participants and encouraging them to respond to my own prejudices. This was especially true for the kinds of questions I was asking, for if I presumed the answer in the question, the data resulting from the discussion would be suspect. I also guarded against participants saying what they think I wanted to hear by stating among the ground rules that there are no right or wrong answers. Additionally, I have a vested interest in the outcome; I have my own hypotheses about the findings. This interest exposes the findings to a charge of bias that I had to continually assess as the conversations proceeded.

Another potential problem was that some participants with strong personalities and/or similar views could try to dominate the discussion, while other, less confident participants could be more quiet. Dominant or opinionated participants can skew the discussion leading to an assumption that the group is more consistent in their thinking than they really are. Because individuals who disagree may not speak out, this was something I had to guard against. I attempted to draw out those who remained silent and tried to engage them by direct interaction and questioning.

There are additional limitations as well. The time required to participate in a focus group proved to be a large problem as it precluded people from volunteering to participate. This, of course, had implications for my obtaining a more diverse sample. Related to this concern with time is the issue of data. A 90-minute interview with an individual can explore issues in-depth while a 90-minute focus group with 2 to 7 participants results in less in-depth data from each participant. This is a tradeoff that was perhaps too costly. While the data could have been gathered by either interview or focus group, focus groups allowed for interaction among the participants. This interaction can open up avenues of thought that the interviewer, as an outsider, might not easily or ordinarily be attuned to.

Though not shared by all scholars, Krueger and Casey (2000) believe focus groups require carefully trained moderators, while other scholars suggest this is a myth.

> It may be more than merely feasible to find a good moderator from within the research team; it may in fact be preferable to do so. . . . When seeking an

> alternative to a professional moderator, the key is to find someone who has experience working with groups (not necessarily leading groups) and who is also capable of working with both the research team and the participants in this particular project. (Morgan, 1988, p. 5)

Limitations of the moderator's skill should not be equated with limitations of the method, however. I have had some experience conducting focus groups and have observed many more. Repeated experience with the focus group method has helped me become knowledgeable about focus group procedures and a competent interpreter of focus group data.

A further limitation or caution exists when using the focus group method with existing groups. In this case, participants almost always knew each other and were somewhat familiar with the values, habits, and interests of their colleagues. I had to use my "outsider" position to redirect the conversation when it went off topic or became too "insider-focused." Confidentiality can also be a sensitive issue with internal focus groups, for both the moderator and the participants (Krueger & Casey, 2000). In my opening remarks to the group, I reassured them that I had taken, and would continue to take, the utmost care with the resulting transcripts. I was also sure they understood that what transpired in the group discussion should not be shared with others outside the group. While it is true that moderating a focus group with participants who know one another can be difficult, this scenario also has some positive characteristics that will be further explained in the data section.

Limitation of Narrative Analysis

Besides the small data pool, another limitation of this study is its use of narrative for analysis. Just as any research method has its limitations, it is also true that every research method is not suitable for all inquiries.

Critics of stories often claim that story telling suffers from an absence of authenticity and a difficulty of scholarly interpretation. Others suggest that the use of story research results from a researcher's inability to utilize experimental design methods and statistical techniques for data analysis. Other criticisms of story include the view that it places extreme emphasis on the researchers' personal meaning and that the relationship between story and reality does not necessarily correspond.

As a researcher, when I take people's stories and try to place them into a larger picture through narrative, I am imposing meaning on their lived experiences. As a result, the participants can never be quite free of my interpretation of their lives and the effects of this imposed telling of the stories can be powerful (Josselson, 1996).

I recognize the risk I have taken that other researchers might dismiss this research for its failure to conform to previous, conventional research standards. Analyzing an individual narrative does not lend itself to empirical investigation. Furthermore, interpretations that emerge in narrative are not open to verification since they emanate from the beliefs that are the collaborative construction of the interviewee and the researcher. I am also aware of the possibility for a different interpretation of the data, given the perspectives and experiences of others. However, the story of women's leadership needs to be illuminated through their own voices and stories for the reasons previously discussed, and it is this mandate that remains at the core of this study.

Skype

Three of the focus groups were conducted face-to-face. Another two were conducted using Skype. One, while originally planned as a Skype session, was ultimately a conference call.

Skype is an innovative method of communication, similar to a telephone call, which uses a software package, a camera, and a microphone to allow users to chat and videoconference over the Internet. As of 2010, Skype had 663 million registered users.

While the face-to-face interview remains the gold standard in social science research, Skype is an example of trying to use current technology to expand research techniques within the social science field. Other methods, including the utilization of email, videoconference, and Voice Over Internet Protocols (VoIP)—Skype is a VoIP—are often viewed as compromises rather than valid techniques in themselves when conducting focus groups (Hay-Gibson, 2009).

Using Skype (or other VoIP software programs) to conduct interviews is a relatively recent phenomenon in qualitative research but is increasingly being used as a method for gathering social science data. It has great potential in qualitative research. While there has been some limited research on various aspects of Skype, most of the published papers on Skype focus on its architecture, engineering, voice quality, traffic congestion, and security. Those are not considerations for this research.

There are, however, both benefits and disadvantages to using Skype in a research setting. Skype is relatively free and very easy to set up. The download is relatively quick and the personal information required to set up an account does not compromise privacy. Audio capture is also possible and a digital MP3 file of the communication can be created. This allows the conversation to be listened to again and again. This also simplifies the upload of the file to a service for transcription.

Arranging face-to-face meetings can be difficult for a variety of reasons including difficulty in traveling to the site and finding the time to interview individuals. Skype is an alternative to meeting in real time and it is possible that using Skype might actually be less intrusive than a physical visit.

User needs, training, documentation, system reliability, and ease of connection are all also considerations when deciding to use Skype. The successful use of Skype for interviews requires learning the new skill of presentation on camera in conjunction with interviewing skills. Cognizance of the time lag in asking questions and hearing the response is necessary. This phenomenon could be off putting if the participants are unfamiliar with the technology. Thus familiarity and confidence with technology is required, as a disruption in connectivity can ruin the flow of the interview.

Among the technological concerns are feasibility and costs. The value of the interview from the perspective of the researcher and the participant is also a consideration. Other drawbacks are familiarity with the technology and the reliability of the technology. It is possible (and often probable) that connectivity is problematic as was the case with one of my focus groups.

Some considerations when considering Skype as a data collection tool include both technological concerns as well as interpersonal concerns. The table below outlines some of the primary advantages and disadvantages to using Skype for social science research.

Table 3.3 Skype

Element	Advantages and Disadvantages
Cost/Expense	Skype is free to download while the cost of landline calls, though inexpensive, are not free. Additionally, travel to a location is costly, both in money and time. Environmental costs of travel might also be a consideration.
Human Element	With Skype, participants and the moderator can see each other and read each other’s faces and body language during the course of the interview. The Skype experience also, it can be argued, creates the advantage—from a social science research perspective—of the “fly-on-the-wall” perspective. A negative aspect of this may be nervousness or shyness on the part of the participants about being on camera. Personal privacy may also be a concern.
Time	The time it takes to set up a VoIP interview is less than the travel time it usually takes to reach the interview site.
Availability	Participants feel in control when they can schedule the interviews themselves, and meetings can be scheduled on a shorter notice than their physical availability. Skype also may be a current technology that will allow a researcher to gain access to participant groups who, for any number of reasons, may be difficult to connect with.
Practicality	When arranging focus groups via Skype, I found that participants who were amenable to a Skype session were already using the technology for other business or personal reasons. They had few concerns with using the technology, as they were familiar with the way it worked.
Recordable	Audio recordings of the session can be made with a low-cost capture software. Only the researcher needs this capability to capture audio. The participants require no additional hardware or software to participate.
Technology Requirements	Internet access is required by both parties. Technological literacy is also a concern.

Ethical Considerations

Focus groups can present some ethical concerns. Anytime a researcher works with human participants, ethical considerations must be examined. The literature is full of examples of research that has failed to protect the autonomy, the sensibilities, and even the health of research participants. Too often, the literature shows, a population is the focus of research that they never have access to after the research is completed.

Focus groups can elicit highly personal information from individuals, including their feelings, perceptions, and reflections. Interviewers may be eliciting critical comments from participants. Among the ethical concerns when using the focus group method are how deep an interviewer should go in probing for information and reflection, and any potential misuse of the information, including any harm that may come to the organization the interviewees belong to. The most important ethical consideration is to tell the truth about what I found. One way to avoid this possible problem is to report back to the informants, not so much to verify the findings but more to get feedback on what I have found. Of course this solution, itself, can be problematic, as it can lead to conflict among participants who may not agree with the findings. So long as I am true to the method, I can assure the participant and the reader of the validity of the study.

The question of confidentiality is problematic. According to Barbour and Kitzinger (1999), focus group participants cannot be given an absolute guarantee that confidences shared in the group will be respected. I addressed such ethical issues again when setting the ground rules prior to the session.

Identifying Giving Circles

As my interest in this topic first surfaced at a Women's Funding Conference, this is where I began to gather possible contacts for the focus groups. Whenever I came across someone who I thought might be a potential link to identifying giving circles for my research, which happened often in the course of my paid work also, I added that name and contact information to my growing database.

In addition, I had the opportunity to attend other philanthropy-focused conferences, including the COF, the Center on Philanthropy, and the Ohio Grantmakers Forum. Invariably when the topic of my dissertation research became known in the course of conversations with other attendees at these conferences, I received other potential contacts.

When my research had progressed to the point of identifying and getting commitment from the giving circles with whom I might conduct the focus groups, my first outreach was through email. Emails sent to individuals I had met along the way at various philanthropy conferences failed to result in many introductions to potential giving circles, however. Others among my contacts were the principle researchers in the scholarship on giving circles. These contacts proved to be tremendously helpful, as they were able to broker introductions to other networks of giving circles

For example, Buffy Beaudoin-Schwartz, Communications Director of the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, put out an email from me to the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers network. This network consists of a network of 35 regional associations of grantmakers who represent more than 4,000 foundations, corporations, organizations, and individual donors. They provide professional and association management services for their members and help to leverage collective resources to support philanthropy across the country. The Forum has also published the majority of the research that has been written on giving circles and provides a large amount of the known literature on giving circles on their web page.

My email to this group outlined the purpose of my research, the criteria for participation in my research, and how I would be collecting data. This one outreach proved to be the most lucrative for identifying interested giving circles.

Other researchers in the field, notably Jessica Bearman, principle author with Angela Eikenberry on several research reports on giving circles, and Sandy Bettger, a principal in the Giving Circle Network, put me in touch with other principle movers and shakers within the giving circle environment. As a result of these introductions I was able to send additional emails to women I had met through the WFN.

I also contacted more than 35 colleagues whom I have met throughout my career in this field and through serving on nonprofit boards. Several of these colleagues in turn put me in touch with yet others who they felt might be interested in participating in my research. One contact in particular sent out my request through her networks in the COF. One interesting footnote to this outreach effort was one colleague's observation that no one in her network had heard of a giving circle but were intrigued and expressed interest in starting a giving circle! This validates for me that this funding mechanism of the giving circle is not as widely known as it should be and that there is a great untapped potential for encouraging more women to engage in philanthropy through a giving circle.

I also sent more than 20 "cold call" emails using the list of participants from the WFN annual conference held in May 2009 in Denver. I received replies from a few of these cold calls but no commitments to participate. Of interest especially was one reply from an Executive Director at a women's fund who, though she was not a member of a giving circle herself, inquired about having a copy of my results when the research is complete. This was further validation that the research I'm undertaking has an audience within the philanthropic community and beyond giving circle members.

This outreach effort resulted in the six giving circles that are the subject of this research on leadership within philanthropy. Once the six circles were committed, dates and locations for each were determined. Prior to the focus group, each participant received a letter of invitation, outlining the questions that would be asked in the course of the focus group. In addition, in the case of the Skype focus groups, a letter of consent as well as the short survey was shared prior to the focus group. For those circles that took place face-to-face, only a letter of invitation with the focus group questions was shared beforehand. The participants in these groups received hardcopies of both the letter of consent and the short survey at the time of the focus group.

Less has been written about how to analyze focus groups than how to conduct them. In general, the topics for analysis are dictated by the focus group guide (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). This is why the guide plays such an important part in the research and why analysis actually begins with the creation of the guide.

The guide was designed to probe the perceptions and experiences of leadership of giving circle members. When beginning each giving circle, I shared with the group what the research topic was about. Even though each had received a copy of the invitation letter, along with the questions, it was important that I not assume the participants all shared the same knowledge about the purpose of the focus group. I shared some basic ground rules with the participants, asked the participants for any additional rules they would like to add and then began the questioning.

The first questions asked each member to talk about how they came to participate in the giving circle. Besides serving as an icebreaker (which is essential to setting a safe environment for the discussion), these questions proved to be eye opening for other members. In many groups, members did not know the stories of how each had come to join the circle. These questions also revealed participants' perceptions of philanthropy, its purpose, and its meaning in their lives. General questions about leadership followed. Within the conversation about leadership that ensued, questions about activism and empowerment were asked to probe for evidence of grassroots leadership within the giving circle (Eikenberry, 2006). Surprisingly, several giving circles self-identified as grassroots groups. These questions were followed by questions about networking and collaboration—asked in order to probe for evidence of distributive leadership.

If time permitted, additional questions from the guide were probed. Each focus group ended with an invitation to ask any questions or bring up any points that the participants had hoped to talk about. Few groups took advantage of this opportunity.

Each focus group was audio taped. The face-to-face focus groups were taped with a digital tape recorder placed on the desk or table, the Skype focus groups were taped using inexpensive audio-capture software. Once the focus group was completed the audiotapes were sent to a commercial firm for word-for-word transcribing.

When the transcription was received it was member checked or shared with each participant of that particular focus group. Member checking serves to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of a study (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). Each participant had the opportunity to comment on or remove anything that was troublesome to them. No one elected to make any substantive changes to the transcripts. Besides offering this opportunity for clarity and correctness, reading the transcripts provided the participants the opportunity to reflect on the experiences. Most participants found the focus group to be a good experience and commented that they had learned a lot about other participants in the circle that they hadn't known before.

Coding for Analysis

I utilized a free software program, TAMS Analyzer, to code the transcripts. My outside coder suggested this program as she had used it herself when completing her dissertation work the previous year.

TAMS Analyzer is designed for coding and analyzing qualitative, textual information such as interviews and observation/field notes. Transcripts and notes are simply imported into the software and it keeps track of sections of text selected by the researcher and coded with significant keywords. Sections of text can be overlapped and more than one keyword or code can be assigned to the same section of text. Coded text can then be extracted from the larger transcript for analysis.

I conducted the first two focus groups face-to-face, just one day apart. Using the topics indicated by the questions in the focus group guide for analysis, I read these first two transcripts several times. The first time I read the transcripts to fill in any gaps in the transcription from my notes. I also used any responses I received from the participants themselves who had read the transcripts and were able to provide missing information. These are the transcripts I provided to the outside coder. After importing the files into TAMS, I reread the transcripts assigning keywords to the text. As I assigned key words, TAMS kept track and generated a list of codes I had used. My outside coder was doing the same with these first two transcripts. After this second reading and first coding, we had a series of conversations, talking through why each of us had used the key terms we had.

This process led me back to my focus group guide. Taking into consideration the preliminary glimpses into the results that the coding seemed to be pointing to, I tweaked the guide a little, adding a question about impact. When talking of leadership, participants in these first two groups seemed to really be talking about impact. This deserved a closer, more targeted look, thus the addition of the question.

The second two groups were conducted via Skype. As discussed earlier, arranging face-to-face meetings can be difficult for a variety of reasons including travel and time. Skype proved to be a viable alternative to meeting in real time and it is possible that using Skype was actually less intrusive than a face-to-face visit. Using Skype necessitated more contact with the participants beforehand, and of course, someone in the group needed to be familiar with the technology. In preparation for the first Skype session, I even had a "test" with one member the day before the focus group was to take place. Both of these focus groups via Skype went on without a hitch and I was able to capture the audio off the computer in an MP3 file. These files were then sent out to the same commercial firm for transcription. Using the same protocols and procedures as with the first two transcripts, these Skype transcripts were also coded by both myself and the outside coder. Once the transcripts were coded, we again discussed the results by phone. The guide appeared adequate for probing the topics of the focus of this research.

Looking at the guide one final time before conducting the final two focus groups, I didn't make any changes to the guide. I used the same questions in the same order for the last focus groups. One of the last two focus groups was to be conducted by Skype, (though it ended up being a conference call) the final group was conducted face-to-face. As with the previous audiotapes, these were sent out for transcription and the outside coder and I coded these transcripts, again using TAMS Analyzer. The ensuing conversation between the coder and myself was quite brief.

In addition to coding, TAMS also allows the identification of the number of times a key term is used within each transcript, both as an aggregate and by individual speakers, as well as by the number of times a key term is used within a combination of transcripts. Using this information, a frequency analysis of key terms was conducted. TAMS also allows the generation of summary statistics (or counts how many records meet a specific search criteria). These features were utilized in creating the frequency analysis matrices that will be discussed fully in the next section.

Chapter IV: Data

The data for this research consist of the focus group guide used to conduct the discussion, the transcripts resulting from the six focus groups, a short survey administered to each participant, and information gleaned from the websites of some of the giving circles.

Bachiochi and Weiner (2002) recommend that when analyzing focus groups, themes that emerge from the group and specific individuals be evaluated by three frequency measures: 1) the absolute frequency or the number of times a key topic is mentioned by any person in any focus group; 2) individual participant frequency, or the number of times the topic is mentioned by a particular person; and 3) interview frequency, or the number of times the topic is mentioned in a focus group. The absolute and interview frequency analyses were completed to ensure that an accurate picture of the importance of each topic and theme be accurately determined. Because the data sample is so small, individual participant frequencies would reveal little additional useful data and thus were not calculated.

Each giving circle "case" that follows uses the interview frequency results from each individual focus group to provide a focus for the narrative description of the giving circle discussion of leadership. Graphic representation of these frequencies is presented as part of each narrative case. Additional points of data unique to each case are also presented. The last section addresses, again through narrative, the themes identified from the absolute frequency measures. This measure combines all the transcripts into one.

Each case also features data gathered via a short demographic survey completed by most every participant.

Giving Circle E

Giving Circle E At-A-Glance

The participants range in age from 49 to 62. All are Caucasian. Two of the three are married, none have children under the age of 18 in the house. All three participants have Master's degrees. One works part-time, one works full-time, and one doesn't work outside the home. One of the participants listed a household income of $130,000; another $153,000, and the third more than $1,000,000. One participant never attends church, one rarely attends church, and the third attends church about once a month. Two of the participants describe themselves as liberal, the third describes herself as conservative. All have previous volunteer service.

I met with three members of this giving circle (the giving circle has approximately 100 members and more than 35 "friends") in a conference room in an office building at an office park in the afternoon of a workday in the summer of 2010. This location was chosen because the full board of the giving circle would be meeting following the focus group. I met for approximately 90 minutes with 3 members. Two of the participants could be considered formal leaders having served either as president or committee chair in the circle.

All of the participants in this focus group are currently working outside the home. One owns a company, another has worked in the not-for-profit arena for many years, the third in for-profit business. Each participant has been a member of the giving circle for more than five years and, at one time or another, served in formal leadership positions ranging from president to committee chair. One member had been instrumental in the founding of the giving circle, having been part of another giving circle in another city. She was responsible for bringing the giving circle concept to the community.

These members first heard about giving circles either in a *Parade* magazine or an article in a local business journal. The circle came together serendipitously through the matchmaking efforts of the community foundation. The local foundation was instrumental in connecting a few women who inquired about the feasibility of forming a circle after they all had read the same article in the newspaper.

As one member told the story,

> So we kind of just hooked up even though we didn't really know each other. So quite an interesting story when women come at something from totally different directions. My colleague knew women probably better than I did in that she had owned a women's clothing store, and I had just been in philanthropy work, reading grants in another capacity through a nonprofit recognition program. . . . I really didn't want to do it alone. I felt that I needed a cohort or a pal to do it.

This giving circle is part of a nationally known network of giving circles, made up of mostly women, who share a model or structure with others in the network. They are not part of a "chain," rather they operate independently from others in the network. They do not pay fees or have official ties or obligations to any other giving circles in the network. Most, however, share principles, guidelines, and best practices through the website, e-newsletter, and more formal annual meetings of the network.

Like most giving circles, this giving circle holds as its premise that while each member may wish to be able to give large grants of perhaps $100,000 or more, for most people this is not possible. But by joining with other women and pooling their resources, they can be impactful philanthropists. The thinking is that collective giving gives the organization a stronger voice and a more profound impact on the community.

This circle is located in a large midwestern city and is a 501(c)(3). Its members' donations are tax deductible. They consider themselves a "pass-through" fund and, like most circles in this network, their focus area is regional. The circle maintains a website and archives information about previous years' giving on the site.

The circle's stated mission is to improve the quality of life in the community by effecting sustainable social change. They fund critical needs, new ventures, and innovative ways to solve social problems. While they see other organizations in the community like the United Way providing operational funds to nonprofits, as one participant suggested,

> Our vision for our funds is to really let a good organization step out and try something new and different or take something to scale that they know is good. So there really is a difference in terms of the focus and the kind of work you would do.

Early on the giving circle realized they needed to do some educating about their group with organizations within the community. "We did a learning session with the nonprofits the first year, I believe. But they had to kind of learn what we were looking for, about community needs and critical needs and that kind of thing."

Another major goal of this network of giving circles is the education of their members. Learning about community issues and the nonprofits that are addressing the issues most effectively is one way members insure their philanthropy makes a major impact. But other benefits of this focus on education also emerge. As one member shared,

> And then there's the very abstract, almost impossible way to measure impact on the women who go into neighborhoods and organizations that they've never been in before and they learn about needs that they didn't know existed. You kind of hear about homelessness, you hear about abuse. But you know, when you really hear the details and the nuances and the challenges. So they're different people as a result of participating in that committee process.

In addition to education, grant (decision) making is also a focus. The giving circle has a four-step grant application that includes an initial letter of inquiry, followed by a request for a full proposal from the prospective recipient. Members of the giving circle also make a site visit, and, when appropriate, a presentation to the membership is made at the annual meeting. The only membership requirement is a $1,000 annual contribution from each member and each member who contributes gets one vote. The application process is open to any regional or local nonprofit, given they have “the vision and capacity” to manage a gift of $100,000 or more. The members of the circle award the grants at an annual celebration, usually a dinner. Competition is among a number of finalists with the winner receiving at minimum $100,000. The only subsequent requirement for the grant recipient is to report back to the circle’s members about how the funds they received strengthened their organization.

One participant offered this in answer to why she found the grant decision making so gratifying,

> The process of consensus, this has been one of the best lessons. Consensus is not an easy barrier [to overcome]. But it’s probably the best when it comes to making wise philanthropic decisions. So these agencies that make it through the whole process and become a recipient of our large grants have quite the bragging rights.

The leadership structure of this giving circle is traditional with a president, vice president and other officers elected every two years. Each of the five areas of focus (listed below) has a committee. Each committee has its own structure but usually appoints a chair and vice chair. It may include a secretary for minutes, or a coordinator. The committees meet 3 or 4 times a year and members report they spend an average of 14 hours of volunteer time each year with the giving circle. The first grant given by the group was in June 2006 and in 2009 the group gave away $165,000.

The giving circle has five areas of focus:

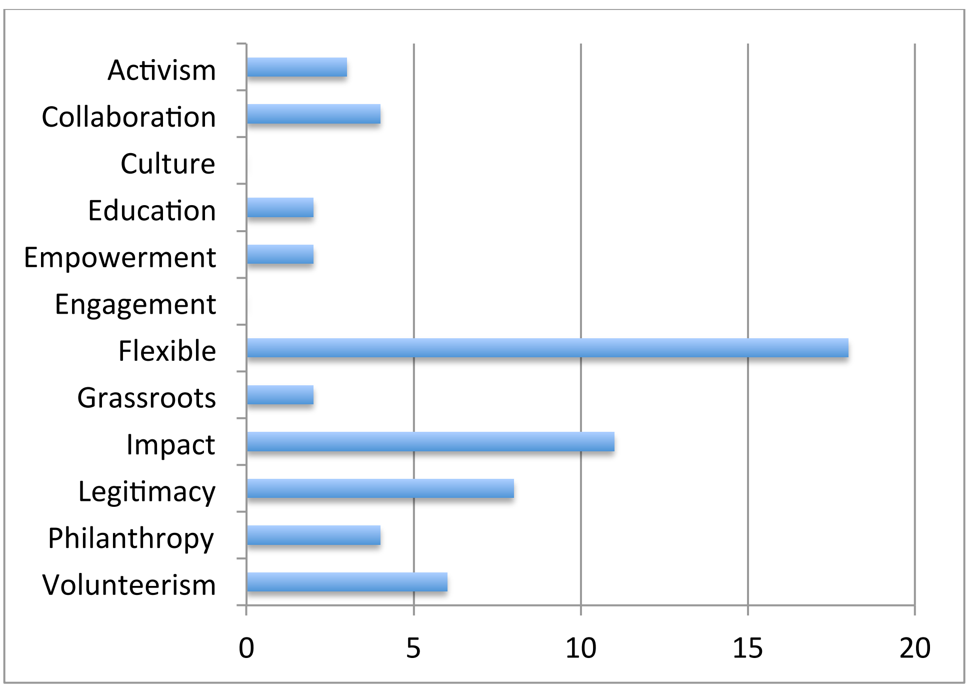
1. Arts and culture—includes theatre, museums, visual and performing arts and literary pursuits;
2. Education—initiatives that advance learning opportunities and improve education;
3. Environment—initiatives that improve, enhance, or restore the environment; encourage research, public awareness and education relating to the environment;

promote conservation of natural resources; restore, preserve, revitalize, or enhance recreational facilities; or promote animal welfare;

4. Family—initiatives that strengthen and enhance the lives of children and families; and
5. Health and wellness—initiatives that improve the mental/physical well being of people.

On leadership. As Figure 4.1 below shows, a frequency analysis of the transcript from this focus group reveals that when talking about leadership within the circle, the members are most concerned with issues of flexibility, legitimacy, impact, volunteerism, and collaboration.

Figure 4.1 Interview Frequency Measurement for Focus Group E



The members of this giving circle talked about how pivotal a role leadership plays in their success. For them, leadership in its simplest terms is a lot of old-fashioned labor, getting their hands dirty, and rolling up their sleeves. The skill of listening, as a function of legitimacy, was paramount to them. The circle's leadership, they said, needs to be able to "hear" the majority voice of the circle and be able to acquiesce to the voice, even when they don't agree. This way, the women suggested, the work of the circle gets done in a complementary way with members working alongside traditional or positional leadership. Part of the ability to hear the majority voice, for these women, is found in the decision making experienced within the circle. These women hold consensus decision making as a high value. As one member shared, "The process of deliberation that happens in the committee meetings is one of the best things about this (the giving circle). Hearing others' ideas . . . is one of the best parts."

A story told by one participant illustrates this point. When their membership didn't grow as quickly as they thought, the circle considered changing the way they award the collected fund. It was a soul-searching decision for the group. As one participant shared,

> We had to go through a process. Different people had to take different leadership parts in that decision-making process in order to come to the decision. But I will say that when we came to that decision, there was no one, or very few, that looked back and regretted the decision. But it was instrumental for this group to come to that spot.

More than once, when talking about their leadership experiences, members talked about the importance of collaboration within the group. One founding member talked about needing a "cohort" to work with to start the circle. Finding a partner to work with—"we both had a passion for the idea"—meant that the two could "spur each other on in many ways." Collaboration outside the circle was also important to the members. They felt partnering with a community foundation was a good decision for their group. The foundation was able to endorse the circle and encourage other nonprofit and philanthropic groups in the community to accept them. Rather than compete with existing nonprofits, this circle suggests every community needs both formal organizations and other informal groups. One member explained it this way,

> The United Way makes the ongoing grants to organizations that provide those vital services that the community deems are necessary. They provide, basically, operational funds for them, the sustainability funds. Our vision for our funds is to really let a good organization step out and try something new and different.

Collaboration also has a third dimension in the work of the giving circle. The circle encourages collaboration among their recipients as well. As one member said,

> We promote collaboration. We look for collaboration in our proposals. We don't really want to fund folks who out there trying to do it all themselves, who don't seem to have a good sense of what resources are out there. We don't want people reinventing the wheel. We promote collaboration . . . it kind of brings groups together.

For the members of this giving circle, leadership has taken different forms depending on the stage of the giving circle at the time. They suggested that different stages of the circle demanded different kinds of leadership from everyone in the group. Leadership, they were adamant, is not the work of one individual. "Participating," suggested one member, "is the first step into leadership." But complicating this idea of leadership is the voluntary nature of the giving circle. The giving circle functions more like an association than a nonprofit organization. For many scholars, these two terms represent the same concept. However, when volunteerism is a characteristic of any common or collective undertaking, its structure, by necessity, is associative. This is, of course, true of the giving circle. In formal organizations, on the other hand, it is often its hierarchy that defines it.

As a member explained, "we do the heavy lifting here," meaning the work of the circle is carried out by volunteer members. There is no staff to make the phone calls, run the meetings, or read the grant proposals. This, of course, leads to a problem of balance. The members of this circle expressed concern about finding the balance between connecting and overloading the members.

Flexibility of participation within the circle appears to be essential for everyone and yet the circle must maintain consistency if it is to remain impactful. As one member insisted, “we need to find the balance between doing the work perfectly and doing it well as volunteers.” Flexibility is evident in the way the group organizes itself. The board members tenure is staggered so that everyone is not new to the board at the same time. The experienced board members bring along the newer members who in a few years time will be doing the same for other new board members. Some of the committee chairs have even experimented with a kind of job-sharing situation when a position proved to be too much work for one person. As one participant remarked about this experiment, “So I think that speaks to some flexibility and adjusting along the way that’s going to continue to be necessary.”

When a few younger members expressed concern about affording the amount of contribution required, the group began a “syndicate” group made up of 4 members with 1 vote, each contributing $100 toward the standard $400 contribution. This way younger, less wealthy women can participate in the circle.

Flexibility even figures in why the women become members of the group. As one participant said,

> We have professional women who are looking for the networking aspect. We have women who have chosen to be at home with their children, for them the circle brings some substance into their life, puts them with other bright women and uses their brain. We have older women who are empty nesters and are enjoying the opportunity to take the time to do something like this. So there’s really something for everyone and it’s all okay.

Giving Circle C

Giving Circle C At-A-Glance

The participants range in age from 65 to 78. Four are married, one is a widow. None have children under the age of 18 living in the house. All are college graduates, two of them hold advanced degrees. None are currently employed, all are retired. Most chose not to answer the question about household income, the one that did answer has a household income of $500,000. One participant never attends church, one attends occasionally, three attend services regularly. Three describe themselves as liberal, one describes herself as conservative, and one describes herself as progressive. All have extensive volunteer experience.

I met for 90 minutes face-to-face with this group of women in the home of one of them. The focus group took place on a weekday afternoon with five members of the group. While this giving circle is coed, I interviewed only women members of the group. We gathered around a table on the back patio of the home, and talked while we drank lemonade and iced tea. All of these participants were retired or, as they described themselves, "post-peak." There was lots of laughter as the group talked together about their leadership experiences within the giving circle. It was clear to me that these women knew each other well.

The previous occupations of the women in this group range from teaching to heading up social service organizations, to leading fair housing organizations, and other nonprofit progressive organizations. All the women have held traditional leadership positions throughout their careers. All also have extensive volunteer experiences, in fact several have served on national nonprofit boards. Several of the women mentioned their church as another volunteer activity. By virtue of their longevity in the community—often many decades long—all of these women could easily be viewed as movers and shakers within the community. All of these women volunteer less now than when they were younger. The majority are also mothers with grown children and grandchildren.

The objective of this giving circle, according to one member, is to encourage people to engage in philanthropy “by learning more about the local issues and by participating in the grant-making process.” They also stress having fun, getting to know each other better in an informal setting, and “engaging in meaningful philanthropy” as a group.

This giving circle is located in a wealthy suburb of a large midwestern city. Because the giving circle is not a 501(c)(3), each member contributes a personal check made out to the selected nonprofit. All the checks are sent together with a cover letter to the designated nonprofit. The geographic focus of their giving is local, with most of the funding going to city/urban organizations. The circle is managed through a local community foundation. The foundation provides the circle with a staff member to handle administrative duties. Every member of the group commits $1,000 each year to fund one or more projects. Since this is a coed group (though only female members participated in the focus group), the couples commit $2,000 every year. The circle has awarded more than $135,000 over the last 7 years.

One member of the group described their education and grant process this way:

> Well, we come up with a topic at the end of our year. We all suggest possible topics and then have a meeting where we sometimes vote, sometimes don’t vote—sometimes it’s just consensus. It’s very informal. Once we come up with a topic, then we usually try to think of an individual in the community who can give us an overview and provide us with the names of people that would be good to bring in as speakers. Then we invite those individuals to come and speak to us about whatever aspect of the topic they are familiar with. Then at the end of the year, in November or even before that happens, a small group of us meets. We look at the organizations that we had speakers from and try to come up with two or three that we think would be the most amenable, that we would like to consider for granting. I should also say that every one of the speakers that we bring in, we ask them how our funding would help them and where it would be utilized or how it would best be utilized. We give them some indication of the amount that we can provide. Then after we meet in this small group, we go back to those three or four organizations and ask them to submit a proposal—one page, something simple. How much do you want, what do you want it for, that sort of thing. Then we go back to the (entire) group (with our recommendations). . . . Then we discuss them, and vote.

The giving circle was founded in 2003 by one individual who remains the primary organizer of the giving circle, the "glue" that holds the group together, as one member described him. Participants in the focus group agreed, "We don't mind that he's doing that." In fact, one member remarked, "I'm not sure it (the giving circle) would continue without him." Others disagreed, but admitted a different process of organization would have to be created if the founder ever stepped down.

The group currently has 22 members, with mostly couples and 4 single individuals. While the group is open to new members, they don't want to get so big they can't meet in each other's homes. As one member said, "We tried dividing for a couple of years because it was getting too big. That didn't seem to be as successful." Another member agreed, adding, "None of us liked it." So consensus was that the group would stay small.

Most of these members came to the giving circle at the invitation of the founder. Some women mentioned the opportunity to get to know other people in the community as one reason for joining the giving circle. Others were interested in learning about issues in the community. Most saw the giving circle as an opportunity to practice a more targeted and thoughtful philanthropy.

The members meet informally several times a year. Evidence of the group's informality was brought home when I asked how old the group was. No one in the focus group knew the answer exactly. Similarly, when asked about how the circle came up with their name, one participant said, "I think we just sort of tossed some things around. . . . Then we finally said well, let's just call it that because we didn't have a formal name."

Another member of the group, however, had information on every organization they've ever given to, along with their first mission statement written in 2003 and its update from 2007, as well as the giving circle’s principles. So while the structure of the giving circle appears to be quite informal, at least one individual considers herself the “unofficial historian.”

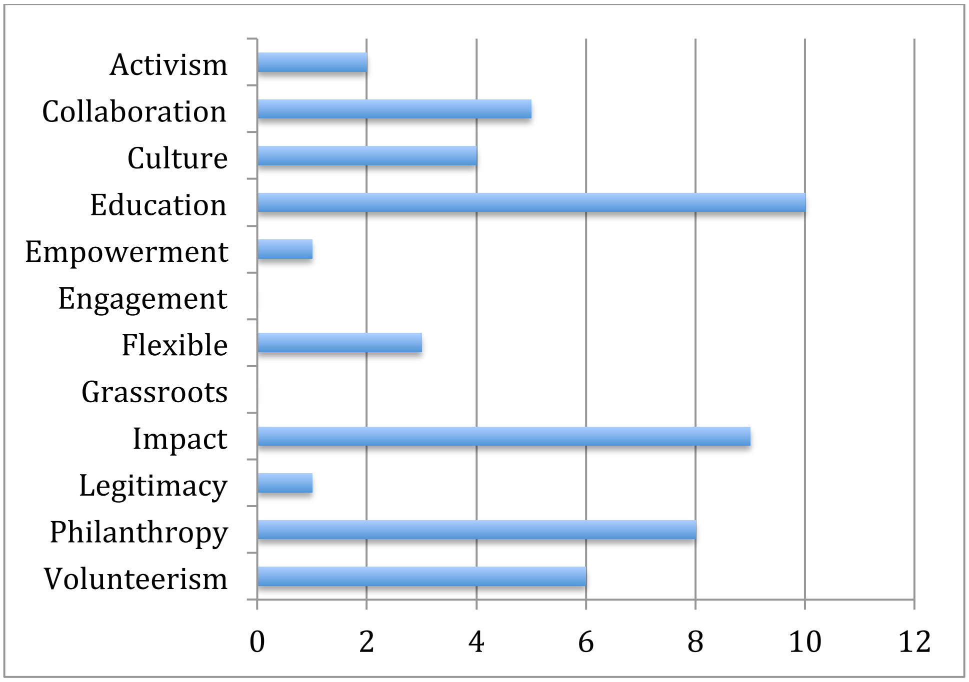
So, the group does have a formal mission statement though it does not appear to be something they focus on much. The core group has been together long enough that most of the group has internalized the focus or mission of the group.

The group also has a set of principles upon which they operate. These include the assertions that:

- citizens can be empowered by gaining greater understanding of the issues facing their community;
- in order to make intelligent gifts, individuals need to be informed about the effectiveness of local, nonprofit, governmental, and educational organizations;
- philanthropy begins at home—individuals and groups should not look entirely to the government or foundation to solve problems facing their community; and
- informed individuals can make a difference with a relatively small amount of money, especially when they give together.

On leadership. As Figure 4.2 below shows, the members of this giving circle, when talking about leadership within the circle, were most concerned about putting their philanthropic and voluntary impulses to work in a collaborative way by learning about and having an impact on issues in the community. Their frequency measures reflect an almost textbook definition of a giving circle.

Figure 4.2 Interview Frequency Measurement for Focus Group C



While every person in this focus group has previously been in a leadership position—most of them career-related or with formal nonprofit organizations—when considering their leadership within the giving circle one member replied, "We don't have officers or formal leadership positions. Our founder does everything and the community foundation provides support. This gets rid of the onerous piece of doing the minutes and things like that." Her colleague quickly chimed in, "I don't think we're looking for leadership positions." Following on that comment, another member added, "That's exactly what I was going to say. We are happy to have (our founder). It's not like we're wanting that role though."

This series of comments led to an animated conversation among the members. One member joined in with this comment,

> I think we got into nonprofits (as a career choice) because we had a passion or a real interest. Then you either become executive director, CEO, or board president because you're capable, you know how to collaborate, you have some vision and all those things.

Another member articulated, “We’ve all been presidents of nonprofits, probably multiple times. We’ve either been executive directors or vice presidents of our own companies. You get to a point in life, you’ve been there, you’ve done that.”

The women agreed that they’ve all been leaders in previous positions and know they have the skills needed. But at this stage in their lives, they don’t have any desire to “take over.”

While this group of women appears content to let the founder lead the group, one member nevertheless asserts, “it’s kind of strange because we’ve all been leaders and can do that, but in this group we’re not passive.” Her colleague added, “I think we all feel empowered to share what we think and to make that known. But it’s certainly not jockeying at all for that (leadership).”

One woman summed up the exchange this way:

> I think that’s one of the nice things about the concept (of the giving circle) is it can taste of many flavors and ways of going about it. It has to be planted as an idea. There is something about supporting the getting going and the sharing of ideas and so on (that appeals to me).

When asked to consider their philanthropy as an example of leadership, most members of the group agreed that membership in the circle was not a motivation for their giving. As one member shared, “we really thought that kind of focused, doing it with a group, small, knowing it could make a difference, was a good way to think about giving. We’ve enjoyed it, so we’ve stayed with it.” Similarly, another participant offered this explanation. “I do think it’s a terrific way to get people involved (philanthropically) and knowledgeable about what's going on (in the community).”

As one participant suggested, “We are all fairly charitably inclined, anyhow.” However the variety of organizations they give their money to has expanded as a result of their participation in the circle, they feel. As another member said, “I would just say, from my limited knowledge, where we've given money are not the kinds of organizations that I necessarily personally would have previously given to. And I think that's very important."

Just as important as their philanthropy is the circle's commitment to education about community issues. As one member offered,

> It's a great way to learn. The issues are so different today than when we were coming along. Somehow food was not a major crisis in the 70s and 80s when I was most active in the community. So I find the issues are very interesting and I'm learning so much from them. For me, it's very rewarding.

Her colleague added,

> The learning I think is important to all of us. For me, it was both the learning aspect and the social aspect. And I like getting away from the social services aspect. For me, learning more about the environment is very important because I really knew absolutely nothing. Last year when we did food, and this year with immigration. The topics have focused on things that really all of us find interesting from a learning perspective.

Having an impact with their pooled funds is of great importance to this group of women also. As one woman said,

> I think we really try to figure out where it (their pooled funds) will really make a difference because it's not a lot of money. So, we're looking for something pretty tangible, something that wouldn't happen if we weren't there to support it, where we feel a connection to the organization.

Responding to the previous comment, another member said,

> So when you get into these . . . smaller agencies, then you can make more of an impact. But you don't make a huge impact on some of these big health and human services organizations. You're deluding yourself if you think you are.

Giving Circle A

Giving Circle A At-A-Glance

Participants range from 32 to 44 years of age. They are both Caucasian, married with children under the age of 18 in the house. Both are college-educated, one has an advanced degree. One participant works part-time, the other does not work outside the home. Only one of the participants completed the income line on the survey, her household income exceeded $120,000. This same participant attends weekly church services, while the other participant attends only occasionally. They both see themselves on the moderate/liberal side of the political spectrum and both have lots of previous volunteer experience.

This third focus group was conducted via Skype and took place during a weekday morning. It was my first experience using Skype technology to conduct a focus group. More on the use of Skype for focus groups can be found in the previous discussion of the methodology.

I met with just two members of the giving circle who gathered at the home of one of the members while I was in my office at work. The Internet connection worked fine and I encouraged the women, after preliminaries, to arrange themselves so that they faced each other and asked them to try to ignore the computer screen and talk to each other rather than to me. This was quite successful, evidenced by the comment of one participant who said after introductions, "This is so much better than a conference call. I hate talking on the phone where I can't see people." After having read the transcript provided to each participant as part of IRB, her colleague remarked in an email, "I think we built off each other really well." This focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Both participants in the focus group are stay-at-home mothers who have stopped out of careers to raise children. One member was a middle manager of marketing and sales within a large computer company. The other was employed as a technology and management consultant with a large national accounting firm. She is currently responsible for a lot of the circle's website development and has used technology to make some of the circle's processes and procedures more accessible to the members. While raising children, both women have decided this giving circle will be their primary volunteer outlet.

This circle, started in 2004, was the idea of a group of wealthy philanthropists in the city. In the course of the formation of a community trust, consideration was given to attracting more than just those individuals who could contribute millions of dollars. The philanthropists also wanted to be able to attract those in the city who perhaps could only contribute a few hundred dollars. Members of the trust had read about giving circles and thought that a giving circle might be the vehicle to involve more people in the community in this way. The formation of both groups—the community trust and the giving circle—was announced jointly. The trust remains a partner and coinvestor with the circle to this day. In addition to traditional members as other circles have, this circle also has sponsors and businesses that support the work of the giving circle.

This giving circle is located in a wealthy urban area in the eastern US. To-date the circle has involved more than 300 women. To be eligible to vote on the gift decision, members must have contributed $100 or more to the circle in the past 16 months. The circle is a 501(c)(3) and the members' donations are tax deductible.

The women of this giving circle pool their resources, both intellectual and financial, with the strategic purpose of serving the children, youth and families of their local community. They invest 100% of their member's contributions to programs addressing parental engagement. They believe a child's parents or primary caregivers are the strongest assets a child has, and that by helping parents obtain the education and support they need, they can create a strong foundation for their children's success. By helping parents engage in their children's social, emotional and cognitive development, the giving circle seeks to help ensure children's well-being. They believe this activity can lay a foundation for the long-term success of the community.

They use a decision process that utilizes a needs-based investment strategy, distributing grants where the research suggests their collective donations can make a difference or help them achieve their mission of providing programs addressing parental engagement. They educate their members about the community's needs through events and initiatives, offering flexible options for participation so members can be involved at the level that makes the most sense for them.

This giving circle maintains a quite formal structure of leadership. This includes officers such as president ex-officio, president, treasurer, and secretary. Directors-at-large within the giving circle include the gift officer, the membership officer, the communication and marketing officer, and the nominating officer. The circle also employs a community director and committee chairs. Both of the participants have held various leadership positions at one time or another though neither is currently serving.

The gift committee has the primary responsibility for developing gift recommendations for the board and membership to consider. They utilize a thorough and collaborative decision process, working with community leaders and other experts to better understand the barriers to children's success and identify successful approaches for addressing these barriers; nonprofit agencies to identify gaps in essential human services; and members to provide opportunities for them to comment on and learn about proposed gifts prior to final approval by the board.

The circle gives 2 kinds of gifts: priority gifts—substantial investments of more than $5,000 to expand existing programs or start new initiatives in parental engagement; and developmental gifts—no more than $3,000 to nonprofits and initiatives that support the success of children.

The circle uses specific criteria to make their funding decisions. Funded projects must contribute to the success of children; encourage collaboration with parents and service providers and apply best practices.

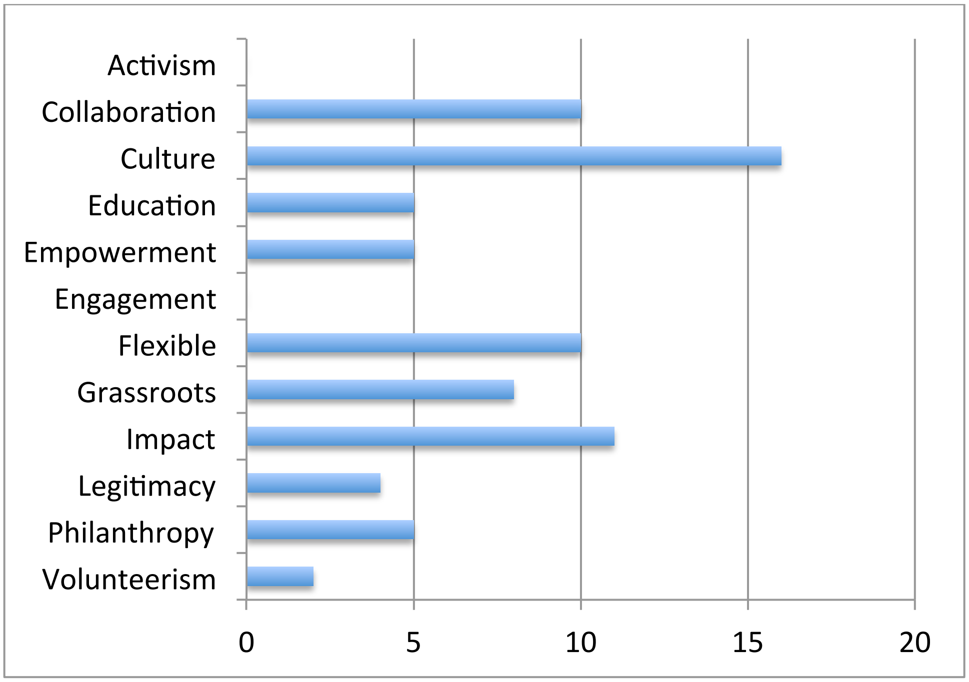
The giving circle does not require a volunteer commitment from its members but instead offers suggestions on how a member might engage in the community. These include volunteering for a giving circle recipient; volunteering at the annual community service day; volunteering for the giving circle by hosting an event; helping with phone calls; serving on a committee; or on the board of directors. Other ways members can participate include subscribing and reading the giving circle's e-newsletter or attending and bringing children to a giving circle event.

The circle's website documents several examples of the impact of previous grants. One notable example of the type of projects the circle supports is one that produced nearly 800 "book packs" for needy children in the community. Volunteers helped sort and pack the books with the goal of distributing 1,200 packs of books throughout the community. Many other volunteer opportunities, including a "do-it-yourself" approach to community service as well as pictures that tell the stories of such events, are available to members through the site.

The giving circle's website includes resources on issues within the community as well as links to activities a member can involve their family and friends in or organizations that need specific supplies and donations. The giving circle also receives media attention, averaging three to four stories each year in the local paper and on the radio.

On leadership. As the frequency chart below shows, these giving circle members, when talking about leadership, were most concerned about the culture within their circle—including an emphasis on collaboration and flexibility—as well as the impact of their giving on their community.

Figure 4.3 Interview Frequency Measurement for Focus Group A



When talking about their leadership experiences within the giving circle, these two members focused on the culture of their circle. While the membership numbers are quite large, essentially only a small group of directors actually research the gift nominees and make the final decisions about where the money will be gifted. These "working" members of the circle spend intentional time talking about their circle's culture and the changes they hope to evoke in the community. As one of the women explained,

> An organization's culture is defined in the first few years. We wanted to make sure we were doing what we needed to do to be a sustainable organization for the long term. We really solidified a cultural feeling that everybody was an important member and part of the circle.

Part of this attention to culture is evidenced by the circle's use of the term "gift" rather than "grant" to describe their work. A conscious decision was made by the circle early on to avoid administrative- and bureaucratic-sounding words. As this same participant said, “A gift is something that you make to someone because you want to and usually you know them very well. (The word gift) is much more personal sounding than a grant.” And these members included themselves when talking about the “gift” culture of their circle. The other participant suggested,

> We do talk about that (giving and receiving) with the members. You may not receive a tangible, physical gift (by contributing to the giving circle or the gift recipient) but I have found that the more we’ve gotten involved in the giving circle and the more time we’ve put into it, it’s been really gratifying. I mean I feel like I’ve gotten a lot out of it. It’s not exactly a gift in a box or in my bank account. It’s not like that.
>
> But I have met a lot of people I would never have met otherwise. I have learned a lot about my community. I feel like I’m really making a difference, however small. It’s very gratifying. It gives some purpose to what would otherwise be kind of a treadmill of a life.

Though the group tries to be less bureaucratic, as the first participant points out, “I feel like we’re more bureaucratic than I’d like us to be.” But process is important to the members as it provides organization to their work while also providing flexibility for the members. This is especially helpful, she suggests, when dealing with an all-volunteer organization. Continuing she says,

> We don’t have any employees (and) no one is paid anything. So when someone needs to take a break from the volunteer activity, someone else in going to need to step in. So they need to know what to do. And when the process is already thought through and documented, at least a little bit, that’s going to be helpful. We aren’t as process-oriented as some giving circles, so we’re a little more flexible. We announce our gifts when we are ready, we don’t stick to a timetable if it doesn’t work for the membership. There is flexibility on when we do things, when we get them done—for the right reasons—or who we talk to or what particular program we might choose. We have a unique process with built in flexibility.

Attention to process also helps them grow their leadership, these members assert. By rotating leadership roles and responsibilities and continuing to expand their leadership ranks, they feel they are helping members avoid burnout. As one member said, “We want people to be able to step in and out as it makes sense to them." They say they are always looking for ways to bring in new people with fresh eyes and new ideas.

Nonetheless, both women talked about the challenge of practicing leadership in an all-volunteer organization, especially when there isn't a "written authority" and decision making is collective. "When people don't have to follow through on their commitments, it's hard to get stuff done," one participant explained. And in keeping with their attention to the culture of the circle, this topic, too, has been talked about within the circle. As one member shared,

> I just felt very challenged very often at the beginning on what kind of leadership we needed at what time, and whether I was the right person for what moment. One of my goals as we move forward is to really let people know that we don't have queen bees, that there is a spot for them in the group. I mean if somebody wants to do something, I want to find a way to bring them in. I don't want them to feel like the board or any committee is a closed group and you have to have the right handbag to get in. I mean totally that's not what we're about.

Her colleague added,

> Egos aren't involved. I think we're all here for the right reasons. I think I came from the generation where the women who succeeded have that negative stereotype of leadership. You did have to talk louder, you did have to be decisive, you had to demonstrate that you could make the difficult decisions, or fire someone, or whatever. But in the next generation of leaders, I think that's changing. Maybe that's not necessarily an issue now.

On several occasions during the focus group, both women brought up examples of how the giving circle members use discussion to problem solve and make decisions about their giving circle. Since the beginning of the circle when the founding members took a "leap of faith" that together they were going to find out what the highest priority needs were in the city, members have utilized group discussion to create the processes that work for the circle. The circle has self-consciously examined their members' motivations for becoming members, they've had discussions about language that led to their adopting the term gift rather than grant to describe their funds, and they are currently in discussions about participation and membership. Through periodic thoughtful and deliberate conversations among the members about these kinds of issues and concerns, the members of the circle continually grow and deepen the relationships within and the impact of the group.

These discussions have included acknowledgement of the tension between the financial side of giving and the volunteer side of giving and its implications for the growth of the circle. One participant explained it this way,

> You know, some people just want to write a check and be done with it. Others don't feel connected when they write a check, and they want to be able to do something. It's hard to satisfy both needs because those who only want to write a check might feel guilty about all the volunteer events they keep hearing about and can't participate in. So we've struggled with how much of this do we do? How much of this do we sponsor? It's a lot of work and may be confusing to people about what our mission really is.

Similarly, a changing membership can create tension within the circle. With growth can come an influx of members that can tip the balance within the circle. As one member shared,

> We have a growing number of members who work for the city. And I found this to be very interesting. These are not high corporate paid people. These are the people who are already serving the city, professionally, spending their day. And they see the giving circle as a great vehicle to do an even better job in the city. It will be interesting to see if over time those opinions change our direction or the balance of our thinking. . . . It's always interesting to hear the perspectives of people who have these city jobs or in the organization because they're so close to what the needs are. But then on the other hand, if you don't have just regular people involved who would see something else, it might skew the vision or the ideas. I don't think we have that kind of problem, but, you know, maybe in the future it would just be something to look at.

Continuing to have intentional discussions on the issues that confront the giving circle suggests leadership to these members.

Giving Circle F

Giving Circle F At-A-Glance

The participants range in age from 40 to 44 years old. Three are Causasian, while one participant did not answer this question. All four are married with children under the age of 18 in the house. All are college graduates, one has an advanced degree. Three of the four do not work outside the home, the remaining participant works part-time. Their reported incomes range from $120,000 to $500,000. Two never attend religious services, one rarely attends, and one attends about three times a month. All describe themselves as liberal to left of center politically.

I met with four members of this giving circle, also via Skype. On a weekday morning the participants met in the home of one of the members and again I was in my office at work. Again I encouraged the participants to arrange themselves in a semicircle facing each other and to try to talk to each other rather than to me. This focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes.

The participants in the focus group included the founder and three other members of the giving circle, none of whom currently hold leadership positions within the circle. The original idea for the circle came from the founder who had the opportunity to take a leave of absence from her employment to pursue a personal goal. Having just moved to the community, when she began to talk to other people about starting a giving circle, the idea was enthusiastically embraced. One participant, on hearing about the formation of the circle, approached her about joining, even though she didn't know the founder. She surprised herself by doing this. She explains, "I usually don't do this (approach someone cold), I'm not forward at all. I didn't know how I would be received, but I was really interested. And I thought, I have to ask and find out if I can join."

The two other members, like members in many circles (Eikenberry, 2007) attended an informational meeting and were immediately hooked. As one of these members said,

> At the time philanthropy was not even on my radar at all. Philanthropy was not something we really discussed in my family as a specific topic or issue at all. And it's not something that I had even really thought about. I wasn't looking to fill a void or anything like that. But it sounded interesting. So I came along to the meeting and loved it. Some of the people I knew, some I didn't. I remember going home and reading the literature and thinking hard about the time commitment. I decided it was worth pursuing and went from there.

The members of this giving circle describe their membership as made up of social workers, small business owners, medical professionals, educators, fulltime mothers, and other women who share a passion for their community and a passion for collective giving.

Founded in 2006 by a group of 12 women, the giving circle maintains 3 levels of members: active, alumna, and backer. Each has its own level of commitment and engagement with the group. About 30 active members manage the circle. They select the community issue and the fund recipient. They organize all the events and volunteer projects. They meet monthly, pay annual dues and serve on one of the three focus committees (learn, give, act). The number of active members is limited so that the group remains informal. This also facilitates decision making. The giving circle is not currently accepting new active members.

Alumna members, the second level of membership, are formerly active members who want a lighter time commitment. They do not attend monthly meetings, serve on committees, or pay annual dues. They do, however, contribute $200 per year to the group.

Backer members, the third level of membership, are women who want to support the group but who need a flexible time commitment or prefer to be passive investors. They contribute their $200 but do not serve on committees, pay dues, or attend monthly meetings.

The circle currently has 80 members, all women, representing all 3 levels.

While like all giving circles the members pool their money and decide together how and to whom to award the funds, this giving circle also intentionally focuses on member education on community issues. The members of this giving circle also participate in volunteer projects within the community.

The geographic area of this giving circle includes eastern US coastal towns encompassing more than one state. The circle is not a 501(c)(3) therefore the members give directly to the chosen nonprofit. Each member writes their own personal check, noting their association with the giving circle. To date, the circle has given away $70,000 to local community organizations.

The giving circle maintains a website and has received lots of media attention about their work over the years of their existence. As a result, the circle receives many requests for assistance from others who are considering starting a giving circle of their own. The giving circle welcomes helping others who are interested in learning more and possibly implementing their model of giving.

The giving circle has as its mission to improve the quality of life of the region through collective giving and grassroots action. They are not affiliated with any other giving circles but, of course, share the basic elements common to most all giving circles outlined previously, to learn, give, and volunteer collectively within the community.

The giving circle has a three-part mission: learn, give, and act. The group seeks to educate members about local issues and groups that support the welfare of the community through their own research and input from area leaders. A *learning* committee provides reading material on the issue of study and arranges guest speakers for the monthly meetings. The circle also studies philanthropy and giving as topics themselves.

The group also invests funds annually in one nonprofit organization and leverages additional support for and awareness of that organization. The *giving* committee, whose responsibility this mission is, reviews the proposals over several months and narrows the pool of semifinalists. The active membership picks two of the semifinalists to present in-person to the group. The members then choose the recipient from these two finalists.

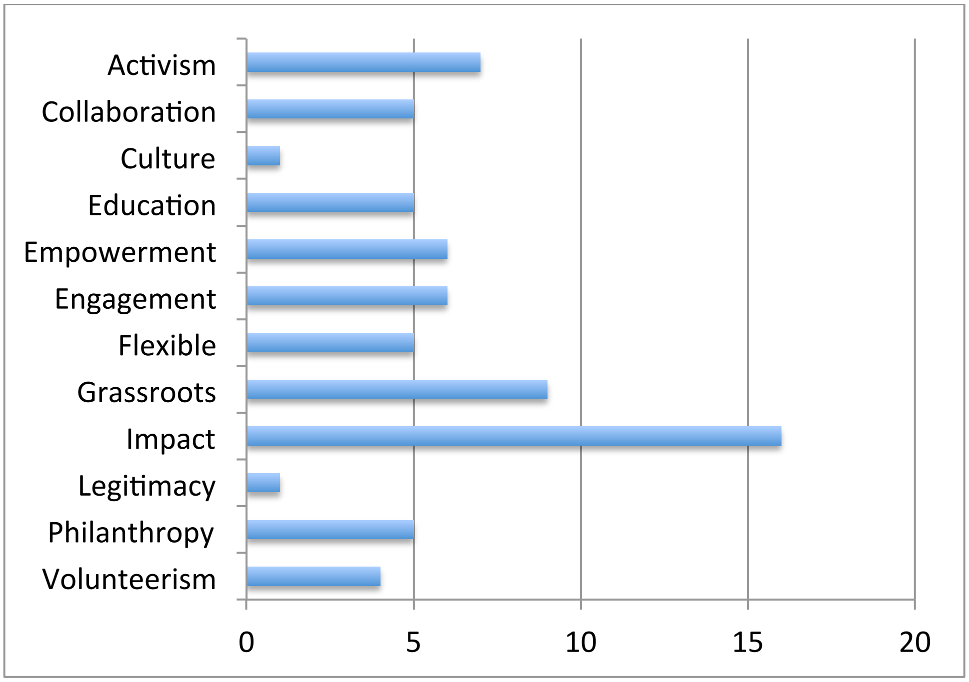
This third committee has as its mission to initiate opportunities for members and their families to *volunteer* in the community. The act (or volunteer) committee organizes at least four volunteer service projects for the members each year.

Recent examples of the group's volunteering and grassroots actions include environmental and economic issues. A campaign to reduce vehicle idling included community environmental forums that encouraged community members to commit to action to make a difference regarding the environment. The current issue of focus is women's economic security. In the course of educating themselves about this issue, members are learning about the need for affordable, reliable transportation in their communities and the limited access to mental health care, especially for the target audience of single and working mothers.

For this giving circle, learning about issues in their community is just as important as the funds and other resources the circle is able to contribute. Volunteering came late to the circle but as one participant shared, "I don't think we would have been as successful if that (volunteering) hadn't been there."

On leadership. As the frequency chart below shows, these giving circle members, when talking about leadership, were most concerned about the impact of their giving. As with the previous giving circle, this circle consciously and intentionally works at improving the culture of the circle. Sometimes this work is aimed at how the circle works and at other times it focuses on why the women do the work they do. Activism, grassroots, and engagement were also major topics of conversation.

Figure 4.4 Interview Frequency Measurement for Focus Group F



When these women talked about their leadership experiences within the circle, they began by contrasting their current experiences to other leadership experiences they had had, mostly in the workplace but also in other volunteer positions.

One member began,

> This is very different because we're all volunteers. I've also been involved on some volunteer committees and I see some similarities between these organizations and the professional non-profit world that are different from the experiences I have with the giving circle. I worked at (one place) for only a short time because the leadership was terrible and there was a really horrible culture there. The leadership at the top was about power and not empowering the people to do their jobs well. There was this great wealth of excitement, enthusiasm and knowledge that could have been tapped into but the leaders chose not to. I didn't need to be part of any organization that had no leadership. And I chose to leave.

A colleague joined in by contrasting that story with one about the giving circle,

> What I feel about our organization is the leadership has been about information gathering and consensus building. The incessant surveying that leadership does helps them tap into the consensus of the group and the direction we all want to go in. This way, there is buy-in, there's always buy-in by a large number of people in

> the group before we move forward. And that is crucial. People aren't on the outside talking about how they're not being heard. There's opportunity for people to share ideas. And so the people have faith that the direction we're going in is based on where we all want to be. Being part of this organization, I always feel like I have a voice and the direction we're going in is based on the collective voice.

This comment prompted a reply from yet another participant,

> This is our giving circle and we are the women who make this happen. And that's really a great experience. In this giving circle, we're a group of peers which is different in the professional nonprofit world. We manage to support each other in our own individual leadership roles. A lot of our personal relationships have grown because of us working together in this circle, in leadership capacities.

The founder resonates with the way I described traditional leadership at the beginning of the focus group—top down, hierarchical, etc. She sees this all too often in other nonprofit and business groups. But her circle experience has taught her about engagement—how to engage board members and circle members. She says she often asks herself how she might help people bring their best to the circle. She is always trying to help bring out the best of other members by inspiring them and giving them information, or whatever they need to be engaged. She sees value in trying to keep some level of informality within the circle by stating,

> There has to be some space for people who have the interest, skills, and desire to be engaged, to be successful. There's room in the boat for every person to be a leader. . . . So I think from the get-go, engaging people and having them be participants in every part of it (the giving circle) has been built into the process so that it trickles down into the way that all the members are working as leaders with their committees and projects.

This sentiment was met with lots of heads nodding. The group continued in conversation, suggesting among other things that they all feel encouraged to learn about the processes and to be involved. Most expressed that they feel they are now all leaders in a really thorough way. Never just one woman's thing, the circle is a group of 30 women, they insist. And they feel the giving circle experience has taught them a lot about how to be better leaders, how to share more, how to teach a little bit more, so that one person is not the focus or the person in control.

The giving circle mission also has been instrumental in the group growing through leadership. As one member said,

> The mission has to evolve and grow and when it does we get better at what we do. There's a constant gathering of thoughts and ideas and input from all the members on how we could do thing more efficiently and get better. And sometimes being better means scaling back a little bit and we can't be afraid to scale back.

There are negatives to this way of leadership though, the group acknowledges. As one member mused, "I guess being a leader oftentimes means being the one who says 'no.' The worst leader is the one who says 'yes' to everything and then nothing actually happens and nothing works well."

The group talked about the "bad" times, when there was some dissention in the group and a questioning of leadership roles. The group brought in a consultant to help them learn how to be better group members and participate effectively in meetings. This led to the group, they feel, being able to talk about the sometimes troublesome dynamics within the group and to understand better the culture they were trying to create.

Giving Circle D

Giving Circle D At-A-Glance

Five of the seven participants filled out the survey completely, one filled out some of the questions on the survey, one did not fill out the survey at all. Of those who responded, the age range was 52 to 69. Five are Caucasian, one is African American. Five of the women are married, one is single. Five have no children under the age of 18 in the house, one participant does. All have college degrees, four of them hold advanced degrees. Three are not employed, two are employed full time, and one is employed part-time. Three of the participants declined to answer the question on household income. Of those who answered, the range was $100,000 to $150,000. Their responses to church attendance ranged from rarely to weekly. Four describe themselves as Democrats, two as Republican. Of those who answered the survey, one indicated she has never before belonged to a voluntary organization, the others indicated many volunteer experiences.

This face-to-face focus group took place during the late afternoon of a weekday. Seven members of the giving circle gathered in the conference room at a local foundation. Only two of the seven participants hold formal leadership positions within the circle. The participants sat comfortably around a large glass-topped conference table. They engaged in small talk as the members trickled in before the start of the focus group. It was obvious to the moderator that not all these participants knew each other well, as they were often introducing themselves to each other as well as to the moderator. The group met for 90 minutes.

This 4-year old giving circle is considered a "branch" of a regionally known giving circle and follows a structure and procedure similar to the other 12 branches. Each member of the circle pledges to give $100 per meeting and commits to four one-hour meetings a year. All the money goes to local community charities.

The group first formed when one member received an email from a former neighbor with an attached article about something called a "giving circle" that had been established in her new town. This former neighbor was convinced, she told her friend, that "you could find other fabulous women" in the community who could form a circle too. This member continues,

> I needed to hear that from somebody. So then I told some of my friends, and it was like a handful of people, and we all thought we could do it. And then everybody started emailing their friends and that really helped a lot.

Like so many others in so many other giving circles (Eikenberry, 2007), three members of the group came to the circle after reading an article about the circle in the newspaper. They thought the circle would be a great way to raise money for other nonprofit interests. Other members joined after attending a "networking meeting" where the giving circle was represented. For one member it was this opportunity to talk, ask questions, and get information that helped her decide to join. She also saw the circle as a great way to fundraise for other nonprofits she was involved with. One woman joined because she was new to town and had always been involved in philanthropy where she used to live. For her this was a way to meet people and find out about the charities in the community.

For others, again like many other circles, a personal invitation from a neighbor, friend, business associate, or relative was their introduction to the circle. Mostly, “it’s been a word of mouth thing,” the women agree. One woman, giving her reason for joining the group, quite simply said, “I thought this was something my community deserved, and needed.”

The guidelines for the group, the participants agreed, are quite simple. The only way a charity can be nominated is by a member. If a member wants to “pitch” their selected charity to the other members, they fill out a charitable organization fact sheet, available from the group’s Facebook page, providing information about the nonprofit, its mission statement, the population it serves, how the funds, if awarded, would be used, and explaining the group’s current form of funding. At the meeting, the member puts their name into the hat, three names are drawn, those three deliver a pitch, and then the group votes for one of the three causes. The money is then awarded that night to the nonprofit with the most votes. “They’re (the guidelines) effective and it’s helped the chapter grow,” offered one member.

The “winning” nonprofit is invited back to a later meeting to talk about how the money was spent. For the members, this answers their concerns about accountability. One member said,

> I’m not just writing a check and handing it out or sending it out, and great it’s a tax deduction, but I’ll never hear from these people or see where it’s gone again. I mean, the members come back and talk about it.

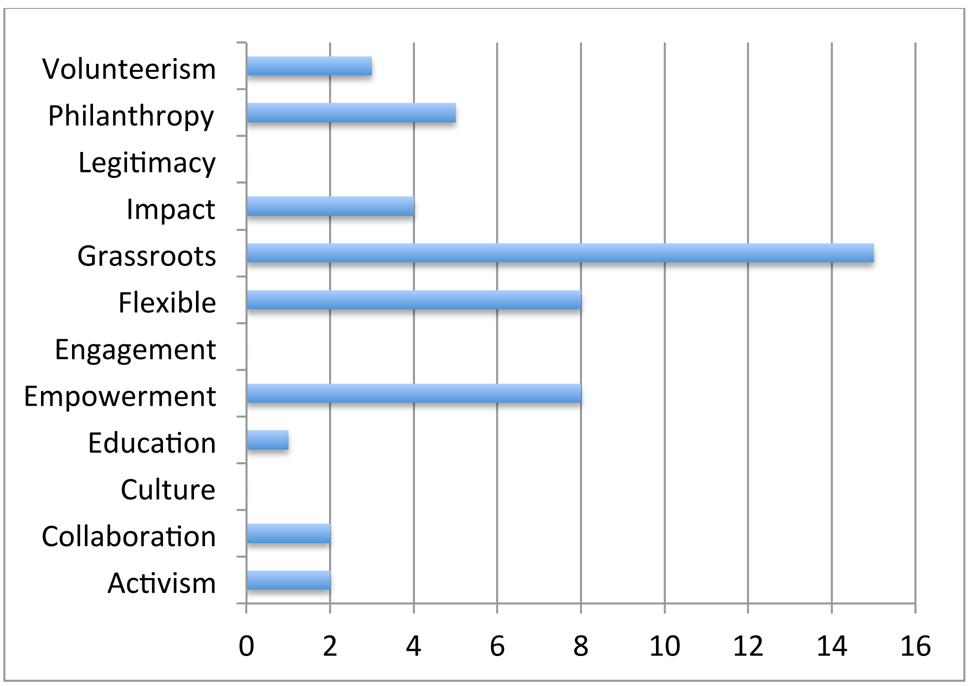
Her colleague added, “I think that gives us more of a connection, and I think it makes it (their giving) more meaningful.”

As of 2010, the group, now numbering 225 members, had awarded more than $250,000 to community nonprofits.

The circle does not maintain a website, instead they rely on a Facebook page to communicate with their members or anyone interested in becoming a member. They use the page to post the names of the recipients of their funds and to announce upcoming events. If available, recipients websites are linked, so members can learn more about the nonprofits to which they have awarded funds. Like any Facebook page, readers can "like" posts, add photographs, write on the wall, read about upcoming events, and participate in any online discussions. The page is quite simple and "requires almost no time to maintain," one participant added.

On leadership. As Figure 4.5 below shows, when talking about leadership, this giving circle was most concerned with issues of flexibility, empowerment, and grassroots.

Figure 4.5 Interview Frequency Measurement for Focus Group D



When the women in this group began to talk about their leadership experiences within the group, they talked about leadership as being both open to anyone and dependent on structure.

Speaking about the practice of members presenting cases for their causes to the entire membership at every meeting, one woman offered,

> I think that it's an opportunity for anyone, whether they consider themselves to be a leader or not, to have a platform if they want it. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what your cause is . . . anyone who belongs to the group is on equal footing and can be a leader.

A colleague added,

> But I think the leadership also comes with things being run smoothly. If it wasn't run smoothly, you wouldn't have people who felt comfortable popping in and out of meetings, or simply sending in a check and not knowing where it's going. The leadership frame is part of what has made the circle grow to such a large number, in my opinion.

Additional evidence of this informal approach toward leadership is contained in the comments by one of the women who currently holds a leadership position. She explains,

> I'm the organizer I would say, there's not really—it's not a leadership position I would say. I'm just responsible for making sure the meetings run as scheduled. One of the things being a coordinator, I try to encourage whoever wants to talk, whoever is passionate about their organization, to put their name in the hat.

A colleague adds, "But it's not just the efficiency of the operation. I think she (the coordinator) puts a personality behind it. And an ethicalness to it too. She's the glue that keeps it together."

Additionally for these women, leadership within the giving circle is in sharp contrast to their experiences with other organizations, both profit and nonprofit. "Sometimes the environment can seem sort of competitive, but in this organization, the only competition that's going on is the three people who are standing up there (presenting their pitch)," suggested one member. Another member added,

> One other difference that I've thought of, comparing this to other things that I've been involved in, is that in all of those other committees and teams there's always someone that you're not sure if you can really count on them to pull their weight. You're like, oh no, I wonder if so and so's going to bring (what) she said she was

> going to. Is she really going to do this? That feeling just doesn't exist at this because everybody is equal.

This struck a chord with another participant who chimed in.

> It's not cliquey. Not in the sense that, you know, there is this group of women, the in-group and the out-group. This, anyone can join. Anybody can be there. Anybody can do, can be part of it. There are not boundaries. There are no limitations to that.

The women also value the impact their work is having in the community, with one member summing up their view, "That so many people are willing to come together and accomplish so much, I just think the difference it's making in our community is huge."

Time is another concern for these women. As one woman commented, "If you're working and don't have time, it doesn't mean you don't care. So this answered to that situation. We meet and we're done in an hour." Nodding, another participant added,

> You know, it's like it's just so easy to be a member of this. It's just so easy. How many business meetings have you been to where it just drones on. It could go for two hours. If there's no end to it, you just really don't know. So that appealed to me.

Another woman added, "I know there are people involved in this that aren't involved in anything else, because they felt that they didn't have the time, or you know, and they heard about this, and it's easy and it feels good."

Giving Circle B

Giving Circle B At-A-Glance

Of the three participants in this focus group, only two completed the survey. These 2 participants range from 59 to 65 years old. They are both Caucasian, married with no children under the age of 18 in the house. Both are college educated and neither works outside the home. Only one of the participants completed the income line on the survey, her household income was $100,000. This same participant attends weekly, sometimes daily church services; the other participant attends once or twice a month. They both describe themselves as conservative. Both have extensive previous volunteer experience.

I met by telephone with this giving circle. Originally, the idea was to meet via Skype, however glitches in the technology prevented this. This created a very different dynamic for this focus group. Having only voice connection and no video made the focus group more difficult to conduct and ultimately less revealing. In the face-to-face and Skype experiences, I could read body language and watch as the group members interacted with each other. This was impossible with only a voice connection. I didn’t feel as if I was in a genuine conversation with them, and that led to what, in retrospect, was a less insightful conversation. This focus group took place on a weekday with three members of the giving circle on the phone line.

Two of the members are long-time community residents and both came to the circle through the same woman. One, self-described as a typical 1960s housewife, met her husband in college, then moved back home to raise her children. The family owns a factory in town. The second woman has only recently returned to town after a career in journalism. Before her marriage she was active in her local women’s foundation. She describes herself as having married “late.” Neither are heavily involved in the circle; their participation consists of contributing money to the circle. However, both are long time community volunteers.

The third member of the focus group is a fairly recent (within the last decade) resident of the community. She and her husband are the founders of a mental health treatment center. She came to giving circle through her husband who sits on the community foundation board. The majority of her volunteer time is spent in activities other than the giving circle with most of her volunteer time going to the center.

All three members see the circle primarily as a philanthropic or fund raising opportunity. Education about community issues is not a motivation for their participation, although the group’s mission statement does promote education.

This giving circle is located in a southern city that, like much of the country, is struggling in the current economic recession. It is sponsored by a community foundation that provides administrative support. The community foundation seeks to promote and expand regional philanthropy, thus making the giving circle's reach also regional. The community foundation also helps to develop local funds to address changing needs and opportunities in the community. Their sponsorship of the circle is one way they do this.

Membership in the circle is comprised of more than 300 women, with each contributing a tax-deductible gift of $1,100 a year for 3 years. The group makes annual grants anywhere from $35,000 to $100,000 to nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and public agencies that work to promote the self-sufficiency and personal well-being of women and girls. Since January 2005, the giving circle has given more than a $1.2 million.

When the group was first forming more than six years ago, its first activity was a call to the women of the community through a well-placed newspaper article. That call simply asked for money. As one member explained,

> You did not have to give up your time. If you wanted to be involved, great, but it wasn't considered part of the deal. There are a lot of women who don't want to get involved. They don't want to be pestered for their time. They're happy to just write you a check.

The group maintains a website, with their mission prominently displayed. "The mission of this giving circle is to increase awareness and address the needs of women and girls in our community by promoting women's philanthropy, empowering women to take action, creating results, and inspiring hope and possibility for women." Each member has a voice and a vote in how the funds are distributed and the level of participation in group activities—such as reviewing grant proposals or making site visits—is totally flexible and up to each individual.

While the giving circle is successful by any measure, the members differed on the amount of the giving commitment required by the circle. As one member said,

> I personally would like to see the donation start being a little larger. $1000 a year I think is miniscule, because the majority of the people involved could give a little bit more. I personally would like to see—and challenge the group—to start raising their goal.

"I'm not sure I agree with you," countered her colleague. Continuing she said,

> I think in this recession, we are starting so many (initiatives), every time you turn around you are going to an event where they are asking you for money. There is so much going on. And some people would say there is so much begging going on right now. We've got the arts expanding, we've got the new performing arts center, we've got a new outpatient cancer center. We've just one thing after another and they all need our attention.

"It will always be that way," the first member replied. "The majority of people that are involved in this giving circle have the capacity, recession or no recession. I think you would be surprised. You would be absolutely surprised (by the amount people could give)."

This led the participants to talk about the mission of their circle. As one said,

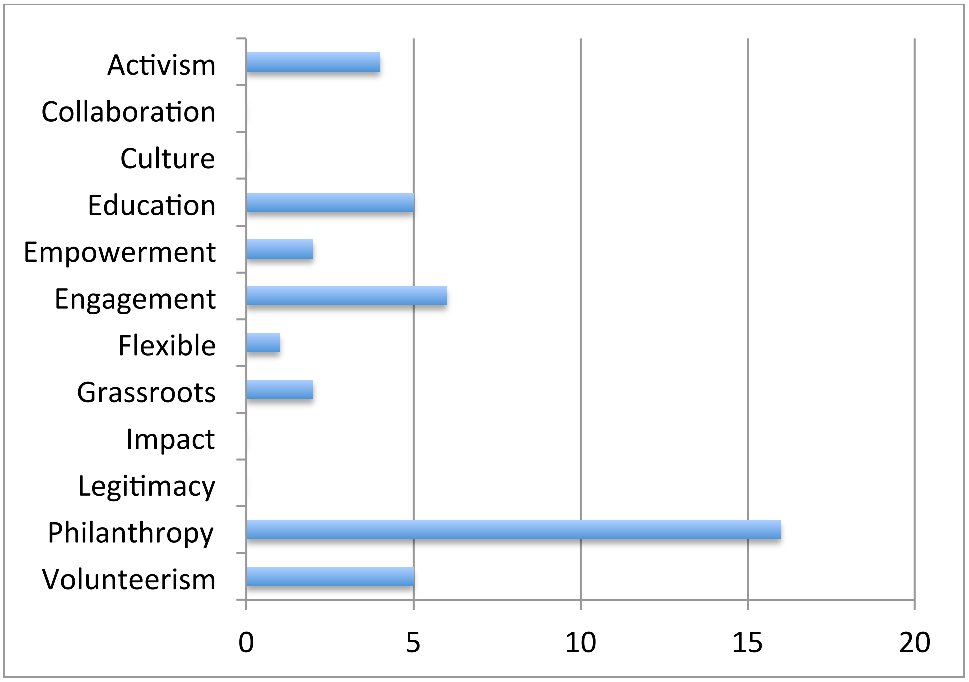
> Our cause is sort of ambiguous. It's very strong in helping other women, but it's also ambiguous. It's not like building a new adoption center at the Humane Society, or working for the breast cancer program at the hospital, or the symphony. You can't touch it exactly.

Agreeing her colleague added,

> Maybe that's why when I look at some of my girlfriends and I always do say, because I use guilt, how can you not just give a small amount every year. It's too easy for them to say, oh well, I don't really think that it's something that's that important. And then you know, you kind of grind your teeth.

On leadership. Interview frequency measures, as indicated in Figure 4.6, show that when the women I interviewed talked about leadership within their giving circle they talked about engagement, philanthropy, and volunteerism.

Figure 4.6 Interview Frequency Measurement for Focus Group B



The members of the group began by talking about being especially proud of the professionalism of the group. As one participant explained, "I just think we've got—not a group of la-di-da women—but a group of professional women, women who have worked. I think the women in our circle are incredible, so professional, I think they can run the world."

The women I interviewed from this giving circle are admittedly not very involved in the circle. While they give their monetary support, none of the three are heavily involved in the work of the circle. As one member explained,

> I did not stay involved much after the first year, because I didn't feel there was a need. . . . I felt they needed my money, but I didn't think they needed my time or energy or thinking. So I have not been involved since the first year. . . . I'm dedicated to it even though I am not involved, if that makes any sense at all.

Another member agreed and added, "there are other things that need me more than they do. They have tons of women. They've got brains falling out of that bank building." Continuing, she said, "I wish there were more opportunities for women to participate on not necessarily running the thing, or attending a luncheon. There's something in between . . . that I haven't seen. We haven't touched that yet."

While not directly naming this issue as one of engagement, the comments of the women point to what I suggest is a failure to engage. Their conversation about the amount of money their neighbors give or don't give is an indication of their frustration with the culture of philanthropy in their community. As one member said,

> When it comes to philanthropy, it's as much the mindset as it is your wallet. People first have to be comfortable with giving . . . it's almost like an education. Once people get over the threshold (of giving), then they're very comfortable giving. As far as we're concerned (speaking of herself and her husband), this is a moral obligation that we have to give something back.

Her colleague agreed, adding,

> I am still very appalled by the number of people that I know and see on a daily regular basis who don't give money away. I was taught that you give back to your community. So I'm surprised at some of the, what I consider stinginess and non-giving of some of my peers.

The members are proud of the grant process and celebration and its educative effects on women in the community. As one member announced,

> There isn't a woman in this town who wants to miss the . . . lunch (where the awards are announced). That's the most educational thing we've done and we need to go a whole step more to (involve) people who need to learn about giving. . . . Reaching out to the community to help them learn about philanthropy is one area. You can be knee deep in learning about what the money's being given for. That education is there. But educating the community about philanthropy in general, that's missing.

These women had definite ideas about how to educate or engage their neighbors. As one member suggested,

> With your friends, invite them to an event but don't ask them for money. Get them comfortable with the organization first, and then get them involved in whatever capacity. And that may take a week, a month, a year. Only then do you start asking them for money. And don't be afraid to ask for too much, that's the worst mistake you can make. I think it's for all of us in the group who are givers, to try and educate people in how to be comfortable with it (giving), by setting the

> example, by you know, inviting them out for a cup of coffee and (saying) this is what it feels like. . . . We need to encourage people. We need to educate them that once they get (over it and just try) a little bit—the more you do, the better it feels.

When asked about volunteerism, one member exploded in enthusiasm.

> Oh, absolutely. We are out there. Women and young girls need our help in these communities (outlying, rural communities). We're trying to make sure they're safe, and educated, and healthy. I mean, you know, that's activism in the truest sense, because in some of these places we are not wanted. We are not seen as a saving grace everywhere. There are probably some (in the communities) who think we are just the worst thing that's ever happened in the world because we're trying to take care of their daughters and their wives and their mothers.

She clearly sees the volunteer work of the giving circle as activist in that they try to help others in the community who do not have as many resources as others.

Absolute Frequency Measures

The third of Bachiochi and Weiner's frequency measures—the absolute frequency—was also completed. While the individual cases illustrate how the focus group participants articulate their personal experiences of leadership within their own giving circle, measuring the data by absolute frequency, or the number of times a topic is mentioned by *any* person in *any* focus group, reveals a slightly different picture of leadership.

These measurements figure in the analysis that follows.

Chapter V: Implications

Implications for Leadership

The literature and research on women's leadership, in any context, begins with women's own lived experiences, so, for this study, it is important that the experiences and perceptions of these women be front and center in any analysis for learning further about leadership. Their voices authenticate the learning and reveal insights into the research questions in this study. To reiterate they are:

- What meaning, understanding, or insights about women's philanthropic leadership can be derived from the experiences and perceptions articulated by members of giving circles?
- What definitions, models, or new articulations of leadership can be discerned? What are the implications of the stories of leadership that members tell for the formation, growth, and sustainability of giving circles?

Most of the literature on women's leadership presents it in the context of a definition of leadership that has historically left women on the sidelines. Only within the last four decades has the research sought to explain and explore characteristics of women's leadership from women's perspectives. This literature on women's leadership provides an understanding of leadership that is in contrast to many conventional definitions. Furthermore, the literature suggests that leadership for women is often at odds with these traditional definitions of leadership and, of primary importance, that the evidence of leadership is often different than traditional practices of leadership suggest (Sinclair, 2007). This is essential to keep in mind when making meaning of the data from this study. The data will be interpreted in relation to the existing literatures on women's leadership and giving circles, but will also be interpreted by including issues that are surfaced through a frequency measure analysis.

Two current major debates within the field of women's leadership are the "same as/different from" frame and the "twenty-first century" frame. Comments and stories that are grounded in and inform both debates are found in the transcripts from these focus groups. A discussion of this debate revels implications for further refinement of theories of women's leadership.

Implications for women's leadership: Different from/same as debate. Most of the literature on women's leadership can be situated within the long-standing debate within the field concerning the same as/different from frame. Most of the women's leadership literature presents a picture of leadership that characterizes women's leadership in comparison to and contrast with "conventional" (or male) leadership.

The women in each giving circle spoke to some degree about the differences between the leadership of men and women. Giving examples that echoed the lenses provided by Bem (1993) and other scholars that describe the "different from/same as" argument, the women in these giving circles described their experiences in a similar manner.

Androcentrism, for example, says men take on the role of leader or authority and women support through care and cooperation and service. The women in these giving circles do support each other and the community through care, cooperation, and service, but they also describe this as leadership. Authority is not the function of a single leader, these women suggest, but is found in the relationships among members and the structure of the circle. These women clearly do not define leadership as authority.

This leadership frame was not foreign to the women who participated in the focus groups, however. Almost all of the women in all of the groups spoke about previous leadership experiences, in both the private and public sectors, when “politics” and “old power rules” got in the way of achieving the organization’s goals. The power of an ego-driven boss sounds almost like a caricature but everyone could relate to these “horror stories” shared in the majority of the focus groups. These experiences of leadership were described by the women as issues of power, position, and authority. One member of Giving Circle A talked about how, in the past, perhaps women had to act more like men to demonstrate their leadership qualities, but now she sees this situation changing for the better.

Giving Circle C, who characterized themselves as post-peak after having successful careers as nonprofit executive directors and foundation executives, declared themselves ready to give up positional leadership roles and to relinquish this type of power or control. They had experienced top-down leadership—in fact they had been at the top—but now within the giving circle experience they simply wanted to focus on the giving and education of their participation.

For most of these women, the giving circle represents a place where there “are no egos” in the room. Or as a member of Giving Circle A declared, “We’re all here for the right reasons.”

A second theory, characterized as a gender polarization lens, as the literature review describes, says men and women do lead differently. Women are more cooperative, collaborative, and less hierarchical than men. These members of giving circles, on the whole, do think they lead differently. They think they have distinct qualities that make their leadership more collaborative, inclusive, and shared. But as Brown (2003) suggests they also believe men can learn to lead in this relational way, with more attention to the qualities of sensitivity, spirituality and emotional expressiveness. It should be noted that the horror stories told of leadership missteps and mishaps by both genders. The women in these focus groups realized that poor leadership skills can be found in both genders and that women can be just as controlling or ego-driven as men.

And they had stories to share about this also. Instead of attributing poor leadership with a gender, they preferred to distinguish between leadership skills that were effective and skills that were destructive. When a member of Giving Circle F shared a story of her leadership experience with what she described as "power-focused" leadership, she appeared most frustrated with how less-than-ideal of leadership can lead to a less effective organizational and lost talent as a result.

Biological essentialism, the last of Bem's (1993) lenses, suggests that women do not lead differently from men and any time spent on this question is wasted effort. This theory suggests that there is little difference in leadership styles between men and women. The women in these giving circles have experienced, unfortunately some quite painfully, the differences in leadership styles of men and women. One aspect of the same as/different from argument suggests that unless women are seen as the same as men in their leadership, women will suffer as a consequence. Lost opportunities and the denigration of skills and sensibilities possessed by women are feared. The women in these giving circles felt there was some credence to this fear and, for some of them, this figured into their participation and leadership in an all-women philanthropic group. Many had sought out and embraced the opportunity to be part of an all-women group, and to experience leadership among all women.

Additional implications. Leadership is entwined with other functions of the giving circle and does not stand alone from these other activities. A case in point is the nature of volunteerism within the circle, while not all members of a circle, or even every circle, conducts volunteer work through the circle, those that do see their volunteerism as essential to the way they think about the leadership within the circle.

Considering the voluntary nature of the giving circle, power as authority was an especially interesting concept for the women to consider. Most women recognized that when the commitment to a group is voluntary, as is the case with the giving circle, there are very different dynamics at work within the group. No one member has authority beyond that granted by the members of the circle. Giving Circle A, for example, specifically acknowledged the challenge of practicing leadership when there isn't a written authority and decisions are arrived at by the group. Collective decision making was another area where the women in these focus groups acknowledged the role of power or authority. Fletcher (2001), in her research, suggests how stereotypically masculine definitions and assumptions suppress certain aspects of organizational life, leading to unrealistically narrow views of concepts such as decision making (p. 18). Once again, the voluntary nature of the giving circle suggests decision making should be a collective action.

Besides the voluntary nature of the circle, also significant for these women when considering leadership as authority is the power relationship inherent within philanthropy. In American society, money is widely regarded as a form of power. To address this issue, Giving Circle A talked about how they regard their grants as “gifts.” A gift speaks to the way these women want to relate to potential grant recipients. They desire a more level playing field between the circle members and the recipients of their gift/grant. Their desire to be less bureaucratic and administrative is part of the attention they pay to their circle's “culture” through this distinction between gift and grant.

Twenty-first century leadership. Rather than get mired down in a debate about whether the leadership of men and women is the same as or different from, some scholars within the women's leadership field have moved to a consideration of leadership known as a twenty-first century view of leadership. Instead of occupying a marginal space within the dominant scholarly conversation on leadership, research on women's leadership makes up a substantial part of what are today characteristic of this theory. This view of leadership embodies many of what were traditionally seen as "women's" leadership attributes.

This new consideration of women's leadership as integrated into the idea of twenty-first century leadership should not be interpreted to mean that women are no longer concerned with or aware of the different ways in which they approach and practice their leadership. It simply means that they do not frame their own leadership experiences *primarily* in this same as/different from way. The differences in leadership styles of men and women are evident to them but they are not defining.

Women acknowledged a "female advantage," but were not interested in talking about their leadership only within the context of this "advantage." The relational or communal qualities of sensitivity, nurturance, and emotional expressiveness were evident but not definitive of the stories the women told about their leadership experiences in the giving circles.

One attribute of twenty-first century leadership that the women in these focus groups did address of course—as was true for the same as/different from frame—is power. In twenty-first century leadership, power also plays a part. In twenty-first century leadership, the relationships between leaders and followers cannot be based in authority or power. Instead, leadership is considered a process, or a dynamic relationship between people. Twenty-first century leadership seeks to understand the processes by which leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve their purpose. This definition was illustrated time and again I most giving circles when they shared stories of leadership within their circles.

Members of Giving Circle A talked about wanting to be less bureaucratic within their circle structure than they currently are but also understanding the freedom that can come with process, especially because of voluntary nature of the circle. These women found a process and structure actually provided more flexibility for their members, not less.

Their leader approached her role “organically” as one member described it, meaning she doesn’t micromanage the group but provides avenues for others to take leadership. This suggests what Goldberger and her colleagues (1996) define as “connected knowing,” or a community-focused approach to leadership. This was further evidenced when this same giving circle experienced rapid growth of the circle. The leadership within the group changed as they went through what they described as stages. Giving Circle E, in a similar vein, also spoke about how by educating their own members about community issues and existing nonprofits, they were also educating groups within the community about what they were about.

The voluntary nature of the circle is important when considering its leadership. The role of voluntarism also played a large part in how these women thought about their leadership and participation in the circle. Giving Circle A felt the leadership within their circle was different because the work of the circle was voluntary and “for the greater good.” They saw the circle not as a clique but an orbit around their community, working for the greater good of the community. As one member said, “We are the people doing the work and making the difference.”

As Giving Circle E explained it, the voluntary nature of group makes participation feel collegial, or part of an association. For Giving Circle F, it is explicitly the voluntary nature of giving circle that makes the leadership different. Leadership is part of the culture of their circle, it is part of how they relate to one another in the circle. They suggested that, as a volunteer organization, each member must feel valued. As one member remarked, "it's my time and I can share it or not." Furthermore, by moving their leadership positions around a lot, not making them permanent, means no one gets vested in a position.

Implications for Giving Circles

To approach leadership within giving circles in a linear fashion would not capture the diversity of giving circles and this diversity appears to be one of their strengths. While they may indeed be identified and segmented by various characteristics such as size, location, or mission, the six giving circles I interviewed were so different from each other that any of these characteristics offer little basis for comparison. Nonetheless, these focus groups did provide enough data to corroborate and indicate new findings about and implications for both women's leadership in general and leadership in giving circles. By moderating a conversation among members of these circles, my purpose was to identify their experiences and perceptions of leadership and then analyze how these perceptions and experiences might help create, grow, and sustain giving circles.

The scholarly literature on giving circles is still in its infancy, thus no "positions" or arguments within the research have yet arisen. Current research on leadership within the circles is limited to research with giving circle founders and pioneers. Eikenberry, the premier scholar in this area, has posited that leadership within giving circles is grassroots and it is this conjecture that drives this research (2006).

When Eikenberry (2006) suggests that leadership in giving circles is grassroots, I believe she is trying to articulate a conception of leadership that includes the democratic, associational, and community capacity building aspects of giving circles she uncovers in her research. My research also uncovers such impulses but further suggests that the term grassroots is only a place to begin such an investigation into leadership. When the women in this study talk about their leadership in the circle, philanthropy's civic roots are revealed.

Grassroots is currently defined in the literature too narrowly to explicate all that is going on in giving circles. Beginning from where Eikenberry (2006) leaves off, assuming the democratic, associational, and capacity building aspect of giving circles as givens, this research suggests that a "civic" or "citizen" approach to explaining leadership may prove to be the most fruitful.

Activism and empowerment, essential elements of grassroots leadership according to the research of Delgado Bernal (1998), are not drivers of leadership for these members of giving circles. The women in this study are just as likely to identify themselves as community-based associations as they are grassroots organizations. While they value being active in the community, they do not see themselves as activist, especially in a political sense. This distinction of active, not activist, that the members of the giving circles articulate could be a function of economic and social status. The participants in this study are above the US average in education and wealth, and do not share other characteristics with the women in Delgado Bernal's study. They do however have a volunteer or a "roll up your sleeves" attitude toward their commitment to community. When creating and growing a giving circle it is not likely that appealing to an activist or empowering stance will attract members.

Following from this finding of commitment to community is the articulation of many of the participants that a physical place gives vision to their leadership within the circle. They don't want to be "ladies who lunch," but rather women who can respond to needs in the community through their time, talent, and treasure. They adhere to a responsibility to be "bridge builders," much like Robnett (1996) suggests in her research. Advocacy, as articulated by Blackwell (2006), rather than activism, is much more likely to resonate with giving circle members. Encouraging members to learn and be involved in the circle creates leaders who may take their leadership into the community through other activities. In this way, leadership within the broader community, is encouraged and grown.

Women see the giving circle as an opportunity to engage with others in serving community needs. Women do not see leadership as a solitary endeavor. As Gilligan (1982), Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992), and Follett (1987) suggest, women prefer to share equal responsibility for leadership within most contexts. Leading a group is not considered the responsibility of just one individual. Collaboration, both within the giving circle and with other nonprofit partners and grantees, becomes a practice women value highly.

Also following from the primary finding of commitment to community is the idea of accountability. Circles feel accountable to their communities and see impact as a way to measure their legitimacy as a community organization. A circle grows when others in the community learn about the work of the circle and thus join the circle. It is also sustained when members receive confirmation of the value and legitimacy of their work. Making a difference or having an impact is a critical dimension to leadership in a giving circle. As James McGregor Burns (1978) explains in his seminal work *Leadership*, leadership should transform both those who practice it and those who are impacted by it. While he was the first to articulate the difference between transactional and transformational leadership, women's emphasis on reform and change in their early philanthropic efforts is of note. Giving circle leadership, for the women in this study, means helping the membership articulate the desired outcomes. Burns also describes transforming leadership as a reciprocal relationship (p. 61). When these women talked about the impact the circle had on them, they were talking about Burns notion of a reciprocal relationship.

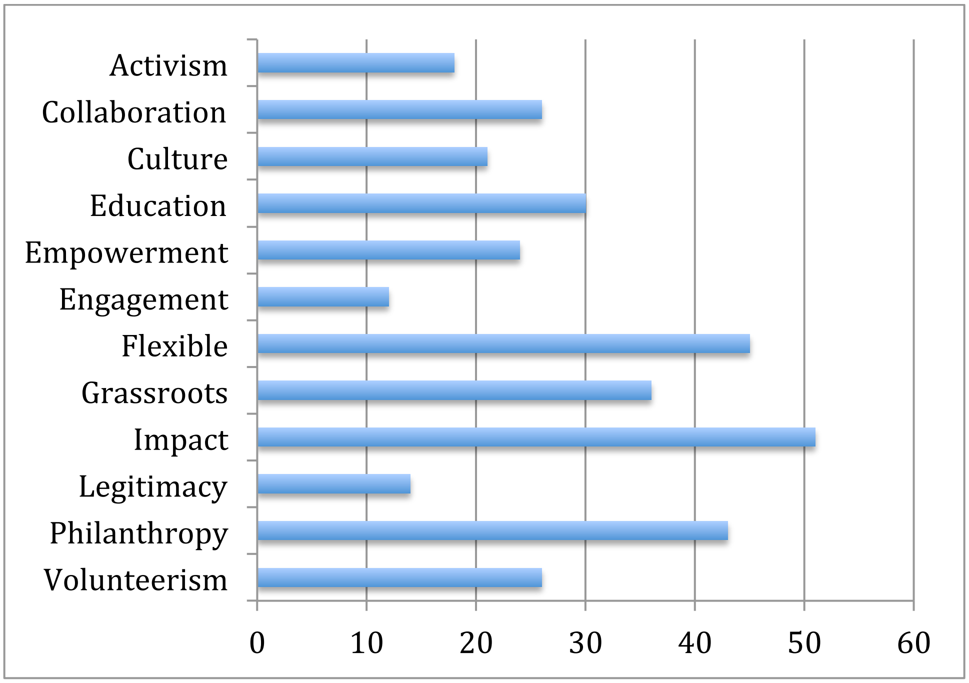
Additionally, women value the opportunity to have ownership of their giving circle. These women know instinctively that they add value to an organization, group, or situation where leadership was required. Women, as history shows, have added value in many areas of civic and community life, they just weren't recognized for it (McCarthy, 1991, 2003). Today women expect to be full partners in any endeavor in which they participate. Most of the women in these focus groups clearly want to "own" their giving circles; they want a say in how the giving circle works. The women in these circles feel accountable to their communities and see impact as a way to measure their legitimacy as a community organization.

Implications of Frequency Measures

Completing the third of Bachiochi and Weiner's frequency measures—the absolute frequency—reveals a slightly different picture of leadership as articulated by the participants than the data cases illustrate. The narratives articulate the personal experiences of leadership of the women within their own giving circle.

Measuring the data by absolute frequency—the number of times a topic is mentioned by any person in any focus group—instead reveals different emphasis of leadership. When talking about leadership, the members of the giving circles are most concerned with issues of impact, flexibility, grassroots, and collaboration.

Figure 5.1 Absolute Frequency Measurement for Aggregate of All Focus Groups



These characteristics can be organized into two themes: leading through relationships and leading with a focus on impact. A third theme, leading to create civic community or civil society, is an emergent theme, rising from an examination of grassroots as a defining characteristic.

The first two themes that emerged from this study—leading through relationships and leading with a focus on impact—were not a surprise. However within these themes, I discovered a more nuanced and deeper understanding of leadership practiced by women within some of the giving circles. Best practices are evident but each circle is so different, there is no one size fits all, nor are the circles looking for a template to follow. Which doesn't mean they don't learn from each other. They do. This phenomenon is part of the "ownership" idea and is explored in more detail later in the research.

When analyzed, the absolute frequency measurement for all the focus groups, as presented in Figure 5.1, reveals three themes: leading through relationships; leading with a focus on impact; and leading to create civic community. The following narratives place each of the measures (activism, collaboration, culture, education, empowerment, engagement, flexibility, grassroots, impact, legitimacy, philanthropy, and volunteerism) within the framework of one of these three themes.

Theme: Leading through relationships. Leadership is not something apart from the engagement and participation of the members in the giving circle. As feminist scholarship suggests (Hyams, 2004), women avoid decontextualizing their experiences, thus these participants see their leadership in the giving circle as one of many elements of their membership and participation in the giving circle. The nature and structure of the circle allows leadership to rest in the relationships among the members. Relationships are at the center of every circle.

This finding is not surprising, as scholars beginning with Follett (1987) and including Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) as well as Astin and Leland (1991) suggest that women's leadership in general is relational.

Beginning with the stories members tell about how they came to their circle, the central importance of relationships is evident. For many members it was a personal relationship that brought them to the circle. Friends, sisters, neighbors, and coworkers came because they were asked. A face-to-face invitation to attend an informational meeting, usually at someone's house, was most members' introduction to their giving circle. As Goldberger et al. (1996) suggest, this face-to-face interaction and relationship is a function of women's role as "relationship keepers."

For members of Giving Circle E, for example, it was a newspaper article that brought them together. Each member had seen the same newspaper article about the formation of the giving circle, and being intrigued, followed up. That article simply encouraged women to "send in their checks." Nothing more was required of them to participate. But of course each member interviewed for this study ended up doing much more than simply sending in a check.

Another founding story, told by the members of Giving Circle A, was of being approached by members of the local community foundation who, having heard of giving circles, wanted one started in their community. As one participant explained, "I was the college roommate of someone who was on the board of the community trust and she certainly knew that I would take something like this seriously."

While word-of-mouth and existing relationships were primarily how circles started and grew, some participants had different stories. One participant from Giving Circle A shared her experience of approaching someone she knew only vaguely, "pretty much cold," to ask how she could be a part of the giving circle. This was a very unusual scenario.

One manifestation of the idea of relationship in leadership is networking. While participants talked about their circle structures and their grant processes, they mostly talked about how they get things done through networks. Several participants talked about using their networks when trying to ascertain the "highest priority needs in the city," coming up with a giving strategy that was "really based on need and not necessarily our pet projects." Networking allowed the women to move away from simply solitary or self-interests toward shared interests with others in the circle.

In describing how one group used their networking skills to educate themselves about community concerns, one participant of Giving Circle C shared this story,

> So it started with the superintendent of schools. We went also to the executive director of the city who had the responsibility for health and human services, social services. And we also spoke to a retired judge who had a lot of experience with juveniles that were headed for court. . . . We had a number of interviews and came to the conclusion that we would try to fund programs that provide childhood early intervention.

Collaborating, usually the result of networking, also figures prominently in participants' comments. Collaboration, of course, has long been the key to women's success in endeavors both public and private. Much in the way Burns (1978) explains transformational leadership as "linked power bases," women in these circles lend mutual support for a common purpose.

Collaboration, both within the circle and with and between other community organizations, can also be understood in relation to the particular theory of leadership known as distributive leadership. In distributed leadership, more people than those at the top of the organizational hierarchy are involved. As the literature review suggests, distributive leadership is useful for understanding leadership within giving circles.

Barry (1991) defines this type of leadership as a kaleidoscope of roles and behaviors ever in motion. At any one time, multiple leaders may be operating, action is usually complementary, and relationships are dynamic. The distributed leadership model emphasizes the "active cultivation and development of leadership abilities within all members of a team. It is furthermore assumed that each member of the group has certain leadership qualities that will be needed by the group at some point" (p. 34). This approach to leadership was epitomized by the way the women of several circles described their interactions. In these circles, most everyone is complicit in determining the vision for the group, for the details and deadlines and structure of the group, for collaborating with grantees and other community organizations, and for maintaining the group from a social perspective.

As an example, a member of Giving Circle E said, "Our mission really has resonated with a lot of women in the fact that collectively we can do so much more than we can individually."

Her colleague added,

> Collaboration would be the key word that would identify us. We're not needed unless we're collaborating with other nonprofits, and we're not coming up with the right strategic ideas unless we're collaborating with city leaders who are working day in and day out with some of the city's problems. So collaboration is central.

As Walker (2007) explains in her article, connecting and collaborating to make change lies at the heart of the giving circle movement. This was true for these giving circle members.

Follett (1987) also talked about leadership as the ability to see the big picture, an insight Heifetz (1994) adopted as well. He characterized this as "getting up in the balcony," an integral part of his concept of adaptive leadership. Giving Circle F, similarly, talked about how they were constantly being surveyed for their goals and aspirations. Their leader was helping them to see the bigger picture.

Encouraging city agencies to collaborate with each other was a goal of Giving Circle C. One member of the circle emphasized, "We want programs to come together so that we can serve the city more efficiently and effectively." Thinking about their work as efficient and effective as well as relational and collaborative is a shared characteristic with distributed leadership, as Barry (1991) and Spillane (2005) explain in their research.

Another participant of this giving circle saw an element of networking at play when reflecting on the impact of the group's work.

> I don't know if we said it, but in terms of our impact I feel like capitalizing on our networks to raise awareness, to get people engaged and get them volunteering. . . . Our network is such a big part of how we've actually been able to be effective and make change and draw in resources.

Another participant from Giving Circle F shared how their circle formalized reaching out to their networks; for this circle, it's how the circle "gets things get done."

One member of Giving Circle E shared this in reflection:

> We get to put our skills to practice, realize things about ourselves that we might not have realized. I think part of the whole networking, the inspiration, and the

> collaboration—it all weaves into what we do (together) and we get to see somebody else grow from the work.

Theme: Leading with a focus on impact and change. When the women in these focus groups talked about leadership, the conversation, with one exception, inevitably turned to a conversation about impact. "I'm in a lot of social groups," said one member of Giving Circle C, "But it's good to get into something where you're really dealing with something of consequence. That's important." This sentiment about the importance of the work having meaning and impact on the community is shared by many of the giving circle members interviewed for this research. This finding was not surprising as Eikenberry and Bearman (2009) and well as Shaw-Hardy and Taylor (2010) have recently documented the centrality of impact to this work.

But looking further back to the literature on early philanthropy also offers some insights. As McCarthy (2003) and Andrews (1950) explain, women were instrumental, though mostly invisible, in the early reform movements in this country. While they held few if any traditional leadership positions (these usually went to male clergy), their imprint on these charitable endeavors is clear. So the impulse, on the part of the modern women who make up this study, is one with roots in reform movements like the "Great Awakenings."

The participants' conversations were of two types. One conversation centered on the impact the circles were having on nonprofits in general, some particular nonprofits, and the community. Another conversation was about the impact of the giving circle on the individual member. Sometimes these two foci were intertwined; the community and the member were equally, though differently, impacted by the same program.

Both types of impact are important to articulate for meaning and implications within the domain of the giving circle. Reciprocity also played a large part of early charitable endeavors (Addams, 1990; Friedman & McGarrie, 2003). Little understood today, it is nevertheless apparent when women talk about leading with a focus on impact and change, that they are experiencing reciprocity as it was understood in earlier times.

Impact on particular nonprofits, nonprofits in general, and the community. For a woman in Giving Circle E, impact meant "being able to potentially fully fund or substantially fund good initiatives. Many times I know that organizations have good ideas and sometimes they go ahead and implement them without as much money as they need."

Her colleague chimed in with a story.

> Rock Steady Boxing (an organization that provides after school boxing lessons for urban students) is a good example. People are going to be interested in that organization regardless of whether it wins the full grant. We became very attached to that organization. The more I learned about them, the more I felt they were really the kind of organization that I wanted to be part of. Those kinds of impact are very hard to measure, but it's just as important.

A member of Giving Circle F described the impact felt by the community at large this way:

> And the impact on the community, I think, is just amazing. First of all, people like you and me, many of us who maybe weren't aware of a way to be philanthropic or to be involved. So many people are intrigued by it (the giving circle), are interested as individuals to be maybe more philanthropic or charitable and to learn about how we do it and to want to be a part of our group and do it.

Her colleague added, "So the reputation of the giving circle has a huge impact in our community, on these non-profits, not only on the non-profits but also on our community and sharing the work of being philanthropic." For these women, the influence they are able to effect through their work in the giving circle is a large part of why they participate.

Added yet another participant from the same giving circle,

> I think that the impact on the community is interesting in a state that's usually near the bottom on the list of the most philanthropic states in the country. . . . That (the giving circle) has a chance of actually taking root and becoming more culturally the norm. . . . So that would be the longer-term, lasting impact I would hope for the group to have beyond the impact on each individual nonprofit that we support.

A member of Giving Circle E spoke about impact this way. “I think another piece of the impact is around raising awareness of community need—it’s so very easy to live in a bubble and just do your job and raise your family.”

Another participant added,

> Within the community, (the giving circle) is a recognized organization and people know—when I speak randomly to people and tell them what I do with my free time with the giving circle—the people are nodding, like, “oh yeah, I totally know who you’re talking about.”

“There’s just impact in so many different ways,” summed up her colleague. “There’s obviously the recipients of the large grants and now there are recipients of smaller grants. But just as importantly, those organizations have revealed themselves.”

Impact of the giving circle on the individual member. Besides impact on their communities and its nonprofits, participants talked about the impact of the giving circle on them individually. A participant from Giving Circle C shared,

> And then there’s just the very abstract, almost impossible way to measure impact on the women who go into neighborhoods and organizations that they’ve never been into before and they learn about needs that they didn’t know existed. You kind of hear about homelessness, you kind of hear about abuse. But, you know, when you really hear the details and the nuances and the challenges. So, they’re different people as a result of participating.

For some of the women, volunteerism also figured into the discussion of impact. Another member of Giving Circle C admitted,

> I would say, just from my limited knowledge, where we’ve given money are not the kinds of organizations that I necessarily personally would have given to. And I think that’s very important. For example, I am not working now, and if this immigration center actually gets off the ground, I might actually get involved with it.

Added a colleague of hers, “That is another reason I really love this group is it’s a lot of fun, but still doing good. . . . It’s something that I like spending time because I know that it’s going to be helpful somewhere along the line. Hopefully a lot.”

In Giving Circle E, the conversation centered around how their leadership in the circle had changed their lives. As one member explained,

> In the literature, it's been proven that women that participate in giving circles are more engaged in their community and give strategically and tend to be more liberal, as well, in their thinking. We certainly fit that, totally. Our women are not passive, for the most part.

Nodding, her colleague agreed, adding,

> The feeling when that award winner is announced is actually amazing. I think sometimes it has as much, if not more, impact on the members than it does on the not-for-profit that gets it. There's obviously sheer joy. But there's a sense of both pride and accomplishment, knowing that you're part of what did that.

Similar remarks were echoed by the members of Giving Circle F. One member declared,

> It makes me feel really good about how I spend my time and we do give a lot of our time. And I want to give my time because we are effective in that way and because we are making such a positive impact.

Perhaps most eloquently, one member of Giving Circle F said,

> I feel like this has been a huge impact on my life. I feel like literally a door has opened to me. It's really hard to talk about this without getting a little emotion(al) because I feel like when you talk about impact, I feel like the impact that it's had on my life and the impact that it's had on my family has just been immeasurable, really, because the whole way I talk to my children now and how we talk about community and helping others and—it sounds like a cliché—but it really has changed my life and impacted my life in such a great way. And I just said the other day, it's like I've been given this gift, this gift of philanthropy. And it's been amazing.

Though at its base it is individual, the pooled fund and its impact appealed to a member of Giving Circle who expressed herself this way.

> Spreading the word among our peers, I think, is very powerful, extremely powerful. But also the reputation of the group is one that I wouldn't have as an individual. So if I went around and said, "we as a family donate," that would not be as impactful as now having the giving circle say in a press release and in our big event and in our newsletter, "after all our research, after going through our decision making process, we chose so-and-so." That is so powerful. And that, for me, is so fulfilling to be part of a group, that it can do much more than I can do as an individual.

Similarly, for a member of Giving Circle A, who admitted the impact on her personal life surprised her, said:

> You may not receive a tangible, physical gift, but I mean I have found that the more we've gotten involved in the giving circle and the more time we've put into it, it's been really gratifying. I mean I feel like I've gotten a lot out of it. It's not exactly a gift in a box or in my bank account. It's not like that. But I have met a lot of people I would never have met otherwise. I have learned a lot about my community. I feel like I'm really making a difference, however small. It gives some purpose to what would otherwise be kind of a treadmill of a life. So I think it's great.

For one focus group however, impact was never brought up. This was the focus group that was to be held over Skype but became a conference call when the technology did not work. For many reasons, this focus group was less rich in some ways, this topic being a case in point. This conversation, in particular, was hard to steer back on topic when the participants would veer away from the subject. Thus impact was never discussed by this group.

Emerging theme: Leading to build community. Eikenberry (2009) in her extensive research on the giving circle landscape, suggests that the leadership in giving circles may be grassroots. Eikenberry's suggestion is a large part of the impetus for my research on this topic.

The literature defines grassroots, especially gendered grassroots as including: activism and organizing, networking, and collective empowerment (Blackwell, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 1998; Robnett 1996). I wanted to know whether these women considered themselves, and their leadership, grassroots.

All but one of the six giving circles in this study was intrigued by the question of whether or not they considered themselves grassroots. Each of these 5 circles, whether they spent 2 minutes or 20 minutes on the question, acknowledged that it was an important question for the circle's members to consider.

In Giving Circle E, the participants couldn't agree whether they were grassroots or not. Some in the group did consider themselves grassroots, but others were not convinced. One participant suggested the circle was not grassroots, "if you consider the makeup of the membership." By this comment she was acknowledging that the economic and social status of the group's members within the community did not make them typical grassroots organizations.

One participant in this circle, as a way to explain why she did see the group as grassroots, defined grassroots as "in and of the community, neighborhood associations, . . . front-line organizations. I think of grassroots as neighborhood and we're definitely in the neighborhood."

For Giving Circle F, grassroots is in their mission statement. One participant explains, "We've talked about how important it is for us to feel like we can be grassroots. We've talked about that word quite a bit." This comment was followed by an explosion of comments from participants, one tumbling after another. "There is a little, let's roll up our sleeves attitude" in the group, said one participant as a way to describe how she defined grassroots. Another interjected, "It has a homemade flavor to it." "Grassroots is who we aspire to be," added another. These comments are evidence that when grassroots is defined as "in and of the community", the women in these giving circles consider themselves grassroots.

Grassroots is what Giving Circle A intended their group to be. Much like Giving Circle F, this giving circle had intentional conversations within the group about what role within the community they would play with grassroots a goal. Admittedly, they are much more "grasstops" rather than grassroots, especially as new members join. For one member of this circle, grassroots is simply, "individuals taking their own action in joining together as opposed to people who are representing their corporation or some other organization."

Part of the tension around this topic for this circle is in attracting a diverse population of members and staying true to their vision and mission. Giving Circle B expressed similar concerns, with one member sharing her take on grassroots. She said, “I love the idea (of being grassroots) in a very sort of a romantic, excited way. We women are going to band together to help each other. It’s a beautiful concept.” Left unsaid was the gap between aspirations of being grassroots and the difficulty of actually engaging grassroots work. Like the other circles who define grassroots as community-based, their intention is to serve the needs of the community.

The members of Giving Circle D, on the other hand, are also members of various nonprofits and not-for-profits within the community. And yet they consider themselves grassroots because they are not the executive directors or managers of these organizations. The membership is open to everyone, and anyone can be a part of it. They see themselves as passionate community members using the simple mechanism of a giving circle to raise funds for their community-based nonprofit.

Both activism and empowerment, two major characteristics of grassroots leadership were also the focus of some discussion in most of the focus groups.

Empowerment, unlike activism, was a topic discussed by every giving circle. For the members of Giving Circle D, empowerment was about ownership. As previously documented, ownership also figures in women’s conversations about leading in relationships. “When I feel like I own it, when I feel like I can really make a difference, then I know I can make something happen. That’s how I feel when I’m empowered,” shared one member. Her colleague added, “We empower our members to make their own decisions,” adding, “in this work you have to empower your members.”

For Giving Circle F however, empowerment is tied to impact, not grassroots. “Leadership has empowered us and provided us with this opportunity to learn as a group and to learn about our community’s needs, to learn about who the players are in our community. It’s given me so much confidence,” offered one member. Added another participant, “Leadership has empowered us to go out and do and to speak up. The process supports everybody in taking the challenge.”

When asked about empowerment, the members of Giving Circles B and C did not see their work as empowering for the simple fact they already felt empowered before joining the circle. As one member of Giving Circle B explained, “We’re already empowered, we’re the sort of group that has dug in and decided to give our time to the community. We see each other at the same functions.” Members of these circles recognized their status and standing in the community had already empowered them to feel they could make a difference in the community. They joined the circle with an already well-formed sense of empowerment.

Five of the six groups talked about leadership as activism but were uncomfortable with describing themselves as activists. Like grassroots, activism suffers from an inability to articulate a definition that everyone agrees on. Activism was defined by the members of Giving Circle E as “active in the community,” but not “marching in the street with placards.” Defined as being “pro-active,” one member of this giving circle saw volunteering as a form of activism, especially the giving of time and talent. As one of her colleagues defined it, “If you’re out there (in the community) active, supporting, and promoting, I guess that’s activism.”

For Giving Circle F, the topic of activism resulted in a spirited conversation among the members. “Activist has a negative connotation to me,” shared one participant. But a colleague disagreed, saying, “In a way, we are activists in trying to galvanize groups of people together to give and contribute to those who have less. And in that way we are active, in a positive way.”

“I think activist implies political and polarizing issues,” suggested another member of this giving circle. This was met with murmurs of agreement around the circle. “Grassroots,” she continued, “that sounds like getting things done. Grassroots sounds like a collaborator and activist sounds like a firebrand and a solo operator.”

“I thought of the word advocate when you said activist,” another participant in the giving circle shared. “To be activist I feel you really need to go deep on one issue and to care about one thing and push that one agenda—and we don’t do that. But we are about to learn how to be advocates.” “Yes,” added another member, “an advocate sort of sounds like activist but without the negative political connotation. We want to learn how to be advocates in a really positive, effective way and not in a polarizing way.”

For the members of Giving Circle A, activism as well as grassroots is only an inchoate goal. Advocacy better describes what they are about, and they have mobilized around a few of their gift recipients. But rather than describing this as activism, this circle sees this work as accountability. The members of Giving Circle C, not surprisingly, see activism in a similar way. While they may play a more activist role in other organizations in which they participate, when it comes to the giving circle they simply give the money and “hope that it gets well used and look forward to hearing about it.” They want to know their money is well spent but they don’t necessarily have “skin in the game.”

Given the data from these focus groups, activism is not seen as part of grassroots leadership. While clearly valuing activity and action, the women in this study did not see themselves as activists or aspire to be activists, if it implied politics of any kind. But this doesn’t mean they don’t want to have an impact on their communities.

While the leadership literature, especially the gendered literature, puts activism and empowerment front and center in defining grassroots (Delgado Bernal, 1998), for the women of these giving circles, community is the defining element of grassroots. Most of the women recognize that they already feel empowered by virtue of their social and economic standing in the community.

For me, emerging from this conversation about grassroots leadership, is a nascent idea that is not yet fully in view. While it is evident that the women in these giving circles are creating a kind of community within the circle, there is also evidence that leadership experienced within the group can have implications for leadership within the larger community of neighborhood, town, or city. By "learning the ropes" so to speak of leadership within these voluntary, philanthropic organizations, women may be—instead of on the margins—on the cutting edge of a new understanding of leadership in philanthropy.

Recent research by John McKnight and Peter Block (2011), innovative thinkers and community scholars, suggests that "a rich network of local associations is the nest from which enterprises grow" (p. 129). He further suggests that society would be better off supporting the growth and connectedness of associations as a way to enhance local economies. Associations, he argues, "provide the basic context for the formation and expression of citizen opinions and values." He goes on to declare, "In this way, America's great space for leadership development is in associational life" (pp.130-131).

McKnight and Block (2011) describe leadership in organizations as limited by their pyramidal structure and focus on competition. In associational space, he argues, "the common experience is an offering to be a leader" (p.130). Associations, he suggests, provide a vital mediating function in societies dominated by institutions. They can act as an antidote to systems that are growing in power at the same time individuals are increasingly feeling overwhelmed and overpowered. Members of associations gain power as their associations negotiate a place for their members within the larger society. Most important, McKnight argues, the work of these community organizations can never be replaced by institutional creations, like citizen advisory boards or blue ribbon panels.

This theme, of leading through community, was explicitly articulated by just one of the giving circles. Members of this circle talked about the ways in which their leadership development had been encouraged and mentored by other members. The story they told is most intriguing.

This circle discusses issues of culture, process, and practice frequently. Facing the impending resignation of their founding leader, the group planned for the succession for more than a year. When I talked with the group, the change was just a few months away. The confidence of the women who were poised to step was noticeable. As they reflected on the process that had brought them thus far, they alternately expressed gratitude, amazement, and confidence.

As one member explained, “I think we’ve all managed to support each other in our own individual leadership roles. . . . A lot of our personal relationships have grown because of us working together in this giving circle, in the leadership capacities.” A colleague chimed in with,

> I feel like I’ve had an opportunity to play a role in helping people to find their niche and maximize their contribution and all of that. What it really comes down to is that for people who have the interest and desire in being leaders in this groups and also who have skills, I’m always trying to find a place for those two to come together and make the work successful.

For this group of women it is clear that there’s space within the circle for anyone to be a leader. Engagement within the group and obligation to the work and to each other lays the basis for leadership development. The group is not and does not want to be a one-woman show. They realize that when they are engaged and participating in the circle, they enhance the work that is accomplished. As one member suggested, “You can’t be a good mentor is you’re not willing to share and inspire others.” As the time approaches for their founder to leave the group they are admiring of the network of leaders they have created to continue the work.

When scholars and others in the field talk about community capacity building through philanthropy they are more often than not talking about investing in the organizational nonprofits they fund. This may take the form of helping a nonprofit reach the next operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational level in order to more effectively and efficiently fulfill its mission. While I found that some of the giving circles I talked with thought about community capacity building this way, others talked about community capacity building as community-focused, not nonprofit- or organization-focused. These circles were defining community capacity building as more about what people in communities *do* based on community interests, not personal or professional interests. They seem to suggest a different approach to community capacity building, an approach in line with more recent scholarship in community development.

For example, Steven Mayer’s *Building Community Capacity: How Different Groups Contribute* (1995), suggests that community capacity building efforts bring together community members and help them work together to identify and address community issues. This clearly is an articulated goal as well as a practice of most giving circles.

The National Occupational Standards for Community Development suggest this definition of community capacity building: “Activities, resources, and support that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities.” Similarly, scholars at the North Carolina A&T State

University Department of Family and Consumer Sciences offer this explanation of what community capacity building does:

> Community capacity building efforts bring together community members and organizations to work together to identify and address complex community issues. Communities can optimize the timeliness of the identification, development and utilization of their local resources through community capacity building collaborative efforts. (Jakes, 2003, p.1)

In short, community capacity building efforts bring together community members and help them work together to identify and address community issues. For several of the giving circles in this study, this definition mirrors how they understand community capacity building.

There are three main types of activity that are characteristic of this way of thinking about community capacity building: action to build social capital (building relationships, trust, shared norms, and networks); delivering services (including autonomous services provided by communities or specialist services provided by community or voluntary groups); and involvement in governance (representing the interests of all local people or particular groups of people in influencing decisions that affect the quality of local life). In various ways and to various degrees, all of these characteristics are evident in the giving circles that contributed to this research.

Furthermore, with the downward trend of society's formal associations and engagement over the last several decades, there is increasing concern that people no longer know how to address complex problems together. Through community capacity building and collaborative efforts communities can improve the identification, development, and utilization of their local resources. Both leadership development and community capacity building are key factors in the development and sustainability of community and community issues must be addressed through a collaborative effort of involved and engaged community members. Experiences in leadership development and community capacity building that had heretofore been unavailable to or underutilized by community members are made available through some giving circles.

Summary

I began this research wanting to tell the story of women's leadership within giving circles. I wanted to make visible the often invisible work of many women within philanthropy. This philanthropic leadership is often on the margins—as it has been historically—and that seems to be where these women prefer to be. Most of them are well-known in their community and that is enough for them. They don't want to become more formal or professional with their philanthropy, if that means they wouldn't be able to be as flexible as they currently are. This flexibility was mentioned by five of the six circles as essential to their leadership. They prefer the informal structures and processes that make up most giving circles, so they can do their work in a way that fits the members of their circle. A formal, bureaucratized approach to philanthropy is the domain of charitable foundations of all types, national, family, or community. Even state agencies that regrant federal and state funds might be considered players in this arena. Giving circles, on the other hand, are an informal avenue for philanthropic giving. By being informal, most giving circle participants agree, a circle can respond quickly and easily to the unique needs of the community.

This doesn't mean that one model is better than the other. It was clear from the women's comments that all forms of philanthropy are needed in a community, both formal and informal. There is no reason for the entities to compete. Each has a specific role and unique characteristics that together make for a fuller philanthropic response within a community.

In summary, by paying attention to the civic, relational, and accountability concerns of their members—the issues this study reveals as of primary concern—circles will continue to grow and develop as a funding mechanism within the larger field of philanthropy.

Chapter VI: Further Research

The field of philanthropy, as a whole, is not immune to the loss of trust experienced by society's institutions within the last few decades. The philanthropic landscape today is far different than it was even two decades ago, increasingly populated by specialized, professionalized nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), responding to pressures that come in part from the explosion of organized philanthropies.

The damage this lack of trust has done to society is still being revealed. Increasingly, there is important evidence that suggests that current approaches undertaken by practitioners, funders, and recipients within conventional philanthropy are not working and that philanthropy's current mission and vision are becoming irrelevant to the larger public.

Within institutional philanthropy, issues of accountability and transparency in particular have led scholars and practitioners to seek out new ways to create effective partnerships with those they serve, both donors and recipients. Likewise, donors and recipients are beginning to search for innovative ways to make connections with philanthropic and community institutions that can build a more vibrant society. Mainstream philanthropy is also being challenged by a dynamic and rapidly changing landscape of giving. Not content with the traditional institutions of charity and philanthropy, people are experimenting with new approaches that include things such as crowd-funding online and collaborative giving offline that collectively is being described as "new giving." Giving circles are one example of this new giving and how donors are reaching out and creating partnerships.

More Lessons to Learn

The work of giving circles, unfortunately, can be an awkward fit within philanthropy's accepted categories and practices and their lessons for the field could be overlooked or dismissed. Additional research designed to place this new research on giving circle leadership in relation to conventional philanthropic leadership is needed.

A study to compare and contrast the practices of giving circles with those of conventional grantmakers would be useful to both constituencies. Such a study is likely to provide opportunities for reciprocal learning across domains within philanthropy.

For example, Grassroots Grantmakers, an organization of place-based funders that seeks to include community members in the grantmaking process, emphasizes “small-grantmaking.” Grassroots Grantmakers is seeking to shift from a stance of reforming place-based philanthropy to creating and nurturing an infrastructure of monetary and non-monetary resources that support the work of active citizens and build productive bridges between the domain of citizen action and the public, business, and nonprofit sectors. They acknowledge that when grantmaking is at work in a highly relational environment, they have experienced a more fluid, generative processes of collective learning and innovation than usually experienced in the grantmaking milieu. They are actively looking to join with others who are learning with others to connect and work with citizen groups in in a way that contributes to community vibrancy.

They accept the premise that people in association are critical components of local democracy, effective service delivery, and community vitality. They want to work against the paradigm in which mainstream philanthropy operates that sidelines the value and opportunities that giving circles represent.

This approach to funding focuses on a community’s needs as expressed by members of the community and may have applicability for giving circles. Likewise, some of the lessons learned by those in giving circles undoubtedly have implications for others. The giving circle’s knowledge of small grantmaking is applicable to their work.

Another of these groups, CFLeads—an association of community foundations that are seeking a different way of relating to the communities they serve—has recently completed “A Framework for Community Leadership” (2008). This report outlines several elements of leadership practice that might be informative for giving circles. Research comparing and contrasting the various approaches to leadership and philanthropy within these other domains would be valuable to the fields of both philanthropy and leadership.

Related to this research, and building on the emergent idea of the relationship between giving circles and community capacity building would be research on civic entrepreneurs. It is quite probable that members of giving circles are indeed civic entrepreneurs, but more research is needed. It has been argued in the literature that giving circles cannot replace the role of traditional philanthropy in a community’s infrastructure. I agree that giving circles will never take over the job of traditional philanthropy in any community setting. Nonetheless, this doesn’t mean that giving circles don’t play an integral part in the community building. There is some evidence that giving circles act as boundary spanners for a variety of groups in their community. More research on these kinds of practices within the giving circle would be useful.

There is also a fairly recent concept within the philanthropic field called embedded philanthropy. Direct and ongoing community engagement is the heart and soul of embedded philanthropy and this distinguishes embedded philanthropy from conventional philanthropy. Embedded funders tend not to rely heavily on formal application procedures and conventional grant cycles in their community work; instead, they develop more informal decision-making processes, drawing on what they know—and who they know—from their community engagement.

Embedded philanthropy offers an alternative approach to the traditional relationship between philanthropic foundations and the people with whom they work. The kinds of relationships and community engagement that characterize embedded philanthropy take years to develop. Crucially, embedded funders don't think of these relationships as incidental or secondary aspects of their community work; they constitute the very means and method through which embedded funders do philanthropy.

Indeed, many embedded funders are comfortable with a level of dependence that most foundations would find alarming. And many are quite explicit about their desire to put themselves on a more equal footing with their community partners and diminish the power differential that philanthropic relationships inevitably entail.

Regardless of whether monetary grants are part of an embedded funder's approach—for most they are, but not for all—there is a good deal more to their community engagement and change efforts than simply grantmaking.

Some embedded funders focus on convening a variety of community actors and interests, providing space for new conversations, and helping all parties "get a place at the table." Others intervene more aggressively, incubating community-based organizations, nurturing local leadership, catalyzing new processes of community mobilization, or brokering their relationships with institutions and political actors to make change. Some take on the role of providing data and information on community issues, developing research or publicity functions.

By comparison with conventional philanthropic practice, embedded funders tend to be more flexible and adaptive in the way they work. Because this approach leads embedded foundations into uncharted territory, they also provide a source of rich innovation and new ideas in a sector that is often wedded to established practices. By necessity, embedded funders have an unusually high tolerance for uncertainty, risk, and disappointment. And there are no recipes to follow.

Embedded philanthropy may be an uncommon and unheralded variety, but it offers some novel insights and types of leverage on the challenges and dilemmas faced by all philanthropic foundations. It deserves both greater visibility in the philanthropic community and, like giving circles themselves, more thorough and extensive study.

Philosophically, some funders begin with a strong commitment to, for instance, democratic participation or the role of small-scale entrepreneurship, while others take a more pragmatic approach. Some focus on community-change goals, while others focus on staging and facilitating community dialog. For some, the agenda for change must come from the community itself, while others are more willing to pursue a foundation-led agenda.

The scope and depth of funders' agendas also vary—some focus on strengthening community institutions or on a set of priority issues, while others have a more ambitiously transformative conception of community change.

Transcending the idea of civic engagement, this notion suggests that people don't just want to develop better ways of affecting policymakers or government but are looking for more sustainable ways to participate in the community. The elements of this idea may also be ripe for a comparison analysis to see what might be learned that would be of value for both embedded funders and giving circles.

Skype as an Interview Tool

I was also fascinated to experiment with Skype when conducting two of the focus groups. Skype should become a more accepted interview medium in the future as there are several positive aspects to its use. It would also be useful to compare and contrast the different mediums—Skype vs. standard face-to-face approach—and the implications for research. I think Skype could be an answer to the problems I encountered identifying and nailing down participant circles. Travel was not required by any of the participants or the moderator and furthermore correspondence could take place through email. The barriers of economics and access that are often present when technology is concerned would not be a factor with this group, given their middle to wealthy class status.

Further Lessons for Leadership

Other topics, in addition to those that are explored here, also came up in some of the focus groups. These topics did not generate enough interest across a majority of the circles to include in this research, but are nonetheless ripe for further investigation. Some of these topics include: the leadership role of giving circles in growing the next generation of philanthropists; the leadership role of giving circles in promoting and incubating other circles; and leadership implications for what has become known as "fast and easy philanthropy" as mediated by community and regional foundations.

New giving initiatives within philanthropy, of which giving circles are but one example, are ripe for further exploration through many research questions yet to be answered.

Appendix

Appendix A: Focus Group Topic Guide

Introduction

I will introduce myself and the purpose of the focus group with the following.

Welcome and thanks for coming.

I'm a doctoral student at Antioch University. You will be helping me today/tonight with my research. I am researching leadership in giving circles.

I am writing a dissertation from the conversation we have here today/tonight and from other conversations with similar groups of women members of giving circles. I will be happy to share my final dissertation with any of you who would like to have a copy. I expect to have it completed by August 1, 2010. Please leave your name and number with me on the sheet I'm passing around and I will see that you receive a copy. I'm also passing around consent forms to be signed by each of you. The university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires me to obtain written permission from all participants in this study. So if you would read and sign the forms and leave them with me, that would be great.

(Pass around the sign-up sheet and the IRB forms.)

Introduction to Focus Group Process

Many of you may not be familiar with the focus group method. Focus groups are used by researchers to find out many kinds of things. They are best known, perhaps, for use in marketing. For example, McDonald's, before introducing a new food item, will hold focus groups to test the item. If a focus group turns thumbs down on the product, McDonald's will continue testing the product in their kitchens before releasing the new item to the general public. Some of you may remember the "new Coke" debacle. I'm not sure if they conducted focus groups or not, but you can be sure they do now before changing or introducing new products. Unfortunately, we won't be testing any food today/tonight.

Focus groups are a way to test what people think about a product or an issue. They are small group discussions where we have the opportunity to discuss a particular issue, in-depth. They provide a deeper, more comprehensive and more reflective look at a topic than a public opinion poll can provide. They provide more synergistic response than a one-on-one interview can. They help reveal new or alternative aspects of an issue. They allow participants to speak in their own voices using their own words not the jargon or specialized language of scholars or experts. Focus groups allow for, some say even encourage, differing viewpoints. Focus groups can also facilitate the emergence of new thinking.

You will have the opportunity to share your own perceptions and experiences with the topic. But you will also have the opportunity to interact with others around the table as you address the questions that I will pose. Most people find the experience a lot of fun and I hope you will, too.

There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your points of view. I want to hear from everyone. It is important to hear from each person because each person has different and unique experiences or perceptions to share. I want you to feel free to share your point of view, even if it differs from what others have said.

If one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask you to let others talk. And if you aren't saying much, I may ask you directly for your thoughts. But other than that I won't provide much direction for the conversation other than to pose a series of questions or statements and some probing follow-up questions for clarity. Instead, today/tonight we will be talking about your experiences and perceptions of leadership, especially within the giving circle environment.

Focus groups are not a question and answer session, so feel free to respond to something someone else says. As the moderator, I may play the devil's advocate.

After the session, I will analyze the transcripts of our conversation to identify themes in the conversation. The conversation we will have here today/tonight we help me tease out findings that will add depth to what is known about women's perceptions and experiences with leadership. As you talk with each other about issues of leadership, I will gain insights into how people think about the topic.

Ground Rules

Before we begin, let me suggest some things that will make our discussion more productive:

I've made name tags for you to help me remember your names. You have the advantage of knowing one another quite well.

- I'm interested in your comments, so speak up, but one at a time.
- The format is fairly informal and relaxed. I hope it will be enjoyable. Please feel free to jump right in to the discussion. But, please try not to interrupt someone else.
- My job as the moderator is to keep the discussion on track, to ask questions, and to listen.

I'll be using a topic guide with a set of questions to stimulate the conversation. (This may have been shared with you in advance.) I must remain neutral at all times; I will be taking field notes, writing down phrases etc. that will help me recall as I listen to the tapes after the session. My assistant (introduce her) will also be listening and helping with note taking.

Also, as I stated in the invitation letter, I'll be audio taping the conversation. Is this OK with everyone? I do this because I don't want to miss any of your comments. The tapes are only used to clarify comments made during the discussion and the tapes will be destroyed at the end of the project.

It's best if we keep the conversation on a first name basis. Your names will not be attached to your comments in any way in my final dissertation. You may be assured of confidentiality of your comments. But also, don't say anything you don't want anyone else to hear. Do you have any other ground rules to suggest?

The session will last about 90 minutes. We'll spend the first hour on a series of three questions, and end with 30 minutes of wrap-up conversation. I'll keep us on time. **Please turn off cell phones.** So, make yourself comfortable and let's begin.

Participant Introductions

Let's go around the table, say your name and anything else about yourself that you want me to know about you.

The topic today/tonight is leadership. I want to explore your perceptions of and experiences with leadership. When we talk about leadership, most people think about what the scholarly literature calls "positional leadership." This is the leadership of outcomes and evaluation with an emphasis on the individual leader and what they do. This isn't what I want to talk about today/tonight. I'm not interested in a critique of the giving circle leaders. I'm interested in exploring your own leadership experiences. What I want to talk about today/tonight is the process of leadership. While positional leadership is indeed a large part of the research and literature in this field, and the activities of leadership also merit study, this research focuses on the experiences and perceptions of leadership in relation to your participation in the giving circle.

In this focus group today we want to explore all types of leadership experienced in the giving circle.

Questions

To begin I'd like to ask:

Q1: How did you come to join the giving circle? Why did you join?

PROBE: Do you think of yourself as a leader in your giving circle? Why or why not? (try to get a sense of how they think about leadership, in a traditional top-down way or alternative ways)

Can you share a story, or give an example or an illustration of your own leadership experience or the leadership of someone else in the circle? (Try to get some concrete examples that illustrate how they think about leadership.) (Reiterate there are no right or wrong answers.)

Q2: When thinking about formal funding organizations, like the United Way or similar organizations, from your experience is leadership practiced differently then in your giving circle? Are there similarities?

PROBE: What is the difference or similarity?

PROBE: What do you think is the reason(s) for the difference or similarity?

Q3: What words would you use to describe leadership in your giving circle?

PROBE: Depending on the words they use to describe and explain the leadership in their circle, probe for: impact; collaboration and networking; grassroots, empowerment, and activism; and volunteerism.

Conclusion/wrap-up

Is there anything you would like to add?

Have we missed any points you would like to bring up?

Do you have any other questions or comments for me?

Thank you for your time and for sharing your thoughts with me today/tonight. Again, leave your name and number with me if you want to receive a copy of my dissertation when it's complete. Also please be sure I have your signed consent form. Thanks so much for your help.

Appendix B: Survey For Giving Circle Participants

The answers to these questions will provide a clearer picture of who the participants in this study are. Your name will not be matched to your answers and your personal information will not be shared with anyone**. There are a number of sensitive questions, therefore, if you do not wish to answer any particular question, please skip it and move on to the next one.**

Demographics

In what year were you born? ___________

What is your race or ethnicity? ___________

What is your marital status? ___________

How many children, aged 18 or younger, live in your household? ______________

What was your highest grade of school or level of education completed? __________

Are you currently employed? __________ If yes, part time or full time? __________

What was your total household income before taxes last year? ___________

How often do you attend religious services? __________

How many years have you lived in your current community? __________

How would you describe yourself politically? __________________________________

Volunteerism

How long have you been a member of this giving circle? __________

Have you held an elected office within the giving circle? __________

Have you belonged to other voluntary organizations? __________ How many? ________

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH!

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation

June 2010

Thanks for agreeing to participate in a focus group planned for Thursday, June 3, 2010. The session will begin at 1:30 pm and conclude by 3:30 pm.

The topic for the discussion is giving circles and leadership. A giving circle is a philanthropic funding mechanism through which groups of people pool their resources, educate themselves about issues in the community, and collectively make decisions about who and what to fund. I want to share the questions that I will ask during the ninety minute to two-hour session with you now. They are:

Q1: How do you experience and perceive leadership in your giving circle? Can you share a story, or give an example or an illustration? (There are no right or wrong answers.)

Q2: Do you think leadership is practiced differently or similarly in a giving circle than in a formal funding organization, say a United Way or even a business organization?

Q3: Now, let's turn to other ways of getting at leadership in your giving circle. What impact do you hope to have through your participation in the giving circle? Are there experiences that come to mind when you think about impact and leadership?

Q4: Generally, do you think of yourself as a leader in your giving circle?

Q5: How do you think about leadership in the context of philanthropy?

I look forward to hearing your opinions on this topic as well as those of the other participants. This is strictly a research project and no sales or solicitations will be made. The discussion will be taped and the tapes will only be used by me in writing up the research. Your name will never be associated with any of the comments or quotes used in the research report.

As a participant, you have the right to discontinue your participation in this research at any time either before, during, or after the focus group has been conducted. You will also receive a draft copy of the analysis to examine and comment on. If you have a concern about your contribution to the study, you have the right to revise your comments, strike out any comments, or ask that your comments be deleted from the transcripts altogether. If you wish to have your comments deleted, those comments will not be used in any way in the research analysis. Any possible concerns you may have are of concern to this researcher and any request by you for revision or deletion will be complied with.

The success and quality of the focus group discussion depends on the cooperation of the people who attend. The focus group will be very small, no more than five participants, so I am counting on your attendance. If for any reason you are not able to attend, please call me as soon as possible at xxx.xxx.xxxx.

I look forward to seeing you. Thanks again for agreeing to participate.

Sincerely,

Deborah Witte

Appendix D: Giving Circles and Leadership Focus Group Participant Consent Form

You have been asked to participate in a 90-minute focus group conducted by me, Deborah Witte, a doctoral student in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University.

This research seeks to understand leadership within giving circles. A giving circle is a philanthropic funding mechanism through which groups of people pool their resources, educate themselves about issues in the community, and collectively make decisions about who and what to fund.

The focus group will be audio-taped and the tape will be transcribed. Your name, however, will not be identified with any comments you make in the course of this focus group session.

The transcript will be used by the researcher to analyze and write up a report of the focus group.

While completing the research, hard copies of this material will be kept under lock and key while soft copies of the material will be appropriately password protected. After the research is complete, the tape and resulting transcripts will be retained indefinitely for future scholarly use.

Participants have the right to discontinue their participation in this research at any time either before, during, or after the focus group has been conducted. Participants will also receive a draft copy of the analysis to examine and comment on. If any participant has a concern about their contribution to the study, they have the right to revise their comments, strike out any comments, or ask that their comments be deleted from the transcripts altogether. If they wish to have their comments deleted, those comments will not be used in any way in the research analysis. Any possible concerns of the participants are of concern to this researcher and any request by the participant for revision or deletion will be complied with.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study.

If you have questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please contact:

Dr. Lisa Kreeger
Ph.D. in Leadership and Change
150 E. South College St.
Yellow Springs, OH 45387
xxx.xxx.xxxx
xxxx@antioch.edu

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating that you have read, understood and agree to participate in this research. Return one copy to me and keep the other for yourself.

Deborah Witte
September 2010

Name of Participant (Please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

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