Executives' Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study

By Laura Kellers Queen

B.A. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, May 1996, Moravian College
M.S.A. in Human Resources Management, May 2006, West Chester University of Pennsylvania

A Dissertation Submitted to

The Faculty of
The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

May 18, 2014

Dissertation directed by

Ellen Goldman
Associate Professor of Human and Organization Learning

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of the George Washington University certifies that Laura Kellers Queen has passed the final examination for the degree of Doctor of Education as of January 14, 2014. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

Executives' Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making:
A Case Study

Laura Kellers Queen

Dissertation Research Committee:

Ellen Goldman, Associate Professor of Human and Organization Learning, Dissertation Director

Joseph Bocchino, Senior Associate Dean for Health Sciences, Committee Member

Susan Swayze, Assistant Professor of Educational Research, Committee Member

© Copyright 2014 by Laura Kellers Queen
All rights reserved

Dedication

To my grandparents and great-grandparents, your guidance, love, support, patience, and example are the fertile ground upon which the seeds for this accomplishment were sown. Your histories, life lessons, work ethic, and personal voyages live in me as I walk my own path as a scholar-practitioner. To each of you who helped me treasure academic and scholarly pursuits, to open myself to the joy of traditional learning and education, I am tremendously grateful, even if I never learned "the King's English." To those of you who opened my world to the exploration of curiosities, to helping me to figure out how "it does that," to the wonders of nature, including the nature of people and business, my fondness and appreciation. And, to all of you—thank you for always, and without fail, answering me when I asked, *"Why?"* All my love, now and forever.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Dr. Ellen Goldman, my chair, for your patience, guidance, support, and personal concern. Your presence has influenced this work in countless ways. Thank you to Dr. Susan Swayze and Dr. Joe Bocchino for your critical insights, guidance, support, and direction. My appreciation to Dr. Dave Schwandt and Dr. Peter J. Dean for your participation as readers, and for sharing your gifts of time and perspective. My indebtedness to B. R. D.; although you're unaware, it was our many professional arguments about promotion and selection that were the inspiration for this work. My never-ending gratitude to my professional colleagues, personal friends, and family members for your care, concern, encouragement, and patience as I prattled on about this work and skipped out on social and family events; there are many rainchecks to cash.

I cannot express how grateful I am to the Untouchables and to the members of ELP Cohort 21. Our time together has been among the most gratifying and difficult times of my life. You became my family and home away from home. My specific thanks to Bill, Donna, Jim, Joan, Mark J., and Martha (in alphabetical order): your conversations, guidance and direction, editorial support, encouragement, and love proved invaluable and inspirational. Thank you to Jeanette Landgreen: you offered your support and a glimmer of hope when I needed it most.

Finally, and most importantly, to my children and husband. Rhiannon, Tori, and Tyler, you have given me the gifts of time, space, opportunity, encouragement, and meaning. I offer you my deepest thankfulness and my love. My fondest hope is that others will benefit through your generosity. And to Tim: without you, achieving this milestone was not even a dream; with you, it is a reality. Words will never express the

depth of my love or the breadth of my appreciation. You are and will always be my knight in shining armor and my soulmate.

Abstract of the Dissertation

Executives' Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making:
A Case Study

This qualitative, exploratory case study addressed the research question: What is the interplay of executive group members' deep-level attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making in one global organization? The study responded to Lawrence's (1997) call to explore the "black box of organizational demography" through the exploration of subjective concepts such as beliefs, cognitions, and values and their relationships within research models. As such, it sought to further the understanding of the influence of executive group members' surface- and deep-level (underlying) attributes while engaged in promotion and selection of internal candidates to higher levels of leadership within one regional business unit of a global organization. The research used executive groups, leadership, and decision-making literature as its basis, and its results inform practice related to executive groups, decision-making, and selection.

The study offered seven conclusions. (1) The definition of deep-level attributes requires revision. (2) Beliefs are not deep-level attributes, but result from the interplay between surface-level attributes and values. (3) Cognitions are generated from the interplay of beliefs and the decision-making context. (4) Executive groups appear to function best when both homogeneity and heterogeneity are present simultaneously. (5) The CEO has a more substantial and pervasive influence on the executive group decision-making process than any other member of the executive group. (6) The conceptual frame for this study required revision to fully understand "interplay." (7) Decision-making

executive groups are flexible in structure. The study offered recommendations related to theory, practice, and future research.

Table of Contents

Page

Dedication ..... **iv**

Acknowledgments ..... **v**

Abstract of the Dissertation ..... **vii**

List of Figures ..... **xiv**

List of Tables ..... **xv**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION **1**

Overview of the Study 1

Statement of the Problem 2

Purpose of the Study and Research Question 5

Statement of Potential Significance 6

Conceptual Framework 7

Summary of the Methodology 8

Limitations 11

Definition of Key Terms 13

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW **14**

Leadership 15

Early 20th-Century Leadership Theory 16

Mid to Late 20th-Century Leadership Theory 17

Early 21st-Century Leadership Theory 19

Leadership Versus Management 22

Decision-Making 25
Group Decision-Making 26
The Content and Significance of Executive Decision-Making 32
The Executive Group 33
Executive Roles and Responsibilities 35
Executive Selection 38
Homogeneity and Heterogeneity in the Executive Group 43
Attributes of the Executive Group 47
Summary of the Literature and Inferences for the Study 55

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 59

Research Design 59
Epistemology 59
Case Study Methodology 60
Interviewing Elites 62
Site and Participant Selection 63
Site Selection 64
Participant Selection 66
Data Collection 68
Review of Documents 69
Semistructured Interviews 70
Observation 76
Data Storage and Management 81
Data Analysis 81

First-Cycle Coding 82
Second-Cycle Coding 83
Identification of Ideas, Clusters, and Themes in the Overall Data 84
Trustworthiness 84
Credibility 84
Transferability 87
Dependability 88
Confirmability 90
Subjectivity Statement 90
Human Participants and Ethics Precautions 91

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS 93
Brief Overview of the Research Site and Sample 93
The Talent Management Steering Committee 93
Theme 1: Group Members Bring Strong Personal Orientations About the High-Stakes Decision-Making Process 95
Cluster 1: Participants' Personal Philosophies of Decision-Making 95
Cluster 2: Participants' Perspectives About Both Non–People- and People-Related Decision-Making 106
Cluster 3: Participants' Perspectives on Selection Criteria 111
Cluster 4: The Role of Instinct in Decision-Making 114
Theme 2: The CEO's Deep-Level Attributes Set the Tone for the Decision-Making Process 115

Cluster 5: The CEO as a Guidepost for Group Members' Orientation to People-Related Decision-Making 116
Cluster 6: The CEO as Being Present, Even When He's Absent 118
Theme 3: Participants' Surface-Level and Deep-Level Attributes Combine to Shape Decision-Making Criteria 120
Cluster 7: The Role of Values 121
Cluster 8: The Role of Surface-Level Attributes 125
Cluster 9: The Role of Beliefs 129
Cluster 10: The Role of Cognitions 131
Cluster 11: Types of Selection Criteria 135
Theme 4: Participants' Surface- and Deep-Level Attributes Shape Decision-Making Interactions 141
Cluster 12: Evidence of Interplay in Participants' Exchanges and Discussions 141
Theme 5: The Formal Process Reinforces Values and Beliefs 147
Cluster 13: Values and Beliefs Reflected in the TMSC Process 148
Cluster 14: Values and Beliefs Reflected in TMSC Member Characteristics 151
Cluster 15: The Influence of the TMSC Process on Executive Decision-Making 153
Chapter Summary 154

CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 160

Interpretations 160
Conclusions 162
Conclusion 1 162

Conclusion 2 164
Conclusion 3 167
Conclusion 4 170
Conclusion 5 173
Conclusion 6 175
Conclusion 7 178
Recommendations 178
Recommendations Related to Theory 178
Recommendations Related to Practice 180
Recommendations for Future Research 181
Reflections on the Research Study 183

REFERENCES 185

APPENDIX A: Talent Management Steering Committee Governance Document 199

APPENDIX B: Candidate Promotion Template 201

APPENDIX C: Informed Consent Form 203

APPENDIX D: CEO Interview Protocol 205

APPENDIX E: Core Member Premeeting Interview Protocol 207

APPENDIX F: Core and Peripheral Member Postmeeting Interview Protocol 209

APPENDIX G: Observation Record: Decision-Making Process 211

APPENDIX H: Original List of Codes 213

APPENDIX I: Final List of 31 Codes 214

List of Figures

Page

1.1. Conceptual Frame of the Study.....7

2.1. Comparison of the Traditional Selection Model with the Match-Fit Model 41

2.2. The Attraction-Selection-Attrition Model 42

3.1. Snowball Sampling Method to Identify the "Stable Core" and "Dynamic Periphery" in the Talent Management Steering Committee Decision-Making Processes 67

3.2. Data Collection Steps.....69

5.1. Surface-Level Attributes Combine with Values to Form Beliefs. 164

5.2. Beliefs and Context Combine to Form Cognitions.....167

5.3. A Revised Look at Attributes: Surface-Level Attributes, Values, and Instinct/Intuition.....169

5.4. A Revised View of the Black Box: The Interplay of Surface- and Deep-Level Attributes and Context 170

5.5. Conceptual Frame Reflecting Revised Image of Interplay in the Decision-Making Process 176

List of Tables

Page

1.1. Key Terms and Definitions 13

2.1. Mintzberg: Managerial Duties and Responsibilities Taken on by Leaders 22

2.2. Mintzberg: Managerial Roles Taken on by Leaders 23

2.3. Kotter: Different Roles for Leaders and Managers 24

2.4. Transition in the Management Environment from the 20th to the 21st Century 37

2.5. A Comparative View of the 20th-Century Manager and the 21st-Century Global Leader 39

3.1. Site Selection Criteria 64

3.2. Talent Management Steering Committee Members: Roles and Involvement in the Study 68

3.3. Enhanced Observation Validity Methods 80

3.4. Provisional Codes 82

5.1. Themes, Data Clusters, and Ideas Resulting from the Data Analysis 155

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

High-stakes decision-making occurs at the executive level of an organization (Guzzo, 1995; Finkelstein, Hambrick, & Cannella, 2009). Decisions at this level include the determination of organizational strategy and structure, operational goals, the investment of assets including people and capital (Andrews, 1987; Chandler, 1962), and the values and philosophy of the organization (Levi, 2011; Selznick, 1957). Such decision-making is arguably the most important leadership activity executives engage in (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Guzzo, 1995; Mintzberg, 1973), as it has the potential for long-term, even far-reaching organizational and individual outcomes, including failures (Guzzo, 1995; Irwin, 2009).

A substantial failure in high-stakes decision-making can be seen in the example of the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling published a 398-page final report concluding that the April 10, 2010, oil spill and blast were the result of "systematic management failure, specifically a string of *poor decisions* that led to technical problems"—and resulted in the deaths of 11 men, the injury of 17 others, massive destruction to the U.S. Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, a significant regional economic crisis, and a tremendous loss in BP's shareholder value (Ciccarelli, 2011).

With so much at stake, it is critical that organizations consider the individuals responsible and accountable for these activities (Irwin, 2009; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009) and how these executive group members influence a high-stakes decision-making process

(Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Lawrence, 1997; Pettigrew, 1992; Priem, 1990). Most previous research in this area has focused on observable demographic attributes and has resulted in conflicting results (Priem, Lyon, & Dess, 1999). Accordingly, this study sought to further the understanding of the influence of executive group members' underlying (deep-level) attributes while engaged in high-stakes decision-making. This effort required looking beyond surface-level, or demographic, attributes.

Improved understanding of executives' deep-level attributes and the ways in which they shape the process of decision-making may help practitioners improve high-stakes decision-making outcomes. Secondarily, it may help organizations identify, select, retain, and promote executive leaders who are better aligned with the organization and therefore more successful as individuals and organizational members.

Statement of the Problem

According to a 2007 report published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, 61% of executives surveyed said that "leadership decision-making at their companies is moderately efficient, or worse," a figure that increased to 72% for executives of large companies. The study also found that nearly 25% of North American leaders believe that their organizations frequently get their decisions wrong (Kielstra, 2007). This finding is critical, as executives possess the capacity and influence to fundamentally create and alter the culture, climate, strategy, and structure of organizations (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Mintzberg, 1979; Selznick, 1957).

The definition of decision-making, "a bundle of interconnected activities that include gathering, interpreting, and exchanging information; creating and identifying alternative courses of action; choosing among alternatives by integrating the often-

differing perspectives and opinions of team members; and implementing a choice and monitoring its consequences" (Guzzo, 1995, p. 4), assumes social interaction and the influence of the decision-making environment. Improving decision-making, therefore, requires an understanding of the environment and the inputs that shape decisions (Kielstra, 2007).

Often, high-stakes decisions are made in highly complex environments (Galbraith, 2002). High levels of environmental complexity require organizations to build into their arsenal the capability to adapt and evolve to meet the demands of their external environment (Ashby, 1965; Goldstein, Hazy, & Lichtenstein, 2010; Keck & Tushman, 1993; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Miles & Snow, 1994; Trist, 1983). An essential element of this capability is matching the complexity of an organization or entity to the complexity of the environment it operates in—known as requisite variety (Ashby, 1965). The specific type of complexity considered in this study is heterogeneity among executive group members.

Heterogeneity of executive group members concerns the variety of attributes or characteristics, such as mental models, values, and beliefs, that approximate the level of complexity present in the external environment within which the organization operates (Ashby, 1965; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Levi, 2011; Trist, 1983). High levels of heterogeneity within decision-making groups allow for greater idea variety, creativity, innovation (Eisenhardt, 1999; Levi, 2011), representation of the perspectives of various organizational functions (Dearborn & Simon, 1958), and environmental scanning (Keck & Tushman, 1993; Lawler & Worley, 2006). However, for the executives to add value to the organization and to coalesce as a team, some level of alignment with the organization

and with each other must also be present (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Miles & Snow, 1994; Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995; Selznick, 1957), a concept referred to as *fit*.

Traditional research in the area of executive group heterogeneity has been based on Pfeffer's (1983) concept of organizational demography and conducted using quantitative methods, often looking at surface-level attributes and using secondary data sources (Lawrence, 1997; Pettigrew, 1992; Priem et al., 1999). Criticisms of this research approach include the observation that "demographic attributes such as functional background, age, or tenure in office are only proxies for other constructs [such as values, beliefs, and cognitions], . . . and [prior] research seldom examined these constructs or the processes by which team composition affects outcomes" (Yukl, 2010, p. 392).

It is also uncommon in executive selection and succession practice to look beyond observable traits and skills and educational and experiential backgrounds to discover the deep-level attributes of executives (Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). Thus, both practice and academia have adopted the perspective that demographic data may be used as a proxy for these less observable, but arguably more important, aspects of leadership capability (Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Yukl, 2010). Lawrence (1997) further contended that the prevailing demographic focus of research on executives removes the subjective concepts from the exploration of organizational outcomes. Organizational demography emphasizes "prediction over explanation" and sets aside "important questions such as whether subjective variables operate as true intervening processes" (p. 2). Lawrence also suggested that research should focus on the processes of executive team functioning, seeking to understand the "dynamic and recursive" links of this social

psychological process, rather than simply focus on the "dependent variables and intervening constructs." She referred to the gap between "subjective concepts and their relationships within research models" as the "black box of organizational demography" (Lawrence, 1997).

As suggested by Irwin (2009), Lawrence (1997), and Pettigrew (1992), further exploration of this black box may help mitigate the derailment of executives and improve the outcomes of high-stakes decision-making. Deep-level attributes, such as values, beliefs, and cognitions, exert influence on executives' behaviors and decisions (Ciccarelli, 2011; Irwin, 2009; Lawrence, 1997; Pettigrew, 1992; Priem, 1990; Priem et al., 1999; Yukl, 2010). Kielstra (2007) advised that organizational decision-making has significant room for improvement; "chief among these areas for betterment is to understand how human beings fit into the process" (p. 14). Stemming the tide of highly visible, destructive, and costly failures of leadership is imperative (Hollenbeck, 2009; Smith & Howard, 2009; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). It behooves us all to explore the black box.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

This exploratory case study sought to further the understanding of the influence of executive group members' underlying (deep-level) attributes while engaged in high-stakes decision-making. Its aim was to ascertain how deep-level attributes impact decision-making by addressing one primary research question:

> What is the interplay of executive group members' deep-level attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making in one global organization?

Statement of Potential Significance

This work contributes to an enhanced theoretical understanding of the interplay of executive group members' attributes during high-stakes decision-making, delving into the "black box of organizational demography" (Lawrence, 1997) and focusing on deep-level attributes as described by Hambrick and Mason (1984), Harrison, Price, and Bell (1998), Milliken and Martins (1996), and Priem et al. (1999). The findings suggest that previous definitions of deep-level attributes require revision. Surface- and deep-level attributes are connected to each other in nuanced ways and are not mutually exclusive. This study also contributes to practice. Business success depends on the ability of organizations to recognize that one individual cannot be all things to an organization (Irwin, 2009; Levi, 2011). Long-term organizational success requires capitalizing on the differences among group members, while attracting and retaining key contributors who are aligned with the values of the organization, the executive group, and the CEO (Irwin, 2009; Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). The findings of this research suggest that executive decision-making groups require homogeneity of values and beliefs to align the members, and heterogeneity of surface-level attributes to ensure the input of various perspectives, thinking styles, functional expertise, and backgrounds.

This research focused on one global organization's executive group process of high-stakes decision-making. The findings of this study provide guidance to organizations and boards of directors in their decision-making activities, including those decisions impacting executive selection and succession activities.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell (2005) suggested that a conceptual framework is a "conception or model of what is out there that you plan to study, and of what is going on with these things and why" (p. 33). The conceptual framework for this study, depicted in Figure 1.1, includes the constructs of executive groups and leadership.

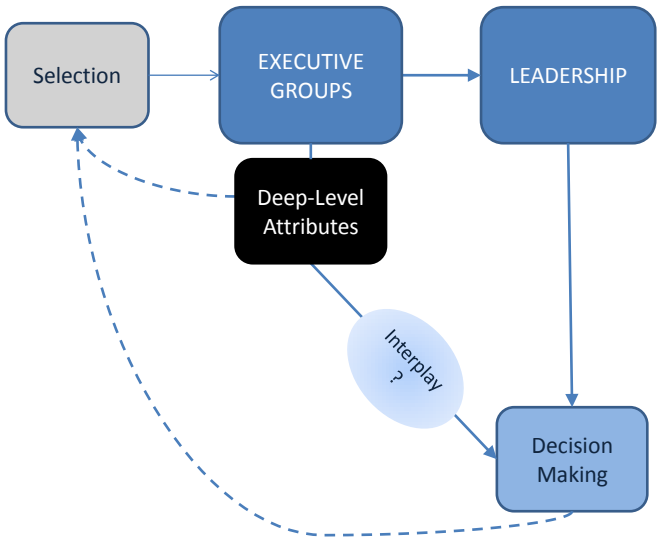


Figure 1.1. Conceptual frame of the study.

Executive groups comprise individuals at the top of the organization whose primary responsibility is the leadership of an organization. For the purpose of this study, executive groups were defined as a small core group of senior managers (including the chief executive) who comprise the "stable core," as well as a changing set of individuals (a "dynamic periphery") who work together closely with the core group to address particular organizational challenges (Roberto, 2003).

Leadership was defined as an ongoing process enacted in an interactive, emergent, and nonlinear fashion that is impacted by the social environment and involves different people who influence each other toward the achievement of common goals (Fiedler, 1996; Goldstein et al., 2010; Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010). Leadership activities include decision-making.

Decision-making is influenced by executive group members' attributes, including deep-level attributes (Ciccarelli, 2011; Irwin, 2009; Lawrence, 1997; Pettigrew, 1992; Priem, 1990; Priem et al., 1999; Yukl, 2010). Both deep-level attributes, defined as the underlying attributes representing differences among individuals including beliefs, values, and cognitions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al., 1999), and the interplay of these attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making ultimately influence the selection of executives for organizational roles. Selection was defined as the process of using information to determine who should be hired for short- or long-term positions in an organization (Jackson & Schuler, 2003). A single, exploratory case study explored the interplay of executive group members' deep-level attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making.

Summary of the Methodology

In Lawrence's (1997) critique of traditional demographic methods of exploring organizations, she said that "there is apparently no evidence that demographic variables provide better measures of individual behaviors than social-psychological measures" (p. 16). She also strongly argued for developing a greater understanding of how, where, and through what processes these social-psychological measures operate. Following

Lawrence's suggestion regarding exploratory inquiry, the methodological approach used for this study was an exploratory case study involving a single case (Merriam, 2009) with multiple levels of analysis (Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007). An exploratory case study approach was chosen because previous research has been quantitative and has predominantly employed secondary data.

A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to achieve an in-depth understanding of complex social situations and to focus on the process rather than the outcomes (Merriam, 2009). The case study methodology also allowed a detailed analysis of a bounded system, with a focus on a specific phenomenon, in this case executive group members' high-stakes decision-making, to provide descriptions of many variables and their interaction over time (Merriam, 2009).

Twenty-three interviews with 18 core and peripheral executive group members were the primary data source used to answer the research question. Additionally, a meeting of the executive group was observed and documents were reviewed in order to provide context and gather information regarding the site, the executive group members, and the meeting that was observed. To ensure trustworthiness, various techniques were employed, including ongoing data analysis, the maintenance of a field/reflexivity journal, inclusion of a subjectivity statement, peer reviews of interviews for bias and leading, peer reviews of data coding and analysis for bias, member checks of core members' interview transcripts, and triangulation of data (Merriam, 2009) from semistructured interviews and the observation.

The research site met the following site selection criteria: it was a regional business unit led by an executive group whose responsibilities included strategy-making.

The executive group's strategy-making function required high-stakes decision-making, and the high-stakes decision-making process was bounded and incorporated an executive team made up of stable core members and a dynamic periphery. The context of this study was a single organization that had an executive group with responsibility for its own profit and loss and the determination of its own business strategy and structure, including the determination of its product portfolio, pricing strategies, choice of market segments, acquisition targets, organizational structure, and staffing. The organization had at least one bounded high-stakes decision-making process (Stake, 2000) that was able to be accessed by the researcher.

The bounded system (Stake, 2000) explored in this research was a standing group of executives ("stable core"), supplemented by various other members of the organization's leadership team ("dynamic periphery"), who had responsibility and accountability for decisions related to the regional organization's talent management activities. This team, the Talent Management Steering Committee (TMSC), engaged in the periodic review and approval of proposals for the addition of headcount and promotions to various levels of executive leadership. The promotional decisions presented to this group were not subject to subsequent review or approval at a higher level of organizational leadership.

In an effort to place a limit on the size of the sample population (Merriam, 2009), the CEO and the standing members of the TMSC were the initial sample. Confirmation of the "stable core" occurred through an interview with the CEO, as well as through organizational records. Members of the "dynamic periphery" were identified through snowball sampling, documentation, and direct observation (Merriam, 2009). The entire

sample of core and periphery comprised 18 participants (Creswell, 2007). All of these individuals were interviewed, at which point no new information was forthcoming and redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was achieved.

Limitations

This study was delimited to a single case study of one organization's group of executives with responsibility and accountability for review and approval of proposals for promotion to various levels of executive leadership. This study explored people-related high-stakes decision-making; therefore, these findings may not apply to other types of decisions such as mergers and acquisitions, product/portfolio selection, or asset allocation. A similar study exploring additional types of high-stakes decisions could be conducted for comparison.

This site was selected as it met the established research criteria and offered a unique opportunity not only to study an executive decision-making process, but also to directly explore the process of executive selection. The researcher had direct access to this decision-making body, as she was a core member of the TMSC team. The researcher's biases, because of her role in the organization, were addressed through the trustworthiness measures outlined in chapter 3.

This research was conducted in one organization using in-depth analysis to gain a deep, rich understanding of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009); such an approach limited the sample size and therefore restricts the generalizability of the findings. The findings generated in this single-site study are uniquely applicable to the site, and extending these findings to other contexts may be a challenge (Orlikowski, 2010). The results may be transferable—by informing practice for other organizations employing similar processes

for the evaluation and determination of internal candidates being selected for promotion to higher-level leadership positions—but are not generalizable. Replication studies may be undertaken at a future date and compared to this case.

There are unique concerns associated with interviewing top corporate executives, often referred to as "corporate elites" (Goldman & Swayze, 2012). These concerns include getting around executive "gatekeepers" and gaining access, scheduling around executives' limited availability, finding appropriate and secure locations, and recognizing the possibility that executives' responses may be scripted to present the best possible image or to represent the organization in an approved manner (Dexter, 2006; Ostrander, 1993; Thomas, 1993). Since the researcher was a member of the CEO's executive group, gaining access and establishing rapport and credibility presented little concern. Being a participant-researcher allowed for access that might otherwise have been very difficult to obtain. In fact, the depth of information obtained in this study may have been possible because the researcher was familiar to the participants, facilitating deeper and more honest conversation.

Interviews were used as the primary data source to answer the research question. Additionally, a meeting of the executive group was observed. Documents were reviewed to provide background and context in the form of information regarding the site, the executive group members, and the meeting that was observed. Since the data presented in this study were collected through participant interviews and meeting observations, the information shared by participants was subjective. The core team included in the pre-TMSC meeting interviews was a stable group; however, the peripheral group members assembled on the basis of the candidates being presented for promotion at a particular

meeting. Therefore, potential participants with valuable information may not have been interviewed or observed.

Definition of Key Terms

Key terms used in this study are defined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1
Key Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Decision-making	"A bundle of interconnected activities that include gathering, interpreting, and exchanging information; creating and identifying alternative courses of action; choosing among alternatives by integrating the often-differing perspectives and opinions of team members; and implementing a choice and monitoring its consequences" (Guzzo, 1995, p. 4).
Deep-level attributes	Underlying attributes representing differences among individuals, including beliefs, values, and cognitions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al., 1999).
Executive groups	A small core group of senior managers (including the chief executive) who comprise the "stable core," as well as a changing set of individuals (a "dynamic periphery") who work together closely with the core group to address particular organizational challenges (Roberto, 2003).
Group heterogeneity	The variety of attributes or characteristics present in the group, such as mental models, values, and beliefs, which approximate the level of complexity present in the external environment within which the organization operates (Ashby, 1965; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Levi, 2011, Trist, 1983).
High-stakes decisions	Decisions that occur at the executive level of an organization (Guzzo, 1995; Finkelstein et al., 2009) and include the determination of organizational strategy and structure, operational goals, the investment of assets including people and capital (Andrews, 1987; Chandler, 1962), and the values and philosophy of the organization (Levi, 2011; Selznick, 1957).
Interplay	"The way in which two or more things or people affect each other" (Hornby, 2005, p. 813).
Leadership	An ongoing process enacted in an interactive, emergent, and nonlinear fashion that is impacted by the social environment and involves different people who influence each other toward the achievement of common goals (Fiedler, 1996; Goldstein et al., 2010; Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010).
Selection	The process of using information to determine who should be hired for short- or long-term positions in an organization (Jackson & Schuler, 2003).
Surface-level attributes	Readily detectable differences among individuals, including demographic attributes, education level, organizational tenure, and so forth (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Priem et al., 1999).

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the literature published to date on the main constructs of leadership and executive groups, addressing both theoretical and practical elements and providing a foundation for the research study. Operational definitions and explanations are provided for each construct.

The literature search was conducted primarily online, between late 2009 and September 2012, the time of the proposal defense, using several electronic databases, including ABI/Inform Plus, ProQuest, Google and Google Scholar, the Gelman Library System's Surveyor, EBSCO Host, and JSTOR. The search was repeated to update literature as the dissertation was nearing completion in October 2013.

Research terms included leadership, executive groups, executive selection, top management teams (TMTs), underlying managerial attributes (surface- and deep-level), decision-making, requisite variety, and heterogeneity. Many of these terms were searched for individually and in conjunction with each other. The initial search criteria targeted publications produced from 1980 to the present to capture the period just prior to, and including the work of, Pfeffer (1983) regarding organizational demography and Hambrick and Mason (1984) introducing upper echelons theory, as these works form the basis for this research study. The search process was both inductive and deductive, simultaneously. The synthesis of this literature highlights the importance of addressing the research question for the benefit of practitioners and scholars.

This literature review is divided into three main sections. The first section on leadership explains the evolution of the concept within the past century and the difference

between leadership and management. The second section focuses on the process of decision-making, delving into aspects of group decision-making and executive decision-making. The final section reviews literature on the executive group, including roles and responsibilities, the executive selection process, homogeneity and heterogeneity in the executive group, and specific attributes in the executive group. The chapter closes with a summary that provides inferences for the current study.

Leadership

In 2003 Bruce Winston, along with his colleague Kathleen Patterson, attempted a "complete definition of leadership." Seeking a holistic approach to viewing and defining leadership, they undertook a comprehensive survey of published articles on leadership to assist them in their effort. They identified 26,000 articles, each reflecting between 1 and 25 individual leadership constructs which, when distilled, could be categorized into 92 dimensions of leadership. This effort reinforces the observation that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are scholars and students of leadership (Bass, 1990).

Most definitions of leadership assume a process of intentional influence over others to guide, structure, build relationships, facilitate activities in a group or organization (Yukl, 2010), and produce useful change (Kotter, 1990a). Leadership is both a cognitive rational process and an emotional process aimed at achieving group and organizational outcomes (Yukl, 2010). Fiedler (1996) defined leadership as "an ongoing transaction between a person in a position of authority and the social environment" (p. 243). Kotter (1990a) suggested that the process of leadership helps "direct and mobilize people and/or their ideas; . . . it produces movement" (p. 3).

For the purposes of this research, leadership was defined as an ongoing process enacted in an interactive, emergent, and nonlinear fashion, which is impacted by the social environment and involves different people who influence each other toward the achievement of common goals (Fiedler, 1996; Goldstein et al., 2010; Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010).

This section presents the evolution of leadership theory, which begins with a psychological approach, moves toward a sociological approach, and then applies the lenses of emergent processes and complexity. It closes with a discussion of the differences between leadership and management.

Early 20th-Century Leadership Theory

Early leadership theory adopted a psychological approach to the study of leadership (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007). The theories developed during this era maintained a focus on the individual and employed research methods often used by psychologists. This period gave rise to the trait-based approach and the notion of "the great man theory of leadership" (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007). This theory assumed that great leaders were born with leadership genius and that by virtue of their innate personal traits, they were uniquely qualified to lead others. Charismatic leadership theory (Conger, 1989; House, 1977; Weber, 1924/1947) attempts to establish a link between individuals and their organizations by emphasizing the intrinsic rewards of their association with the organization. Charismatic leaders are credited with transforming the identity of followers to the collective identity of the organization (Northouse, 2010). The great man theory (Burns, 1978) and charismatic leadership theory (Conger, 1989; House, 1977; Weber, 1924/1947) both owe their origins to this trait-based approach.

Role-based theories also emerged during this period (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007). These theories highlight the importance of the role each individual occupies as the source of leadership influence and authority (Yukl, 2010). Attribution theory (Calder, 1977) is among the prominent contributions of this period. According to this theory, followers mistakenly attribute organizational successes and failures to CEOs and other executives. These early theories represent great leaders as commanding and controlling (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007); however, while they are important building blocks in the study of leadership, they offer only a single dimension of leadership. These theories assume that individual leaders are the primary, if not sole, source of organizational outcomes. Later theories of leadership portray great leaders as strategic thinkers, teachers and stewards, and facilitators of organizational success, who consider the influences of environment, situation, and stakeholders (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007).

Mid to Late 20th-Century Leadership Theory

The mid to late 20th century marked early consideration of situational influences and a sociological approach to leadership (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007). Among the notable contributions in this area is the life cycle theory of leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), referred to now as the tridimensional leader effectiveness model (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996) or, more commonly, situational leadership. This model focuses on how leaders go about the activities of leadership along the dimensions of task orientation and relationships. The situational leadership model adds an "effectiveness dimension" to the previous models, suggesting that a leader's effectiveness will result from the interaction between the leader's style and the environment, which in their view

includes recognizing the development level of followers and other environmental factors (Hersey et al., 1996).

Contributions during this period also include the transformational leadership theory of Burns (1978). This theory suggests that leaders raise the level of morality in an organization (Northouse, 2010). Leaders inspire followers toward a shared vision for the future; they establish the values of the organization and create and maintain an organizational culture that provides for employees' needs (Northouse, 2010). It is through transformational leadership that members of an organization find common purpose and can achieve a higher calling (Burns, 1978). In contrast to his perspective of transformational leaders, Burns (1978) suggested that most leadership is transactional and focuses on the exchanges between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2010), a quid pro quo relationship. He distinguished between the transformational and transactional leadership perspectives by saying that transactional leadership "aid[s] in the individual persons or groups going their separate ways" (p. 425).

The mid to late 20th century also saw the influence of social cognitive theory, which is based on an interactional model of human behavior and highlights the role of agency in social interactions (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007). Among the key contributions in this field is Bandura's (1986) model of triadic reciprocal causation. This model represents the importance of the interactivity of personal factors, action, and environmental influences. Unlike many of the models to follow, most of the models appearing during this era adopt a linear approach to the various leadership influences (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007).

Early 21st-Century Leadership Theory

Contemporary leadership study has expanded upon and refined many of these earlier perspectives, considered the emergent nature of leadership, and added important dimensions to the continuing exploration of leadership. The late 20th and early 21st century is considered the knowledge era (Schwandt & Szabla, 2007). Company valuations include not only tangible assets such as buildings, equipment, and infrastructure, but also human capital, intellectual property, and intangible assets (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Galbraith, 2002; Porter, 1998). The competitive business environment is characterized by continuing technological advances, vast quantities of information, and the expansion of globalization (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). To compete effectively, organizations and their employees must constantly learn, evolve, and adapt to their environments (Lawler & Worley, 2006).

Adopting leadership approaches designed to enable adaptation and change to meet both internal and external business demands will drive organizational value (Lawler & Worley, 2006). The great volume of previous leadership theory lays an important foundation for current and future research and has been expanded upon to include such important leadership conceptualizations as Gronn's (2002) distributed leadership and Pearce and Conger's (2003) shared leadership models.

Distributed and shared leadership. Distributed leadership moves away from leader-centrism toward an adaptive response to the leadership needs of organizations (Gronn, 2002). Distributed leadership takes advantage of members' differing skills, knowledge, and abilities by allowing them to coalesce around organizational needs and outcomes (Gronn, 2002). These capabilities emerge as working relationships form and

individuals develop mutual trust and understanding of each other's interests and capabilities. This process is enhanced by formalized organizational practices that support the distribution of leader roles and responsibilities.

Gronn (2002) suggested that there are both technical and social components to leadership distribution. Technical distribution divides tasks across members of the organization on the basis of knowledge and technical ability; social distribution divides tasks on the basis of members' values and interests. He defined distributed leadership as "a status ascribed to one individual, an aggregate of separate individuals, sets of small numbers of individuals acting in concert or larger plural-member organizational units" (Gronn, 2002, p. 428). Unlike some of the more process-oriented views of leadership, this definition assumes that leadership influence is voluntarily ascribed to these units by members of the organization, including executive group members.

A more process-oriented approach to the distribution of leadership is the shared leadership model proposed by Pearce and Conger (2003). Shared leadership represents a response to team-based work arrangements; the inability of senior leaders to possess all the knowledge and information necessary to make highly effective decisions in complex environments; the requirement for speed in response to organizational needs; and the complexity of senior executive roles. They defined shared leadership as "a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both" (p. 1).

Shared leadership assumes social interaction and leadership influence in all directions—laterally, upward, and downward (Pearce & Conger, 2003)—and positions learning as an important element of leader effectiveness, requiring that individuals and

organizations continually learn in order to benefit from such a leadership process (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003).

Complexity leadership. Complexity leadership extends the shared leadership model to account for the emergent nature of leadership and the impact of environmental influences (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). This perspective suggests looking at leadership as "an emergent, interactive dynamic—a complex interplay from which a collective impetus for action and change emerges" (p. 299). Complexity leadership theory recognizes three types of leadership: (1) leadership grounded in traditional, bureaucratic notions of hierarchy, alignment, and control (administrative leadership); (2) leadership that structures and enables conditions such that complex adaptive systems are able to optimally address creative problem solving, adaptability, and learning (enabling leadership); and (3) leadership as a generative dynamic that underlies emergent change activities (adaptive leadership). Complexity leadership theory argues that leaders and the organizations they serve are complex adaptive systems. At their best, complex adaptive systems facilitate enabling leadership to provide an adaptive capacity for organizations, while also allowing administrative leadership to provide structure and orientation.

Goldstein et al. (2010) furthered the discussion of complexity leadership by applying a social systems lens. They suggested that meaning emerges from the interplay of differences in members' backgrounds, skills, opinions, and perspectives, and as a result creativity and innovation occur. Goldstein et al. (2010) referred to this process as generative leadership, a process of innovation that "is not led by any one individual but emerges through an unfolding series of events at every level of the organization" (pp. 2-3). Genera-

tive leadership is a progressive process that is advanced by organizational patterns of interactions and mutual interplay that allow for capturing novelty, growth, and flexibility.

This literature review has defined leadership as a process and has followed the evolution of leadership theories. In addition to the various leadership theories, there are also a variety of perspectives about how the processes of leadership and management are associated. The following section presents two of these perspectives discussed because of their relevance to this study.

Leadership Versus Management

There are a variety of views about the concepts of leadership and management and how they relate to each other. Mintzberg (1973) suggested that leadership is a role subsumed by the management function. Table 2.1 summarizes his definitions of managerial duties and responsibilities.

Table 2.1
Mintzberg: Managerial Duties and Responsibilities Taken on by Leaders

Managerial positions	**Duties and responsibilities**
Supervising	Improving the performance of subordinates by working with them to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, providing training, developing skills, scheduling their work, and setting performance goals.
Planning and organizing	Formulating short-term plans, carrying out projects, developing budgets, determining optimal allocation and utilization of resources, translating long-range plans into short-term operational goals, recommending and developing operational policies and procedures.
Decision-making	Making business decisions without hesitation in an unstructured situation, authorizing minor or major deviations from established procedures to meet new or unusual situations.
Monitoring indicators	Monitoring internal and external forces that may affect the company, including performance indicators, corporate finances and assets, market conditions, and the cultural, social, and political climate.
Controlling	Developing schedules and cost-time estimates for producing or delivering products or services, tracking productivity, ensuring the quality of products or effectiveness of services, and analyzing operational effectiveness.

Managerial positions	Duties and responsibilities
Representing	Answering questions and responding to complaints from outsiders, communicating with outsiders to promote company relations, negotiating with outsiders, conducting promotional activities to establish or maintain company image, and convicting others of one's point of view.
Coordinating	Communicating with others in the company over whom one has no direct control in order to share information, meet previously established schedules, solve problems, and achieve objectives; maintaining a smooth working relationship with peers; mediating disagreements and conflicts between key individuals.
Consulting	Keeping current with technical developments in one's field, introducing new techniques or technologies into the organization, and acting as expert advisor, consultant, or troubleshooter for other managers.
Administering	Performing basic administrative activities, such as locating information on company practices and procedures, analyzing routine information, or maintaining detailed and accurate records and documents.

Note: Adapted from *The Nature of Managerial Work*, by H. P. Mintzberg, 1973, pp. 54-99. Copyright 1973 by Harper & Row Publishers.

According to this framework, these duties and responsibilities, including the role of leading, are executed in the enactment of various managerial roles, and each role then comprises various activities (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2
Mintzberg: Managerial Roles Taken on by Leaders

Role types	Managerial roles
Information-processing roles	Liaison Monitor Spokesperson
Decision-making roles	Entrepreneur Disturbance handler Resource allocator Negotiator
Interpersonal roles	Liaison Figurehead Leader

Note: Adapted from *The Nature of Managerial Work*, by H. P. Mintzberg, 1973, pp. 54-99. Copyright 1973 by Harper & Row Publishers.

Mintzberg (1973) defined a manager as the individual in charge of an organization or subunit of an organization. He said, "No job is more vital to our society than that of the manager" (p. 12). Mintzberg (1973) viewed the job of manager as a gestalt composed of each of the managerial roles. Although no individual position contains each of these roles in exactly the same way, no role can be removed from the job and still allow for an integrated whole (Mintzberg, 1973). Mintzberg (1973) described the leader role as encompassing all managerial activities, including those with other basic purposes.

Kotter (1990a) took a different perspective, suggesting that leadership and management are different and complementary. He viewed leadership as coping with change, and management as promoting constancy, creating consistency and order, and coping with complexity (see Table 2.3). This view suggests that leadership and management are two sides of the same coin.

Table 2.3
Kotter: Different Roles for Leaders and Managers

Leadership	Management
Establishing direction: Developing a vision of the future, often the distant future, along with strategies for producing the changes needed to achieve that vision	*Planning and budgeting:* Setting targets or goals for the future (typically for the next month or year), establishing detailed steps for achieving those targets, and then allocating resources to accomplish those plans
Aligning people: Communicating the direction to those whose cooperation may be needed so as to create coalitions that understand the vision and that are committed to its achievement	*Organizing and staffing:* Creating an organizational structure and set of jobs for accomplishing plan requirements, staffing the jobs with qualified individuals, communicating the plan to those people, delegating responsibility for carrying out the plan, and devising systems to monitor implementation
Motivating and inspiring: Keeping people moving in the right direction despite major political, bureaucratic, and resource barriers to change by appealing to very basic, but often untapped, human needs, values, and emotions	*Controlling and problem solving:* Monitoring results versus plan in some detail, both formally and informally, by means of reports, meetings, and other tools; identifying deviations; and then planning and organizing to solve problems

Note: Adapted from "What Leaders Really Do" by J. P. Kotter, *Harvard Business Review*, May 1990, pp. 103-111. Copyright 1990 by Harvard Business School.

Combined, both Kotter's (1990a) and Mintzberg's (1973) taxonomies reflect the interconnectedness of management and leadership activities and highlight their importance in complex organizations. Using these frameworks as a reference, this study focuses on management and its subordinate activities, specifically the activity of decision-making. The next section provides additional detail about decision-making, with an emphasis on executive decision-making.

Decision-Making

Richard Guzzo (1995) defined decision-making "as a bundle of interconnected activities that include gathering, interpreting, and exchanging information; creating and identifying alternative courses of action; choosing among alternatives by integrating the often-differing perspectives and opinions of team members; and implementing a choice and monitoring its consequences" (p. 4).

Decision-making outcomes are generally categorized as either process outcomes—"the feelings and reactions of the team members that result from reaching decisions in teams (referenced internally to the team itself)"—or as quality outcomes "judged against standards or criteria external to the team" (Ilgen, Major, Hollenbeck, & Sego, 1995, p. 118). Generally accepted criteria for evaluating decision-making are speed, quality, and support or acceptance for the decision (Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995; Levi, 2011), as well as decision implementation (Priem, Harrison, & Muir, 1995). These outcomes result from the environmental context (Carpenter, Geletkanycz, & Sanders, 2004; Hoffman, 1982), as well as specifics related to the decision makers: the nature of interaction among group members, individuals' established roles, and personal differences (Ilgen et al., 1995).

In line with the study's focus, this section highlights the effect of group composition on executive group decision-making, including the impacts of consensus and conflict.

Group Decision-Making

Because information is unequally distributed across individuals (Guzzo, 1995; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; McIntyre & Salas, 1995), group decision-making is generally considered superior to individual decision-making (Bantel & Jackson, 1989), allowing for a diversity of perspectives (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Ilgen et al., 1995; Levi, 2011). Group decision-making promotes learning from the group's interactions, enhancing analytic and problem-solving capabilities (Levi, 2011), and encourages adaptation and development of individual and group skills and behaviors (Levi, 2011; McIntyre & Salas, 1995). However, the sharing of information in the decision-making process may be hindered by status and power issues, uncertainty among group members, and a lack of appreciation for the importance of information each member may hold (Guzzo, 1995). Successful teams demonstrate the ability to learn from their decisions and interactions to improve decision-making over time (Levi, 2011). They support members' individual development, maintain positive social relations, and complete the assigned tasks effectively and efficiently (Levi, 2011).

A group decision-making process is most successful when the problem is suitable for a group (Levi, 2011), the group members are able to effectively pool their resources (Jackson et al., 1995; Levi, 2011), the group is composed of heterogeneous members with complementary skills (Jackson et al., 1995; Levi, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996), there is ample time for communication (Janis, 1972; Levi, 2011), and group members are

encouraged to participate in open discussion that promotes cohesion among members (Levi, 2011; Selznick, 1957).

Cohesion and consensus in group decision-making. There is an inherent assumption in some of the literature that cohesion and consensus are preferred decision-making outcomes in and of themselves and that consensus and group cohesiveness will improve organizational outcomes (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Boone & Hendriks, 2009; Guzzo, 1995; Ilgen et al., 1995; Jackson et al., 1995; Kor, 2003; Levi, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Cohesion is a result of emotional ties built among the group members and enables good communication, reduces group member stress, improves job satisfaction, encourages trust, and improves individual, social, and interpersonal skills (Jackson et al., 1995; Levi, 2011; Yukl, 2010). An important benefit of group cohesion is effective conflict resolution and problem solving (Jackson et al., 1995; Levi, 2011). Groups demonstrating good social relations skills are more adept at communication, conflict resolution, and problem solving. One outcome of a group's positive social relations skills is a shared belief that the group is capable of successfully executing on its objectives, a belief referred to as "collective efficacy" (Yukl, 2010).

Although group cohesiveness improves stress tolerance and morale, it may lead to an "increase in concurrence seeking at the expense of critical thinking" (Janis, 1972, p. 115). Very high levels of group cohesion may impair group decision-making, as some members are too quick to agree with one another so as not to upset other members (Forbes & Milliken, 1999; Janis, 1972; Levi, 2011).

Groups exhibiting poor social relations skills will avoid conflict and confrontation, disrupting their ability to perform and eventually threatening the group's existence (Levi, 2011). The optimal decision-making process includes decision makers who are diverse enough to complement one another and bring varied perspectives and expertise to the situation, encouraging debate and improving creativity, while also being similar enough in values, beliefs, and assumptions to trust one another and foster cohesion (Barnard, 1938/1968; Janis, 1972).

Conflict in group decision-making. Conflict is another important part of the decision-making process and is facilitated by assembling diverse teams (Ilgen et al., 1995; Levi, 2011; Priem et al., 1995). Conflict stimulates debate in high-stakes decision-making processes through questioning assumptions and generating a broader range of available options (Eisenhardt, 1999). Conflict can be balanced by the creation of goals and objectives and the establishment of a shared vision. This shared vision allows for a sense of teamwork and collaboration, a hallmark of effective decision makers (Eisenhardt, 1999; Levi, 2011).

Intense interactions, as in situations of conflict and debate, create teams with intimate knowledge of each other, facilitating frankness of conversation and a greater willingness to express diverse points of view (Eisenhardt, 1999; Levi, 2011). Eisenhardt (1999) suggested that high levels of interplay among team members include "antipodal team member roles" (Eisenhardt, 1999), or what Priem et al. (1995) referred to as "devil's advocacy" roles. These roles allow team members to challenge the status quo and produce contrary points of view to aid in the decision-making process. "A range of

perspectives improves decision quality by ensuring that managers consider different sides of the issue" (Eisenhardt, 1999, p. 67).

Several studies have concluded that group processes that include higher levels of disagreement and free exchange of ideas contribute to improved consensus (Kor, 2003; Priem et al., 1995). Intergroup conflict allows all group members to express their opinions and perspectives (Levi, 2011), which is unlikely to occur in homogeneous groups (Barnard, 1938/1968), where groupthink (Janis, 1972) and premature decision-making are the more likely group process outcomes.

Group composition and decision-making. The composition of a group influences the dynamics of the decision-making process (Barnard, 1938/1968; Eisenhardt, 1999; Ilgen et al., 1995; Kor, 2003; Levi, 2011; Priem, 1990). The attributes of the group members influence creativity, cohesion, the time required to make decisions, and the ability to generate ideas (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Boone & Hendriks, 2009; Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Guzzo, 1995; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Ilgen et al., 1995; Kor, 2003; Levi, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996). A group of individuals must possess a required variety of attributes to ensure that organizations can draw upon multiple capabilities and perspectives (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Boone & Hendriks, 2009; Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Guzzo, 1995; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Ilgen et al., 1995; Kor, 2003; Levi, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Meeting the required level of variety enables organizations to meet current demands while fostering continued growth and adaptation with a changing environment—more variety in some cases and perhaps less variety in others (Ashby, 1965; Keck & Tushman, 1993; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Trist, 1983).

Diverse group decision-making may be enhanced through establishing shared mental models, or cognitions, among the group members (Guzzo, 1995; Knight et al., 1999; Yukl, 2010). These mental models are composed of values, perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions (Knight et al., 1999; Yukl, 2010). Guzzo (1995) argued that the group decision-making process is a "product of the cognitive processing of information, norms influencing the nature of social interaction, the skills, traits, and dispositions of individual group members, and more" (p. xi).

Managing group decision-making processes in diverse groups may be more difficult than in homogeneous groups; however, this does not seem to prevent decision makers from improved performance, including enhanced creativity (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Jackson et al., 1995; Levi, 2011). Conversely, a 1998 study conducted by Miller, Burke, and Glick evaluating cognitive diversity among executive group members revealed that high levels of cognitive diversity resulted in less comprehensiveness and extensiveness in evaluating opportunities and threats during the strategic decision-making processes. Importantly, managing greater diversity of ideas among group members requires more time for integrating these ideas into the decision-making process (Chatman et al., 1998).

Studies of TMTs, defined as CEOs and their direct reports (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), have suggested that, compared with organizations that limit debate, TMTs fostering debate and engaging in constructive conversations are more capable of leveraging the advantages of heterogeneity, resulting in more comprehensive strategies and higher levels of performance (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999). Additionally, there is evidence that higher levels of debate in the decision-making

process may lead to better implementation outcomes (Priem et al., 1995). “Consensus may, for example, mediate relationships between TMT demographic heterogeneity and performance” (Dess & Priem, 1995, p. 410), as it “results in greater satisfaction and acceptance of the group’s decision” (Priem, 1990, p. 471).

Priem (1990) presented a contingency approach to the consensus-performance theories and posited that in organizations with high environmental dynamism, executive group heterogeneity, a structured executive team, and the encouragement of agreement during decision-making are necessary. Conversely, he suggested that in organizations with low environmental dynamism, executive group homogeneity, unstructured executive groups, and the encouragement of disagreement in decision-making are required. Priem (1990) suggested that one avenue for future research is the idea that more complex strategies may require greater diversity of opinion and may be necessitated by the “specter of information overload,” since in a complex environment no one individual can possess all of the necessary information to optimize business decisions.

Decision-making processes require that members interact interdependently to achieve desired goals and valued objectives, demonstrate mutual influence, and adapt to circumstances (Ilgen et al., 1995; Levi, 2011; McIntyre & Salas, 1995; Yukl, 2010). Effective teams exchange information, share resources, and display a variety of styles suited to particular situations (Chatman et al., 1998; Guzzo, 1995; McIntyre & Salas, 1995). “The key to managing diversity in a team is to create an environment that supports constructive controversy so that members are able to express their differences in a safe and useful manner” (Levi, 2011, p. 230). Because the consequences of decision-making

at the executive level are so significant (Finkelstein et al., 2009), further discussion of these unique consequences is presented in the section below.

The Content and Significance of Executive Decision-Making

Decision-making at the executive level of an organization includes high-stakes issues (Guzzo, 1995) and "choices that affect the basic character of the enterprise" (Selznick, 1957, p. 135). At this level, decisions influence the establishment, maintenance, and preservation of an organization's "distinctive aims and values" (Selznick, 1957) and may also include more mundane, administrative decisions (Finkelstein et al., 2009).

Executive decisions are often factored into other smaller decisions, setting off waves of decisions within an organization (Mintzberg, 1979). "No executive decision is inherently strategic; rather, an issue becomes strategic when top management believes that it has relevance for organizational performance" (Dutton & Ashford, 1993, p. 397). Mintzberg (1979) suggested that executive decisions are only strategic in context, perhaps being impactful in one organization and routine in another.

Executive decisions include the allocation of a firm's resources: "men, money and materials" (Chandler, 1962). Executives must identify and choose among strategic alternatives, defend such decisions, and establish individual and organizational performance objectives (Aaker, 2001; Andrews, 1987; Barnard, 1938/1968; Chandler, 1962; Davis & Useem, 2002; Martin, 2011; O'Shannassy, 2010). Often, such executive decisions are made on an informal basis, in ad hoc consultation with other members of the organization (Kielstra, 2007). Many of these decisions require considering concerns of the organization as a whole (Chandler, 1962; Doz & Kosonen, 2008), a role for which

executives are uniquely positioned. Executive decision-making is not a simple, straightforward process, as Burns (1978) highlighted:

> Executive decision-making is not a series of single, linear acts like baking a pie. It is a process, a sequence of behavior, that stretches back into a murky past and forward into a murkier future. It is associated with other basic social processes: the division of labor, group relations, reward and penalty systems and other social control mechanisms, and . . . the holding of single or plural needs, motivations, goals and values. Organization theorists see the process as a turbulent stream rather than as an assembly-line operation—as "a twisted, unshapely, halting flow of interactions between people . . . interactions that shift constantly from a rational to a heuristic mode and back again" (Gore). (p. 379)

Although executives may not initiate all decisions, they have a significant influence on decision-making outcomes and eventual decision implementation (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Roberto, 2003). In addition to their role as high-stakes decision makers, executives occupy a variety of roles and possess various responsibilities. To clearly identify which organizational members are the targets of this research, the following section defines executive groups and more completely discusses executive roles and responsibilities. Understanding this group of organizational members is critical; as Finkelstein et al. (2009) stated, "In general, no other small group has nearly as much effect on the form and fate of an enterprise" (p. 6).

The Executive Group

Executives, the most impactful, important, and influential members of a corporate community, are worthy of study (Finkelstein et al., 2009). They are often considered the embodiment of organizations; their presence, demeanor, and behavior personify organizations and contribute significantly to organizational success or failure (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Peterson, Martorana, Smith, & Owens, 2003; Selznick, 1957). "We need

only to consider, in an integral way, the biases and dispositions of the people at the top of the firm. In doing so, we will find that human factors—deriving from personality, experiences, values, social connections, fatigue, envy, and so on—play a substantial role in affecting organizational outcomes" (Finkelstein et al., 2009, p. 4) and in defining the organization's personality (Chandler, 1962). Selznick (1957) argued that in the activities of executives, "we see the way group values are formed, . . . [the way] they define the commitments of the organization and give it its distinctive identity" (p. 16).

Often, the focus of research on executive groups is an organization's top leader, a CEO and his or her direct reports. Barnard (1938/1968) subscribed to the belief that the executive function of an organization is a "cooperative and democratic" responsibility, requiring the combined efforts of a CEO and the senior staff. The executive group is frequently referred to as the TMT (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Roberto (2003) argued against the use of a TMT definition, contending that the constellation of executives and senior managers responsible for senior-level leadership and decision-making is more situationally determined.

Roberto (2003) argued that executive group membership consists of a "stable core," composed of individuals who are trusted and respected and enjoy a strong personal relationship with the CEO, supplemented by a "dynamic periphery" at both the executive and senior management levels of the organization (Roberto, 2003) that encourages active, continuous, and substantive dialogue (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). The group changes on the basis of the task at hand, including the dynamic periphery who "work together closely with the core group to address particular strategic challenges" (Roberto, 2003, p. 123).

Among the conclusions drawn from Roberto's (2003) research is the observation that an individual's placement in the organizational structure does not determine his or her role in the decision-making process; rather, decision-making roles are determined circumstantially (O'Shannassy, 2010; Roberto, 2003), incorporating the members' range of backgrounds, depth of experience, and cognitive diversity (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). For the purpose of this study, an executive group is defined as a small core group of senior managers (including the chief executive), which comprise the stable core, as well as a changing set of individuals (a dynamic periphery) who work together closely with the core group to address particular organizational challenges (Roberto, 2003).

Executive Roles and Responsibilities

Leaders, as individuals or as members of an executive group, possess a multitude of roles and responsibilities (Barnard, 1938/1968; Mintzberg, 1973). Executives occupy the best vantage point from which to view and create the organization's purpose, to establish commitment to this purpose and its evolution, and to influence the holistic efforts toward such purposes and their adaptation (Andrews, 1987). Executives are responsible for establishing commitment to shared values and objectives, articulating a compelling vision of the future, and conveying shared mental models, assumptions, and beliefs regarding the organization (Yukl, 2010).

The CEO and his or her executive group are responsible for securing employee commitment to established organizational purposes and objectives (Andrews, 1987). Executives create and protect the social values of an organization (Selznick, 1957), formulate and communicate organizational interpretations (Barnard, 1938/1968; Chandler, 1962; Daft & Weick, 1984), and convey to the organization and its

constituencies “the kind of company this is” (Selznick, 1957, p. 106). The executive group establishes mechanisms for information dissemination, data gathering, analytics, evaluation, and coordination of activities across the organization to ensure efficiencies among multiple business units (Barnard, 1938/1968; Chandler, 1962).

To accomplish these roles, executives must be aware of the company’s environment, particularly those elements likely to impact the organization in the future (Andrews, 1987; Chandler, 1962; Galbraith, 2002). Executives are responsible for sourcing ideas and information for use in determining strategy from a wide array of stakeholders inside and outside of the organization (O’Shannassy, 2010). These boundary-spanning activities ensure that organizations and executives don’t become sealed off from organizational and environmental influences (Andrews, 1987; Chandler, 1962; Daft & Weick, 1984; Galbraith, 2002; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Selznick, 1957) and can effectively use this information to adapt and survive (Keck & Tushman, 1993; Lawler & Worley, 2006).

The importance of boundary-spanning activities for executives is highlighted by the shift in the management environment from the 20th to the 21st century (Table 2.4). Environmental transitions like those delineated in the table have significant implications for how businesses operate and for the content of executive roles and responsibilities. Incorporating this information into the choices and actions of an organization is an executive imperative.

Table 2.4
Transition in the Management Environment from the 20th to the 21st Century

20th century	21st century
High percentage of manufacturing industries	High percentage of service industries
Emphasis on functional expertise	Emphasis on management processes
Domestic market	Foreign markets and cultures
Legitimate authority in hierarchical organizational structure	Virtual team and network organizational structure
Clearly defined operating procedures	Fluid and reactive operating procedures
Well-defined industry boundaries	Ill-defined industry boundaries
Fairly constant market	Turbulent market
Bricks and mortar	Virtual offices
Communication slow and unreliable	Communication instantaneous and continuous
Technology growth emerging	Technology growth exponential
Many employees with similar responsibilities and skills	Many employees with unique responsibilities and skills

Note: Adapted from "Assessing the 'Conventional Wisdoms' of Management for the 21st Century Organization," by M. G. Harvey & M. R. Buckley, 2002, *Organizational Dynamics, 30*, pp. 368-378. Copyright 2002 by Elsevier.

Chandler (1962) concluded from his studies that the 20th century executive was depended upon "almost entirely" (p. 384) for the "health and effectiveness in carrying out [the] basic economic functions" of the enterprise (p. 384). As we move through the early 21st century, executives must possess or acquire the required operational skills and competence necessary for the effective functioning of their organizations (McIntyre & Salas, 1995). Many of the roles played by executives during both of these eras are similar; however, the environment and organizations have undergone many changes (Harvey & Buckley, 2002), necessitating rigor and a shift in the focus of executive recruitment and selection processes. The strategic activities of organizations include "human resource policies, [which] start with hiring practices that recruit and attract people who fit with the organization, not just the job" (Galbraith, 2002, p. 85).

Executive Selection

"The choice of persons for executive positions at any level . . . is probably the most important act of administration" (Andrews, 1987, p. 7). Chandler (1962) agreed, placing the selection of executive leaders in organizations as second only to an organization's strategy in importance and impact. Smith and Howard (2009) contended that executive selection should be viewed as a strategic business decision and "most accurately . . . as a risk mitigation strategy" (p. 145). Organizational failures can result from significant mismatches between key executives and the organizations they are selected to lead. Notable examples include Bob Nardelli's failures with Home Depot and Carly Fiorina's difficult tenure with Hewlett Packard (Irwin, 2009).

Hollenbeck (2009) asserted that "executive selection decisions are often, if not usually, wrong" (p. 130), and he suggested that "executives and executive selection are absolute keys to organization success" (p. 131). Although there are little data on executive failure, in general, as most of the data exists specific to CEOs, "executive failure is common," and no industry is left untouched (Hollenbeck, 2009). Smith and Howard (2009) offered the following "self-evident truths" about executive selection:

- It is more important than ever before.
- The cost of leadership failure is higher than ever before.
- Every choice is a high-stakes decision for organizations, their shareholders, and their associates (p. 144).

Consideration of all of the ingredients necessary for success in an executive role within an organization is a business imperative (Harvey & Buckley, 2002; Smith & Howard, 2009; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). Environmental factors (Harvey & Buckley,

2002) and organizational and group context (Smith & Howard, 2009) are of tremendous significance in making such decisions. In addition, the managerial environment has changed, resulting in a similar shift in the requirements of a 21st century executive (Harvey & Buckley, 2002), as outlined in Table 2.5. This shift has significant implications for attracting and selecting executives who can be personally successful and can contribute to the ongoing performance of the organizations they serve (Harvey & Buckley, 2002).

Table 2.5
A Comparative View of the 20th Century Manager and the 21st Century Global Leader

20th century manager (early 1900s)	**21st century global leader (early 2000s)**
• Has broad interests and a wide imagination and understanding • Has superior intellectual capacities • Understands the field of human relations • Appreciates the importance of persuasion in human affairs • Understands what constitutes rational behavior toward the unknown and the unknowable	• Is open minded and flexible • Has value-added technical and business skills • Has cultural interest and sensitivity • Is resilient, resourceful, optimistic, and energetic • Is able to deal with complexity • Has a stable personal life • Possesses and engenders honesty and integrity

Note: Adapted from "The Evolution of the Concept of the 'Executive' from the 20th Century Manager to the 21st Century Global Leader," by J. T. Heames & M. G. Harvey, 2006, *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 13*, pp. 29-41. Copyright 2002 by Sage.

Various theories and practical models can be employed to assist in this selection exercise. Traditional models of executive selection have focused on a job candidate's observable traits and qualifications as the primary, if not the sole, criteria for the position (Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). Over time, however, the effectiveness of such approaches has been questioned, and alternative selection models have been suggested (Schneider,

1987; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). A brief summary of the traditional selection model and two alternatives are presented below.

The traditional selection model. Assessing candidates for basic competencies, including background, education, industry experience, abilities, skills, and knowledge, is very important and is referred to as the traditional selection model (Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). This model defines abilities as "all those learned and inherent skills, knowledge, aptitudes, talents, and intellectual capabilities that allow an individual to accomplish certain executive functions at appropriate levels of expertise to achieve certain predetermined outcomes" (Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009, p. 43).

The traditional selection model does not, however, account for factors such as organizational culture, personality, and behavioral fit in the evaluation of candidates. As previously discussed, deep-level attributes—personality, attitudes, beliefs, values, and cognitions—are often at the heart of executive failure (Irwin, 2009).

The match-fit model. Stoddard and Wyckoff (2009) proposed a new model, the match-fit model, where "match" is a function of how well the candidate's abilities, personality (behaviors), and energy relate to the needs of the company (p. 36) and *fit* is a function of the alignment between an individual's values and beliefs and those of the organization (Figure 2.1). Stoddard and Wyckoff (2009) emphasized the need to assess both the candidate and the organization; "it is not enough just to identify the character traits possessed by a candidate to determine if he or she is right for a given job" (p. 81). Organizations need to know their needs and subsequently identify individuals who not only have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities, and also have deep-level

attributes that align with the culture of the organization as well as to the values and beliefs of the CEO and executive team.

Lack of fit can affect the success of an organization's strategies (Aaker, 2001). In his comparative case studies conducted in 1962, Chandler concluded, "The training, temperament, and daily activities of the executives responsible for the company's basic decisions vitally affected the attention given to and the solutions proposed for these needs" (p. 283).

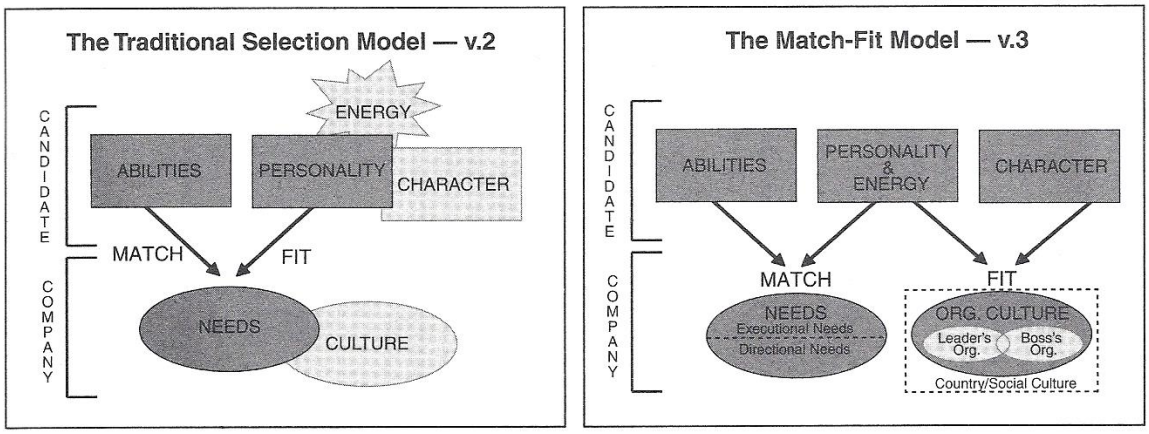


Figure 2.1. Comparison of the traditional selection model with the match-fit model. Reprinted from *The Right Leader: Selecting Executives Who Fit,* by N. Stoddard & C. Wyckoff, 2009, p. 67. Copyright 2009 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The attraction-selection-attrition model. The attraction-selection-attrition model (Schneider, 1987) takes a slightly different view of placement in organizations, suggesting that attraction, selection, and attrition are reciprocal processes fueled by an individual's interest in, and alignment with, an organization's goals, objectives, and culture (Figure 2.2). In this model, the executive leader, as the designer of the organization's goals and objectives, is a focal point for the attractiveness of the organization. The model posits that "different kinds of organizations attract, select and

retain different kinds of people and it is the outcome of the ASA [attraction-selection-attrition] cycle that determines why organizations look and feel different from each other" (Schneider, 1987, p. 440). The attraction-selection-attrition model forms the basis for the person-organization fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Figure 2.2. The attraction-selection-attrition model. Reprinted from "The People Make the Place," by B. Schneider, 1987, *Personnel Psychology, 40*, p. 445. Copyright 1987 by Wiley-Blackwell.

This model suggests that individuals are most attracted to the goals and objectives established by the founder or CEO (Schneider, 1987). Peterson et al. (2003) provided support for the attraction-selection-attrition model, suggesting that CEOs need to be aware of the impact their personalities have on members of the TMT and should carefully select group members on the basis of group dynamics, or fit. The suggestion is that individuals who fit will experience greater success, personally and for the organization,

and that it is better for individuals whose values are in conflict with management to separate from the organization (Andrews, 1987; Barnard, 1938/1968).

Schneider (1987) offered a warning, however: "If people who do not fit [organizations] leave, then the people who remain will be similar to each other. . . . They will constitute a more homogeneous group than those who were initially attracted to the setting" (p. 442). Without careful attention, recruitment, selection, and attrition processes can result in the homogenization of an organization, in part because people often prefer working with, and consequently hire or choose to work with, others perceived as similar to themselves (Levi, 2011; Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1998; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009).

Homogeneity and Heterogeneity in the Executive Group

Organizations are complex systems, whose survival depends on the ability to adapt and respond quickly to changing environments. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) described an organization as

> an open system in which the behaviors of members are themselves interrelated. The behaviors of members of an organization are also interdependent with the formal organization, the tasks to be accomplished, the personalities of other individuals, and the unwritten rules about appropriate behavior for a member. Under this concept of system, the behavior of any one manager can be seen as determined not only by his own personality, needs and motives, but also by the way his personality interacts with those of his colleagues. Further, this relationship among organization members is influenced by the nature of the task being performed, by the formal relationships, rewards, and controls, and by the existing ideas within the organization about how a well-accepted member should behave. It is important to emphasize that all these determinants of behavior are themselves interrelated. (p. 6)

Complex environments require organizations to possess variety and be self-renewing, adaptive, and flexible to meet both internal and external demands (Goldstein et

al., 2010; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Trist, 1983). Ashby's law of requisite variety suggests that a system must contain a level of internal complexity comparable to the level of complexity existing in its external environment in order to adapt and survive (Ashby, 1965; Trist, 1983). To accomplish this objective, an organization must constantly upgrade competencies and span the organizational and environmental boundaries to ensure that necessary information is gathered and translated back into business strategy (Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Lumpkin & Dess, 1995; Miles & Snow, 1994; Selznick, 1957). Extending this concept to executive groups suggests that in a complex environment, executive groups must comprise individuals who possess a variety of attributes, similar to the level of complexity reflected in their environment, in order to ensure adaptability and survival (Doz & Kosonen, 2008).

As addressed in the section on decision-making, homogeneity within the executive group results in the dampening of positive conflict among group members, reducing the capacity of the group to learn, problem solve, create, and make decisions (Barnard, 1938/1968; Janis, 1972; Levi, 2011). Homogenization can also cause an organization to fail or stagnate. Organizational members, structures, and processes may become so attuned to an environment that they are no longer able to adapt and evolve when faced with environmental shifts (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1998). Schneider (1987) argued, "Structures and processes will change when the behaviors of people change, and the behaviors of people will change when different kinds of people are attracted to, selected by, and stay in an organization" (p. 446). Conscious attention to the need for and benefits of at least some level of heterogeneity in organizations offers an opportunity to combat the potentially negative implications of homogenization.

The greater the variety of technical, business, and organizational skills possessed by group members individually and as a whole, the more resources are available to the organization to respond and adapt to business needs (Kor, 2003; Miles & Snow, 1994; Norburn & Birley, 1988). At the industry level, "research indicates that industries with greater variation in firm strategy and behavior tend to outperform their more homogeneous counterparts" (Miles & Snow, 1994, p. 138). Increased heterogeneity also allows groups and organizations to be more sensitive to varied markets, internal and external constituencies, and environmental shifts (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Chatman et al., 1998; Ely, 1994).

Higher levels of demographic heterogeneity among members of the TMT translate to better firm performance in turbulent environments (Haleblian & Finkelstein, 1993; Keck & Tushman, 1993). Heterogeneity among executive group members may also result in a variety of goal orientations across the organization and will generally result in differences in what is attended to among executive group members (Dearborn & Simon, 1958). These differences may include orientations toward functional specialty (Dearborn & Simon, 1958), concerns such as the time dimension of decision-making and the formality or lack of formality of internal processes (Dess & Priem, 1995; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Lumpkin & Dess, 1995), and enhanced creativity in decision-making processes (Hoffman, 1982).

One of the outcomes of an executive group is creativity. Enhanced creativity requires higher levels of executive group diversity to ensure idea variety along with higher levels of *fit* (as previously defined) to enable trust and the sharing of ideas. Since creativity within a group occurs within a social context (Hoffman, 1982), both the

composition of the executive group and the organizational culture are integral to the creative process (Chatman et al., 1998).

In their work on innovation in banking, Bantel and Jackson (1989) found that team member characteristics were more positively related to innovation than was a CEO's characteristics. Other research suggests that more heterogeneous groups have the potential to consider a greater range of perspectives and to generate more high-quality solutions than less diverse groups (e.g., Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Boone & Hendriks, 2009; Levi, 2011). Many of these studies also suggest that diverse groups, including TMTs (Bantel & Jackson, 1989) and research teams (Levi, 2011), perform better on production, problem solving, creativity, and innovative tasks.

Milliken and Martins (1996), referring to Ely's (1994) research, discussed the benefits of diversity, specifically at the executive level in organizations, as follows:

> Maintaining diversity in organizations . . . may be important for requisite variety and creativity and for achieving benefits associated with the symbolic processes of representation and access to power. Not only does the organization lose possible cognitive benefits of having diversity in the membership of its management teams, but the organization may be systematically affecting the behavior of all members who observe this homogeneity at the top and react to it in ways that are detrimental to the achievement of organizational goals. (p. 421)

Conversely, among the potential disadvantages of greater levels of group heterogeneity is a low level of group cohesion, emotional trust, and poor formation of social bonds among group members (Chatman et al., 1998; Levi, 2011; Priem, 1990). The greater the amount of demographic heterogeneity in a group or an organizational subunit, the less integrated the group is likely to be (O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989) and the higher the level of dissatisfaction and turnover (Wagner, Pfeffer, & O'Reilly, 1984). Chatman et al. (1998) observed that information sharing in groups is based primarily on

trust, not on surface-level heterogeneity per se, which is not directly observable through the study of organizational demographics.

Group composition and heterogeneity, particularly with respect to executives, has often been approached through the lens of organizational demography (Yukl, 2010). This approach, looking at leaders' observable characteristics as proxies for other, less observable attributes, has met with mixed results (Lawrence, 1997; Priem, 1990; Yukl, 2010). The following section discusses attributes in the context of organizational demography and provides greater definition of both surface- and deep-level attributes.

Attributes of the Executive Group

Attributes, the qualities and features of individuals (Hornby, 1995), are important in distinguishing one individual from another and in determining which individual and group features have the greatest importance for performance in organizations. Individual attributes are seen as critical to understanding executive groups and organizational performance and have been studied in a variety of ways.

There are three distinct groupings of attributes in organizations: (1) demographic attributes, including gender, ethnicity, and age, (2) organizational attributes, including tenure, occupation, status, and functional responsibility, and (3) psychological attributes, including values, beliefs, and cognitions (Levi, 2011). Surface-level attributes (demographic and organizational) are readily detectable, while deep-level psychological attributes cannot be observed (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al., 1999).

Observable attributes in organizational demography research. In 1983, Pfeffer argued that since many organizational behavior theories were based on constructs

that are not directly observable and required the "compliance and agreement of subjects to measure" (p. 301), researchers could look instead for readily detectable measures, "composition, in terms of basic attributes such as age, sex, education level, length of service or residence, race and so forth of the social entity under study" (p. 303) to account for explanations of social situations. Organizational demography uses readily detectable attributes to proxy larger, complex, and difficult-to-measure constructs, such as values, beliefs, and cognitions (Carpenter et al., 2004; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Levi, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Following Pfeffer's (1983) suggestion, the field of organizational demography has continued to grow and develop. Among the most notable contributions to both the TMT and the organizational demographics literature is Hambrick and Mason's (1984) upper echelons theory.

Observable attributes in upper echelons theory. Upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) is based upon the assumption that "observable managerial characteristics [are] indicators of the givens that a manager brings to an administrative situation. Examples of such characteristics are age, tenure in the organization, functional background, education, socioeconomic roots, and functional position" (p. 196). Upper echelons research uses surface-level attributes as reliable indicators of personality characteristics that are unobservable (Carpenter et al., 2004; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990; Knight et al., 1999; Martin, 2011; Pfeffer, 1983). Carpenter et al. (2004) delineated the three central tenets of the theory:

> (1) strategic choices made in firms and therefore firm performance (Priem et al., 1999) are reflections of the values and cognitive bases of powerful actors, (2) the values and cognitive bases of such actors are a function of their observable characteristics like education or work experience, and as a result (3) significant organizational outcomes will be associated with the observable characteristics of the actors. (pp. 750-752)

Most upper echelons theory research has focused on surface-level attributes and the relationship to group and organizational performance, as well as individual outcomes. Previous research on executive groups and heterogeneity has proven that differences among group members affect organizational outcomes; however, this research has not been able to explain *how*. "The unmeasured mediating factor *through which* TMTs actually influence performance could be their choices, or their charisma, or their implementation skills or some other factor" (Priem et al., 1999, p. 947). The result of this considerable stream of research is the determination that differences in the surface-level attributes of a firm's executive leadership group are often, and unreliably, used to describe and predict differences in individual and firm performance outcomes (Carpenter et al., 2004; Priem et al., 1999; Yukl, 2010).

Priem and colleagues (1999) concluded that "it is unlikely that demographic proxies capture the essential heterogeneities that most strongly affect the processes and social integration of on-going TMTs" (p. 943). An exploration of these "essential heterogeneities" requires a look beyond the surface to explore those differences that are not readily observable. Hambrick and Mason (1984) argued that group processes and subsequent decisions reflect psychological and cognitive characteristics that underlie surface-level attributes, which are referred to in this study as deep-level attributes. At present, there is no universally accepted list of the attributes considered deep level; however, Harrison et al. (1998) suggested that "the relevant deep-level variables in any situation are those that bear directly on the fundamental purposes of the group" (p. 105).

Deep-level attributes. Deep-level attributes, the underlying differences among individuals, include beliefs, values, and cognitions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison

et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al., 1999). Qualitative research is seeking to identify what these deep-level attributes are and how they impact executive processes, but much of the existing research is quantitative and focuses on specific values and cognitions. Independent streams of theory and research focus on each element, with interactional psychology considering values and beliefs (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) and managerial and organizational cognition considering individuals' mental models and the organization's response to them (Porac & Thomas, 2010). Very few studies have synthesized these ideas, particularly in the context of executive groups and decision-making. The following section provides this synthesis.

Values and beliefs and their organizational fit. Alignment between individual and organizational values and beliefs, as well as among group members' values and beliefs, is often referred to as *fit* (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Executives' values, desires, and aspirations are influential in the determination and implementation of corporate decisions (Andrews, 1987; Lord & Brown, 2001).

A value "is a view of life and a judgment of what is desirable that is very much a part of a person's personality and a group's morale" (Andrews, 1987, pp. 59-60). Values are considered elemental in evaluating activities and outcomes, as well as regulating motivational, affective, and cognitive processes (Lord & Brown, 2001), including decision-making (Steptoe-Warren, Howat, & Hume, 2011). Beliefs are "understandings about credible relationships between objects, properties and ideas" (Chattopadhyay, Glick, Miller, & Huber, 1999, p. 765).

Beliefs form through experiences and the roles individuals play (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Feedback, rewards, and situational demands all contribute to the formation of

certain sets of beliefs (Chattopadhyay et al., 1999). Beliefs may be categorized as "normative beliefs" and "cause-effect beliefs," and have been shown to guide decision-making and business choices (Chattopadhyay et al., 1999). Normative beliefs are related to the perception of importance ascribed to a particular objective or outcome; cause-effect beliefs are related to perceptions of how strongly one variable influences another variable (Chattopadhyay et al., 1999). Elements of fit include management ideologies that guide organizational processes and provide the norms for appropriate behavior, decision-making, structure, management philosophies, and person-to-person similarity (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Operationalizations of person-environment fit include goals, attitudes, values, personality traits, skills, needs, and preferences. This study focuses on values and beliefs, which provide two important organizational functions. First, "because they are enduring and transcend situations, they . . . can provide coherence and a sense of purpose to an individual's behaviors"; second, "because they are normative standards, values are a basis for generating behaviors that conform to the needs of groups or larger social units" (Lord & Brown, 2001, p. 138), including the environment.

In keeping with the interactional psychology tradition, "the environment can be conceptualized as an entity with its own unique characteristics or as an aggregate of its members' characteristics" (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 282). Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) also delineated a variety of subcategories of person-environment fit, suggesting that, like subcultures, there are layers of fit including person-organization, person-group, person-supervisor, and person-to-person. Based on their 2005 meta-analysis of the

person-organization fit literature, they concluded that fit on deep-level attributes has the greatest impact on individual and organizational outcomes.

Ultimately, individual and organizational outcomes rest with whether the individual and the social structure are a fit with each other and can adapt and evolve in concert with internal and environmental requirements. In complex and changing environments, individuals' patterns and ways of thinking, values, and beliefs are challenged and may not be suited to the evolving organizational requirements (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995; Selznick, 1957; Steptoe-Warren et al., 2011).

This connection to the environment, considered by Miles and Snow (1994) to be a function of fit, requires organizations to constantly adjust their strategies to maintain alignment with external conditions. Unless organizations consciously work to broaden the variety of people within them, they will be unaware and incapable of making the required changes (Keck & Tushman, 1993; Schneider, 1987) or resolving values-based conflicts when the environment shifts (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). Many executives struggle with the challenge of the changing nature of organizations over time.

Executives and fit. Leaders inform and establish the foundation upon which organizations and individuals make choices about day-to-day and strategic decisions and the appropriateness of behavior (Selznick, 1957). "It is the modeling by leader figures that permits group members to identify with them and internalize their values and assumptions" (Schein, 1990). Group and organizational values attract or repel individuals, and it is upon this organizational culture, the values and beliefs, that individuals and groups determine their own fit with an organization (Schein, 1990; Schneider, 1987; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009).

Chattopadhyay et al. (1999) explored the influence of functional background on executive beliefs. Contrary to the conclusions of Dearborn and Simon (1958) and Hambrick and Mason (1984), they found that social influence among members of the executive group had a stronger impact on beliefs than did functional background. "Executives' beliefs are clearly influenced to a greater extent by the beliefs of other members of the upper-echelon team than by their past and current functional experiences" (p. 781).

The study of Chattopadhyay et al. (1999) also suggests that executives with dissimilar organizational tenure had greater similarity of beliefs than those with similar tenure, suggesting that common lengths of exposure may have less influence on common beliefs. Chattopadhyay et al. (1999) suggest, as did Schneider (1987) in his attraction-selection-attrition model, that the similarity of beliefs among executives with different tenures may be caused by the "*selection* of like-minded executives to the upper-echelon team" (p. 783).

A 2007 study of perceived values among TMT members and their CEOs, conducted by Lankau and colleagues, demonstrated that TMT members with higher levels of perceived differences in importance of values had higher levels of relationship and task conflict. This study also found that greater dissimilarity from the CEO in perceived and actual values negatively affected TMT member attitudes and lowered their satisfaction with the CEO. Additionally, greater levels of perceived differences in values among TMT members contributed to lower levels of satisfaction with the group's performance. Ultimately, Lankau et al. (2007) concluded that a "minimum level of values

similarity," what we call fit, "is required for the effective use of conflict" in executive interactions.

Executives, human resources practitioners, and boards of directors recognize the importance of fit between individuals and their roles. Executive decision-making is influenced by both organizational and individual beliefs (Tikkanen, Lamberg, Parvinen, & Kallunki, 2005). However, "we know all too little about what specifically determines 'fit'" (Fiedler, 1996, pp. 248-249). It is possible that other deep-level attributes also contribute to individual and organizational success, and these may also influence fit. Among these attributes may be cognition, the individual and shared mental models of organizational members.

Cognition. Cognition refers to an individual's interpretation of the world, which determines how he or she will behave (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Individuals' cognitions comprise schemas, or mental models that represent "general knowledge about a given concept or stimulus domain" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 14), and are heavily influenced by individuals' "organized prior knowledge" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 98). It is this general knowledge that allows individuals to function in their environments, offering a sense of understanding about their world (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Schemas shape what individuals attend to and remember and are often composed of content concerning people and situations (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). "Schemas affect how quickly we perceive, what we notice, how we interpret what we notice, and what we perceive as similar and different" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 122). These mental models are individual and based on unconscious associations, which trigger judgment, motivation, behavior, emotion, and other cognitions (Fiske & Taylor, 2008). Individual cognition is important to decision-

making (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), as individuals' biases, perceptions, and rules of thumb influence their decision-making process (Fiske & Taylor, 2008; Porac & Thomas, 2010).

Often the decision-making process occurs through group and team interactions. Groups and teams comprise individuals with different beliefs and mental models (Porac & Thomas, 2010). Through interaction with others, these beliefs and mental models are formed and maintained (Chattopadhyay et al., 1999). In group decision-making situations, the diversity of mental models among group members is believed to produce a greater variety of perspectives, increasing the possibility that creative and innovative solutions will be raised in decision-making activities (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Porac & Thomas, 2010). This is especially true of executive decision-making activities.

The mental models of executive group members and key decision makers have the greatest influence on decision-making activities (Lyles & Schwenk, 1992; Porac & Thomas, 2010), as they act as filters for data, information, and knowledge (Porac & Thomas, 2010**)** and "influence the development of widely held cause-and-effect beliefs" (Lyles & Schwenk, 1992, p. 156). It is argued that executives make decisions consistent with their cognitive base, a function of their values and beliefs (Dearborn & Simon, 1958; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Herrmann & Datta, 2002). This cognitive base influences diversification strategies (Lyles & Schwenk, 1992), growth and business portfolio strategies (Doz & Kosonen, 2008), and the diagnosis of business opportunities and threats (Lyles & Schwenk, 1992; Porac & Thomas, 2010).

Summary of the Literature and Inferences for the Study

Executive decision-making has a significant impact on organizations (Finkelstein et al., 2009). Although these decisions have the potential to significantly impact long- and

short-term performance, there is no agreement on the necessary executive competencies that ensure positive outcomes (Steptoe-Warren et al., 2011; Yukl, 2010), or on the ways in which organizational context impacts decision-making (Heames & Harvey, 2006; Martin, 2011).

Different kinds of leaders are more successful in different kinds of settings (Barnard, 1938/1968; Fiedler, 1996; Finkelstein et al., 2009; Irwin, 2009; Schneider, 1987; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). As organizations and the environments within which they exist continue to become more dynamic and complex, context becomes an increasingly important element of organizational research (Heames & Harvey, 2006; Martin, 2011).

The relationship between individuals and their environments is complex. The environment has direct influences on organizational culture, as well as on interrelationships among individuals (Carpenter et al., 2004; Dess & Priem, 1995; Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Schein, 1990; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). Ensuring that organizations are capable of identifying and selecting the right leaders for their executive roles is critical to organizational performance and long-term success. Often organizational and individual success or failure comes as a result of executive decision-making (Irwin, 2009).

Executives make decisions on the basis of a variety of factors, including their functional specialization (Chandler, 1962; Dearborn & Simon, 1958) and their executive orientation. Executives also make decisions on the basis of the underlying differences among individuals, including beliefs, values, and cognitions—their deep-level attributes (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al.,

1999). These attributes influence their ability to fit with other members of the executive group, with the CEO, and ultimately with the organizations they are employed by (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schneider, 1987; Stoddard & Wyckoff, 2009). Much of the research to date in this area has been focused on TMT heterogeneity and conducted through the lens of organizational demography.

Previous studies of TMT heterogeneity have met with conflicting results. There is concern that some of these mixed results stem from confusion about the type of attributes being studied (Levi, 2011; Yukl, 2010). Are observable, demographic attributes being studied, or are underlying characteristics being evaluated? Are proxy measures appropriate, and does it makes sense to mix all types of diversity in studies (Levi, 2011)? This conundrum, referred to as the "black box of organizational demography" (Carpenter et al., 2004; Lawrence, 1997; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Pettigrew, 1992), suggests that there are causal gaps in linking surface-level variables and deep-level variables and the mechanisms for which they are proxies (Carpenter et al., 2004).

There are ample opportunities for advancing the study of TMTs and executive attributes. Further studies should focus on heterogeneity in group composition with respect to the ways that attitudes, personality, cognition, and values affect individual and group outcomes (Carpenter et al., 2004; Dess & Priem, 1995; Finkelstein et al., 2009; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Yukl, 2010) and focus on individual effects when studying executives in addition to looking at individuals collectively (Carpenter et al., 2004).

To explore these deep-level attributes and study these complex interrelationships, the current research directly observed a business process to establish an understanding of individual and group behavior (Lawrence, 1997; Roberto, 2003; Schein, 1996) at the

executive level (Pettigrew, 1992). The process of executive decision-making was selected, since this process is significantly impacted by group member heterogeneity (Barnard, 1938/1968; Chandler, 1962; Dearborn & Simon, 1958; Doz & Kosonen, 2008; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Steptoe-Warren et al., 2011). A process-based approach to qualitative research, using case study methodology, facilitated such an exploration and is further outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory case study sought to further the understanding of the influence of executive group members' underlying (deep-level) attributes while engaged in high-stakes decision-making. Its aim was to ascertain how deep-level attributes impact decision-making by addressing one primary research question:

> What is the interplay of executive group members' deep-level attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making in one global organization?

This chapter reviews elements of the research design and then describes study procedures for site and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. The closing sections address trustworthiness, researcher subjectivity, and ethics.

Research Design

Epistemology

This research was conducted from an interpretivist theoretical lens and a social constructionist epistemology, which suggest that

> All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (Crotty, 2009, p. 42)

The interpretivist theoretical lens posits that interpretations of the social life-world are "culturally derived and historically situated" (Crotty, 2009). This study focused on decision-making, a nonlinear process (Burns, 1978) requiring that individuals interact interdependently to adapt to circumstances and achieve mutual goals and objectives

(Ilgen et al., 1995; Levi, 2011; McIntyre & Salas, 1995; Yukl, 2010). Decision-making itself is contextually specific and in this study was situated in the process of review and approval of proposals for promotion to various levels of executive leadership in one region of a global organization. It was the interactions of the executive group charged with this responsibility that established the social context of interest in this research.

This social constructionist epistemology suggests that reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and that meaning comes through human beings, as a collective, engaging in the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 2009). Social constructionism emphasizes capturing and honoring the multiple perspectives of the participants and the researcher (Patton, 2002). This approach also considers the "effects of inequitable power dynamics [such as exist in the study of elites] and how that relationship affects what is found" (Patton, 2002, p. 103). Both the theoretical and epistemological perspectives outlined here suggest that qualitative methods are most appropriate for this study (Crotty, 2009). The qualitative methodology used to explore this activity is described in the next section.

Case Study Methodology

The methodology used for this study was an exploratory case study involving a single case (Merriam, 2009) with multiple levels of analysis (Hitt et al., 2007). An exploratory case study approach was chosen because previous research has been quantitative and has predominantly employed secondary data. This methodological approach is consistent with the idea of *verstehen*, which "stresses understanding that focuses on the meaning of human behavior, the context of social interaction, an empathic understanding based on personal experience, the connection between mental states and

behavior" (Patton, 2002, p. 52) and can be achieved through the use of an exploratory case study (Yin, 2009).

A case study methodology was also chosen because it allows a researcher to achieve an in-depth understanding of complex social situations and to focus on the process rather than the outcomes (Merriam, 2009). Such studies allow the researcher to record detailed descriptions of how people interact with each other; to capture the participants' experiences in their own words; to record the fluidity of the process; and to identify the participants' perceptions (Patton, 2002). It is a continual process of discovery: "One is learning how to reformulate or at least modify one's formulation of a problem; one is locating new data" (Dexter, 2006, p. 45). Specifically, this approach afforded the researcher the opportunity to examine members of the executive group while engaged in the process of decision-making.

As suggested by Priem et al. (1999), a case study approach enables "capture of the inherent 'richness' and complexity of decision-making processes . . . to sort out [deep-level] TMT [top management team] variables, wherein heterogeneity might have particularly profound influences on organizations from those that are spurious or less influential" (pp. 947-948).

Patton (2002) stated that "the strategic mandate of field-work is to get close to the people and settings under study" (p. 67). This is particularly difficult when the participants are organizational executives, often referred to as "corporate elites." Corporate elites are defined as those organizational members who are likely to enjoy both privilege and power and to participate in various networks (Woods, 1998). The following

section provides additional detail about the study of these often difficult-to-access individuals.

Interviewing Elites

"Corporate elites are influential, prominent, and/or well informed people in an organization, [and] there are numerous advantages to interviewing them" (Goldman & Swayze, 2012). Gaining access to corporate elites is often a concern of researchers (Goldman & Swayze, 2012; Ostrander, 1993; Pettigrew, 1992). Such access can be gained through well-thought-out strategies and luck (Ostrander, 1993) and through using the researcher's own social and business networks (Ostrander, 1993; Rice, 2010). Ostrander (1993) suggested that establishing rapport through the creation of mutual trust and respect is an essential element in the researcher-interviewee relationship. Additionally, highlighting the value or contribution of the interviewee's participation can enhance the interaction. Often the most important outcome of the interview process for elites is the opportunity to teach others and share their knowledge and experiences (Dexter, 2006).

Beyond gaining access, there are concerns with respect to the type and quality of information elicited from elites; their representations of the way things work in organizations may not actually represent the facts (Dexter, 2006). Dexter (2006) said of elite interviews that "interviewers [must] have enough relevant background to be sure that they can make sense out of interviews or conversations" (p. 27). He suggested that in interviews with elites, "the chief practical difficulty . . . is: the less acquaintance one has with an individual, the harder it is to determine what biases or reasons for deception, ingratiation, etc., may affect what he/she says" (p. 109).

A site with which the researcher had a direct relationship was selected to overcome the obstacle to access, as it has been suggested that "those who sit amongst the mighty do not invite sociologists to watch them make [their] decision" (Kahl, 1957, as cited in Pettigrew, 1992, p. 164). This was of particular concern because the decision-making topic to be studied represented very sensitive and confidential organizational information. The criteria for and description of this research site are presented in the following section.

Site and Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to select the sample for this study (Stake, 2000). This approach "is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

The case, a standing committee of executives at the regional business level with responsibility for the review and approval of proposed promotions to various levels of executive leadership, referred to as the Talent Management Steering Committee (TMSC), is further described below. It represents a "specific, unique bounded system" (Stake, 2000), as it is the only executive group of its kind in this regional organization and its decision-making process is not subject to review or further approval at higher levels of the organization.

Site Selection

The regional business unit of a larger multiunit global business was selected as the research site, as it satisfied the established research criteria, as summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Site Selection Criteria

Selection criteria	**How selection criteria are met**
Executive group	Site has its own CEO and assigned executive team, calling on peripheral organizational members for high-stakes decision-making
Regional business unit	Site is an independent geographic region, responsible for its own profit and loss
Strategy-making function including high-stakes decisions	Site determines its own product portfolio, market approaches and pricing strategies, organizational structures including the selection and promotion of executives, acquisition targets, and political and legislative approaches
A bounded high-stakes decision-making process	Site has at least one high-stakes decision-making process that is bounded (TMSC) and can be accessed by the researcher
Stable core and dynamic periphery	TMSC includes 10 core members, supplemented by various other organizational members who are assembled on the basis of the list of promotions to be reviewed and approved at each meeting

This regional business unit had its own CEO and executive group and was responsible for establishing its own business targets and setting its own corporate strategy (Markides, 2010). Additionally, as the region was subject to its own unique legislative and regulatory requirements, the regional business unit engaged in approaches to strategic market management, product selection, and mechanisms for influencing the environment, including governmental policies and legislation, using its own creative strategies (Aaker, 2001).

This business unit established the TMSC, a unique decision-making group (Stake, 2000) comprising a core team of standing members (stable core) supplemented by additional organizational leaders and presenters (dynamic periphery) (Roberto, 2003). This group assembled for various purposes, including the review and approval of candidates proposed for promotion to various executive levels, which is a high-stakes decision-making process (Smith & Howard, 2009). The TMSC was originally called the People and Promotions Decision Team but was renamed on October 17, 2012, in an effort to convey the revised, broader talent management directive of the committee members. At the time the committee was renamed, a revised governance document was produced explicating the expanded scope of the committee's oversight from review of proposed promotions only to various talent-related items including policy creation, talent assessment and development, and people-related program designs (see Appendix A). The TMSC meetings were scheduled quarterly and attended either in person or via teleconference by the members.

Decisions undertaken by the TMSC were made both within the context of the TMSC meeting itself and outside of this meeting. Prior to presentation to the TMSC committee, candidates were independently considered for promotion by core and peripheral members of the TMSC. In each case the TMSC member(s) would evaluate the proposed candidate to determine whether it was in the individual's and organization's best interest to proceed with the recommendation. In some cases these premeeting decisions occurred in isolation, and in other cases TMSC members chose to engage decision-makers of their own choosing in their decision-making. These ad hoc decisions were important decision-making events, in and of themselves. They also resulted in a

reduction in the total number of candidates ultimately presented to the TMSC committee for approval.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected using Roberto's (2003) definition of an executive group, which identifies a "stable core" and "dynamic periphery." The members of the stable core included the regional CEO as well as nine other individuals identified through the TMSC governance communication dated October 17, 2012, and the periodic meeting invitations as being core members of the TMSC. The CEO confirmed the membership of the TMSC stable core at the time of his pre-TMSC meeting interview. Of the 10 core TMSC members, eight participated in the study. One core member was unable to participate in the study due to his travel schedule (VP014), and the researcher was the tenth core TMSC member.

The TMSC was supplemented by a dynamic periphery, a group that changes on the basis of the task at hand "to address particular business challenges" (Roberto, 2003, p. 123). This dynamic periphery was made up of other executive business leaders, human resources business partners, human resources generalists, and compensation professionals who assembled on the basis of the list of possible promotions presented at each TMSC meeting (Roberto, 2003). The dynamic periphery was identified through a process of snowball sampling during a thorough review of the documents and communications received prior to the TMSC meeting (Figure 3.1). These documents and communications listed the candidates for promotion and their presenters (Martin, 2011; Roberto, 2003). Ten peripheral TMSC members for the December 2012 meeting were identified through the compilation of the list of proposed promotions. This list was assembled by the

compensation manager responsible for the review and approval of TMSC submissions and the creation of the final meeting documents. This final list of presenters was provided to the researcher by the compensation manager for use in distributing invitations to the observation and post-TMSC meeting interview participants.

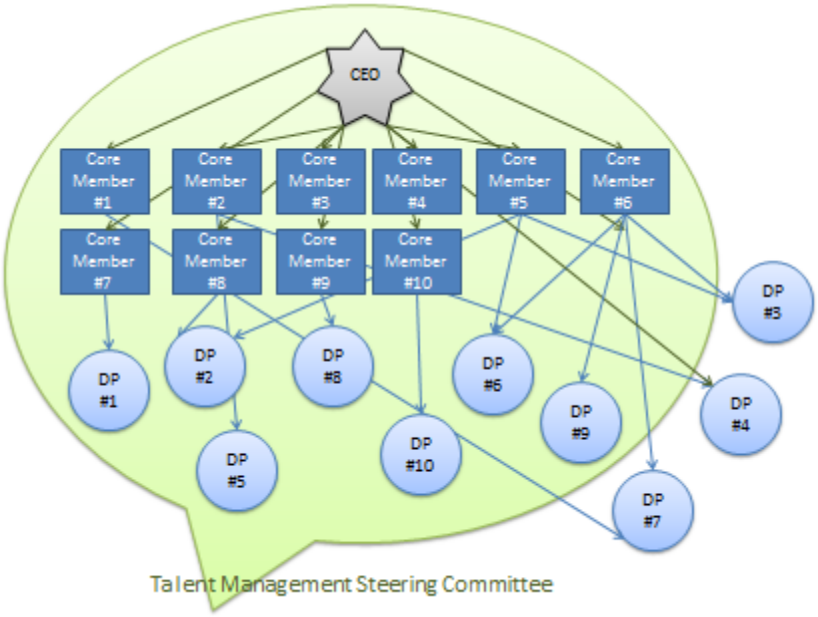


Figure 3.1. Snowball sampling method to identify the "stable core" and "dynamic periphery" in the Talent Management Steering Committee decision-making processes.

The research sample thus consisted of 18 participants and involved 23 interviews with members of the TMSC core and periphery. The number of interviews allowed the researcher to achieve redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202), whereby additional interviews would not have added any novel information. Table 3.2 lists the TMSC members, represents them as either core or peripheral members of the committee, and identifies which study-related activities they engaged in.

Table 3.2
Talent Management Steering Committee Members: Roles and Involvement in the Study

Participant*	TMSC membership role	Pre-TMSC meeting interview	Observation†	Post-TMSC meeting interview
Chief Executive Officer	Core	Yes	No	No
Vice President 001	Core	Yes	No	No
Vice President 002	Core	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vice President 003	Core	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vice President 004	Core	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vice President 005	Core	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vice President 006	Core	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vice President 007	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Vice President 008	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Vice President 009	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Vice President 010	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Vice President 011	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Vice President 012	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Vice President 013	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	No
Vice President 014	Core	No	No	No
Director 001	Core	Yes	Yes	Yes
Director 002	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Director 003	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Human Resources 001	Peripheral	N/A	Yes	Yes
Researcher	Core	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Participants are referred to by these descriptors—for example, Vice President 009 is referred to as VP009 in the text.
†At the committee meeting on December 18, 2012.

Data Collection

The primary methods of data collection were interviews and observation.

Document review was also used. The data collection process is depicted in Figure 3.2.

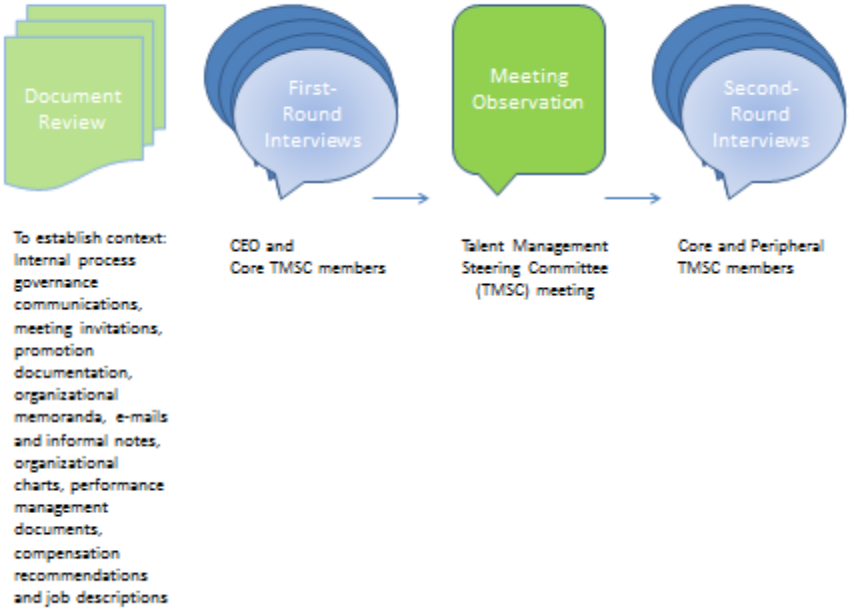


Figure 3.2. Data collection steps.

Review of Documents

Documents were used to provide context and to assist with participant selection, identify members of the executive group to be interviewed as core and peripheral members of the TMSC, confirm agenda items, and determine how candidates were presented when proposed for promotion. These documents were collected prior to and during the TMSC meeting. The first document collected was an internal process governance communication, dated October 17, 2012 (Appendix A), which was used to identify the core members of the TMSC. The TMSC meeting invitation and reminder e-mails were used to identify the peripheral members of the committee. From these two documents, a list of potential study participants was generated and used by the researcher to extend invitations for research participation. The organization used a standard process and template (see Appendix B) for presenting candidates for promotion. Promotion

documents were sent by the promoting manager to the compensation team, accompanied by additional promotion documentation, including e-mails and informal notes, organizational charts, performance management documents, compensation recommendations, and job descriptions. These documents were distributed to all meeting participants by the organization's compensation team via e-mail prior to the TMSC meeting on December 18, 2012. These documents served as initial indicators of support for the promotional decisions being made and as clarification of executives' decision-making criteria, but were not analyzed or presented as data for the purposes of this study. An additional set of documents, provided as a PowerPoint presentation, was distributed to the participants of the TMSC meeting by VP012. This presentation was used to review the proposed revisions to the sales and marketing compensation scheme. This presentation was not included in the data analysis activities of this research but is referred to in chapter 4 as context for one of the exchanges that took place during the TMSC meeting. Authenticity of the documents was verified with the originators during the process of data gathering.

Semistructured Interviews

Consistent with a constructionist epistemology, interviews were chosen as a data collection method because they allow for the capture of different perspectives (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009) and were the primary data source used to answer the research question. Interviews allow researchers to discover from participants those things that cannot be directly observed and to enter directly into the other person's perspective (Patton, 2002).

Specifically, a semistructured interview format was selected to ensure a systematic and comprehensive approach to interviewing a number of different

participants (Patton, 2002). The interview protocols comprised open-ended questions, as it has been suggested that elites respond better to this question format (Harvey, 2011). Each interviewee received an electronic copy of the interview guide via e-mail before the interview, as suggested by Goldman and Swayze (2012).

Eight pre-TMSC meeting interviews were conducted. Each interviewee was asked for his or her participation via an initial e-mail invitation, attached to the informed consent form (Appendix C). All of the invited participants agreed to participate in the study and returned their signed informed consent form to the researcher either personally or through confidential interoffice mail. Following each participant's acceptance of the invitation to participate and return of the signed informed consent form, an Outlook meeting invitation was sent electronically, with an attached interview protocol. An initial interview was conducted with the CEO, using the CEO interview protocol that appears in Appendix D, followed by interviews with seven of the stable core members of the TMSC, using the Core Premeeting Interview Protocol presented in Appendix E. Six interview questions were used to guide the premeeting interviews.

1. For the purposes of this study, would you please provide a summary of your professional history?
2. Would you please provide a description of your current role in your own words?
3. I'd like to talk about high-stakes decision-making. Please tell me a bit about your role in the process of making high-stakes decisions regarding current organization employees. What things come into play in your high-stakes decision-making regarding employees?

4. I'd like to ask you about decisions regarding the promotion of current organization employees. Would you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was consistent with your own values and beliefs? Would you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was inconsistent with your own values and beliefs?
5. I would like to discuss your other high-stakes decision-making activities. In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions similar to those you make about employees? In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions different from those you make about employees?
6. Is there anything else you think I should know, or you would like to share, that you believe would be helpful to my research?

The pre-TMSC meeting interviews explored the criteria by which executives made decisions, including decisions made about people and the selection process. These interviews were required to take place no less than 2 weeks from the scheduled decision-making meeting that was the subject of the observation. The 2-week timeframe allowed for distance between the interviews and the observation to minimize the potential effects of the interview contents on the decision-making meeting to be observed.

The researcher received final institutional review board approval for the study 21 days before the TMSC meeting to be observed, originally scheduled for December 14, 2012. The research protocol required that all pre-TMSC meeting interviews be concluded at least 14 days before the observation; therefore, all eight pre-TMSC meeting interviews were conducted during one 5-day work-week.

Each pre-TMSC meeting interview was scheduled for 1½ hours and conducted either face-to-face or via telephone conference call, depending on the availability of each interviewee (Harvey, 2011). Face-to-face interviews took place in the interviewees' private offices, and phone interviews were conducted from the researcher's private office. Interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

Post-TMSC meeting interviews were conducted following the TMSC meeting observation which, after rescheduling, took place on December 18, 2012. The post-TMSC meetings interviews explored the deep-level attributes of the participants and the impact of participants' deep-level attributes on the TMSC decision-making process.

Each of the post-TMSC meeting interview participants had previously been invited to participate in the study as a follow-up to the initial e-mail invitation to attend the TMSC meeting. A final list of the actual TMSC meeting attendees was compiled by the researcher and confirmed with the meeting organizer after the December 18, 2012, TMSC meeting concluded. Following the meeting, each confirmed TMSC meeting attendee was sent an e-mail invitation to participate in a post-TMSC meeting interview, at which time he or she was provided with an electronic copy of the Core and Peripheral Member Postmeeting Interview Protocol, which appears in Appendix F. The main questions used to guide the postmeeting interviews were as follows:

1. Please tell me a bit about your role in the organization (for those who did not participate in the premeeting interviews).
2. I'd like to talk about the promotional process, first in general. Please tell me a bit about your role before this meeting, in the process of promoting and selecting individuals for roles at higher levels of leadership (director level and above).

What criteria do you believe are most important in evaluating a candidate for promotion?

3. How many TMSC meetings have you participated in and within what timeframe? Have the TMSC meeting(s) in general, including the one we just had, influenced your people-related decision-making?
4. Can you share an example of a promotion decision, presented during one of these meetings, that you felt was consistent with your values and beliefs?
5. Can you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was inconsistent with your values and beliefs?
6. What values, beliefs, and cognitions of the TMSC meeting participants were evident in the most recent meeting?
7. Is there anything else you think I should know, or you would like to share, that you believe would be helpful to my research?

A total of 15 post-TMSC meeting interviews took place: six with core members and nine with peripheral members. The CEO and VP001 were unable to participate in the TMSC meeting due to scheduling conflicts and, therefore, were not invited to participate in the post-TMSC interviews. One peripheral member (VP013) who had participated in the TMSC meeting was unable to participate in the post-TMSC meeting interview due to his travel schedule.

The post-TMSC meeting interviews followed the TMSC meeting observation and were conducted face-to-face or via teleconference. The interviews were scheduled for 1 hour (Harvey, 2011), and most took 45 minutes; none lasted longer than 60 minutes. The meeting method was determined on the basis of the availability of each interviewee.

When conducted face-to-face, the interviews took place in either the participants' or the researcher's private office, determined by which location was most convenient for both the participant and the researcher. When taking place via teleconference, the interviews were conducted from various quiet locations, including the researcher's private office, the researcher's personal home office, and in one case the researcher's private hotel room.

All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Recordings were transcribed by an independent paid, professional transcriptionist (FoxTranscribe.com). Each recording was captured as an MP3 file and stored in a secured, partitioned area on the researcher's personal computer. Within 48 hours of each interview, the related MP3 file was uploaded to the FoxTranscribe.com website with specific instructions to prepare the transcripts verbatim and to anonymize the information by representing all proper names of individuals as "Person X" and all proper names of companies as "Company X." In most cases electronic transcript files were returned within 5 days of the upload. One of the pre-TMSC meeting interview files was found to be corrupt and required a resubmission of the MP3 file to the transcription service.

Each transcript was received from the transcription service as an electronic Word file. As each transcript was received, the researcher opened the file and read through it to ensure that the transcript was complete and error free. Once completeness was determined, the file was copied to a secured storage location on the researcher's personal laptop for later review, coding, and analysis.

In addition to interviews, observation was selected as a data collection method. It is described in the following section.

Observation

Naturalistic observation happens in the field, in the cultural setting of the activities being explored (Lincoln, 2002; Patton, 2002). Observation is used to describe the setting, the activities taking place, the participants, and the meanings of what was observed from the perspective of the participants (Patton, 2002). Using observation, the researcher is better able to understand the context of interactions, to see things that may routinely escape the awareness of other participants and that others may not have previously paid attention to (Patton, 2002). This method of data collection allows the researcher to observe and describe the social environment, identifying the ways in which participants arrange themselves and group themselves (Patton, 2002), the patterns of interaction, and nonverbal cues (Dexter, 2006). To accomplish these goals, the researcher abstained from participating in decision-making during this meeting in order to focus attention on the recording of observations and the collection of data. Each presenter acted as facilitator during his or her individual candidate or topical presentations. VP004 acted as minute-taker, recording the outcomes of each proposed promotion decision and providing her notes to the compensation team for follow-up after the meeting concluded.

Statements represented in an elite interview are "merely the perception of the [participant], filtered and modified by his [or her] cognitive and emotional reactions and reported through his [or her] personal verbal usages" (Dexter, 2006, p. 101). Therefore, direct observation offers the opportunity to obtain information about participants' inferences (Maxwell, 2005), gain information that might not be shared in interviews (Patton, 2002), and get at "tacit understandings and 'theories-in-use'" (Maxwell, 2005).

In addition, direct personal contact allows the researcher to "be open, discovery oriented and inductive" (Patton, 2002, p. 262).

The process of decision-making was of critical interest in this research, and the decision-making process is a "particularly important part of a social environment" (Patton, 2002, p. 283). The decision-making process observed was consistent with the definitions of decision-making previously identified in this research, that is, one that involved "gathering, interpreting, and exchanging information; creating and identifying alternative courses of action; choosing among alternatives by integrating the often-differing perspectives and opinions of team members; and implementing a choice" (Guzzo, 1995, p. 4).

This observation was intended to provide details regarding the interaction among executives, specifically the ways in which executives' deep-level attributes influence the decision-making process. The observation occurred over the life cycle of the decisions, in this case a single meeting that took place on December 18, 2012. The TMSC meeting had been rescheduled from its original date of December 14 because a number of the core TMSC members had scheduling conflicts on that date and would not have been able to participate. The request for an alternate date was made by the CEO's administrative assistant.

A list of the TMSC meeting participants was provided to the researcher by the compensation manager who had responsibility for organizing the meeting, after all responses and submissions for promotion were received. Following the receipt of the list of participants, an e-mail invitation and an electronic copy of the informed consent form were provided to each proposed participant who had not already been interviewed as part

of the pre-TMSC meeting interview process. All invited participants elected to participate and provided completed informed consent forms to the researcher prior to the December 18, 2012, TMSC meeting, either electronically through return e-mail or by returning hard copies of the forms through confidential interoffice mail.

The TMSC meeting was scheduled to be held in an executive conference room in the regional headquarters location. A scheduling conflict required that the meeting relocate to an alternate meeting room in the regional headquarters, approximately 50 minutes into the scheduled meeting time. At the time of relocation the conference call bridge line was closed and the connection was re-established once the move to the new room had been completed. The researcher and 11 participants attended the TMSC meeting face-to-face. There were no more than seven members physically present in the meeting room at any one time, as five peripheral members joined and left the meeting at various times. For those participants who were not present for the entire meeting, their attendance was determined by the order in which their candidates were presented. Five additional participants attended via teleconference, and VP002 left the conference bridge prior to the end of the meeting. Three core TMSC members, VP001, VP014, and the CEO, were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts.

The meeting was recorded using a hand-held digital recorder, and the resulting MP3 files were transcribed by a paid, professional, independent transcriptionist (FoxTranscribe.com). The observation yielded two MP3 files, one for the first 50 minutes, until the meeting had to be relocated, and the other for the approximately 100 minutes representing the second portion of the TMSC meeting after the room relocation. These MP3 files were uploaded to the FoxTranscribe.com website within 24 hours of the

TMSC meeting with specific instructions to the transcriptionist to transcribe the data verbatim and to anonymize proper names of people as "Person X" and proper names of companies as "Company X."

The researcher also took handwritten notes during and immediately after the observation (Dexter, 2006; Priem et al., 1999), using the observation form that appears as Appendix G, recording details of the exchanges of words and phrases between and among the meeting participants and recording text that highlighted the interplay of executives' deep-level attributes throughout the decision-making process. These notes included observations about the demeanor of the participants, the arrangements of each meeting room, the locations of the participants in the room, and a list of those not physically present. Observations about the information being presented and by whom, as well as the reactions and responses of the participants, were also included in the researcher's notes.

Three key items were being observed. The first was values, "a view of life and a judgment of what is desirable that is very much a part of a person's personality and a group's morale" (Andrews, 1987, pp. 59-60). The second item being observed was beliefs, "understandings about credible relationships between objects, properties and ideas" (Chattopadhyay et al., 1999, p. 765). The third item being observed was cognitions, an individual's interpretation of the world, which determines how he or she will behave (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), including schemas, or mental models that represent "general knowledge about a given concept or stimulus domain" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 14).

The researcher's role was that of a participant-observer (Crotty, 2009), as she was a member of the executive group and a standing core member of the TMSC with responsibility for decisions related to executive selection and promotion. This role allowed the researcher to "share as intimately as possible the life and activities of the setting under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 268). The researcher remained constantly vigilant about her perspectives as a participant, drawing from and explicating her knowledge as a participant, while describing the setting and activities as an observer. It was essential that the researcher be clear in her representations about each of these perspectives (Patton, 2002). To strengthen the validity of the observation, especially considering the researcher's role as a participant-observer, several strategies were adopted (Angrosino, 2005), as outlined in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3
Enhanced Observation Validity Methods

Enhanced observation validity strategies	**Related procedures**
Focus on the particular, not on the general	The observation form, Appendix G, identified the specific areas of focus for the observer. These items of focus were delineated as follows: • What words or phrases are exchanged by the meeting participants that highlight their values, beliefs, and cognitions? • Does the interplay of values, beliefs, and cognitions among participants shape the decision-making process? In what ways? • What are the pivotal statements of importance and/or critical moments in this meeting? Describe in detail.
In structuring the observation, focus attention on certain characteristics and events	Also accomplished through the use of the observation form, Appendix G.
Use observation only for studying those phenomena appropriate to this method	The specific foci of observation included social interactions, nonverbal cues, and manifestation of previously identified items of interest related to the research study.

Data Storage and Management

To protect the confidentiality of the participants and the organization and the privileged and confidential nature of many of the documents, steps were taken to ensure confidentiality and data security. Recordings, transcripts, notes, and documents were stored in secured locations maintained by the researcher and were coded with individual alphanumeric codes unique to each participant. The coding key for the participants was maintained separately from the electronic and paper transcripts and recordings. All data will be destroyed at the conclusion of the dissertation defense, after all related papers, proposals, and submissions for publication have been concluded.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an iterative and emergent process requiring the researcher to "get a sense of the whole" (Creswell, 2009) and then break the data down systematically during the coding process. Through successive cycles of coding, the salient features of the data emerged, forming categories, themes, and concepts (Saldaña, 2009). During the analysis process, all raw data were reviewed and revised constantly, as they were obtained. The researcher completed two cycles of coding using both provisional codes and open coding.

Documents, interview notes, interview transcripts, field notes, observation notes, and transcripts of the meeting that was observed were coded. The largest volume of data was derived through interviews. All coded data were entered into Atlas.ti 7.09, a qualitative coding and analysis tool, as part of the data coding and analysis process.

First-Cycle Coding

First-cycle coding was conducted using multiple forms of coding, referred to as eclectic coding (Saldaña, 2009). The participant and site data were coded using attribute coding, which provided basic descriptive codes for data regarding role level, participant characteristics, and demographics such as TMSC role (Saldaña, 2009). As each of the research activities was completed, additional first-cycle coding occurred using the following coding processes: descriptive coding, where a word or short phrase was used to code the topic of a paragraph, statement, or quote; in vivo coding, where participant-generated words, terms, or phrases were used to code quotes, paragraphs, or topics; and provisional coding, using a predetermined beginning list of codes derived from the literature on deep-level attributes and decision-making (Saldaña, 2009). The provisional codes are listed in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4
Provisional Codes

Code	**Definition**
Deep-level attributes	Underlying attributes representing differences among individuals, including beliefs, values, and cognitions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al., 1999).
Surface-level attributes	Readily detectable differences among individuals, including demographic attributes, education level, organizational tenure, and so forth (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Priem et al., 1999).
Interplay	"The way in which two or more things or people affect each other" (Hornby, 1995, p. 813).
Values	"A view of life and a judgment of what is desirable that is very much a part of a person's personality and a group's morale" (Andrews, 1987, pp. 59-60)
Beliefs	"Understandings about credible relationships between objects, properties and ideas" (Chattopadhyay et al., 1999, p. 765).
Cognitions	An individual's interpretation of the world, which determines how he or she will behave (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), including schemas, or mental models that represent "general knowledge about a given concept or stimulus domain" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 14).

The process of first-cycle coding comprised four steps: (1) each interview, observation transcript, and field note was read through to ensure completeness and accuracy within 24 hours of collection or receipt of the transcript; (2) if necessary, edits were made to the transcribed Word files and notes; (3) each edited transcript and note was uploaded to Atlas.ti 7.09; and (4) each file was coded separately in Atlas.ti 7.09. This process was repeated three times: for the pre-TMSC meeting interviews, the TMSC meeting observation notes (December 18, 2012), and the post-TMSC interviews. During the coding process, the researcher also maintained a set of electronic memos in Atlas.ti 7.09 to record thoughts about the data, coding schemes, and general observations. The first-cycle coding process generated an initial list of 84 codes (Appendix H).

Second-Cycle Coding

During the second coding cycle, categories of data were refined, sorted, and categorized to develop thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from the codes (Saldaña, 2009). During this phase, code reports for each of the original 84 codes were generated out of Atlas.ti 7.09. The code reports enabled the review and revision of working definitions of each code and facilitated the process of evaluating the data for patterns and categories. During this phase of coding, emergent themes and ideas were identified to create a more coherent and meaningful summary of the data (Saldaña, 2009). The code reports allowed the researcher to identify codes with very few quotes, which were combined to establish a higher level of abstraction. Additionally, the code reports identified a cluster and theme that required the addition of one code, "CEO Influence," eventually resulting in a final list of 31 codes.

After the completion of the second coding cycle, all codes were reviewed for consistency, and several codes were retitled and redefined. The revised titles and definitions were entered into Atlas.ti 7.09, and associated code reports were generated for review. This multicycling coding process allowed the researcher to narrow the focus of data analysis to address the research question (Merriam, 2009).

Identification of Ideas, Clusters, and Themes in the Overall Data

The activity of content analysis resulted in the identification of ideas, clusters, and themes from the final list of 31 codes. This process of inductive analysis (Patton, 2002) allowed the researcher to make sense of the data and determine what was significant (Patton, 2002), yielding 46 ideas, 15 data clusters, and five themes, as discussed in chapter 4.

Finally, various trustworthiness measures were employed as part of this research methodology. These measures are discussed in the following section.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative studies is established by considering four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address these four criteria, various trustworthiness measures were employed.

Credibility

Credibility is established through measures that ensure the authenticity of the findings through rigorous methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). In this study, credibility was enhanced through three procedures: triangulation of data from multiple sources, use of a nonbiased peer reviewer, and member checks. An additional measure of

trustworthiness, specifically establishing researcher credibility, is to include a subjectivity statement (Patton, 2002). The researcher was a core member of the TMSC and a peer of many of the study participants. Additionally, she attended and participated in all of the TMSC meetings, prior to the December 18, 2012, meeting, as a decision-maker. As such, her presence as a participant-researcher impacted this study, but it is not known in what ways this influence was evident. A separate subjectivity statement, addressing this item in greater detail, is included following the trustworthiness section.

Triangulation. Data collection was triangulated through the use of multiple data collection methods, including pre-TMSC meeting interviews, observation of a TMSC meeting, and post-TMSC meeting interviews. Triangulation increases the trustworthiness of a study's data collection efforts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through the gathering of data from multiple sources by simultaneously minimizing the weaknesses and building on the strengths of each source (Patton, 2002). These procedures also enable the use of multiple sources of data to "address a broader range of historical and behavioral issues" (Yin, 2009, p. 115). "Thus case study finding[s] or conclusion[s] are likely to be more convincing and accurate" (Yin, 2009, p. 116).

Peer review. The researcher selected a nonbiased individual to act in the capacity of peer reviewer. This peer reviewer was a doctoral student in human and organization learning, a classmate of the researcher and an individual who had studied leadership and management in her coursework. Therefore, the reviewer possessed a foundational knowledge of the theories. As a practitioner, the reviewer had previous experience in leadership and management, as well as decision-making, but no formal role as an executive or in an organization in this industry, to avoid bias.

The peer reviewer initially reviewed the notes, transcripts, and the original list of 84 codes resulting from the pre-TMSC meeting interviews with the CEO and the first two core TMSC members. This was done to ensure that no researcher bias was present in the data gathering and coding processes and to test the researcher's analyses, working hypotheses, and biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The peer reviewer then conducted a debrief with the researcher on January 13, 2013. This "process expose[d] [the researcher] to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the [researcher's] mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). The debrief discussion took place via teleconference, lasting approximately 2 hours. During the debrief the peer reviewer's assessment of the coding process, suggestions for reduction in the overall number of codes, and evaluation of the researcher's data gathering process were all discussed. The addition of the codes Adaptability/Flexibility and Reflection were a direct result of this debriefing.

At the conclusion of the first debrief conversation, the researcher asked the peer reviewer if she would be willing to take the additional step of reviewing the pre-TMSC meeting interview transcripts with the CEO and the first two core TMSC members against the pre-TMSC meeting interview protocols to ensure that there was no evidence of interviewer bias or leading questions. The peer reviewer agreed and reported back, on January 20, 2013, that she saw no indication of leading or researcher bias in the pre-TMSC meeting interview transcripts.

An added measure of trustworthiness was employed during the post-TMSC meeting interview process. The first three post-TMSC meeting interview transcripts,

codes, and interview protocols were also reviewed by the peer reviewer. Again, a debrief discussion, held face-to-face for 2 hours on March 18, 2013, took place, during which the peer reviewer indicated that there was no evidence of leading or researcher bias. However, the peer reviewer suggested that an additional review of the coding take place in order to make the coding more granular, while at the same time reducing the overall number of codes. As a result of this debrief, the list of codes was refined to the final set of 31 codes listed in Appendix I. Following this debrief, the transcripts were reviewed and recoded as necessary.

Member checks. Member checks were also employed as a trustworthiness measure. Member checks offered the participants the opportunity to review data to ensure that the researcher's representations were "an adequate representation of their own" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To accomplish this, transcripts of their interviews were provided to each of the core TMSC members via e-mail, with the request that they submit their edits either via hard copy through confidential interoffice mail or as an electronically edited copy returned via confidential e-mail. Participants were instructed to return their edits by the close of business on January 14, 2013, should they have changes; otherwise, the researcher would assume that they had no changes. The CEO and VP002 each returned their transcripts electronically, reflecting minor edits to spelling and grammar and one proper name change.

Transferability

Transferability considers the relevance of research findings in other contexts and may be achieved by providing thick, rich description for others to use in determining whether the findings are of value (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of thick, rich

description allowed the participants' voices to be heard directly in the data, thereby reducing the influence of researcher bias. This trustworthiness measure was important, given the researcher's relationship to the participants. These data are included in chapter 4 as participant quotes derived directly from the interview and observation transcripts.

These data addressed the constructs of leadership, executive groups, and decision-making through an exploration of one company's promotion process. Promotion and selection is one of many types of high-stakes decisions made in organizations. The findings of this study suggest that values, beliefs, and cognitions impact both people- and non–people-related high-stakes decision-making; however, this study does not address in what ways these impacts may be evident outside of the promotion and selection process.

This case study was unique to one organization, in one specific industry and focused on one specific set of decision-makers at a single point in time. The decision-makers, organizational culture, and candidates presented for promotion were unique to this study and would not be directly applicable to other cases.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of data collection and analysis procedures (Patton, 2002). The researcher enhanced dependability through reading each transcript and note to ensure completeness and correctness prior to coding. Dependability was also enhanced through using a peer reviewer and employing a 2-week lag between the pre-TMSC meeting interviews and the observation, both described above, as well as maintaining field notes, as described below.

Field notes. As a participant-researcher, the researcher was unable to maintain objectivity throughout the entirety of the research process. Several approaches were used

in this study to minimize researcher bias, recognizing that this goal is never fully attainable. To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher bracketed her assumptions and prejudices through the maintenance of reflexive notes in a partitioned section of the field journal (Merriam, 2009) and through the use of the memo function in Atlas.ti 7.09. These field notes recorded the researcher's thoughts, observations, concerns, questions, and ideas for synthesis during the data collection, coding, and writing processes. Notes were taken during and immediately after each interview (Dexter, 2006; Priem et al., 1999) and were also recorded throughout the transcript review, coding, and writing processes.

These efforts at reflexivity reminded the researcher "to observe [herself] so as to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological orientation of [her] own perspectives and the voices of those she observe[d] or talk[ed] to during fieldwork" (Patton, 2002, p. 299). This reflexivity proved essential to the development of codes, ideas, clusters, and themes, as the process forced a level of objective review during the data analysis activities. Additionally, the review of the field notes and this reflexive process were critical to elucidating the researcher's assumptions and generating the synthesis of ideas, insights, and images that eventually emerged as the findings of this research.

An enhanced observation strategy was also employed (Angrosino, 2005) and required the use of an observation form (Appendix G). This allowed the researcher to enhance her objectivity through focusing her attention and note-taking during the observation of the December 18, 2012, TMSC meeting.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a measure of how grounded the findings are in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that confirmability can be established through both triangulation and the maintenance of field notes (reflexivity journal), both of which have been presented in previous sections.

Subjectivity Statement

Ensuring integrity of the research through an examination of the researcher's beliefs, opinions, and assumptions is essential in qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The researcher has been actively involved in the business community since 1987, with professional experience in finance and human resources. As an active member of an executive team since 2006, she has engaged in various group decision-making processes, including processes involving high-stakes decisions. The identification and selection of individuals for leadership positions has been a part of her direct responsibilities since 1996. The researcher also has training in human and organizational learning through the Executive Leadership Doctoral Program at The George Washington University, which has provided significant opportunity to explore the constructs of leadership, executive groups, and decision-making. The researcher's combined professional experience and academic learning have led to substantial curiosity about executive group members' attributes and their influence on decision-making processes.

At the time of this study, the researcher had been employed by the research site for more than 8 years and had direct access to all members of the executive group. She sat as both a standing member and an ad hoc member of various subgroups and committees formed among members of this team. This study involved an executive group

responsible for decision-making at the top of an organization. As a member of this top team, the researcher had access to the executive group, allowing for direct interaction and observation of these phenomena. It would have been impossible to gain access to the type of critical decision-making activities to be studied if the researcher had not had this role in the organization. Additionally, the relationship between the researcher and the participants helped the participants to be more open and forthcoming with their responses.

Just prior to the time of these interviews and the December 18, 2012, TMSC meeting, the regional CEO announced his intention to retire and the global CEO announced the 3-year strategy to begin an organization-wide strategic restructuring effort. Additionally, during the data gathering phase of this study, the researcher learned that her position in the organization was to be eliminated, and her employment terminated in early May 2013. The notification that the researcher's employment would be terminated occurred after the TMSC meeting observation on December 18, 2012, and before the completion of the post-TMSC meeting interviews. As many of the participants in this study were direct reports of the CEO, the influence of these organizational changes may be seen in some of the data presented later in this study.

Human Participants and Ethics Precautions

This study was conducted under the guidelines established by the institutional review board of The George Washington University. Signed consent forms were obtained from each of the interview participants (Appendix C). Confidentiality and nondisclosure documents required by the study site were also executed. All documents acquired through this research effort were maintained in a confidential manner and kept in a secure

location. To ensure confidentiality, the organization was not named, and alphanumeric codes were used for each participant.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of this qualitative case study of one organization's leadership promotion decision-making process, addressing the study's single research question: *What is the interplay of executive group members' deep-level attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making in one global organization?* The findings were derived from 23 semistructured interviews and one meeting observation conducted over a 4-month period, followed by 4 months of data coding and analysis.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief background of the research site and the sample. Afterwards, the findings are presented, organized by five major themes: (1) group members bring strong personal orientations about the high-stakes decision-making process; (2) the CEO's deep-level attributes set the tone for the decision-making process; (3) participants' surface-level and deep-level attributes combine to shape decision-making criteria; (4) participants' surface- and deep-level attributes shape decision-making interactions; and (5) the formal process reinforces values and beliefs. Each theme is divided into clusters, or subcategories of findings related to the overall theme. Clusters are further subdivided into ideas.

Brief Overview of the Research Site and Sample

The Talent Management Steering Committee

The Talent Management Steering Committee (TMSC), originally formed as the People and Promotions Decision Team and renamed on October 17, 2012, was created to aid the regional executive team of a multiunit global business in the promotion process of

internal candidates to higher levels of leadership. At the time the committee was renamed, a revised governance document was produced, expanding the scope of the committee's oversight to include other employment and people-related topics (see Appendix A). The group comprised 10 standing committee members (the core members) and an additional group of members (the periphery) who assembled on the basis of the candidates being presented for promotion at each committee meeting. The meetings were scheduled quarterly and were attended either in person or via teleconference.

The TMSC core members and additional periphery members who attended the December 18, 2012, meeting comprised the research sample for this study and were previously detailed in chapter 3. To ensure participant confidentiality, each study participant was assigned an alphanumeric code. There was only one CEO, who was identified as such in the data. All participants with a vice president title, regardless of level (i.e., executive vice president, senior vice president, vice president) were identified as VP0XX in the data. All participants with a director title, regardless of level (i.e., executive director, senior director, director, associate director) were identified as DIR0XX in the data. There was one nondirector human resources business partner in the sample, who was identified as HR001 in the data.

All quotations presented in these findings are verbatim. For purposes of clarity, ellipses were used when skipping text from some of the quotes. In some places the researcher's words were inserted or substituted either to ensure clarity and understanding or to preserve confidentiality.

Theme 1: Group Members Bring Strong Personal Orientations About the High-Stakes Decision-Making Process

The findings shared in this theme represent the philosophies and preferences executive group members brought to high-stakes decision-making activities. These findings reflect the participants' responses to questions about high-stakes decision-making after having been provided the following definition: high-stakes decision-making is a process that occurs at the executive level of an organization related to areas such as determination of organizational strategy and structure, operational goals, the investment of assets including people and capital, and the values and philosophy of the organization. This section also presents the study participants' perspectives about selection criteria and the role of instinct in decision-making.

Four clusters of data are presented under this theme: (1) participants' personal philosophies of decision-making; (2) participants' perspectives about both non–people- and people-related decision-making; (3) participants' perspectives on selection criteria; and (4) the role of instinct in decision-making.

Cluster 1: Participants' Personal Philosophies of Decision-Making

This cluster details participants' philosophies about high-stakes decision-making, including the need for clarity about business strategy, participants' personal decision-making processes, the need for diversity in group decision-making, the value of a disciplined decision-making process, and the need to align decision-making with individual and organizational values. Eight ideas are represented in this cluster:

- Participants expressed the need for a clear understanding of business strategy and requirements in high-stakes decision-making.

- Participants described their personal high-stakes decision-making processes.
- A participant refined her approach to improving the decision-making outcomes for her promotion candidates.
- Participants suggested that diversity is necessary in a group decision-making process.
- Participants suggested that discipline in decision-making processes ensures alignment with values.
- Participants shared how *fit* with organizational values came to be an important consideration in leadership selection.
- Participants expressed the need to ensure fit with organizational values in the selection process.
- Participants shared the need to align their personal decision-making with organizational values.

Participants expressed the need for a clear understanding of business strategy and requirements in high-stakes decision-making. Many of the participants indicated that regardless of the content of the decision to be made, it was essential to ensure that a clear understanding of the business situation and strategy had been identified through the involvement of multiple constituents:

> Trying to clearly articulate what are we solving for. If it's a problem we're trying to address or rectify or if it's an objective we're trying to establish, what [is it that you are] truly trying to solve for? Once you get to that core understanding, then, all right, this is what we're solving for, begin to generate the solutions, what are the choices that we have, what are the alternatives, what are the ramifications? . . . There's fact-gathering, there's engaging appropriate stakeholders to gather their opinion, gather their perspective. (VP002, personal communication, November 27, 2012)

VP005 suggested that one should assume there are multiple potential ways to address business situations:

> For me, in terms of high-stake[s] decision-making, it's always important to understand all of the options and not just . . . one path. It's really a lot of contingency planning and understanding the what-ifs, . . . what could go wrong and what would you do. When I look at all the high-stakes decisions . . . that I make, it's not to make it with an assumption that one path is going to work. It's a matter of essentially putting together decision trees and really understanding what the options are, what the obstacles can be along the way, and then what you'll do to resolve or circumvent to still achieve your goals. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Participants described their personal high-stakes decision-making processes.

Many of the participants discussed their own processes for high-stakes decision-making, specifically the processes they each used individually for identifying and preparing candidates for potential promotion to higher levels of leadership. Through these interviews it became apparent that there were often other conversations, sometimes even group discussions, about proposed promotion candidates, which occurred well before a candidate was included on the list for presentation to the TMSC.

About his personal decision-making process, VP006 said,

> I use a similar thought process, whether I'm talking about people or I'm talking about other resources or whatever it is. I think being fair, truly trying to understand what a situation is, what the pros and cons or what the different attributes of a decision are—I try to listen a lot. That helps me to understand, really put the pieces together. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

VP003 also described his own decision-making process:

> I go try to reach out to people and get as much information as I can. Balance it off to various people and make a decision. It's hard to . . . [describe] my process. [I] call a bunch of people, have a meeting, read some stuff, look at some data, ask a question, and say, "This is what I think we ought to do." It's helpful to have people in the room because a lot of people will give things away through their body language. Depending on who it is, I make some calls and I try to challenge what people are saying, [to] think about it. If it's something really important, you get a second opinion. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

In preparing to bring forward candidates for promotion, many of the business units conducted a talent calibration process. Here VP007 shared the process in his business unit and his perspectives about the value of this exercise:

> All the managers got together and reviewed collectively each other's personnel. [It] can be an extraordinarily difficult process. To be honest with you, I think it was one of the better things that we've done in a while because it ensures that you get that input from other people. . . . I may think [Person X] is great and ready to take on the world, then when you see everybody's eyes around the room rolling I don't know about that. It really puts it into perspective, I think. The benefits are twofold. Number one, I confirm or discover personnel in my organization that I should consider in my long-term strategic plan, both from an organization and a development standpoint. I've got the right people or I'm not missing somebody. Two, it allow[s] me an opportunity to have the same input into other people's organizations so that they don't construct a conflicting organization or put people in the wrong roles that will adversely impact my plan. It really allows us to have an entwined strategy. . . . It still allows us at least to be somewhat complementary if nothing else and not conflicting. (personal communication, January 23, 2013)

A participant refined her approach to improving the decision-making outcomes for her promotion candidates. VP008 shared her prepromotion proposal decision-making activities and discussed how she used this process to gather feedback about proposed promotion candidates and to socialize her candidates with some of the other TMSC participants as a way to encourage their buy-in when it came time for ultimate decision-making and future development of new leaders:

> I actually try and go in two different directions. One, are people that I know I can trust to get the feedback. I feel that a lot of times, they'll give me very honest and open feedback based on my relationships with them. Then the second group are the people who I feel are the constant roadblocks or naysayers. . . . I feel like that provides them the opportunity to give feedback. It provides me the opportunity to hear what they have to say in a constructive way. I think it also helps that person feel like they're buying in more to the development of the individual [I am presenting], because they have a vested interest now in seeing how that person develops, because they provided the feedback that [is] supposed to help guide [the candidate's] development along the way. . . . What changed for me is making sure that I put my people in front of the people and the leaders more so than I might have done before, just because I needed them to have that exposure so that the

> Talent [Management] Steering Committee had the ability to accurately decide whether or not [my candidates] were going to get promoted. . . .
>
> I would say that the [first] time we put Person X up for a promotion, the feedback that I consistently got from the [TMSC] meeting was that people didn't know who she was. They didn't feel like they had enough interaction with her to make a decision about her capabilities, or [know whether] she [was] able to handle the job and things like that. I think from that it made me handle the way I did the internal communications process very differently for the course of 2012, in that, where I used to handhold the executive team and walk them through their communications and let Person X handle everything below that level. I put her right up in front of them and have them go to her, consistently, knowing that when the next cycle came around . . . these would be the people sitting in the room, having the interaction and saying, "Do I think she's promotable? Do I think that she has the right skill set?" Making sure that everybody in that room . . . and the people who weren't in that room who still had influence about the process had interaction[s] with her and the ability to feel either comfortable or negative about it one way or another. But they [did not have] the ability to sit there and say, "I really don't work with her, so I can't speak to it." They worked with her. They knew what she did. (personal communication, January 24, 2013)

VP008's change in approach worked, as evidenced by this statement made about Person X by VP012 after the December 18, 2012, TMSC meeting, during which VP008's candidate was re-presented for promotion:

> What comes to mind is just the most recent meeting, and I believe it was one of [VP008's] promotion recommendations. I think it was [the promotion of Person X in VP008's organization]. She's an individual who I knew I had worked with, so I felt as if I really could contribute to the discussion. I saw in that individual someone who had worked very hard, had been very engaged with the business during a significant period of change, had made a lot of personal sacrifice and additional personal effort to help the business succeed, and had grown her role and her responsibility from the process—so for me, it met all the criteria. The job had grown, the individual had grown with it and had demonstrated . . . equanimity under duress in a way to still hold it together from a values standpoint and continue to be a positive contributor. (personal communication, February 20, 2013)

Participants suggested that diversity is necessary in a group decision-making process. Many of the participants were involved in or created their own group decision-making process. When asked about the makeup of the decision-making groups in the

selection and promotion processes, the participants often expressed views supporting the need for a diverse team makeup. Although the participants did not uniformly define diversity, they represented multiple benefits from having a variety of individuals involved in the decision-making process. The participants suggested that the benefits of diversity included multiple perspectives about the strategy of the business and different types of functional expertise, varieties of experiential background, personalities, and personal viewpoints about the role/function/promotional candidate that made the evaluation process more robust.

DIR001 shared a general statement about the value of diversity in organizations:

> I think background and diversity issues matter. I think it matters in an organization, especially one of our size, to have people who come from different backgrounds and who are diverse and who maybe approach problems and issues from perspectives that aren't uniform. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

When assembling his group of decision-makers, VP003 used, among other criteria, his team's Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTIs) to help assemble a diverse group of decision-makers:

> [One of my staff is] like everything opposite of ISTJ [which is my MBTI style], so I just happen to know that his thinking is much different from mine. Being in touch with the way people [think and express themselves] . . . it's actually a good exercise because without even having the [MBTI type] initials, you just know who the people are who think differently, which is a nice advantage. [He is] somebody that I go to who's contrary. He isn't looking to agree with me. It's good to have a person like that. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

VP002 shared this view of the group decision-making process used in his business unit, which also highlights the perceived value of a diverse decision-making body, not only related to the decision outcome but also in finding creative alternatives to promotion as an employee retention mechanism:

> You've got a combination [of business leaders in the process]. You've got line management. You've got G[eneral] & A[dministrative] support management. You get those different perspectives. Again, each of us [is] so busy that we can get very myopic within our line needs. I need to have this promotion. I can't lose this person. And yet when you come to a broader forum it causes you to think a little bit more holistically, a little bit more broadly, to understand that others have these compelling reasons and arguments. And it may give you a different perspective and view on how you're looking at things as well as other levers that you can pull if the promotion is purely retention of one [individual], but it doesn't match market or organizational need. Are there other levers you could pull to retain some of the other [candidates] than just giving them, "Hey, you've been here 20 years, you're doing a great job, here's a promotion." I think it does add value as an individual to get different perspectives and see what different levers exist out there. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

VP006 also suggested that having a group of individuals with various types of expertise involved in the decision-making process was beneficial in gathering facts and eliciting support for the ultimate decision:

> I usually look for some experts or advisers that I know have certain things that are important to that decision. I think there's value from several points. There's the value that maybe you make a better decision with multiple input, that their chances of success are better because you've better thought out or you better explored what you were looking at. My goal is to get the facts on the table. If we happen to align, then that's great. I want to make sure that I have all the information available to make a decision, not necessarily to achieve consensus. You also get the buy in of the individual(s) [who participated] that [these were] the right decisions. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

VP003 shared that he sought counsel from individuals both within and outside of the organization in such decision-making to ensure he was getting all of the relevant information prior to reaching his final conclusions:

> They're [mostly] internal people. Yes, but I have a few external people that I'll go to, who are more "out of the box thinkers," as they say. [One of these external people] is another good person we haven't talked about who's really good at playing devil's advocate. [He] thinks completely differently from the way most of the people in this office think. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

Participants suggested that discipline in decision-making processes ensures alignment with values: Discipline is a value that suggests the desire to control individual, group, and organizational behavior in order to ensure consistency, standardization, fairness, and robustness in a process. Values, as an element of deep-level attributes, are further explored in a later section; however, it is important to represent this particular value as an integral element of the high-stakes decision-making process. A common sentiment among the participants was the requirement that high-stakes decision-making be driven by a rigorous process aligned with the organization's strategy and business objectives, while mitigating risk and limiting liability. This view was shared by many of the research participants and is considered a core high-stakes decision-making accountability, as described by DIR001:

> . . . making sure that the decision-making process is lawful or using lawful criteria, and that we're, to the extent possible, minimizing risk and liability exposure. There are lots of other issues that come into play. Just because I sit in the business and am not simply an attorney providing counsel from the outside, so factors including if the decision or the strategy or the objective reflects the business's values, what the effect is on employee relations, on business continuity, on employee morale, business performance and how we can effectively implement [employee programs] such that the administrative burden is not too onerous and that the legal side of the process is adhered to. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

The desire for discipline and rigor in the high-stakes decision-making process was reflected in the following statement by DIR002 about the value of the organization's leadership promotion process, the TMSC meeting:

> I think, first of all, the fact that there is this elaborate process, which can certainly be seen as . . . bureaucratic . . . can have a negative slant. The flip side of that, which I think is very valuable, is that it forces you as a manager to be very thoughtful and very precise in what you're doing and why you're doing it. Really, it causes you, just the process itself, before a person even opens her mouth, causes you to really think out your decisions and make sure . . . , because you're going to

> have to [present it] in front of somebody. They may ask you a very tough question and you need to have an answer to that, so I think the process itself causes you to think [of] the level of severity and importance that these types of promotions [represent] in an organization. That's before you even walk into the room. (personal communication, January 22, 2013)

The following statement from DIR003 indicates that the rigor of the promotion decision-making process also addressed employees' concerns about fairness and equity: "[Previously] the perception of favoritism came up. You eliminate that type of perception, which increases employee engagement with this type of process" (personal communication, February 14, 2013).

Participants shared how *fit* with organizational values came to be an important consideration in leadership selection. A significant number of the participants identified fit as an important criterion for selection. *Fit* is a function of the alignment between an individual's values and beliefs and those of the organization. There are multiple kinds of fit, including person-organization fit, person-group or departmental fit, and employee-supervisor fit.

The following statement highlights person-organizational fit, which is a reflection of how closely aligned a group or individual is with the values and beliefs of an organization. Here, VP007 stated that the evolution of his own selection practices revolved directly around the importance of fit, rather than other selection criteria:

> There was a day and age in which I would interview for technical skill set first and if they had it, the assumption was they could do the job; we could train them accordingly to be a manager. I've learned over the years that actually the opposite approach is better. I will hire for fit first with the assumption that they have the skill set. Then I can develop any kind of special skills or understanding of the industry or processes that they did not have when they came in there. The reason is, is whenever it comes time to, I'll say, . . . correct a bad hire situation, I've been very successful in teaching people the skills but teaching them how to fit culturally, philosophically, socially is usually going to fail. I usually go for fit first and then skill set second. (personal communication, January 23, 2013)

Participants expressed the need to ensure fit with organizational values in the selection process. Participants often referred to the need to ensure that there was fit between an individual and the role, business unit, leader, and organization when assessing a candidate for selection or promotion. Additionally, the participants often suggested that demonstrated alignment with the organization's values and beliefs, through behavior, was critical to a promotion/selection decision.

The following statement by VP004 provided an example of person-organization fit, highlighting the importance of aligning decisions about individual selection (or retention in the case of mergers and acquisitions) with overall business strategy. Here, she suggested that fit and business context should be intricately connected:

> When we're looking at a company [merger and acquisition] deal, it's how does it fit into the strategy, so if you're comparing that to a person, it would be how does that person fit into the organization from a longer-term perspective. Obviously, if you're thinking about development or promotion, you're thinking about where the organization is going, what opportunities there will be for that employee going forward, how they fit into the organization, how they fit from a cultural standpoint with the organization. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

DIR001 made the following statement about how a candidate's fit with an organization influenced promotional decisions during the TMSC meetings:

> I can think of one person who was up for promotion, like a multilevel promotion, reasonably new to the organization. My recollection is [that] he was promoted one level instead of two and it was partly, it seemed to me, not based on his skills and abilities, but on the committee members' lack of familiarity with him and lack of, I guess, more substantive information about who he is and what his values are and how he fits with the type of organization. (personal communication, February 7, 2013)

The following statements suggest that the belief that a candidate was aligned with the values and beliefs of the organization and/or group was not enough to warrant a

promotion. In these examples, fit in the selection process was evaluated on the candidates' demonstrated behaviors:

> [A] clear demonstration of positive values connected to the company's value system is also really important at [the leadership] level too. We might find people who are very results oriented and they accomplish a lot for the organization. But if we were to promote them and they exhibit other behaviors that don't reflect properly on the organization, we send the wrong signal to the rest of the organization by promoting such individuals. (VP012, personal communication, February 20, 2013)

Demonstrated behavior representing an individual's fit as a requirement for selection was also highlighted in the following statement by VP006:

> To me the really critical things are how is that individual going to perform as a manager of other people? What are their people skills? Do they focus on teamwork? Do they believe in treating people right? . . . I spend a lot of time in evaluating or assessing how that person is going to fit into the organization. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Participants shared the need to align their personal decision-making with organizational values. A number of the participants described considerable discomfort when asked to approve promotional decisions when there was an apparent lack of alignment with the organization's stated values and operating principles. This level of discomfort reinforced the role of fit in executive decision-making. Alignment with organizational values and beliefs guided the criteria for selection, as seen in the previous examples. In addition, the executives' personal alignment with the organization's values and beliefs also influenced their decision-making, which is evident as VP004 discussed her personal perspective about aligning the group's decision-making with the values of the organization:

> In general I don't like the promotions that come about just because the person has an offer outside the company, and that it becomes a defense mechanism just to promote them so that we retain them. In general, what it says to me is we're not

> doing our job all along, . . . or we're giving a promotion even though we don't think the person is qualified. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

Cluster 2: Participants' Perspectives About Both Non–People- and People-Related Decision-Making

This cluster provides detail regarding the participants' perspectives about both people-related and non–people-related decision-making. Core members of the TMSC were asked the following two questions during the pre-TMSC meeting interviews: (1) In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions similar to those you make about employees? (2) In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions different from those you make about employees? Most participants suggested that decision-making was similar in both people-related and non–people related cases in terms of the need to reduce risk and limit liability. However, they also identified specific characteristics of people-related decisions that were different from other decisions, such as the implications and risks related to people-related decisions, as well as the importance and impact of people-related decisions. Five ideas are represented in this cluster:

- Participants expressed the need for people- and non–people-related decision-making to reduce risk and limit liability.
- Participants defined people-related decisions as high-stakes decisions.
- Participants described people-related decisions as having significant impact on the organization.
- The CEO discussed the influence of politics on people-related decision-making.
- Participants shared the perceived value of and their intrinsic satisfaction from people-related decisions.

Participants expressed the need for people- and non–people-related decision-making to reduce risk and limit liability. In a personal communication with DIR001, he stated that minimizing risk and limiting liability in all decision-making activities was a critical decision-making factor:

> High-stakes decisions are . . . made with the thought of minimizing risk and liability, or at least balancing them. We can have a high-risk issue but have low liability. Even when it's a nonemployee issue, still considering those things and . . . the likelihood of suit and publicity is [important]. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

Participants defined people-related decisions as high-stakes decisions. Decisions related to people, and specifically those at the leadership level of the organization, were considered to be significant and potentially critical. Multiple members of the core TMSC shared their views regarding the impact of people-related high-stakes decisions. An example of the importance of people in business outcomes can be seen in the statement made by VP002, "At the end of the day, I have corporate objectives, be they financial, be they key performance indicators, and those don't just happen. Those are made to happen by having the right people in the right place" (personal communication, November 27, 2012).

In a personal communication, the CEO stated, "The high-stakes decision really starts out with: Is this the right individual to give them multibillion dollar, oftentimes hundreds of millions or billions of dollars, worth of responsibility?" (personal communication, November 29, 2012). In the following example, VP006 quantified the value of a leadership selection decision made by the organization, highlighting just how high the stakes could be in a company's leadership selection decisions:

> [Poor leadership selection decisions] can set you back years, depending on the position that they're in and the influence, the impact that that position has over the organization. It can be billions of dollars. . . . Instead of [the product] being a three to four billion-dollar global product, maybe it could [have been] a five to six billion dollar product. I mean it can be huge. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Participants described people-related decisions as having significant impact in the organization. VP005 shared this thought about the impact of people-related decisions:

> The greater impact is the investment in the employee because in the end, no matter how much money you spend and how beautiful something looks, it doesn't matter if you don't have the right management team and the right technical people. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Many of the participants also stated that they believed people-related high-stakes decision-making to be difficult because of the emotional content of the decisions, the difficulty in discerning hard facts, and the perceived lack of concrete data upon which to base decisions. The following statement from VP005 represents this view: "In some . . . ways I think it's easier to make high-stake[s] decisions when it doesn't involve people because the people part of it sometimes is the hard part of it. When it doesn't involve people, it's black and white" (personal communication, November 30, 2012).

VP003 reflected that people-related decision-making is "a much softer thing. You can do pros and cons, but you can't do a N[et] P[resent] V[alue] analysis like you can for a financial decision in the high-stakes world about . . . making an investment, for example" (personal communication, November 28, 2012).

While presenting candidates for promotion during the TMSC meeting, members of the executive group shared their views about the potential impact of individuals in each of their organizations and the importance of making correct people-related

decisions. VP007 said this of an individual he was presenting for promotion to a higher-level leadership position: “In terms of impact . . . every product sold in the U.S. goes through this group, all of our sales. From an impact standpoint, he certainly has a significant impact on our organization” (observation, December 18, 2012).

During the TMSC meeting, VP008 presented the following views related to the proposed promotion of one of her employees. Here she referred to the candidate’s prior performance, as well as the risks associated with this promotional decision:

> From a standpoint of responsibility, the work she’s done this year, she is absolutely worthy of the promotion. On top of that, I think that if we lose her, we as a company stand a huge risk of liability. [We have to] make decisions on a global level of what we’re doing for a community involvement from our foundation, tax liability, running product donations. (observation, December 18, 2012)

In summing up his thoughts about the impact of people-related decisions in organizations, the CEO shared the following situation:

> There’s a gentleman running Company X now, Person X. It’s amazing how he screwed up that company, and yet he’s sitting in that chair and he’s running that company and . . . their board of directors . . . want[s] to replace him. Now, this is the board of directors of [a] publicly traded multibillion dollar company calling [me] up and saying, “Person X’s got to go but we don’t want to embarrass him, and so we want to bring an individual in to kind of like come in under person and within 6 months to a year, they will take him over and Person X will go away.” Now, can you think of a crazier situation around high-stakes decisions about individuals and talent? That’s at the board level of a publicly traded company. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

The CEO discussed the influence of politics on people-related decision-making. Politics is concerned with getting or using power within a particular group or organization; it includes a person’s political views and beliefs. Here, the CEO presents his view about the influence of politics in such a process, particularly as it relates to people-related decisions:

> I think when you think about high-stakes decisions, you think about all those things about making a perfect, legitimate, acceptable, smart decision and then there's the whole thing about what you want to do and what you can do. Meaning, what are all the other factors that stop you from making the best high-stakes decision? Those things about maybe you know the best person in the world to do this job you want them to do happens to be your brother-in-law, but the rules of the organization or the rules of most good organizations would not allow you to do that, and that's a very extreme point. Those things happen, right? The political ramifications, that you know the best person for this job would be the person to do this, but politically it's not acceptable. Those impacts, social and political impacts, do exist. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

Participants shared the perceived value of and their intrinsic satisfaction from people-related decisions. Many of the participants expressed a great deal of positive sentiment and personal satisfaction about their influence on individuals and the organization when asked about their people-related decision-making. This is evident in the following statements from VP004, VP003, and VP005:

> I get satisfaction out of seeing other people succeed that I feel I had a hand in, because you feel like you have a tangible—you can see, touch, and feel like you did something, which is a little bit different than the reward you get out of just making another decision in the business. It's like seeing your kids do something well, right? The same kind of reward. (VP004, personal communication, November 29, 2012)

> I feel good about that for my people. I'm happy for them and I feel a little bit of good will rub off on me for helping them get there. (VP003, personal communication, November 28, 2012)

> When I think back, . . . sometimes the most satisfying things for me any time in my career is, not when somebody leaves the company, but when somebody leaves the company and they make a testimonial. They tell me how much I've influenced, how much they've grown, how much they've learned, how much I've changed how they think and how they feel. Through my leadership, I've made a difference in what they believe they can do, what they can do, their own self-confidence, and then their own abilities. (VP005, personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Cluster 3: Participants' Perspectives on Selection Criteria

This cluster provides detail about the participants' thoughts regarding leadership selection criteria. During the interview process participants were asked: (a) What criteria do you believe are most important in evaluating a candidate for promotion? (b) What is the purpose or reason for using each of these criteria to evaluate candidates for promotion? and (c) How did these criteria come to be important in this decision-making process? In response to these questions, participants discussed learning through their decision-making mistakes and how this learning had altered their perspectives about the importance of dedicating themselves to strategy and people as they ascended the leadership ranks and the resultant shifts in promotion and selection criteria over time. This cluster represents a singular idea, as it was often shared by the participants as an important reflection on their leadership evolution. These thoughts represented significant professional learnings for the participants and in some cases came about as "ah-ha" moments in their discussions with the researcher. One idea is represented by the data in this cluster:

- Participants shared their thoughts about leadership selection criteria and how they came to be important to them.

Participants shared their thoughts about leadership selection criteria and how they came to be important to them. In discussing his role and responsibilities in the organization and the evolution of an executive's orientation as he ascends in his career, VP006 said, "As you get higher in an organization, your focus becomes more on strategy and on people—making sure you have the right organization, the right people in

that organization. More and more of your time becomes people-focused" (personal communication, November 30, 2012).

Selection criteria included decision-making frames created through executives' personal and professional experiences, education, individual background, and roles, as explored in a later theme focused on surface- and deep-level attributes. Such criteria may include expectations about candidates' behavioral characteristics, as described here: "If they have great technical skills, but they are not as well organized, they won't be able to articulate, they won't be able to manage complex situations" (VP005, personal communication, November 30, 2012).

Selection criteria may be based on the need to ensure that through the promotion process, the organization continues to do the right thing, acting with credibility and integrity, and waiting until a business need arises for the position. The following statement from VP012 suggests that business need is an important consideration for the promotion of employees:

> Even though someone may have all of the skills and requirements that were needed and they may be able to do the job at a level that's been defined, unless there's an organizational need within the business unit for that job, they will not be promoted to that level. In some cases, you just need to wait until the organizational need is there. (observation, December 18, 2012)

Scope and complexity of the role, span of control, and business need were all identified as necessary requirements for promotion, aside from an individual's qualifications for a higher-level position. The following statements each reflect the participants' perspectives about these requirements for promotion:

> I think the main issue is reinforcing the idea . . . so people could get promoted. There has to be some meaningful expansion of the complexity of the job and not

> just the volume and not just grade inflation or title inflation. (VP002, personal communications, February 1, 2013)
>
> One thing is a more global aspect. For example, [Person X] has [Person Y] and he's getting pulled into a lot of global activity, so I see that as being a level that you potentially justify as a promotion as opposed to just more volume within the same scope. (VP003, personal communication, February 5, 2013)
>
> Things like increase[d] complexity on the job, . . . the scope of this position, . . . if the position is going to cover multiple divisions. Things like that will probably tweak the level of the position. I pair that with the business need. (DIR003, personal communication, February 14, 2013)
>
> What part of the organization . . . is going to change along with his promotion? Is [the team] more effective because of this promotion? Is it taking any burden off of you [the promoting manager]? Are we going to streamline our reporting [structure]? Things like that. (HR001, personal communication, February 5, 2013)

When asked what the most important promotional criteria for leadership positions were and how they came to determine that these criteria had a significant impact on candidates' success, many of the participants cited having made hiring mistakes that altered their perspective, as seen in this statement by VP001:

> Mistakes in hiring and mistakes in promoting teach you certain things. We always pay a price for either being anxious to get somebody into the job and not take time to find the right person for the job, whether internally or externally it doesn't matter, or you just assign too much value in certain things and not enough value in other things.
>
> Let me just say, these are three things I find most important; they're not the only things I'm looking for. Let's talk about that. At the beginning in my career, the first one was the most important to me. Competency. The bigger the credentials the more impressed I was unless worried about other elements, about the element of making decisions. In other words, I was just overly impressed with people being too smart and didn't care really what their personality was. Over time I've learned, actually, there is even such a thing as being too smart for the job. (personal communication, November 27, 2012)

The following statements from VP004 and VP006 highlight the evolution of perspective about selection criteria over their careers:

> I think I was hiring at a different level earlier in my career, so you look for a different skill set. I think the higher up the organization goes, the more important the leadership skills, and . . . decision-making capabilities. The ability to influence becomes more important than your technical skill set. You've got to have a strong base in technical skills, but it's really important to surround yourself with people that have them. [And], it depends on the role you're hiring for. (VP004, personal communication, November 29, 2012)

> Early on I'm sure I looked more at the technical side and that was an important part, but I think over time, as I said earlier, I've shifted more to the people side of the individual. (VP006, personal communication, November 30, 2012)

VP003 also shared that as he has progressed in his career, he had to balance hard facts and concrete evidence with his instincts in his decision-making. The role of instinct in high-stakes decision-making is addressed in further detail in the next section. "I think it's similar in that as I get more experience, I tend to go more on my instincts but at the same time, trying to balance that with the facts in a more disciplined process" (personal communication, November 28, 2012).

Cluster 4: The Role of Instinct in Decision-Making

This cluster represents participants' perspectives about the role of instinct and intuition in the high-stakes decision-making process. As in the previous section, these data are presented as a singular idea. Often, the participants shared their thoughts about gut, instinct, or intuition in decision-making as a stand-alone and important but difficult-to-discuss aspect of the process. One idea is represented in the cluster:

- Participants elaborated on the role of instinct and intuition in decision-making.

Participants elaborated on the role of instinct and intuition in decision-making. Instinct or intuition is a belief or a judgment of truth based on feelings and abilities one was born with, rather than facts occurring from thought or through training. Many of the core TMSC members stated that there was an element of instinct or intuition

present in their high-stakes decision-making, both people-related and non–people related. These beliefs were viewed as instrumental in providing guidance and direction in the high-stakes decision-making process, as shared first by VP001:

> I think coming to this high-stake[s] decision-making there is always that one small part where you're going to have that right feeling in your gut too about making [a decision], whether that's a person you want to give a job to or whether it's a project you want to favor, whether it's a strategic decision. . . . We often tend to neglect that, I think, to more extent than is justifiable. That's how we talk to each other about this stuff and it's not really, . . . it's very difficult . . . to use an argument: Well, let's do this because I just feel it's the right thing to do. I believe because we as a society and particularly now our business, we tend to be data driven. We forget often the fact that there is a lot of gut involved in everything we do, that undefined implicit sort of wisdom and knowledge that we all bring to whatever we are doing that is based on our upbringing, our work experience, our life experience, and so on. We tend to neglect that. There is an element of art in everything we do, in all of the jobs we do, and when you look at successful people actually, you realize that they were doing certain things where it was not quite easily understandable why they do that. (personal communication, November 27, 2012)

Specifically related to people-related high-stakes decisions, the CEO said:

> These are our very, very large decisions and they're, I think, largely made from a formed base of knowledge. But then a lot of it's through intuition and then how do you then interact with those individuals and how are you observing how they're performing and what are the metrics, what are the measurements to success. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

Theme 2: The CEO's Deep-Level Attributes Set the Tone for the Decision-Making Process

This theme provides detail regarding the CEO's influence on this organization's high-stakes decision-making, specifically its people-related decision-making. The participants often expressed how impactful the CEO's values, beliefs, and cognitions were and that he was perceived as perhaps the most influential team member in the TMSC process. This theme presents some of the CEO's views and philosophies, as well

as others' perspectives about his impact on the decision-making process, even when he was absent from the meetings.

Cluster 5: The CEO as a Guidepost for Group Members' Orientation to People-Related Decision-Making

This section provides detail about the CEO as a driver and model of organizational values. This cluster highlights the CEO's views about the size of an organization and its implication in people-related decisions. He also discussed the differentiation of talent, and a specific example of how his views are reflected in the organization is presented. Four ideas are represented by the data:

- The CEO shared his philosophy about employees being one of an organization's most valuable assets.
- The CEO shared his framework for thinking about the implications of an organization's size.
- The CEO discussed his orientation toward the differentiation of talent.
- The CEO shared an example of personality criteria viewed as critical for leadership success.

The CEO shared his philosophy about employees being one of an organization's most valuable assets. During a personal conversation with the CEO, he shared the following thought:

> I think the decisions you make with your employees as being one of your most valuables assets is very critical, and making those decisions are largely about how you feel about individuals. I am a believer that 90-some percent of the world are good solid people who want to do well and, given the opportunity and given the proper circumstances, will always do the right thing. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

The CEO shared his framework for thinking about the implications of an organization's size. The CEO's impact on high-stakes decision-making extended beyond values to beliefs and the framework for thinking about the context of the decisions. In a personal communication with the CEO, he shared the following thoughts about the size of an organization and its implications in people-related decisions:

> I think [the success of selection] also depends . . . on the size of your organization a bit. Because I think a mismatched individual can probably last longer in a smaller organization with less big decisions than they can in a large organization. I think that you may not be the perfect target profile in a small organization and succeed, whereas as the bigger the organization, the more influence, the more it's better for you to hit that target profile. . . . It's harmonic distortion. You make a mistake and it just becomes huge because you make a mistake in a $20-billion company, . . . a significant mistake in a $20-billion company, wow. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

The CEO discussed his orientation toward the differentiation of talent. Beliefs inform the philosophical foundations of the selection process. The CEO suggested that some of his beliefs about talent differ from those of his peers:

> My own view is it's actually important to hire role players, . . . though I know other CEOs who think that everybody should be swinging for the fences all the time. . . . My view is you create [too much competition] . . . when everyone has to be in that [high-potential] mold and everyone has to be the next potential CEO; then it can be a really tough environment. I think it's almost too much in-fighting. . . . [It has the] potential for inviting animosity. I believe in a world of A players, B players, and even some Cs. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

The CEO shared an example of personality criteria viewed as critical for leadership success. The study participants were asked to identify criteria they viewed as important for successful promotion to higher levels of leadership. The CEO identified adaptability as being among the most critical criteria for candidate success in leadership:

> One of the things I like to look for, beyond the background and just the smarts, is . . . adaptability. I don't [want] someone who's going to come in and totally

> change themselves. No, I want somebody who can adapt, though, to a different way of existence. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

These examples of the CEO's people-related perspectives can be seen as directly impacting the promotion and selection process. The CEO's perspective regarding differentiation of talent is shown in the first example provided in the discussion of Theme 4, Cluster 12. Adaptability as a critical leadership capability is evident in the discussion regarding personality criteria in Theme 3, Cluster 11. These are examples of the ways in which the CEO's influence was evident. His influence was reflected in the stated values of the organization, in the actions of his leadership team, in the organization's philosophical orientation toward the value of people, in the criteria viewed as important for leadership success, as well as in the evaluation/differentiation of talent, even in situations when he was not physically present.

Cluster 6: The CEO as Being Present, Even When He's Absent

This cluster provides additional detail regarding the CEO's influence on this organization's high-stakes decision-making. The participants often expressed how the CEO's values, beliefs, and cognitions had an impact and how he was perceived as perhaps the most influential team member in the TMSC process, even when he wasn't physically present. A number of participants expressed concern about the influence of the CEO since the announcement of his impending retirement. Two ideas are represented by the data:

- Participants identified the CEO as a driver and model of organizational people-related values.

- Participants shared their perceptions of the CEO's influence on the TMSC meetings.

Participants identified the CEO as a driver and model of organizational people-related values. The participants often identified the CEO's presence and his values as having a differential impact on decision-making in the organization. The influence of the CEO's personal philosophies can be seen in the following statement by DIR001, which he suggests then translates to the business strategy and can be seen in the actions of the leadership team, as an extension of the CEO:

> [A] lot of these high-stakes decisions really reflect the values of the leadership and, in our world, reflect the leadership of [CEO], who genuinely cares about his employees and their welfare. I think that it might be somewhat unique that there's a person in his position that actually asks questions about the individual and what the effect of those decisions might be on the individual, instead of just on the bottom line or on achieving a certain objective. The personal values as expressed as the business strategy of a CEO or executive means a lot. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

Participants shared their perceptions of the CEO's influence on the TMSC meetings. In a personal communication, occurring after the December 18, 2012, TMSC meeting and also after the announcement that the CEO would be retiring, VP008 provided her reflections about the influence of the CEO on the promotion process and the TMSC meeting in particular. This statement represents a prevailing sentiment among the meeting participants:

> What's interesting is I wondered when I went into that meeting, I think . . . [the CEO] had announced that he was leaving. I think part of me had wondered how the meetings went with [the CEO] versus [when the CEO] had gone, because I think part of what you see around the company is some people feeling like, "Oh, I can function differently now that he's not here," and other people thinking, "How do I function now that he's not here?" (personal communication, January 24, 2013)

During an interview conducted after the TMSC meeting, VP003 specifically stated that during high-stakes decision-making meetings, he and others specifically looked to the CEO for guidance:

> Well, I think you've got an interesting experiment because you [previously] had [the CEO] there and I think a lot of people like me were kind of looking at him out of the corner of our eye for signals, because we have a very strong leader in [the CEO] and you have a pretty good idea about where he wanted to go. (personal communication, February 5, 2013)

Theme 3: Participants' Surface-Level and Deep-Level Attributes Combine to Shape Decision-Making Criteria

Cluster 1 highlighted how the participants valued diversity of group composition in the decision-making process. The characteristics implied by diversity include deep-level attributes such as values, beliefs, and cognitions and are evident at the individual, group, and organization levels. They also include surface-level attributes, which are observable characteristics such as length of service, role responsibilities, education, and employment experience. This section explores these attributes and sets the stage for how they combine to influence high-stakes decision-making.

Five clusters are presented in this theme. Cluster 7, The Role of Values, and Cluster 8, The Role of Surface-Level Attributes, are presented first, as the combination of values and surface-level attributes generate the beliefs and cognitions represented in Cluster 9, The Role of Beliefs, and Cluster 10, The Role of Cognitions. Cluster 11, Types of Selection Criteria, provides detail about the selection criteria generated through the combination of participants' surface- and deep-level attributes.

Cluster 7: The Role of Values

Values are a view of life and judgments about what is desirable. They are a significant part of an individual's personality and a group's morale. Values are evident at various levels in an organization, including at the organizational, group, and individual levels. Organizational and leaders' values have a significant influence on other members of the organization and on the way in which individuals and the organization behave, specifically in the activities of decision-making. Four ideas are represented in this cluster:

- Participants shared that "how" is as important as "what."
- One participant shared his view of the leadership team's values.
- Participants expressed the value of people as contributors to the organization.
- Participants discussed fairness and equity as important values.

Participants shared that "how" is as important as "what." Beyond the structure of the organization, the business strategy, and measures of success, there is the element of values, reflected in questions about "how" things happen in the organization, that drives high-stakes decision-making. VP006 provided a foundation for values as establishing context in the following statement about the differences and similarities between people- and non–people-related high-stakes decisions:

> I don't know how they differ. I'll turn it the other way: How are they similar? . . . If you're doing what's right for people or you're doing what's right for the [customer], you're probably doing the right thing. I guess to answer your question the way it was asked, if you don't feel good about what you're doing from a[n] [employee] or a [customer] standpoint, then you're probably not doing the right thing. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Many of the research participants cited "doing the right thing" as the foundation for decision-making in all circumstances. The organization had adopted an employee/ employer value proposition, a part of which stated:

> We strive for pre-eminence in the development, manufacturing and marketing of [products].
> We are committed to the safety of our employees and the quality of our products.
> We deliver on our promises.
> We demand honesty, integrity and mutual respect.
> We do the right thing.

It became evident in the data that these principles played a strong part in the foundation for decision-making, particularly at the executive leadership level in the organization. Doing the right thing was a clear and present sentiment in the decision-making framework for VP004, as reflected here:

> You're always looking for the best thing for the company, which isn't always the best thing for you personally. It may not always fit with what you like or what might be best in the short term, but what is the best thing for the company in the long term. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

When asked to identify a promotion in the organization that he believed was most consistent with his personal values, DIR001 shared the following example, which was very consistent with the stated values of the organization, his own personal values, and the overarching theme of "doing the right thing":

> I think of the promotion of Person X to the global compliance officer, or whatever his role is officially termed. That's a good example. This person reflects the values of the company. His action and conduct embody the values of the company, and he is a guy who I personally like and respect, and think that he would do a very, very good job in a global role. He has the company's best interest in mind when conducting the duties of his position. I think Person X is a guy who is not going to push the bounds of the law to reach a result that he wants to reach. He respects the law. He respects the process. He respects company policies and processes, so that I know when he's in the position, he's not going to do things to put the company or the shareholders in a bad position.

> Two, I think he reflects, embodies the values of the company. There is integrity, there's respect, there's a dignity, and he embodies those things. He is a good poster child, if you will, for [our company's] values. A person in that position, he's the right person. He's a person people can look to and say he's going to do the right thing, we can rely on him to do the right thing and to do the things that [our company] values.
>
> I also think there is a measure of respect. Person X is very respectful in his approach and how he communicates with people. That is something I value. I don't like to deal with people who treat others derisively or in a way that I would not want to be treated. I don't think Person X is that guy. I've never seen him be that person. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

One participant shared his view of the leadership team's values. The leadership team's values were emphasized in the following statement by DIR001, specifically related to a voluntary retirement program he worked to roll out to the organization's employees:

> We spend a lot of time honing and refining our values. With something like the [retirement program], there is going to be something of an internal inequity, because we're going to draw a line between who is eligible and who is not. [Our company] does a good job of trying to be as fair and balanced as possible when making these decisions. That, to me, reflects the values of our leadership. To date, [CEO] and his team, they're concerned not only about our serving our stockholders but also treating the people who make the stockholders money each and every day with dignity and respect. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

Participants expressed the value of people as contributors to the organization. The value of people ascribed by executives drove the amount of time and effort they were willing to expend on people-related activities:

> To me the really critical things are how is that individual going to perform as a manager of other people? What are their people skills? Do they focus on teamwork? Do they believe in treating people right? I really . . . spend a lot of time in evaluating or assessing how that person is going to fit into the organization. (VP006, personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Individual values were influential in establishing the criteria executives used to drive their promotion and selection decisions: "You want someone who wants to promote the organization and make things better and change" (VP004, personal communication, November 29, 2012).

Participants discussed fairness and equity as important values. Many of the participants referenced fairness or equity as being of great importance to them, particularly in the context of people-related decision-making. The value of comparative equity and consistent application of standards and rewards was exhibited in a variety of ways. In a personal communication with VP012, he made the following observation about his role in the promotion process: "I support the business leaders in assessing the talent in their organization and ensuring that there are clear and fair criteria applied as to when and why an individual [is] to be promoted" (personal communication, February 20, 2013).

VP010 stated that he believed being a part of the talent management process offered "the advantage of global interaction":

> We not only learn what goes on in the committee here, . . . the big thing about these promotions is the fairness. We as functional heads, we might feel that we're being fair as we promote people, but your role in that committee is to make sure [that there] is fairness across functions. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

When asked to share his observations about the talent management process, VP006 stated:

> Probably some of the most pertinent questions are: How does this compare to somebody over in this other part of the organization? Do we have consistency between level and scope and so forth? I think that's a real value of this committee itself is looking for that fairness across the organization so one portion doesn't get out of [kilter] with the others. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

Cluster 8: The Role of Surface-Level Attributes

Surface-level attributes are readily detectable differences among individuals. These differences include demographic attributes, past experience, educational background, and role responsibilities. The accumulation of executives' past professional and personal experiences, their academic achievements, and their professional roles all contribute to the creation of their beliefs and cognitions. The following section provides details of study participants' surface-level attributes as a foundation for the exploration of their beliefs and cognitions. Four ideas are represented in this cluster:

- Participants' past experiences are surface-level attributes.
- Participants' views about length of service influence decision-making.
- Participants' educational background is a surface-level attribute.
- Participants' roles and responsibilities are surface-level attributes.

Participants' past experiences are surface-level attributes. Experience is both the process of gaining knowledge and skill and the actual knowledge or skills themselves. Experience is considered a surface-level attribute as it is readily identified through biographies, other people's recollections, and professional resumes or curricula vitae. All of the study participants were asked to provide a brief overview of their professional history and their current role in the organization. Often this information included not only the participants' job titles and a basic overview of their background, but also the length of service, which was almost universally included as part of the representation of their experience. The following statements are examples of the information provided:

> I am a licensed attorney and have been so since 1998. I spent 1 year as a federal law clerk and the remaining years until I joined [our company] in 2010 in private

> practice as a labor employment attorney. (DIR001, personal communication, November 28, 2012)
>
> I've been working in finance for almost 25 years. Half of my career was working for Company X as an external auditor, and the other half has been at [our company] in various finance functions. (VP004, personal communication, November 29, 2012)
>
> I've been in the . . . industry for 35 years, started in [the Midwest]. (VP006, personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Participants' views about length of service influence decision-making. Length of service and time in position were raised by many participants as being inadequate criteria for promotion. However, as evidenced below, questions about candidates' years with the organization or in a particular position were almost universally presented during the TMSC meeting and were often points of discussion. In addition, some participants viewed length of service as an acceptable and indeed important criterion for movement to a new position.

In this statement, VP012 shared a situation in which the decision not to promote an individual was based on length of service, with the view that the promotion was happening too quickly. This example also highlights the value of fairness and consistency in the organization:

> There was [a potential promotion] in my client group . . . where we decided to put it off and put it on hold. [There was a] feeling as if this wasn't the right time and we knew we shouldn't proceed. . . . It had to do with this concern about it's too quick and too soon for the individual. I do think that's a relevant thing to consider because it plays into not wanting to overpromote and not wanting to see the individual not succeed. It also plays into . . . the idea of fairness and consistency in how we apply these [criteria] across the organization. (personal communication, February 20, 2013)

In the following example, VP006 shared that "there needs to be an expectation that [promotion is] not based on the number of years that somebody's been here. It's

based on the level of performance and if an employee is truly ready to go to that next level based on the skill set that's really needed" (personal communication, January 24, 2013). Yet, during the TMSC meeting, as VP006 presented one of his candidates for promotion, he shared this information: "[Person W has] been very instrumental in training and coaching our folks over the last . . . I think he's been here about 3 years" (observation, December 18, 2012). At a later point in the TMSC meeting, the following exchange occurred, representing the only question about this candidate by VP006:

> **VP006:** VP002, how long has she been with the organization?
>
> **VP002:** VP006, it doesn't say here specifically, but I want to say that [this candidate's] been . . . it's at least 5+ years. She came in as a director, I believe.

Other participants identified time in position as a necessary basis upon which to make a promotion decision, as shared by VP010: "Based on . . . how many years of performing that role, the individual is ready to go to the next level" (personal communication, February 1, 2013).

Participants' educational background is a surface-level attribute. Level and type of education were easily discerned through a review of an individual's curriculum vitae or through a background check, and in some cases simply by looking at the diplomas on an office wall. Similar to experience, educational background provides specific types of knowledge that influence individuals' decision-making and contribute to the creation of their beliefs and cognitions.

Although not all of the participants in this study stated their educational backgrounds, among this group of executives there were various technical specialists related to the industry, lawyers, finance and human resources professionals, and marketers. Some of these individuals possessed advanced degrees in communication,

management, psychology, business administration, finance, and technical fields. Others had only undergraduate levels of education.

Participants' roles and responsibilities are surface-level attributes.

Executives' job responsibilities influence what they attend to in their decision-making. This can be seen in VP004's description of her responsibilities in the organization:

> I've been working in finance for almost 25 years. Half of my career was working for Company X as an external auditor, and the other half has been at [our company] in various finance functions. I always like to say the elevator line about the role of a CFO is you control the wallet of the corporation. Basically, [there are] two main components of the role. One is ensuring that we're complying with rules, regulations, and that the financials are fairly presented. The second component is that of a business partner to the business, . . . so supporting the business in their decision-making as it relates to financial decisions and other items. . . . When we're looking at a [a potential acquisition or merger deal], how does it fit into the strategy, so if you're comparing that to a person it would be how does that person fit into the organization from a longer-term perspective. You're looking at the economics of it, so when you're hiring someone you're considering, what's the cost? (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

In support of VP004's own perspective about her role and responsibilities as chief financial officer, VP003 shared his expectation of her contributions in the TMSC decision-making process: "If we look at the TMSC group now, I think [VP004] is really kind of dollars-and-cents oriented, as she should be, trying to hold the line from a financial perspective" (personal communication, February 5, 2013).

Similarly, VP005 shared this description of his own role in the organization:

> I've worked in operational roles throughout my career, primarily focusing in . . . manufacturing, and I've worked my way through a variety of different companies with increasing scope and responsibilities from single-plant responsibilities to multiplant and then global operations. . . . I am responsible for the operations of the Americas, which is all of our manufacturing operations which extend from Canada, the United States and also through Latin America. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

When asked about his selection criteria, VP005 shared the following thoughts, which were directly linked to his current role and responsibilities, as well as those he has held throughout much of his career:

> I think, of course [selection criteria] depends very much on the position and exactly what the job function is. In technical roles, it really needs to start with the credentials and with the parts of the educational background and the experience. Those are some very key factors. We have to look at two tracks: . . . one about their technical skills and abilities, and then, of course, is their management, organizational, and leadership skills. While we have some employees that . . . don't have the right technical skills, [they] will fail, so that's critical. (personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Cluster 9: The Role of Beliefs

Beliefs represent an understanding about the relationships between objects, properties, and ideas and are a significant component of executives' deep-level attributes. Beliefs shape perceptions about people, circumstances, and outcomes and have an important influence on decision-making processes. Two ideas are represented in the data about beliefs:

- Participants shared how beliefs act as catalysts for decision-making.
- Participants' stated beliefs reflect generalizations about candidates' skills and abilities.

Participants shared how beliefs act as catalysts for decision-making. In the following statement, VP010 shared his department's belief in the skills and capabilities of his team and the vulnerability he believed this created relative to engaging and retaining talent. Beliefs such as these compelled this department to take measures to ensure that it was actively managing its talent:

> What we believe is that [our company] is an organization with pretty significant talent, and any other company looks at [our company] as the first thing. We're constantly under attack, and many of us are presented with (pretty routinely) [outside] opportunities. What is the risk for the retention of our talent? . . . This brings a certain level of urgency: . . . What do we do to make sure we're continuing the retention of this talent? Some of those aspects would [be] . . . compensation, the roles and responsibilities, their possibilities of growth in the organization, and do they have . . . even the right projects. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

In the following statement, VP003 shared his business unit's beliefs regarding the hiring and organizational design process:

> Typically, we also went for the young, less experienced person on the theory that they would [have] had more fire and ability, typically. . . . We wanted to have an organization that was a pyramid structure, with [fewer] managers at the top and then more junior people at the bottom. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

Participants' stated beliefs reflect generalizations about candidates' skills and abilities. The following statements are examples of participants' generalized beliefs about the skills and capabilities of particular subsets of the employee population. In the first example VP003 has formed a negative belief about scientists' general lack of communication capability:

> Then you have people who just don't know how to communicate, which is also unfortunately a very common obstacle. Particularly, in an organization like what we have, where you have a lot of science people—and not to be stereotypical, but in my experience, people who are really smart [scientists], . . . they're not trained in communication. When you're talking about HR and legal, actually people get training in communications. That is a core skill set. People who can't figure out a way to communicate and had to operate in a complex maintenance matrix, they just don't succeed. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

In this second example, VP006 has formed a positive belief about marketers' ability to market any product. He said, "I believe a good marketer can market any product. Maybe they're an expert in [one product line], but they can take those skills and

transpose them over to [another product line]" (personal communication, November 30, 2012).

This last example, shared by VP004, reflects her belief that a substantial capability for all leaders is the ability to identify and develop talent, without which she believes leaders will not be successful:

> For me, the people stuff is always really important, because as you progress, it's less and less about your own skill set as it is about identifying and developing talent below you. Those are the people that are actually getting things done and driving the organization day to day. If you don't have the ability to spot that talent, develop that talent, and be able to manage your own ego around that, you're not going to be successful, in my view. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

Cluster 10: The Role of Cognitions

Cognitions are an individual's interpretation of the world, and they determine how an individual will behave. Individuals' cognitions comprise schemas or mental models that represent their general knowledge about a given concept or idea and are heavily influenced by their prior knowledge. Cognitions are the result of a combination of beliefs about things and experiences that lead one to a conclusion about the likely outcomes of a situation or event. Diagnoses of business opportunities and threats—cause and effect thinking—are cognitions. Four ideas are represented by the data on cognitions:

- Participants evaluated the level of risk in their decision-making.
- One participant compared internal business units as a context for decision-making.
- Participants shared how job roles, complexity, span of control, level of influence, and past experience combined to influence decision-making.

- Participants cited business needs and organizational structure as contexts for decision-making.

Participants evaluated the level of risk in their decision-making. Risk was presented in Theme 1, Cluster 2 in the section related to the participants' perspectives about people- and non–people-related decision-making. Participants' perspectives are cognitions; therefore, the topic is also presented here to illustrate the idea that risk is a mental model and refers to the possibility that something bad will happen, now or at some time in the future. Many of the participants referred to risk as a significant influence in their decision-making processes, as can be seen in a statement made by VP009, highlighting her concerns about talent in her own department:

> When somebody asks me, as the compliance officer, what keeps me up at night, having been in the industry for 29 years, this is really the first time that I have assumed a role where I have the talent that I have within my group. My biggest risk right now, and I think [our company's] biggest risk from my compliance standpoint, is losing some key critical players from this compliance group. (VP009, observation, December 18, 2012)

In a personal communication with VP001, he suggested that risks can and should be evaluated during the decision-making process; however, that is more difficult to do when the topic of decision-making is people:

> When you make decisions about people, I think at least I tend to be more conservative about that. In other words, I would be more likely to say: Well, this project is very risky, but if we are successful, we may be first to the market and we make a lot, so we will go ahead and take that risk as long as we're aware we'll go. I don't tend to think that equally you can do that with people. (personal communication, November 27, 2012)

The risk issue related to the similarities and differences between people- and non–people-related decisions was made even more poignant in the following statement from DIR001:

> [Some decisions] are not about employees and they're not going to affect whether a person can pay his or her mortgage or feed his or her kids or have healthcare. Those are factors (at least in my mind) that make decisions about employees much different and much more realistic and true and grounded. The emotional aspect of that can be hard. The interest of the organization becomes integrated with the interests of that employee because, depending on what the issue is, it can cost the organization a lot of money, or it can put the organization at risk in a different way, especially if it's a touchy or an ugly circumstance where it can put the organization in a bad light for making a decision that people might not agree with, even though on the facts and the law, it's the right decision. No one wants to read in the *Sunday Inquirer* about a contract dispute because that's boring, but if we fire a person who has cerebral palsy and four kids and they're out on the street that makes for good press. (personal communication, November 28, 2012)

One participant compared internal business units as a context for decision-making. Organizational context refers to the organizational situation in which events and occurrences happen. Here VP012 represents his perspective about the differences between two parts of the organization and the influence of those differences on the people-related decisions that occurred inside the TMSC meetings:

> I do think [the two divisions of the business] get represented, and it comes from [each executive's] own world and their own contexts, and there's a bit of a dynamic that I saw in the meetings. . . . What you see is some organizations are more inclined on the reward and recognition front than others may be. Some are more conservative, whereas some are not. That may not be as much of a personal value or perspective, but it sort of is derived from the organization and culture in which they're a part. (personal communication, February 20, 2013)

Participants shared how job roles, complexity, span of control, level of influence, and past experience combined to influence decision-making. These concepts were previously presented in Theme 1, Cluster 3 in the section on participants' perspectives on selection criteria. Selection criteria are also cognitions and represent decision-makers' understandings about level of complexity, span of control, level of influence, and candidate experience, which all come to bear on the promotional decision. In the following statements, both VP012 and VP005 shared how these elements can

impact the choice to promote. The first example also highlights how business needs factor into promotion decision-making, as discussed earlier.

> At these higher-level position[s] for the organization, [the decision is based on] a combination of what the individual brings to the job and to the company, but it's also somewhat organizationally dependent. By that, I mean that the job itself assessed outside of the individual needs to be of a significant scope and span of control to warrant being at a certain grade level. For that reason we sometimes will find that we have individuals who may be ready for more senior roles in the organization, but the organization just doesn't have . . . a role to offer to that individual. (VP012, personal communication, February 20, 2013)

This second example reflects a view about a candidate's experience, and consequent credibility, as essential to success in a leadership role:

> The best leaders in operations are people who have been there, done that. You can't manage from behind the desk if you have absolutely no experience on the shop floor. You can't lead a plant, . . . you'll never be able to lead the employees in the plant without them being able to respect you and the employees that believe in their plants respect the people who understand what they do on a daily basis. (VP005, personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Participants cited business needs and organizational structure as contexts for decision-making. Other key considerations in people-related decisions are the business needs and complexity of the organization, as well as the organization's external environment. Business need as a context for decision-making was presented in Theme 1, Cluster 1 in the section on participants' personal philosophies of decision-making. Participants' perspectives about the contexts surrounding their decisions are cognitions and are therefore also included here.

Participants frequently cited business need, the complexity of the role, and the level of responsibility of the new position as critical factors in determining whether a promotion should be approved. Often, these factors were considered against the

landscape of competitor organizations to determine the relative value of such a role inside the company, as reflected in this personal communication with VP004:

> I think some of it is you're looking at [the promotion decision] externally. In terms of the complexity and the level of responsibility and their leadership ability, what would their role be in another organization, because sometimes you are doing this because you're trying to be proactive about managing someone's expectations [and retaining talent]. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

Additionally, changes in the organizational landscape often alter the content of individuals' roles and responsibilities. These changes are less a function of a conscious change in job responsibilities than an evolution of the role due to factors including organizational restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, changes in departmental staffing levels, and regulatory or environmental shifts. This evolution may result in expanded scope of responsibility, span of control, or complexity of position. As VP004 stated below, these factors require constantly evaluating positions to ensure that they reflect appropriate job grades and compensation levels. Each of these elements needs to be considered when evaluating proposed promotions and changes in job level and compensation:

> A lot of times what happens here, I think, is people's roles, levels don't really change. . . . I shouldn't say their roles, . . . their levels and titles don't change, but their roles tend to never stay the same. Because of our history . . . we tend not to have a mapped-out [career] path, so it is incumbent upon ourselves to recognize when we think someone is kind of stretched to the next level. It's about accomplishments and ability. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

Cluster 11: Types of Selection Criteria

The process of executive selection is considered among the most important decision-making activities of an organization. Selection takes on greater significance and

requires a larger investment of time as individuals rise to the executive team. The criteria used in selection and promotion decisions are informed by a combination of the executives' surface- and deep-level attributes and are presented in this section. The selection criteria represented here fall into three general categories. The first category, personality, represents those elements of individual personality identified by participants through the interview process as being most relevant, perhaps most desirable or most undesirable, in their personal view. Similarly, the second and third categories represent managerial and leadership criteria identified by the participants as being most or least desirable. Three ideas are represented in this cluster:

- Participants shared the personality criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success.
- Participants shared the managerial criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success.
- Participants shared the leadership criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success.

Participants shared the personality criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success. The lack of ego and requirements for adaptability and flexibility were often cited by participants as personality factors most conducive to individual and organizational success. The following statements by the CEO and VP004 discuss the lack of ego as being important:

> [The] best leaders, I think, oftentimes, are self-deprecating. They're not full of themselves. They don't have a huge ego, and that's very difficult to get in a big system with lots of responsibility and large ramifications to their decisions for people not to have big egos. (CEO, personal communication, November 29, 2012)

> I tend to look for people that can work effectively with other people, people that have their own ego in check. (VP004, personal communication, November 29, 2012)

In this statement, and as was discussed in Theme 2, Cluster 5, the CEO shared his perspective about the need for individual adaptability. In this example he described adaptability as a necessary criterion for leadership success in order to compensate for the lack of orderliness in the organization:

> I want somebody who can adapt . . . to a different way of existence. . . . It's very interesting that many people come to our organization from other places within the [industry]. I would say more likely than not, most of them don't make it here, . . . and they don't make it because the world here is not as orderly as the world they came from, and so they have a hard time adapting to it. That causes them to not understand the environment. (personal communication, November 29, 2012)

The CEO's stated preference for candidates who demonstrate adaptability was reflected in the promotion criteria identified by other members of the TMSC as being critical for success in higher-level leadership positions and in the following two statements:

> I have to make sure that [candidates], especially [because] we're talking [about] high-level positions, whomever I promote or hire at higher levels . . . share the same capabilities and skill set [as the department leader] and adaptability, for example. (DIR003, personal communication, February 14, 2013)

> I think, an important element . . . I don't like black-and-white people. I like people that can solve problems and adjust their solutions to whatever the business demands are, because the business demands will change and I want these people to also be here a year from now, 2 years from now. Not someone who's stuck in a certain way of doing things that the business is going to outgrow. (VP007, personal communication, January 23, 2013)

Participants shared the managerial criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success. Managerial criteria include capacities for organizing and staffing, planning and controlling work results, problem-solving, decision-making,

communication, and functional/technical expertise. Participant selection criteria that fell into these categories are included in this section.

The following statements from VP004 and VP006, related to the element of organizing and staffing, represent the importance of people assessment and development as critical leadership capabilities:

> For me, the people stuff is always really important, because as you progress, it's less and less about your own skill set as it is about identifying and developing talent below you. Those are the people that are actually getting things done and driving the organization day to day. If you don't have the ability to spot that talent, develop that talent, and be able to manage your own ego around that, you're not going to be successful, in my view. (VP004, personal communication, November 29, 2012)

> Ability to lead a team, to pull a team together, someone that would be respected, from a more of a technical standpoint—I think those are probably the key things. (VP006, personal communication, November 30, 2012)

The following example from the TMSC meeting reflects the desire for individuals with a demonstrated capacity for planning along with the ability to execute that plan:

> She's been instrumental in the . . . culture roll out from a communication planning standpoint, her creativity, her follow-ups. I think she's a rock star as well. High-quality and high-quantity work is what comes to mind. I am completely confident that if I need something from her that she will come through, even if it's a rush. She does know how to manage a workload and she always comes through with high quality. (VP013, observation, December 18, 2012)

The following candidate, presented by VP007 during the TMSC meeting, demonstrates effective problem-solving:

> He actually identified, he went to the lab, looked at the dissolution band. As he was looking, he found out that one of the pedals was coming down with time and that's what was causing higher agitation and faster results. We were all at a loss thinking that that whole validation batch is destroyed, the one before that one is destroyed. Totally going outside of it, [he has a] very investigative mind. (VP007, observation, December 18, 2012)

VP003 shared his opinion that communication skills, written communication in particular, are important qualifications: "Right now, there's a real premium on communication skills and being able to write a one-page memo that makes sense" (VP003, personal communication, November 28, 2012).

VP010 shared the following example, which illustrates just how important verbal communication skills are and the lengths the organization will go to in an attempt to remediate a highly qualified candidate before deciding upon a promotion:

> Just to give you an example, we're currently talking about two or three individuals. Not only just . . . how well they're doing, but what are the significant deficiencies that they need to overcome. We have a guide for instance, Person D who we brought from Company X, probably one of the best scientists you could find for developing patches and films, but his communication skills are very weak. He's a Chinese fellow, and not only [do] . . . people have difficulty understanding him when he speaks in English, but apparently it turns out in Chinese also. We've talked to Person D for quite some time. How do we [help him to succeed] . . . and if he developed great communication skills, somewhat better leadership style, he could be an enormous asset for the organization. . . . Before he's ready to take on a bigger role, how do we overcome those deficiencies? So we developed a plan, and then we monitor progress. And [at] some point, you know, [after] seeing the individuals for a while, . . . they [are] ready, really ready to . . . get to the next level. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

VP004 suggested that candidates for promotion must possess the ability to be effective decision-makers: "Do they have decision-making capability? That would be one thing, because as you progress in an organization you're put into positions where you need to be able to have that capability" (personal communication, November 29, 2012).

This statement from VP005 speaks to his requirement for technical knowledge and expertise as primary in making his selection decisions:

> I think, of course, it depends very much on the position and exactly what the job function is. In technical roles, it really needs to start with the credentials and with the parts of the educational background and the experience. Those are some very

> key factors. We have to look at two tracks: . . . one about their technical skills and abilities, and then, of course, is their management, organizational and leadership skills. (VP005, personal communication, November 30, 2012)

Participants shared the leadership criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success. Leadership criteria include role modeling and reinforcing the ethics and values of the organization, aligning people and influencing across boundaries, and establishing direction for self and others. Participants' chosen selection criteria that fell into this category are represented in this section.

The following statement, made by VP012, describes his views about leadership candidates' demonstration of integrity and respect as essential criteria for promotion:

> Integrity and respect are very important. . . . Employees that work for them are putting a lot of trust in them too, to lead them effectively. Unless somebody has really solid integrity and solid ethics and the ability . . . despite pressures, despite stressors, . . . to act in a respectful way as they go about their job in the organization, it's not going to be a successful promotion to a role like that. (personal communication, February 20, 2013)

The statements below from both the CEO and VP009 reflect the need for individuals aspiring to a leadership position to be able to influence the organization and its people:

> Can they articulate thoughts? Are they willing to speak and are they willing to maybe openly disagree or push back? Are they willing to share all of their thoughts and ideas with the group? (CEO, personal communication, November 29, 2012)

> It's not just about doing your job well. It's about the influence and driving change throughout the organization. I look at their ability to change behavior, drive change, and be able to impact the business. (VP009, personal communication, January 24, 2013)

VP010 discussed the need for leaders to facilitate their employees' performance:

> Beyond that first supervisory level, further promotions are really based on how well do you drive performance, how well do you enable people to perform, how creative you are, not only just the science aspect of this, but in terms of how well you think of . . . how to get the best out of the team that you have. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

VP008 shared one of her most important leadership selection criteria—the ability to work autonomously: "I look for people who can be self-directed. What I'm looking for, specifically, in the people that work for me is the ability to lead their department with little guidance from me" (personal communication, January 24, 2013).

Theme 4: Participants' Surface- and Deep-Level Attributes Shape Decision-Making Interactions

This theme provides evidence that participants' surface- and deep-level attributes shape decision-making interactions. Participants' attributes combine in various ways to impact the decision-making process and the selection criteria, and in this section, Cluster 12 focuses on exchanges and discussions that provide evidence of the interplay of these attributes.

Cluster 12: Evidence of Interplay in Participants' Exchanges and Discussions

This cluster provides examples of information exchanges, statements, and participants' observations demonstrating the interplay of executives' attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making. Four ideas are represented in this cluster:

- A participant gave an example of differentiating talent and rewarding solid performance.
- A participant described a business process as an example of fairness and equity during the TMSC meeting to facilitate group decision-making.

- During the TMSC meeting and subsequent conversations, a discussion of "doing the right thing" demonstrated interplay at the group and individual levels.
- During the TMSC meeting, participants discussed the value of developing talent.

A participant gave an example of differentiating talent and rewarding solid performance. Previously the CEO shared his perspectives about the requirement to differentiate talent and to populate the organization with A, B, and C players. A combination of the CEO's beliefs, the executive team members' beliefs, and the organization's values carried through to promotional decision-making in the organization. The following exchange during the TMSC meeting related to a proposed promotion reflects a shared alignment regarding the differentiation of talent and the criteria for promotion.

In this example, the business unit presenting the candidate used a talent and succession management process that rates employees on the dimensions of potential and performance, placing each evaluated employee in one of nine blocks on a 3 × 3 matrix. The upper-right-hand quadrant of this matrix is where the highest-performing, highest-potential employees are placed. Often, when assessing candidates for promotion, the placement of an individual in this matrix is considered, as referenced in this discussion.

> **VP004:** Person W has been here a long time, done a myriad of different roles; she's kind of a solid performer. I would not say, I put her, kind of the same [high-potential] box as the [candidate we were just discussing] from a talent perspective. To give some perspective, we put her into this role 2 years ago in revenue. She didn't know the area, so she learned it from top to bottom and then, on top of it, she's targeted into the brand areas. It expanded quite a bit with the acquisition of Company C. She [managed] all the integration. [Her supervisor's] comfortable now to kind of let her lead the way. She really did step up in the role.
>
> Also, the other dynamic is, she works a lot with the brand teams. All of her peers that she's interfacing with, her directors, her associate directors, and I think she's been kind of cognizant that like, she's, "I know not just as much as you guys, I've

> got more!" Different roles, but there is a comparative factor there, and I wouldn't do it just for that, but I do think she has developed her expertise. Person W's not someone that I'd say, "In 2 years, I'm going to be back with a director role," where I do think that's possible with [the previous candidate] or somebody else.
>
> **DIR003:** It's similar, like the story with [legal department candidate we reviewed earlier], the job has continued to evolve even though it might be the same, but it is different. [She] is definitely dependable.
>
> **VP004:** Yeah, I mean Person W's most direct peer in that smaller group would be Person K, [who] will outpace Person W in the long term, but Person K is much less experienced and mature and needs to evolve, but at some point, Person K will be a director probably before Person W.
>
> **VP006:** I have always been very happy with Person W and I worked with her more specifically when she was doing [a] lot for the company in Denmark. One of the things that I always liked about her was the sense that, she was just, she was tried and true, you could always count on her to get things done no matter what the circumstance was, absolutely. When we look at differentiating talent, the A, B and C players, I think she's absolutely a B player and she needs to be recognized for that contribution.

A participant described a business process as an example of fairness and equity during the TMSC meeting to facilitate group decision-making. The value of fairness and equity has previously been described as being of particular concern to the members of the TMSC. Additionally, many of the research participants spoke of the value of using a diverse group of decision-makers to benefit people-related decision-making. The following example demonstrates the value of fairness and group decision-making in action. Here, VP012 shared the data gathering and decision-making process used in evaluating brand-marketing roles in the organization. This process was employed to ensure competitiveness, fairness, and parity and was described to the executive team during the TMSC meeting. This discussion laid the framework for the promotion of four individuals who were eventually identified as having been inaccurately graded, titled, and compensated according to the new job evaluation criteria.

> The approach we decided to take was . . . to bring together the right stakeholders in each of these processes. We need them to work together to truly define what is a senior director in brand marketing. What is a director? Can we benchmark that against industry and also look internally within your organization at other jobs? We had a committee that was formed. It included members of what we call the marketing council. These are representatives from the different brand units. It also included members from Human Resources. The ladder and the competencies were built by this subteam, and then they were reviewed by the full marketing council, and then reviewed by VP006's whole U.S. Brands leadership team. Moving to the next slide, it's now a tool for us to clearly and consistently utilize in recruitment, retention, career development. It also serves as pretty much a core job description for each level within marketing. It drives some of that consistency that we're looking for. We also now have common titles that we'll share across the brand units. It's aligned with external benchmarks. It's also aligned with the competencies that we have in [the talent management database], and I'll show you that in a minute. It's a really . . . clear framework for career development for incumbents in this position. (observation, December 18, 2012)

During the TMSC meeting and subsequent conversations, a discussion of "doing the right thing" demonstrated interplay at the group and individual levels.

The following exchange during the TMSC meeting and the observations of various meeting participants after the TMSC meeting raised questions about whether the TMSC was actually doing the right thing. The exchange and subsequent decision reflected here left some of the committee members feeling as though there should have been additional push back, that in fact the organization and some of the committee members may have compromised their principles in allowing this proposed promotion to go through. Initially, VP003 presented a candidate for promotion:

> **VP003:** I think everybody knows Person B real well. . . . Person B, I think, is a little different [than my previous candidate] just because he's mostly doing the same things that he's do[ne] before. . . . I don't even know that I can say he's doing more of it. Person B reports to [one of my vice presidents]. We spent a fair amount of time talking about it. The one thing that we came up with that's qualitatively different is both in the antitrust area with the patent elements and the product liability, which are the two main areas that he operates in. He's been expanding what he does to bring in third parties, so there's a lot of work that is done on those areas with getting third parties to weigh in, like he's got the contacts with the Chamber of Commerce . . . and the Department of Justice and

know that he's the person that's dealing with [federal agencies] on that stuff and he's also very involved, which is also new on the global approach. They're trying to reshape how they're doing [task] and labeling and he's the connection. To that, I think DIR003 was alluding to earlier that there's a difference in the titles because [my previous candidate] has a big room [for growth] but Person B doesn't. Thus, I don't think really an important issue for the committee. I'm happy to answer questions about it, but I think the main issue is just the change in the grade which has a financial impact. So, you want to add something? You deal with those guys all the time.

VP003: Listen, what can I say? This is a small group so I can be candid. . . . In fact, Person B has some issues. But he's got some really good qualities. He works hard and the truth is [one of my VPs] thinks that if [the previous candidate] gets promoted and Person B doesn't, it's going to be a real problem and I think it's borderline but in the end I decided to support it. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here and I'm just being very candid about that aspect of it, as I like to be candid on these things. DIR003, I don't know if [you] want to add anything else to that conclusion.

DIR003: No.

VP003: Do you agree with what I'm saying?

DIR003: I absolutely agree.

VP003: Okay, and you spoke with [general counsel] about this too, I assume, and he supports it. So, there is that for whatever that's worth.

DIR003: Yeah, I think they're great for whatever that's worth.

VP003: They are great. I mean they are great guys. . . . Tremendous, yeah, tremendous. You know, Person B's trying. Person B is still a project. We are working with him. We're trying to give him some development. He's got some really good qualities but he's got a couple of obstacles. I don't know that's a reason not to promote him because we want to develop him a little bit. It's a little harder. Just because he doesn't have this big room, he's got a little bit of . . . he's getting a little global from this whole global perspective on product liability but the truth is that's somewhat limited. Although we, as me and [the general counsel] bounce back and forth on that, we just don't have [this capability] in Europe, for example. Anyway, I'm protesting too much. I would like to go ahead and do it. These are good guys and this is the right thing to do.

VP004: I support.

VP008: I'm fine with it.

VP006: No problem.

VP009: Okay.

About this particular interchange, DIR003 made the following observation, "I saw a lot of lack of managerial courage. I saw promotions that I'd know, for sure, the leaders didn't support outside of the meeting and then nobody said no in the meeting" (personal communication, February 14, 2013).

VP007, who attended the TMSC meeting to present a proposed promotion candidate in his own organization but was not a member of the TMSC core team, shared this observation about this same exchange:

> There was one situation with VP003, and I don't know the candidate's name. VP003, in my opinion, was almost begging for someone to say no. The way he presented it was, "Well, you know I don't know about this one for sure." I can't remember the exact verbiage. It was almost saying, "Someone, challenge me. Come on. Talk me out of this." No one even did. That one really bothered me up to the point I almost said to my staff, I said afterwards, "Why didn't I say something? If nothing else, [VP003], you don't seem too convinced about this. Why are you proceeding?" Maybe it's my being the freshman, maybe didn't feel prepared to do so. (personal communication, January 23, 2013)

VP008 made this observation about the exchange above, which represented her perspective about VP003's presentation of Person B for promotion. Here, she suggested that the situation was a reflection of VP003's character, rather than a judgment about the TMSC members' compromise of values and principles:

> I had the opportunity to sit through [VP003's] presentation. One of the things that he had mentioned that rung out my mind was this idea that one of the people may not have been exactly ready for the promotion, but they felt like he couldn't promote the one person without the other and risk losing a person who was a really great employee, a valuable employee. By saying that, I might not be ready for this person to move. The funny thing, though, is that when he said that, part of me wondered (because I know Person B), is the person actually not ready for the promotion, or is [VP003] just thinking, "I don't want to promote too many people. I don't want too many people high up in the organization," because he's got a little bit of a complex, I think, about having too many people at a high level. He needs to be at the top. How [is] it all perceived [by the other executives].

> It was interesting because up until that moment I didn't see that behavior from [VP003], but that's definitely his behavior. When he said it, I chuckled to myself and thought "That's so [VP003]," and the fact that he had to say it in the room almost like a disclaimer like, "Hey, by the way, if this guy doesn't work out in this role, I want to be at least on record as having said that I wasn't quite positive he was ready for it." It's just interesting. Yes, it was sort of a disclaimer in there. I thought it was interesting. I think that the person who's [being] presented everybody knew was ready for that role, otherwise people would have been like: "No, I don't agree with you, and we don't care if we lose him." They all agreed: hard-working employee, very valuable asset to the company, etc., etc. They were probably more supportive of the promotion than [VP003] may have represented himself to be. (VP008, personal communication, January 24, 2013)

During the TMSC meeting, participants discussed the value of developing talent. The following exchange during the TMSC meeting demonstrates the executives' stated values around the development and success of individuals in the organization:

> **VP012:** I have one more thing. Something you said, VP006, reminded me. What's sort of an opportunity for some high-potentials to get broader exposure in the business, get broader involvement in other activities with the idea that it would be a great development opportunity that would give them a platform into bigger roles? I think what we're seeing now is that, with all the change in the business, some of those people that were considered high potential don't have a place to go yet somewhere else in the business. We need to be conscious on what are we doing for them in the continuous improvement function itself to encourage retention and career development, etc.
>
> **VP006:** We haven't identified [the career opportunities yet]. It depends, quite frankly, on the number of people we end up in the group that help determine that goal. . . . This is a way, this methodology and philosophy is something I want to get across the entire organization. I still look at it as being in its infancy rather than peaked and past its prime. I think, again, depending on the organization, [where] it's been, [we] may be doing different things and going in different directions.

Theme 5: The Formal Process Reinforces Values and Beliefs

This section provides various participant views and observations about the TMSC process. These observations are both complimentary and critical. Many of these perspectives reinforce the alignment of the TMSC process with the individual, group, and

organizational values and beliefs shared in earlier sections. Some of the statements suggest different perspectives based upon whether the participant was a core TMSC member or a peripheral member and provided observations about the fate of this decision-making activity in light of the organization's recent change in leadership and structure. Three clusters represent this data: values and beliefs reflected in the TMSC process; values and beliefs reflected in TMSC member characteristics; and the influence of the TMSC process on executive decision-making.

Cluster 13: Values and Beliefs Reflected in the TMSC Process

Participants shared various observations about the value of the TMSC process, both positive and negative. The members' observations reflect their individual values and beliefs, as well as those of the organization. Two ideas are represented in this section:

- Participants shared their thoughts and observations about the value of the TMSC process.
- Participants expressed a variety of observations about the TMSC process, both complimentary and critical.

Participants shared their thoughts and observations about the value of the TMSC process. The following statement reinforces an earlier sentiment about the need for a rigorous high-stakes decision-making process. VP002, a core member of the TMSC, shared his perspective about the value of the TMSC process:

> I think knowing that there's this body with my peers who are faced with these same decisions, it adds a layer of rigor and really makes sure that I have questioned my team and my staff or myself with regard to these promotions because I know it's going to have other people's eyes on it. It helps me build the case for myself first to justify it and to rationalize it, because ideally I'm coming to that body and I need to be prepared. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

Additionally, VP007 shared his belief that the rigor of the TMSC process reinforced the alignment of people-related high-stakes decisions with the immediate and longer-term strategies of the organization and promoted fairness through the requirement for business justification:

> Knowing that there's going to be [a] thorough and diligent process that my recommendations and requests are going to have to go through is going to require me to think this through and not just test the waters and put things through willy-nilly. Recognizing that I'm going to have to back up what I do, I'm justifying what I see, and that I'm going to have to answer for my decisions to the highest level of management. It also suggests to me that whatever I'm recommending is going to have to fit strategically into the direction of the organization because this is all going to be reviewed against a strategy and fit with the rest of the organization and whether or not I'm looking for a leader, a technical person, a strategist. Two years from now, is this person going to still be successful because the company's going in this direction? Knowing those things are going to be looked at, as well as other people are going to be challenging it, says that you're also going to get that 360 view, you're not just going to be able to promote your friend. (VP007, personal communication, January 23, 2013)

Participants expressed a variety of observations about the TMSC process, both complimentary and critical. Some of the general observations about the TMSC process were very complimentary and supportive, as with the sentiments shared by DIR001, a core member of the TMSC:

> I think the committee actually functions really well . . . within its purpose. The [meetings are] well attended, they're interactive. It's not just a rubber stamp. There are often lengthy conversations about candidates and their trajectory, if you will, which suggests to me that it's a thoughtful process that is ultimately beneficial to the company and to the stockholders. There's definitely thought going into where their organization is heading with its people. (personal communication, February 7, 2013)

VP002 shared a similar sentiment, discussing the alignment of decision-making with the values of the organization through the interactions occurring during the TMSC meetings:

> Even though I had disparate businesses, I think the values, the organization, the views to how you match organizational need to individual need was common. The dialogues around the VP [level positions], which were the big promotions, the dialogues [around] inline director promotions from director to senior [director]—the discussion around those two vectors of organizational need and individual need, I think, were informed by the values that [our company] has espoused and how other cross-functional leadership . . . I think they had a pretty common view on that. We all wrestled with it. It wasn't an easy answer, particularly the director inline promotions. I think there was pretty consistent consideration, I'll say, of the cross-functional leadership on how to look at those twin vectors as it relates to these promotions. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

Others shared that their perspectives about the committee have changed as a result of their own personal involvement in promotions and presentations to the TMSC. DIR002 commented:

> In the beginning, I think I saw it as, "Okay, the circle of God is going to sit around and judge someone they don't even know." I think that people perceived that, and I don't think now, having sat in that room, that that's at all what happens. (personal communication, January 22, 2013)

DIR002 related the following example about one individual she has worked to develop and eventually promote:

> It's interesting because my feelings have actually changed over time. I was a proponent of the first time she [was presented to the TMSC], which was a year ago that she actually be given the role at that time. I supported that. She wasn't [promoted that time]. The decision was made that she needed a little more time. Retrospectively, I also agree with that, so I think that the committee serves an important role of making sure there's some balance. There's some wisdom, I think, in not being so close to people and some wisdom in looking across the whole organization and trying to make sure that there's a calibration that make[s] sense. (personal communication, January 22, 2013)

However, others still maintained the opinion that the TMSC "was a little bit of a rubber stamping, which over time could cause the process to lose some of its credibility" (VP007, personal communication, January 23, 2013). In addition, some participants

questioned the ability of the group to maintain its robustness in the face of the changing organization and the retirement of the CEO. DIR003 shared her concerns:

> [In the most recent meeting] I saw a lot of lack of managerial courage. I saw promotions that I'd know, for sure, the leaders didn't support outside of the meeting and then nobody said no in the meeting. . . . Early on, I did see a more robust office, which was extremely motivating. I think it died down as we continued and what it seems in the large [meeting], gradually the managerial support that was there physically was not there anymore. And it felt . . . fake. (personal communication, February 14, 2013)

Cluster 14: Values and Beliefs Reflected in TMSC Member Characteristics

Participants shared their views and perspectives about the ideal and actual characteristics they value in members of the TMSC. These member characteristics reflect the values and beliefs of the other TMSC members and the organization. One idea is represented in this section:

- Participants shared their thoughts about the ideal TMSC member characteristics.

Participants shared their thoughts about the ideal TMSC member characteristics. Some of the participants shared their views about the committee members themselves, describing both the ideal and the actual characteristics of the TMSC members as representing and reinforcing the values and beliefs of the organization. VP006 described what he believed to be an ideal TMSC member:

> I'll describe what I think that person is. I think that person, they don't have an agenda. They are really looking out for the best interest of the whole. They truly do ask questions to understand. They ask for comparisons across the organization. They come prepared to the meeting. They look through the list. If they had known anybody in the organization it might have some input that would help them in their comments and review at the meeting. I think, again, kind of back to preparedness. (personal communication, February 1, 2013)

DIR001 shared his observations about the characteristics of the actual TMSC members, from his perspective as a core TMSC member:

> The folks on the committee, in my experience, are open minded. I think it's widely understood that if we have to do something that [is] either legally required or the right thing to do from a corporate responsibility perspective or something else, they'll do it. I think it's not so hard to have those folks consider the issues and consider them thoughtfully. (personal communication, February 7, 2013)

VP008 shared her observations, as a peripheral TMSC member, about the individuals participating in the TMSC process:

> I think that from the perspective of respecting people, I think that everybody was treated with respect, whether it was their personal statements about people or whether they were presenting. There was no dismissiveness that happened in the room. I think people were respectful of what everybody had to say. They were respectful of the time and process. I think that shows a lot about who we are as an organization, that that's how, I think, how the organization works. In the same way as it did in that room, which is just that, I'm going to give you the respect to sit here and listen. I'm not going to sit on my Blackberry and type; I'm not going to not pay attention, or half listen, or walk out of the room. Everybody was very engaged in the process. I keep using the word, but respectful of what was happening in that room. I thought it was really a neat thing to see. (personal communication, January 24, 2013)

In this statement, VP007 also offered a bit of praise and a word of caution about the decision-makers involved in the TMSC process, both in this organization and in general:

> The only other thing I would add—and, boy, this is, I don't know if I should put words on this. A lot of it goes down to the organizational maturity thing. You really do need good professional people in the process. Just as it can be destroyed by an organization that is not mature and ready to do it, it can also be destroyed by people's ulterior motives. I think with big organizations, [we've] done a good job of getting rid of some of those folks recently. Let's just make sure we have our eyes open. If nothing else, you just don't bring . . . people into the process [just because] they're here. They can really ruin. . . . You can imagine how much people could shut up. You shut up five people in a room with one bad egg in there who's got secret plans or is trying to manipulate the process. (personal communication, January 23, 2013)

Cluster 15: The Influence of the TMSC Process on Executive Decision-Making

In this section, participants shared examples of the value of the interactions occurring in the TMSC meetings. One idea is represented in this section:

- Participants shared examples of the influence of the TMSC meetings on executive decision-making.

Participants shared examples of the influence of the TMSC meetings on executive decision-making. A number of the participants shared examples of the ways in which the TMSC meetings influenced this organization's people-related decision-making. A specific example of the value of the interaction within the TMSC meetings, especially with respect to sharing information across parts of the organization, can be seen in the following situation, shared by DIR003. In this situation, she was asked to co-present the promotion of a research and development candidate with VP010. She indicated her confidence about the individual and the supporting information: "The promotion was presented; it sounded good. I was representing it." The presentation was then interrupted by another TMSC member, who shared that there had been a strategic shift in the business and the unit headed by this promotion candidate was likely to be scheduled for closure:

> The point that [VP010] was making was quickly followed by [VP002] and we ended up in a different decision. . . . [VP002 said] but wait, we know X, Y, and Z is going to change; we've been fooling ourselves if we create this delusion right, of what we're trying to create. Basically [in an instant] the whole situation . . . right then and there. . . . Not necessarily that the promotion didn't have its merits, but what started as a . . . promotion . . . [ended in a discussion about closing the facility]. Things are going to change, so I saw a lot of value [in the process]. I said: Oh my god, if we are not doing this meeting, this wouldn't have happened. (personal communication, February 14, 2013)

DIR003 said that had this discussion during the TMSC meeting not taken place, the candidate would have been promoted, followed immediately by a closure of his facility and his separation from the company.

This second example reflects a change in DIR002's perspective about, and behavior regarding, promotion candidates, resulting from her experience with the TMSC:

> I think the first key point is [the TMSC process] challenged me so I was willing to maybe sacrifice a little bit on the candidate's skill set in the beginning, thinking I could develop it on the fly. It might be easier for me, or maybe better; at least there's something in the box. The committee served its role by saying, "We don't believe, not yet. It's not quite right." That's a check on me and that forces me to challenge my own beliefs, because any time you get told "No," you don't feel good about it. It's not a good thing.
>
> I had to really think about, "Okay, why isn't [my candidate] ready and what are they seeing?" That forced me to really put down on paper in a different way than I had: What do I believe this position needs to be able to do and where do I believe that she hasn't necessarily, not she isn't efficient but that she hasn't been able to prove herself? How can I help develop those opportunities for her? This is not something that I [previously] spent a long time doing. Just being honest, it's not. I think that's where the committee does a good job of saying, "You, as manager, have the responsibility to prove it to us. You need to give her a window to show it." We don't always do that. (personal communication, January 22, 2013)

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the research study on the impact of executive group members' deep-level attributes on high-stakes decision-making. Executive group members are those individuals at the top of an organization who may have a reporting relationship to the CEO, and in this case also participated as members of a decision-making body tasked with making high-stakes decisions about the promotion of individuals to higher levels of leadership in one organization. The themes, clusters, and ideas described in this chapter are summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1
Themes, Data Clusters, and Ideas Resulting from the Data Analysis

Themes	Clusters	Ideas Represented in the Cluster	Codes
1. Group members bring strong personal orientations about the high-stakes decision-making process.	1. Participants' personal philosophies of decision-making	• Participants expressed the need for a clear understanding of business strategy and requirements in high-stakes decision-making. • Participants described their personal high-stakes decision-making processes. • A participant refined her approach to improving the decision-making outcomes for her promotion candidates. • Participants suggested that diversity is necessary in a group decision-making process. • Participants suggested that discipline in decision-making processes ensures alignment with values. • Participants shared how *fit* with organizational values came to be an important consideration in leadership selection. • Participants expressed the need to ensure fit with organizational values in the selection process. • Participants shared the need to align their personal decision-making with organizational values.	• High-stakes decision-making • Group decision-making • Discipline • Diversity • Fit –With organizational values –As a selection criterion
	2. Participants' perspectives about both non–people- and people-related decision-making	• Participants expressed the need for people- and non–people related decision-making to reduce risk and limit liability. • Participants defined people-related decisions as high-stakes decisions. • Participants described people-related decisions as having significant impact in the organization. • The CEO discussed the influence of politics on people-related decision-making. • Participants shared the perceived value of and their intrinsic satisfaction from people-related decisions.	• Importance of people • Non–people-related decision-making • People-related decision-making • Politics
	3. Participants' perspectives on selection criteria	• Participants shared their thoughts about leadership selection criteria and how they came to be important to them.	• General selection criteria • Reflection • Selection criteria

Themes	Clusters	Ideas Represented in the Cluster	Codes
	4. The role of instinct in decision-making	• Participants elaborated on the role of instinct and intuition in decision-making.	• Gut (instinct or intuition)
2. The CEO's deep-level attributes set the tone for the decision-making process.	5. The CEO as a guidepost for group members' orientation to people-related decision-making	• The CEO shared his philosophy about employees being one of an organization's most valuable assets. • The CEO shared his framework for thinking about the implications of an organization's size. • The CEO discussed his orientation toward the differentiation of talent. • The CEO shared an example of personality criteria viewed as critical for leadership success.	• Influence of the CEO
	6. The CEO as being present, even when he's absent	• Participants identified the CEO as a driver and model of organizational people-related values. • Participants shared their perceptions of the CEO's influence on the TMSC meetings.	
3. Participants' surface-level and deep-level attributes combine to shape decision-making criteria.	7. The role of values	• Participants shared that "how" is as important as "what." • One participant shared his view of the leadership team's values. • Participants expressed the value of people as contributors to the organization. • Participants discussed fairness and equity as important values.	• Values –In the process –Of the leadership team –Of people • Fairness (also parity and equity)
	8. The role of surface-level attributes	• Participants' past experiences are surface-level attributes. • Participants' views about length of service influence decision-making. • Participants' educational background is a surface-level attribute. • Participants' roles and responsibilities are surface-level attributes.	• Surface-level attributes • Educational background • Experience • Role responsibilities • Years with company • Years of experience
	9. The role of beliefs	• Participants shared how beliefs act as catalysts for decision-making. • Participants' stated beliefs reflect generalizations about candidates' skills and abilities.	• Beliefs
	10. The role of cognitions	• Participants evaluated the level of risk in their decision-making. • One participant compared internal business units as a context for decision-making.	• Cognitions • Organizational context • Risk

Themes	Clusters	Ideas Represented in the Cluster	Codes
		• Participants shared how job roles, complexity, span of control, level of influence, and past experience combined to influence decision-making. • Participants cited business needs and organizational structure as contexts for decision-making.	
	11. Types of selection criteria	• Participants shared the personality criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success. • Participants shared the managerial criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success. • Participants shared the leadership criteria they identified as being most closely associated with success.	• Personality criteria • Managerial criteria • Leadership criteria
4. Participants' surface- and deep-level attributes shape decision-making interactions.	12. Evidence of interplay in participants' exchanges and discussions	• A participant gave an example of differentiating talent and rewarding solid performance. • A participant described a business process as an example of fairness and equity during the TMSC meeting to facilitate group decision-making. • During the TMSC meeting and subsequent conversations, a discussion of "doing the right thing" demonstrated interplay at the group and individual levels. • During the TMSC meeting, participants discussed the value of developing talent.	• Interplay
5. The formal process reinforces values and beliefs.	13. Values and beliefs reflected in the TMSC process	• Participants shared their thoughts and observations about the value of the TMSC process. • Participants expressed a variety of observations about the TMSC process, both complimentary and critical.	• TMSC meeting
	14. Values and beliefs reflected in TMSC member characteristics	• Participants shared their thoughts about the ideal TMSC member characteristics.	
	15. The influence of the TMSC process on executive decision-making	• Participants shared examples of the influence of TMSC meetings on executive decision-making.	

The findings suggested that each of the participants came to this decision-making activity with a pre-existing set of personal philosophies about decision-making, including the need for alignment with business strategy, personal decision-making processes, the value of diverse individuals and points of view in the decision-making process, and the importance of aligning promotion/selection decisions with group and organizational values.

In addition to sharing their philosophies about decision-making, the participants also described the criteria they used for determining candidates' qualifications for promotion and how these selection criteria came to be important for them, as well as the role instinct or intuition had in their decision-making process.

Many of the participants highlighted the influence of the CEO on organizational values and decision-making processes. The data demonstrated that the CEO's values and beliefs contributed to the importance other participants placed on the treatment of people in the organization. In addition, the CEO's presence during the TMSC meetings was considered to be impactful, and a number of participants remarked about the changes that might occur as a result of his absence at these meetings.

Alignment with the CEO's and the organization's values was evident as the participants shared their individual sets of values. These values then combined with participants' surface-level attributes, such as educational background, roles and responsibilities, personal and professional experiences, and length of service, to create the beliefs and cognitions the participants used in their decision-making activities. The participants' surface- and deep-level attributes ultimately combined to create the specific criteria used to evaluate candidates for promotion.

Four types of selection criteria emerged from the data. The first, alignment with group and organizational values, is referred to as *fit*. The remaining three categories of selection criteria were personality, managerial, and leadership. Each category of selection criteria was composed of specific traits, skills, and/or behaviors deemed to be desirable in candidates for leadership positions within this organization.

This study focused on the interplay of group members' deep-level attributes in the process of decision-making. Interplay of both surface- and deep-level attributes was evident in the participants' exchanges during the TMSC meeting and through the interviews. Interplay was also evident in the creation of selection criteria. Participants' surface- and deep-level attributes combined in various ways, both individually and during their interactions as members of a group, to inform the evaluation of candidates for promotion.

Finally, participants shared their perspectives about the TMSC process. Participants provided both compliments and criticisms of the organization's talent management and selection process; however, there was majority agreement that the TMSC process reinforced both the participants' and the organization's values and beliefs and that the process influenced executive decision-making. These views were clear in the discussions about the participants' meeting preparations, the meetings themselves, and the TMSC member characteristics identified as most conducive to a properly functioning talent management decision-making body.

The final chapter addresses these findings, providing associated conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5:

INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this study was to further the understanding of the influence of executive group members' deep-level attributes on high-stakes decision-making. This study focused on the process of decision-making as suggested by Lawrence (1997) and Yukl (2010), in an effort to begin unpacking the "black box of organizational demography" (Lawrence, 1997). This chapter presents the interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations based upon the findings of the research related to the primary research question: What is the interplay of executive group members' deep-level attributes in the process of high-stakes decision-making in one global organization?

Interpretations

This section describes the understanding of deep-level attributes conveyed by the findings of this study and forming the basis of the conclusions detailed in the next section. The literature used in this study differentiates deep from surface-level attributes. The definition of deep-level attributes used in this study was underlying attributes representing differences among individuals, including values, beliefs, and cognitions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al., 1999). The definition of surface-level attributes used in this study was readily detectable differences among individuals, including demographic attributes, education level, organizational tenure, and so forth (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Priem et al., 1999). Rather than confirming the definition of deep-level attributes, the data

point to a more complex relationship between surface- and deep-level attributes and suggest that a deeper exploration of attributes may be necessary.

Specifically, the data suggest that instinct or intuition may be a deep-level attribute, missing from the original definition. It appears from the results that surface-level attributes and values (defined in the literature and confirmed in this study as deep-level attributes) combine to generate beliefs. Consequently, beliefs (defined in the literature as a deep-level attribute) are not attributes, in and of themselves. Further, beliefs combine with the decision-making context to form cognitions. Therefore, cognitions are not deep-level attributes either but rather are a result of the interplay of surface- and deep-level attributes, beliefs, and the decision-making context. Each of these relationships is detailed in the conclusion section that follows.

In addition, defining attributes as either surface- or deep-level appears to be too simplistic. The findings suggest a nuanced relationship between attributes that are readily detectable and those that are less observable. Consequently, it is unlikely that surface-level attributes could be used to proxy deep-level attributes, particularly using previous definitions.

This study adopted the perspective that heterogeneity of group members would benefit the decision-making process through incorporating group members' varied backgrounds, areas of skills and expertise, education, thinking styles, and perspectives into the decision-making process. The results confirmed that this level and type of heterogeneity was positive, valued, and specifically sought by members of the executive group. Additionally, homogeneity of values, aligned with the organization, the CEO, and other executive group members, appeared to be highly influential in the decision-making

process. Proposed promotion candidates were evaluated for alignment with these values, such that those candidates viewed to have greater alignment with the organization's, CEO's, and group's values were viewed more positively. It appears that aspects of heterogeneity and homogeneity, existing concurrently in such decision-making groups, positively influence group function.

Alignment with organizational and group members' values, as described above, was considered important for group function and candidate promotion decisions. The CEO's values and perspectives were also particularly influential in the decision-making process. The CEO was seen as setting the tone for the organization. He was considered to have provided guidance and direction related to "doing the right things" for the organization and its people, and his presence and views were considered influential in the activity of decision-making, even if he was physically absent during decision-making meetings. This has tremendous implications for selection and promotion of executives, and CEOs in particular, as their impact on the organization establishes the culture and sets the parameters for executive decision-making.

Conclusions

This section discusses the seven conclusions drawn from this research study.

Conclusion 1

The definition of deep-level attributes requires revision.

The data from this study suggest that deep-level attributes, at a minimum, are composed of values and intuition and that beliefs and cognitions are not deep-level attributes in and of themselves.

This study defined deep-level attributes as underlying attributes representing differences among individuals, including values, beliefs, and cognitions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Priem et al., 1999). The findings confirmed that values are an essential element of individuals' deep-level attributes and the organizational environment in which decision-making takes place. Values are defined as a view of life and judgments about what is desirable (Andrews, 1987). The influence of values in the decision-making process reflected that how an outcome was achieved, in this organization, was as or more important than the outcome itself. These organizational values included "do the right thing," the CEO's orientation toward the value of people, the leadership team's interest in treating people with dignity and respect, and the individual participants' stated principles about ethics and integrity.

Intuition/instinct may be an additional attribute. For the purpose of this research, intuition/instinct was defined as a judgment of truth based on feelings an individual was born with, not acquired through learning or experience (Hornby, 1995) and, therefore, may be considered an attribute. Without respect to whether the decision-making was people- or non–people-related, most of the core Talent Management Steering Committee (TMSC) members discussed the impact and importance of intuition in their decision-making processes. While this concept was called different things by different participants—gut, instinct, or intuition—it was defined similarly by everyone. The executives regularly relied on their "gut or instinct" to make decisions. Instinct was deemed difficult to justify and articulate, but a necessary element of their high-stakes decision-making process. The original definition of deep-level attributes did not account for instinct or intuition, which appears to be an individual attribute and has a significant

influence on the decision-making process. One participant referred to it as the "art" in what we do.

Conclusion 2

Beliefs are not deep-level attributes but result from the interplay between surface-level attributes and values.

Beliefs represent an understanding about the relationships between objects, properties, and ideas (Chattopadhyay et al., 1999). The data suggest that beliefs are composed of executives' values and surface-level attributes, such as experiences, education, and functional expertise. This relationship is depicted in Figure 5.1.

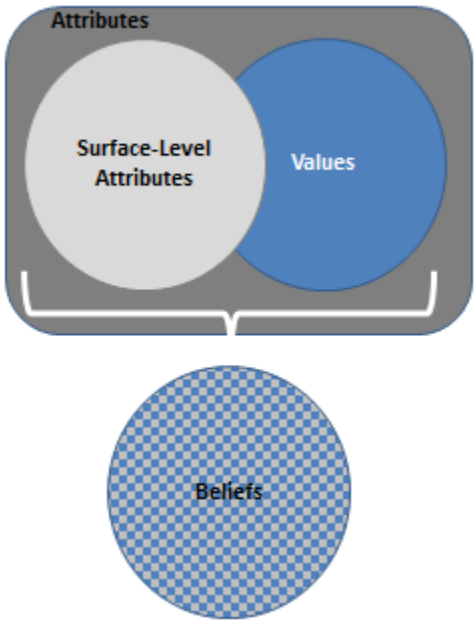


Figure 5.1. Surface-level attributes combine with values to form beliefs.

Participants' beliefs were strongly influenced by their values. The data showed that the organization, the CEO, and the leadership team possessed a strong set of values

around the importance of people and their development. This belief was directly aligned with the organization's values and was influential in the decision to promote individuals into higher levels of leadership.

For example, this study suggested that one leader's beliefs about the potential for attrition of employees was a function of his personal values about employees and their importance to the organization and partly a function of his own experiences with retention and loss of qualified team members. This belief compelled the leader and his team to focus much of their attention on the identification of highly talented individuals and the creation of development plans as an offensive mechanism to retaining this talent.

The participants came to the decision-making activities with an accumulation of past professional and personal experiences, academic achievements, and professional roles, which are considered surface-level attributes. For the purposes of this study, surface-level attributes were defined as readily detectable differences among individuals, including demographic attributes, education level, organizational tenure, and so forth (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Priem et al., 1999). The findings of this study support this definition.

Surface-level attributes strongly influence participants' beliefs, which in some cases resulted in generalizations about candidates' skills and abilities. These generalizations may be positive or negative, and in either case influence selection and promotion decisions. For example, one participant suggested that scientists have difficulty with communication, influencing his decision to assess his promotional candidates for their communication skills and employing communication-focused development activities to ensure their future success. Another participant expressed a

view that a "good marketer can market any product," suggesting that in promotional decisions, he might have a positive bias for good marketing skills, despite the fact that a candidate may not possess a significant amount of product knowledge.

Surface-level attributes, including experience or organizational tenure (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harrison et al., 1998; Priem et al., 1999), could be seen to influence beliefs and selection criteria as participants described their roles and relationship to the organization with statements regarding the overall length of their career and typically their length of service with the organization. Those leaders whose functional responsibilities were highly technical, such as chemistry, research and development, or quality, and who possessed highly technical educations themselves, cited technical education as a very important aspect of an individual's qualifications. As such, these surface-level attributes were connected directly to the participants' beliefs about a candidate's ability to perform and succeed in a role.

Dearborn and Simon (1958) argued that an individual's functional background would influence their decision-making activities by informing what they attended to and why. Many of the participants in this study suggested that their decision-making lens was strongly impacted by their functional role. There was also an explicit expectation from others, as in the case of the chief financial officer, that a group member's specific functional knowledge and expertise would be used to benefit the decision-making process. VP005 shared that his personal belief that success in a leadership role is directly related to an individual's past experience, educational background, and technical skills—a view taken directly from his own career path.

Conclusion 3

Cognitions are generated from the interplay of beliefs and decision-making context.

Cognitions, which were also included in this study's definition of deep-level attributes, are considered an individual's interpretation of the world and a determinant of how an individual will behave (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Cognitions are schemas or mental models that represent an individual's general knowledge about a given concept or idea and are heavily influenced by his or her prior knowledge (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Cognitions arise from the combination of an individual's beliefs about things and experiences that lead to a conclusion about the likely outcomes of a situation or event. These mental models arise from perceptions, beliefs, assumptions, and experiences (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Knight et al., 1999; Yukl, 2010) and in decision-making are strongly influenced by the context within which a decision is to be made. Cognitions appear to be the result of the interplay between an individual's and/or group's beliefs and context. Neither cognitions nor context are attributes of the decision-makers themselves. Figure 5.2 depicts this relationship.

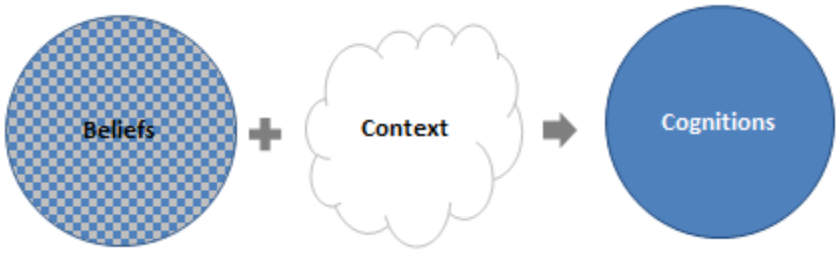


Figure 5.2. Beliefs and context combine to form cognitions.

The perspectives study participants brought with them to the decision-making process are cognitions and have a tremendous influence on executive decision-making (Lyles & Schwenk, 1992; Porac & Thomas, 2010). The context within which the decision-making takes place informs the decision-maker's mental models, providing a framework for the decision (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Context for this organization's selection/promotion decisions included the scope and complexity of the role, the strategic needs of the business, the candidate's direct job-related experience and past behavior, the structure of the organization, and the influence of organizational change on the position to be filled.

Participants' cognitions were evident as they expressed a sense of gravity about people-related decisions, which they suggested was not present in non–people-related decisions. People-related decision-making was considered more difficult to quantify and potentially more susceptible to political influence than other decision-making. People-related decision-making was also viewed as potentially more satisfying, offering the opportunity to see others benefit from job-related growth and development, as well as providing the chance that the participants themselves would be viewed more positively for having fostered the candidates' achievements. And, as Andrews (1987) and Chandler (1962) suggested, there was universal sentiment among the participants that people-related decision-making was in fact high-stakes decision-making, with significant impact on the organization.

Whether people-related or non–people-related, high-stakes decision-making was considered to be, among other things, an exercise in risk mitigation (Smith & Howard, 2009). The assessment of risk is a cognition and stems from a participant's knowledge,

beliefs, experiences, and understandings about how the world works and how individuals will behave in a particular situation (Lyles & Schwenk, 1992, Porac & Thomas, 2010). For example, VP009, the company's compliance officer, evaluated risks related to her department's staffing on the basis of her role in the organization, her previous professional experiences, the value she placed on identifying and developing talent, as well as the potential consequences to the organization for loss of critical staff members. Participants cited other examples of risk in the decision-making process, including limiting liability and risk associated with public disclosure of people-management practices and risk related to the impact of decisions on internal equity across business units.

Conclusions 2 and 3 suggest that there is a need to revise the definition of attributes, removing beliefs and cognitions and potentially adding instinct and intuition, as shown in Figure 5.3.

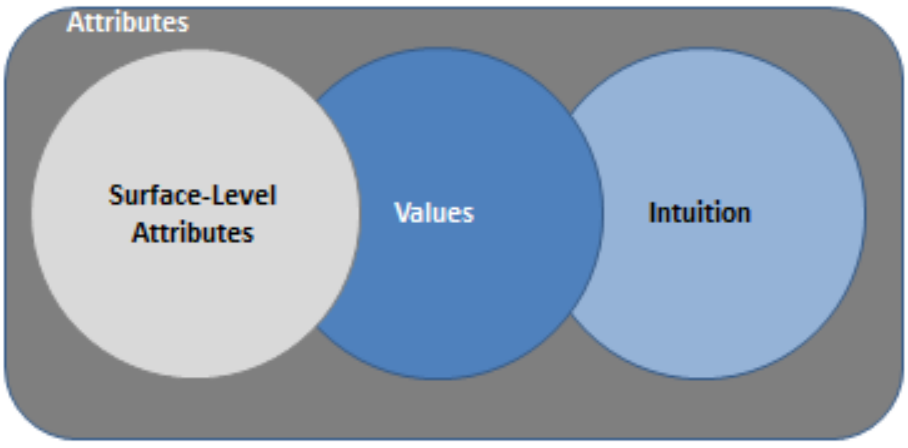


Figure 5.3. A revised look at attributes: Surface-level attributes, values, and instinct/ intuition.

However, beliefs and cognitions are integral to the decision-making process and result from the interplay of attributes and decision-making context. This revised relationship may be seen in Figure 5.4.

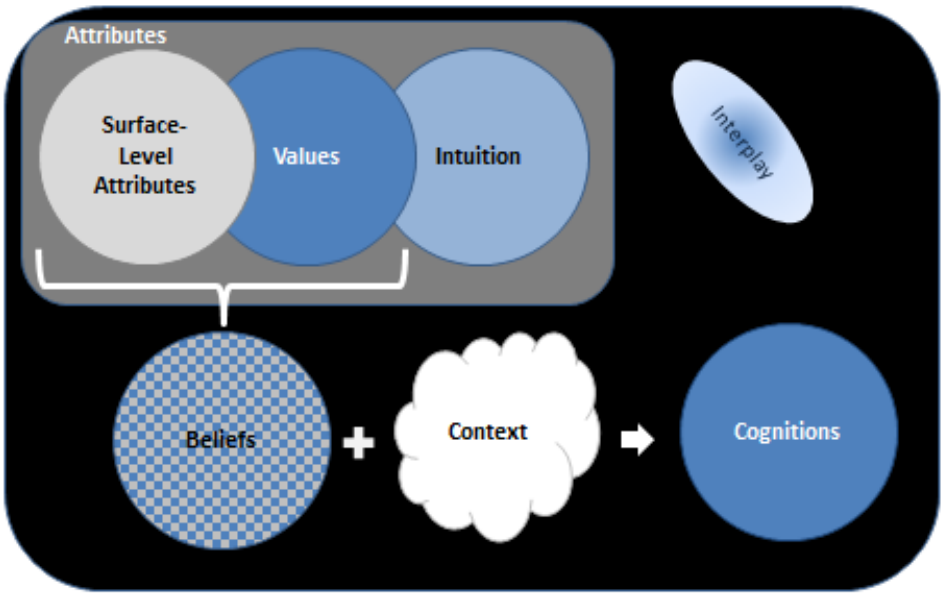


Figure 5.4. A revised view of the black box: The interplay of surface- and deep-level attributes and context.

As a result, it appears that deep-level attributes, as previously defined in this study, cannot be proxied by surface-level attributes, as had been argued in the literature (Hambrick, 2007; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Yukl, 2010).

Conclusion 4

Executive groups appear to function best when both homogeneity and heterogeneity are present simultaneously.

The members of the executive group must have a common set of values and beliefs, which serve to align them with one another. Further, group members desire heterogeneity of functional backgrounds, thinking styles, personalities, experiences, and

educational backgrounds and consider themselves more effective when such heterogeneity is present among the team members.

Homogeneity in the group decision-making process. The participants reflected clear alignment with the CEO's, group's, and organization's values and beliefs, resulting in a degree of homogeneity among the executive group members. The alignment of individuals' values and beliefs with the organization, its leader, and/or other group members was evident as participants discussed their evaluation of candidates' alignment with the values and beliefs of the organization, team or group, and manager (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Miles & Snow, 1994; Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 1995; Selznick, 1957). Aligning decisions with the values and beliefs of both the organization and its leaders was viewed as critical to the organization's success and was considered particularly important in promotion and selection decisions (Levi, 2011; Peterson et al., 2003; Schneider et al., 1998; Stoddard & Wycoff, 2009). Behavioral evidence of a candidate's values and beliefs as being aligned with the organization and its leadership was often cited as an important criterion for promotion and necessary for preservation of the organization's culture. Candidates evaluated for promotion were much more likely to be successfully promoted to the extent that they were considered to have demonstrated that their values and beliefs were similar to the organization's and to the decision-makers', an explicit evaluation of *fit*.

The TMSC process reinforced the organization's values and beliefs. The data presented demonstrated the importance participants placed on a decision-making process that reflected and reinforced their own values and beliefs and those of the organization. The data indicated an intentional bias toward discipline and rigor and suggested that

participants expected that the TMSC process would include significant preparation, the proposals would be reviewed by one's peers, the meetings would be attended by the most senior members of the executive team, and the process would promote fairness and equity, mitigate risk, and reinforce the deeply held values and beliefs of the participants and the organization.

For example, participants shared a common decision-making framework that required that promotion and selection decisions be made in alignment with business strategy and operational needs. Business strategy and needs provided a necessary context for decision-making and assisted the participants in assessing proposed promotions against a set of business parameters (Carpenter et al., 2004; Hoffman, 1982; Kielstra, 2007). The TMSC process was viewed as an example and reflection of the values and beliefs of the CEO, the organization, and its executives—perhaps a demonstrable representation of the organization's culture. Additionally, participants expressed greater personal satisfaction from decisions they considered supportive of the organization, and individual concern or dissatisfaction with decisions they perceived as conflicting with the values and beliefs of the organization.

Heterogeneity in the group decision-making process. Participants described their personal decision-making processes as interactive, emergent, and involving different people who influence each other (Fiedler, 1996; Goldstein et al., 2010; Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010). Often, the participants spoke of the value of assembling an ad hoc, diverse decision-making body to augment this process (Kielstra, 2007). The benefits of these diverse groups included having various perspectives through which to evaluate the situation (Finkelstein et al., 2009; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Ilgen et al., 1995; Jackson,

et al., 1995; Levi, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996), hearing the expression of opposing points of view (Eisenhardt, 1999; Priem et al., 1995), benefiting from others' functional and professional expertise in the decision-making process (Dearborn & Simon, 1958), and establishing buy-in and support from the participants (Levi, 2011).

There was a general view that the TMSC process fostered interaction among diverse individuals that was critically important to ensuring that the decisions being made about promotions were carefully evaluated against the needs of the business and that members of the organization with the knowledge and perspective about those situations were included in the process (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Boone & Hendriks, 2009; Levi, 2011). This observation supports the idea that information is unequally distributed across an organization (Guzzo, 1995; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; McIntyre & Salas, 1995) and that group decision-making, at least in this study, offered benefits over individual decision-making (Bantel & Jackson, 1989). These data suggested that without an appropriate forum for the exchange of distributed knowledge and information and varied perspectives, critical errors in decision-making, albeit for the right reasons, might be made.

Conclusion 5

The CEO has a more substantial and pervasive influence on the executive group decision-making process than any other member of the executive group.

This study lends support to Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model. In support of this model, the data suggested that the CEO was considered the most impactful and influential TMSC member. His presence was felt by many members of the TMSC, regardless of his physical participation in the meetings. His views

and perspectives and his values and beliefs permeated this group's decision-making orientation and activities.

The CEO was identified as the driver and model of organizational people-related values, and the data suggested that his perspectives carried more weight in the decision-making process than those of the other TMSC members (Schneider, 1987), even when he was not physically present. Participants described the CEO as an individual "who genuinely cares about his employees and their welfare" and who infused the strategy of the organization with this philosophy. During the data collection phase of this study, the CEO announced his imminent retirement. Many of the participants expressed concern or curiosity about how people-related decision-making in the organization was, or would be, impacted by his absence. One participant said, "We [look] at him out of the corner of our eye for signals"; however, because he was such a strong leader, the participants were often sure of his direction, despite his absence, and used that as their guidance.

The CEO shared his perspective that "employees [are] one of your most valuable assets," and he emphasized the belief that given an opportunity, employees will "do the right thing." Both of these philosophies were echoed in the organization's culture, could be seen in the organization's values statement, and were evident in the criteria used in promotion and selection decision-making.

The CEO shared his thoughts about the implications for promotion and selection decision-making, specifically the potential consequences of a selection mismatch in a large organization, suggesting that a promotion/selection mistake in a $20-billion organization could be "huge." He shared his philosophical orientation toward the differentiation of talent, which was translated into an organizational disposition.

Conclusion 6

The conceptual frame for this study requires revision to fully understand "interplay."

The initial conception of interplay assumed an impact from the social interaction occurring in the formal decision-making process, the TMSC meeting. Interplay, defined as one thing acting upon or influencing another (Hornby, 1995), was seen in the social interaction occurring prior to and during the TMSC meeting and in the reflections of the participants after the meeting. Interplay of group members' attributes was evident within the social interaction occurring during the TMSC meeting, as anticipated. In this study, interplay occurred within the context of exchanges and discussions in various group decision-making settings.

Interplay also and very importantly occurred in other ways. Interplay was evident as surface-level attributes combined with values to establish individual beliefs; as values, beliefs, and surface-level attributes combined to generate cognitions; as beliefs and context came together to generate cognitions and inform final decisions; and as instinct or gut impacted the decision-making process. Figure 5.5 depicts the revised conceptual frame, reflecting these conclusions.

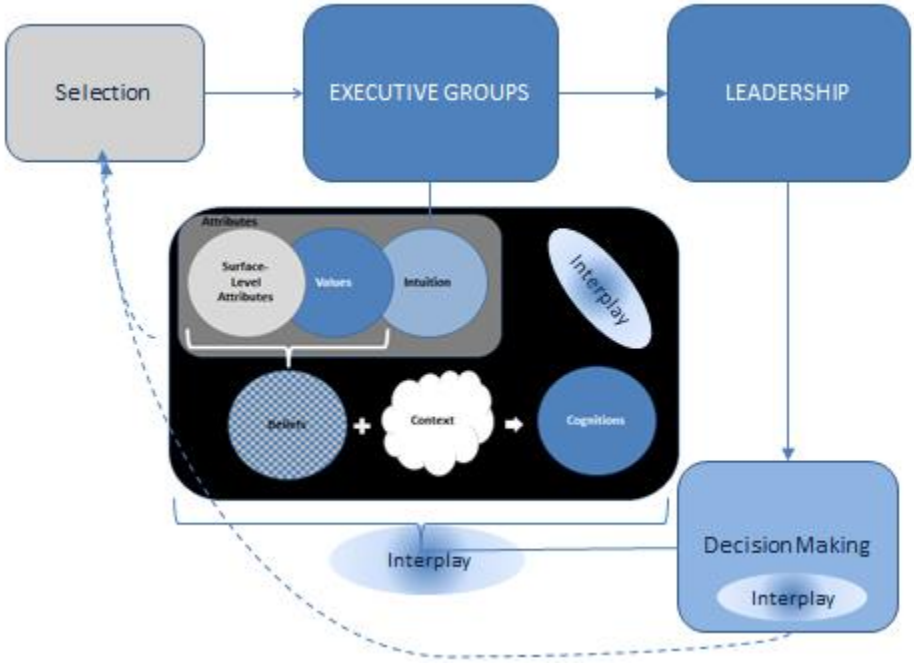


Figure 5.5. Conceptual frame reflecting revised image of interplay in the decision-making process.

A specific outcome of interplay between and among the group members' attributes at the individual level was the creation of selection criteria. As participants reflected on their past experiences, they revised their personal selection criteria and decision-making processes. This interplay often occurred outside of the formal exchanges and conversations, and in some cases, outside of the consciousness of the participants.

Selection criteria are borne of the decision-makers' attributes combined with the decision-making context. These factors come together to create an evaluation of the business needs and an assessment of the critical criteria necessary for a candidate's future success. Upon reflection, many of the participants described a shift in their leadership promotion and selection criteria as they developed more leadership experience. The data suggested that participants subscribed to the traditional selection model (Stoddard & Wycoff, 2009), with its bias toward a candidate's technical and functional skills and

qualifications, at an earlier point in their career. They then gravitated to a more comprehensive evaluation of a candidate, including the evaluation of a candidate's demonstrated abilities to model and maintain the values and beliefs of the organization, to develop and reward others, and to manage complex situations (Stoddard & Wycoff, 2009).

As discussed previously, the data suggested that values are particularly influential in the decision-making process, specifically the value of fairness and equity. As predicted by Andrews (1987) and Barnard (1938/1968), those candidates whose values and beliefs were most similar to the executives' experienced greater success in the promotion process. Indeed, the TMSC members' selection criteria were heavily influenced by their values: the promotion criteria included team building, the fit of individuals with teams and the organization, positive organizational change, fairness and equity, and consistency within and across organizational segments.

In addition to the achievements of the candidate, there was a specific interest in making promotional decisions on the basis of business need and the context of the role (Chandler, 1962; Doz & Kosonen, 2008). This framework applied to both immediate and longer-term business needs. If the organization was deemed not ready for a candidate's promotion, the decision would be deferred to a later date. Further, promotional decisions were based on an expansion of the candidate's role in the organization. Evidence that the role had become more complex and that the span of control had expanded was required in approving proposed promotions.

Conclusion 7

Decision-making executive groups are flexible in structure.

This study confirms Roberto's (2003) definition of executive groups. The data from this study indicate that the group was formed for a specific, functional purpose and comprised a core membership, supplemented by a dynamic periphery, assembled on the basis of the candidates being presented for promotion. The executive group studied as part of this research was composed of a stable core and peripheral members who changed on the basis of the "task at hand" and the organization's strategic challenges, rather than being defined by the proximity of an executive's position relative to the CEO. This organization very clearly established a definition and process for who would participate in the selection and promotion decision-making process, and why.

Recommendations

This section discusses this study's recommendations related to theory, practice, and future research.

Recommendations Related to Theory

For theory related to executive groups, this study looked at both surface- and deep-level attributes in decision-making, as the literature argues that surface-level attributes may be used to proxy underlying attributes (Carpenter et al., 2004; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1990; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Knight et al., 1999; Martin, 2011; Pfeffer, 1983). The data suggested that surface-level attributes combine with an individual's values to form beliefs; beliefs and context then come together to form cognitions. Beliefs and cognitions then coalesce in the identification of selection/

promotion criteria. Selection/promotion criteria, business context, and the interaction with others in the process of decision-making (in this case either or both the participant's personal decision-making process or the TMSC meeting) then result in the ultimate decision. Therefore, it seems unlikely that surface-level attributes alone could be used as proxies for deep-level attributes, the way they are currently defined, and it is recommended that additional exploration into surface- and deep-level attributes be undertaken.

For theory related to organizational demography, this study explored deep-level attributes of executive group members. Specifically, the attribute of values may be related to the underlying assumptions central to the theory of organizational culture. It is recommended that additional exploration of the relationship between individual values and culture be undertaken, with the possibility that there may be a way to unite culture with organizational demography and/or upper echelons theory.

For theory related to groups and teams, this study's conclusions suggest that a balanced approach to homogeneity and heterogeneity of group composition be considered. Teams and groups have been evaluated using a dichotomous lens, assuming that in order to be the most productive, efficient, aligned with organizational strategy, and/or creative, they needed to be either homogeneous (Aaker, 2001; Andrews, 1987; Barnard, 1938/1968; Peterson et al., 2003; Schneider, 1987) or heterogeneous (Jackson et al., 1995; Levi, 2011; Milliken & Martins, 1996). This study indicates that groups/teams may perform best in situations where both homogeneity and heterogeneity are present, and it is recommended that additional research be conducted looking at both heterogeneity and homogeneity simultaneously.

Recommendations Related to Practice

There are several recommendations related to practice, as follows:

- This study confirms the importance of people in organizations. The implications for a lack of focus on people as valuable contributors to business are monumental and include lost opportunities, corporate risk and liability, direct dollar costs, and public relations concerns, among others. This study confirms the view that people-related decisions are, in fact, high-stakes decisions and that there remains a critical imperative for organizations to make the best selection and promotion decisions possible. Organizations are wise to put as much time and effort into the evaluation and selection of individuals for leadership roles as they do into other critical business decisions.
- Staffing and selection practices should be designed to achieve homogeneity and heterogeneity simultaneously. The data suggest that an individual's alignment with the organization's and leadership team's values is important in selection, as is establishing a population of diverse individuals capable of bringing varied backgrounds, education, experience, functional/technical expertise, thinking styles, and perspectives to the operation of the business.
- The CEO is a critical member of the executive team. His or her values, beliefs, and presence, physically or otherwise, are significant and impactful, much more so than those of any other member of the executive group. Therefore, organizations need to critically evaluate their selection of a CEO as he or she personifies the culture of the organization, sets the tone for decision-making, and

will likely be the most influential member of an organization's decision-making body.

- Managers and executives may benefit from conceptualizing high-stakes decision-making groups as fluid and adaptive, assembled on the basis of the work to be accomplished rather than on hierarchies and organizational reporting relationships. Such groups function with flexibility, coming together as a cross-section of organizational members uniquely suited to addressing the task at hand. However, there are implications to adopting this practice, such as communicating why some individuals may not be invited to participate, despite their hierarchical level or functional role in an organization.
- Organizations would be well served to consider the influence of sponsorship and reciprocity in decision-making. It is conceiveable that some level of *quid pro quo* exists among the decision-makers and has influence on group decision-making processes.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several recommendations to advance knowledge through research on executive groups, high-stakes decision-making, and attributes:

- There is limited research on executive groups using primary data. Additional research conducted directly with these organizational groups may shed light on their formation, composition, and functions, including their decision-making processes. Recognizing that it is difficult to gain access to these groups, this researcher is recommending coordination of research among scholars and practitioners for the benefit of both theory and practice.

- This study focused on only one type of high-stakes decision-making. Replicating this study looking at other types of high-stakes decision-making such as research and development, mergers and acquisitions, divestitures, or other topics may enhance these findings and advance knowledge about high-stakes decision-making in general.
- The participants had difficulty identifying and articulating their values and beliefs. Those who prepared themselves for the interviews by reading through the protocols in advance were better able to articulate their thoughts. A preparatory conversation to review definitions and ensure understanding of the questions may result in deeper, richer discussions.
- This study did not focus on the relationship between ego and empathy; however, aspects of both are apparent in the data. Additional research focused on this relationship as it relates to executive groups and decision-making would be worth further exploration.
- Finally, the definition of deep-level attributes requires additional exploration. Research focused on executives' attributes and the role of instinct/intuition in decision-making may prove helpful, providing additional understanding of group member characteristics, in general, and their influence in decision-making processes more particularly. In addition, further study on the nuanced and interconnected relationships between and among these attributes may prove fruitful.

Reflections on the Research Study

> Still round the corner there may wait,
> A new road or a secret gate. . . . —J. R. R. Tolkien (1892-1973)

This study benefited considerably from a deep level of access to the executives of this organization. Without their willingness, and in some cases enthusiasm, to participate and share their perspectives, this research could not have happened. And certainly, without the participants' trust and candor, these findings would not have achieved such richness and resonance.

The most impactful moment of this research came very early in the data collection phase of the study. The following statement, at the end of the very first interview, was confirmation that at least in practice, this work had value, and that that value was to the participants themselves. The power of reflection in helping leaders learn was palpable: perhaps, together, we could make a difference:

> [I'd like] to think some more about this because I never thought about this. . . . Well, I'll share this with you, . . . it's [an] interesting introspective effort because you do this stuff and I have never actually, until this point, I have never formulated this stuff for anybody. Even though . . . obviously, it was somewhere in me, because I didn't really have to think very hard to say it. . . . I guess that tells me that there's value in what you do. (VP001, personal communication, November 27, 2012)

This study was intended as an exploration, an opportunity to gain greater understanding of theory and practice in the hope that it would contribute to improved individual and organizational outcomes. These findings suggest that there remain many unanswered questions and paths of possibility. Decision-making is indeed, as Lawrence (1997) suggested, "a dynamic and recursive" social psychological process. The "black

box of demography" may prove to be a well, deeper and more alive than in its initial conception.

REFERENCES

Aaker, D. A. (2001). *Developing business strategies* (6th ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Andrews, K. R. (1987). *The concept of corporate strategy* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Angrosino, M. V. (2005). Recontextualizing observation: Ethonography, pedagogy, and the prospects for a progressive political agenda. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 729-745). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ashby, W. R. (1965). *An introduction to cybernetics*. London, UK: University Paperbacks.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundation of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bantel, K. A., & Jackson, S. E. (1989). Top management and innovations in banking: Does the composition of the top team make a difference? *Strategic Management Journal, 10*, 107-124.

Barnard, C. I. (1968). *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Originally published 1938)

Bass, B. (1990). *Bass and Stodgill's handbook of leadership* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. New York, NY: Anchor.

Boone, C., & Hendriks, W. (2009). Top management team diversity and firm performance: Moderators of functional-background and locus-of-control diversity. *Management Science, 55*, 165-180.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Calder, B. (1977). An attribution theory of leadership. In B. M. Staw & G. R. Salancik (Eds.), *New directions in organizational behavior* (pp. 179-204). Chicago, IL: St. Clair.

Carpenter, M. A., Geletkanycz, M. A., & Sanders, W. G. (2004). Upper echelons research revisited: Antecedents, elements, and consequences of top management team composition. *Journal of Management, 30*, 749-778.

Chandler, A. D., Jr. (1962). *Strategy and structure: Chapters in the history of the American industrial enterprise*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Chatman, J. A., Polzer, J. T., Barsade, S. G., & Neale, M. (1998). Being different yet feeling similar: The influence of demographic composition and organizational culture on work processes and outcomes. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 43*, 749-780.

Chattopadhyay, P., Glick, W. H., Miller, C. C., & Huber, G. P. (1999). Determinants of executive beliefs: Comparing functional conditioning and social influence. *Strategic Management Journal, 20*, 763-789.

Ciccarelli, M. C. (2011, March). BP's bubbling cauldron. *Human Resources Executive,* 18-21. Retrieved from http://www.hreonline.com/HRE/story.jsp?storyId=533332933

Conger, J. A. (1989). *The charismatic leader: Behind the mystique of exceptional leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crotty, M. (2009). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen and Unwin.

Daft, R. L., & Weick, K. E. (1984). Toward a model of organizations as interpretation systems. *Academy of Management Review, 9*, 284-293.

Davis, G. F., & Useem, M. (2002). Top management, company directors and corporate control. In A. M. Pettigrew, H. Thomas, & R. Whittington (Eds.), *Handbook of strategy and management* (pp. 232-258). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Dearborn, D. C., & Simon, H. (1958). Selective perceptions: A note on the department identification of executives. *Sociometry, 21*, 140-144.

Dess, G. G., & Priem, R. L. (1995). Consensus-performance research: Theoretical and empirical extensions. *Journal of Management Studies, 32*, 401-417.

Dexter, L. A. (2006). *Elite and specialized interviewing*. Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.

Doz, Y., & Kosonen, M. (2008). *Fast strategy: How strategic agility will help you stay ahead of the game*. Harlow, UK: Wharton School Publishing.

Dutton, J. E., & Ashford, S. J. (1993). Selling issues to top management. *Academy of Management Review, 18*, 397-428.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1999). Strategy as strategic decision-making. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 40*(3), 65-72.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Schoonhoven, C. B. (1990). Organizational growth: Linking founding team, strategy, environment, and growth among U.S. semiconductor ventures, 1978-1988. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 35*, 504-529.

Ely, R. J. (1994). The effects of organizational demographics and social identity on relationships among professional women. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 39*, 203-238.

Fiedler, F. E. (1996). Research on leadership selection and training: One view of the future. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 41*, 241-250.

Finkelstein, S., & Hambrick, D. C. (1996). *Strategic leadership: Top executives and their effects on organizations.* New York, NY: West.

Finkelstein, S., Hambrick, D. C., & Cannella, A. A., Jr. (2009). *Strategic leadership: Theory and research on executives, top management teams, and boards*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social cognition* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (2008). *Social cognition: From brains to culture* (1st ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Fletcher, J. K., & Kaufer, K. (2003). Shared leadership: Paradox and possibility. In C. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger (Eds.), *Shared leadership: Reframing the how's and why's of leadership* (pp. 21-47). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Forbes, D. P., & Milliken, F. J. (1999). Cognition and corporate governance: Understanding boards of directors as strategic decision-making groups. *Academy of Management Review, 24*(3), 489-505.

Galbraith, J. R. (2002). *Designing organizations: An executive guide to strategy, structure, and process*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Goldman, E. F., & Swayze, S. (2012). In-depth interviewing with healthcare corporate elites: Strategies for entry and engagement. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 11*(3).

Goldstein, J., Hazy, J., & Lichtenstein, B. (2010). *Complexity and the nexus of leadership*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gronn, P. (2002). Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. *Leadership Quarterly, 13*, 423-451.

Guzzo, R. A. (1995). Introduction: At the intersection of team effectiveness and decision-making. In R. A. Guzzo & E. A. Salas (Eds.), *Team effectiveness and decision-making in organizations* (1st ed., pp. 1-8). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Haleblian, J., & Finkelstein, S. (1993). Top management team size, CEO dominance, and firm performance: The moderating roles of environmental turbulence and discretion. *Academy of Management Journal, 36*, 844-863.

Hambrick, D. C. (2007). Upper echelons theory: An update. *Academy of Management Review, 32*(2), 334-343.

Hambrick, D. C., & Mason, P. A. (1984). Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers. *Academy of Management Review, 9*, 193-206.

Harrison, D. A., Price, K. H., & Bell, M. P. (1998). Beyond relational demography: Time and the effects of surface- and deep-level diversity on work group cohesion. *Academy of Management Journal, 41,* 96-107.

Harvey, M. G., & Buckley, M. R. (2002). Assessing the 'conventional wisdoms' of management for the 21st century organization. *Organizational Dynamics, 30,* 368-378.

Harvey, W. S. (2011). Strategies for conducting elite interviews. *Qualitative Research, 11*(4), 431-441. doi: 10.1177/146879411140329

Heames, J. T., & Harvey, M. G. (2006). The evolution of the concept of the 'executive" from the 20th century manager to the 21st century global leader. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 13*(2), 29-41.

Herrmann, P., & Datta, D. K. (2002). CEO successor characteristics and the choice of foreign market entry mode: An empirical study. *Journal of International Business Studies, 33,* 551-569.

Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1969). Life cycle theory of leadership. *Training and Development Journal, 23*(5), 26-34.

Hersey, P., Blanchard, K. H., & Johnson, D. E. (1996). *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Hitt, M. A., Beamish, P. W., Jackson, S. E., & Mathieu, J. E. (2007). Building theoretical and empirical bridges across levels: Multilevel research in management. *Academy of Management Journal, 50,* 1385-1399.

Hoffman, L. R. (1982). Improving the problem-solving process in managerial groups. In R. A. Guzzo (Ed.), *Improving group decision-making in organizations: Approaches from theory and research* (pp. 95-126). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Hollenbeck, J. R. (2009). Executive selection—what's right . . . and what's wrong. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2,* 130-143.

Hornby, A. S. (Ed.). (2005). *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (7th ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

House, R. J. (1977). A 1976 theory of charismatic leadership. In J. G. Hunt & L. L. Larson (Eds.), *Leadership: The cutting edge*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Ilgen, D. R., Major, D. A., Hollenbeck, J. R., & Sego, D. J. (1995). Raising an individual decision-making model to the team level: A new research model and paradigm. In I. L. Goldstein (Ed.), *Team effectiveness and decision-making in organizations* (1st ed., pp. 113-148). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Irwin, T. (2009). *Derailed: Five lessons learned from catastrophic failures of leadership*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Jackson, S. E., May, K. E., & Whitney, K. (1995). Understanding the dynamics of diversity in decision-making teams. In R. A. Guzzo & E. Salas (Eds.), *Team effectiveness and decision making in organizations* (1st ed., pp. 204-261). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Jackson, S. E., & Schuler, R. S. (2003). *Managing human resources through strategic partnerships* (8th ed.). Louiseville, Quebec: South-Western.

Janis, I. L. (1972). *Victims of groupthink*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Keck, S. L., & Tushman, M. L. (1993). Environmental and organizational context and executive team structure. *Academy of Management Journal, 36*, 1314-1344.

Kielstra, P. (2007). *In search of clarity: Unraveling the complexities of executive decision-making*. London, UK: Economist Intelligence Unit.

Knight, D., Pearce, C. L., Smith, K. G., Olian, J. D., Sims, H. P., Smith, K. A., & Flood, P. (1999). Top management team diversity, group process, and strategic consensus. *Strategic Management Journal*, *20*(5), 445-458.

Kor, Y. (2003). Experience-based top management team competence and sustained growth. *Organization Science, 14*, 707-719.

Kotter, J. P. (1990a). *A force for change: How leadership differs from management*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Kotter, J. P. (1990b). What leaders really do. *Harvard Business Review*, May, 103-111.

Kristof-Brown, A., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C. (2005). Consequences of individuals' fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology, 58*, 281-342.

Lankau, M. J., Ward, A., Amason, A., Ng, T., Sonnenfeld, J. A., & Agle, B. R. (2007). Examining the impact of organizational value dissimilarity in top management teams. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 19*, 11-34.

Lawler, E. E., III, & Worley, C. G. (2006). *Built to change: How to achieve sustained organizational effectiveness* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Lawrence, B. (1997). The black box of organizational demography. *Organization Science, 8*, 1-22.

Lawrence, P. R., & Lorsch, J. W. (1967). *Organization and environment*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

Levi, D. (2011). *Group dynamics for teams* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. (2002). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The qualitative inquiry reader* (pp. 327-345). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lord, R. G., & Brown, D. J. (2001). Leadership values and subordinate self-concepts. *Leadership Quarterly, 12,* 133-152.

Lumpkin, G. T., & Dess, G. G. (1995). Simplicity as a strategy-making process: The effects of stage of organizational development and environment on performance. *Academy of Management Journal, 38,* 1386-1406.

Lyles, M. A., & Schwenk, C. R. (1992). Top management strategy and organizational knowledge structures. *Journal of Management Studies, 29,* 155-174.

Markides, C. (2010). Corporate strategy: The role of the centre. In A. M. Pettigrew, H. Thomas, & R. Whittington (Eds.), *The handbook of strategy & management* (pp. 98-112). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Martin, J. A. (2011). Dynamic managerial capabilities and the multibusiness team: The role of episodic teams in executive leadership groups. *Organization Science, 22*, 118-140.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McIntyre, R. M., & Salas, E. (1995). Measuring and managing for team performance: Emerging principles from complex environments. In R. A. Guzzo & E. A. Salas (Eds.), *Team effectiveness and decision-making in organizations* (1st ed., pp. 9-45). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, R. E., & Snow, C. C. (1994). *Fit, failure and the hall of fame: How companies succeed or fail*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Miller, C. C., Burke, L. M., & Glick, W. H. (1998). Cognitive diversity among upper-echelon executives: Implications for strategic decision processes. *Strategic Management Journal, 19*, 39-58.

Milliken, F. J., & Martins, L. L. (1996). Searching for common threads: Understanding the multiple effects of diversity in organizational groups *Academy of Management Review, 21*, 402-433.

Mintzberg, H. (1973). *The nature of managerial work*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Mintzberg, H. (1979). *The structuring of organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Norburn, D., & Birley, S. (1988). The top management team and corporate performance. *Strategic Management Journal, 9*, 225-237.

Northouse, P. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

O'Reilly, C. A., Caldwell, D. F., & Barnett, W. P. (1989). Work group demography, social integration and turnover. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 34*, 21-37.

O'Shannassy, T. (2010). Board and CEO practice in modern strategy-making: How is strategy developed, who is the boss and in what circumstances? *Journal of Management and Organization, 16*, 280-298.

Orlikowski, W. J. (2010). Practice in research: Phenomenon, perspectives and philosophy. In D. Golsorkhi, L. Rouleau, D. Seidl, & E. Vaara (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of strategy as practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ostrander, S. A. (1993). "Surely you're not in this just to be helpful": Access, rapport, and interviews in three studies of elites. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 22*(7), 7-27. doi: 10.1177/089124193022001002

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pearce, C. L., & Conger, J. A. (2003). All those years ago: The historical underpinnings of shared leadership. In C. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger (Eds.), *Shared leadership: Reframing the how's and why's of leadership* (pp. 1-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Peterson, R. S., Martorana, P. V., Smith, D. B., & Owens, P. D. (2003). The impact of chief executive officer personality on top management team dynamics: One mechanism by which leadership affects organizational performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*, 795-808. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.795

Pettigrew, A. M. (1992). On studying managerial elites. *Strategic Management Journal, 13*, 163-182.

Pfeffer, J. (1983). Organizational demography. In L. L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior: An annual series of analytical essays and critical reviews* (Vol. 5, pp. 299-357). Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Porac, J. F., & Thomas, H. (2010). Managing cognition and strategy: issues, trends and future directions. In A. M. Pettigrew, H. Thomas, & R. Whittington (Eds.), *The handbook of strategy & management* (pp. 165-181). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Porter, M. E. (1998). *Competitive strategy: Techniques for analyzing industries and competitors*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Priem, R. L. (1990). Top management team group factors, consensus, and firm performance. *Strategic Management Journal, 11*, 469-478.

Priem, R. L., Harrison, D. A., & Muir, N. K. (1995). Structured conflict and consensus outcomes in group decision-making. *Journal of Management, 21*, 691-710.

Priem, R., Lyon, D. W., & Dess, G. G. (1999). Inherent limitations of demographic proxies in top management team heterogeneity research. *Journal of Management, 25*, 935-953. doi: 10.1177/014920639902500607

Rice, G. (2010). Reflections on interviewing elites. *Area*, *42*(1), 70-75. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-4762.2009.00898.x

Roberto, M. A. (2003). The stable core and dynamic periphery in top management teams. *Management Decision, 41*, 120-131.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London, UK: Sage.

Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist, 45*(2), 109-119.

Schein, E. H. (1996). Culture: The missing concept in organization studies. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 41*, 229-240.

Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology, 40*, 437-453.

Schneider, B., Goldstein, H. W., & Smith, D. B. (1995). The ASA framework: An update. *Personnel Psychology, 48*, 747-773.

Schneider, B., Smith, D. B., Taylor, S., & Fleenor, J. (1998). Personality and organizations: A test of the homogeneity of personality hypothesis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83,* 462-470.

Schwandt, D. R., & Szabla, D. B. (2007). Systems and leadership: Coevolution or mutual evolutions towards complexity? In J. K. Hazy, H. W. Goldstein, & B. B. Lichtenstein (Eds.), *Complexity systems leadership theory*. Mansfield, MA: ISCE.

Selznick, P. (1957). *Leadership in administration: A sociological interpretation*. Berkeley, CA: Harper & Row.

Simons, T., Pelled, L. H., & Smith, K. A. (1999). Making use of difference: Diversity, debate, and decision comprehensiveness in management teams. *Academy of Management Journal, 42*, 662-673.

Smith, A. B., & Howard, A. (2009). Executive selection as a strategic business decision. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2*, 144-150.

Stake, R. (2000). Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 435-454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Steptoe-Warren, G., Howat, D., & Hume, I. (2011). Strategic thinking and decision-making: Literature review. *Journal of Strategy and Management, 4,* 238-250.

Stoddard, N., & Wyckoff, C. (2009). *The right leader: Selecting executives who fit*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Thomas, R. J. (1993). Interviewing important people in big companies. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 22,* 80-96. doi: 10.1177/089124193022001006

Tikkanen, H., Lamberg, J.-A., Parvinen, P., & Kallunki, J.-P. (2005). Managerial cognition, action and the business model of the firm. *Management Decision, 43,* 789-809.

Trist, E. (1983). Referent organizations and the development of inter-organizational domains. *Human Relations, 36,* 269-284.

Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *Leadership Quarterly, 18,* 298-318.

Wagner, G., Pfeffer, J., & O'Reilly, C. A. (1984). Organizational demography and turnover in top-management groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 29*(1), 74-92.

Weber, M. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization* (A. M. Henderson & T. Parsons, Trans.). New York, NY: Free Press. (Originally published 1924)

Winston, B. E. (2003). *A complete definition of leadership*. Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University.

Woods, M. (1998). Rethinking elites: Networks, space and local politics. *Environment and Planning, 30*(12), 2101-2119. doi: 10.1068/a302101

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yukl, G. (2010). *Leadership in organizations* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

APPENDIX A:

TALENT MANAGEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT

October 17, 2012

Talent Management Steering Committee

Purpose: To provide governance, oversight and direction to [redacted] regarding overall talent management activities, including: diversity and inclusion, promotion, development, rewards and retention strategies for our regional employees.

Functions:

- Review activities related to overall talent management practices for [redacted] including diversity and inclusion efforts, staffing and promotion activities, total reward strategies, and developmental opportunities, with a specific emphasis on leadership talent.
- Review and disposition all recommendations for hire/promotion to positions of Associate Director and above, for employees in [redacted] locations.
- Evaluate business and workforce implications for proposed moves/hires, including: incumbent readiness, skills, knowledge and performance; internal/external compensation equity; development opportunities/needs; and performance and potential. Consideration to succession management issues will also be discussed – is the role critical (either cluster or corporate); is the incumbent a key employee; will the move enable or restrict other changes in organization function/structure; what are the long- and short-term implications for these changes.

Process:
The committee will meet approximately monthly, face-to-face or virtually, to review various talent management topics, One monthly meeting each quarter will be dedicated to reviewing all proposals for promotion to, or the addition of new/replacement positions, at the Associate Director level or above.

Promotion:
- Proposals must be in writing, authored by the hiring manager/direct supervisor and approved by the business unit Vice President and the assigned Human Resources Business Partner.
    - Proposals must include an approved job description, brief business justification for the change in role/hire, proposed organization chart, a justification for the promotion of the employee in consideration, and a brief statement of the development needs/plans to ensure the employee's successful transition into the new role.
- Approved proposals must be submitted to [redacted] Total Rewards team for evaluation, grade, title and job code assignment prior to submission to the committee.
- If approved by the committee, all prospective candidates will be reviewed with the President/CEO [redacted] for final authorization/approval.
- Final decisions will be communicated to the HRBP and the hiring manager/direct supervisor upon final approval at which time the employee may be informed of the promotion.

*Promotions to VP/SVP reporting to a [redacted] member must be reviewed and approved by the committee, the President/CEO [redacted] and the [redacted] Executive Committee [redacted].

New or Replacement Positions:

- Proposals must be in writing, authored by the hiring manager/direct supervisor and approved by the business unit Vice President and the assigned Human Resources Business Partner.
- Proposals must include an approved job description, compensation evaluation, brief business justification for the position, proposed organization chart, and a brief statement of the orientation and development plans to ensure the employee's successful transition into the new role.
- Approved proposals must be submitted to [redacted] Human Resources Compensation for evaluation, grade, title and job code assignment prior to submission to the committee.
- If approved by the committee, all prospective positions will be reviewed with the President/CEO [redacted] for final authorization/approval.
- Final decisions will be communicated to the HRBP and the hiring manager/direct supervisor upon final approval at which time the requisition may be initiated and the hiring process begun.
- Final decisions will be communicated to the HRBP and the hiring manager/direct supervisor upon final approval at which time a contingent offer of employment may be made.

Offers of Employment including Stock Options:

- Offers of employment which include stock options must be reviewed and approved by the committee. And, these final offers must be forwarded to Global Compensation for review and approval.

Committee Members:

EVP US Technical Operations, [redacted]
SVP Global Medicines Group, [redacted]
President & CEO, [redacted]
EVP, US Brand Pharmaceuticals [redacted]
VP, General Counsel, [redacted]
SVP, Global Branded Clinical Research, [redacted]
Vice President & CFO, [redacted]
VP, Human Resources and Administration, [redacted]
Sr. Counsel, [redacted]

APPENDIX B:

CANDIDATE PROMOTION TEMPLATE

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title:		**Date:**	
Grade:		**Dept:**	
Job Code:		**EEO Job Classification:**	
Number of Direct Reports:		**Total Number of Reports:**	
Supervisor's Title		**Location:**	

Position Summary:

Travel Requirements:

Essential Duties & Responsibilities	**Percentage of Time**
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7. Follows Safety, Health, and Environmental policies and procedures.	
8. Other projects and duties as required/assigned	

Position Requirements

Education Required:	
Education Preferred	
Experience Required:	
Experience Preferred:	
Specialized or Technical Knowledge Licenses, Certifications needed:	
Functional Knowledge:	
Company/Industry Related Knowledge:	

Job-specific Competencies

1.		
2.		
3.		

Employee Promotion Form

Employee Information:	
Name:	**New Job Title:**
Current Job Title:	**New Grade:**
Department:	**Manager / Supervisor:**
Current Grade:	**Total # of Direct Reports:**

Promotion Requirements:

The following sections must be completed in order to be considered for the promotion.

1. Has the employee been in his/her current position for 6 months?

☐ **No** *(if no, employee is not eligible for promotion at this time)*
☐ **Yes** *(If yes, continue to next question)*

2. Has the employee received a corrective action within the last 6 months?

☐ **No** *(if no, continue to next question)*
☐ **Yes** *(If yes, employee is not eligible for promotion at this time)*

3. Performance Ratings: Prior Year - None **Current Year -** None

- In order to be considered for a promotion, the employee must have been meeting or exceeding performance expectations
- If an employee received a "Meets" on the most recent evaluation, please provide justification as to why you are considering the employee for the promotion in question 4

4. Written Justification for Promotion:

What are the additional duties the employee has or will assume?

What are the responsibilities and qualifications of the position?

Please provide a summary of the employee's skills, qualifications and experience that meet the requirements of the new position.

Please provide a summary of the employee's past and current performance.

Comparator Information:

Please identify incumbents in roles with similar scope and responsibility.

Employee Name	Job Title	Reports To

Attachments Required:

1. Current / updated job description of the position the employee is being promoted into
2. Proposed organizational chart representing the position including key dotted line reporting relationships
3. Most recent employee performance appraisal

Recommended Promotion Amount:

The promotion amount should be discussed with your manager and HR Business Partner before the form is submitted for the next level of Management Review. This information must be entered into the Performance Management System.

Submitted By:		**Date:**	

APPENDIX C:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Executives' Deep-Level Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study

IRB # 0000000

Principal Investigator: Laura K. Queen (484) 919-1562
Sponsor: The George Washington University,
Graduate School of Education and Human Development

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Laura K. Queen and The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

You are being asked if you would like to take part in this study because you have been identified as a member of a group of executive decision-makers. Please read this form and ask me any questions that will help you decide if you would be willing to participate in this study. Taking part is completely voluntary, and even if you decide you would like to participate, you may quit at any time. You are one of approximately 25 people taking part in this study. Your decision to participate in this study will not affect your current employment or any of your current employment-related benefits.

The purpose of this research is to explore deep-level attributes or characteristics of executives in the practice of decision-making. The total amount of time you will spend in this study is approximately 4 hours over the course of 2 to 4 months. All participants in this study will be asked to take part in the following activities:

1. Possible participation in an initial individual semistructured interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes
2. An observation of one decision-making meeting that would occur during your normal course of business (time undetermined), followed by
3. An individual semistructured interview lasting 60 minutes
4. Follow-up as needed to clarify statements and information received during the interviews and observation

Additionally, some participants will be asked to review the transcripts of their interview and preliminary research conclusions for comment.

This study has two main risks. First, you may feel some emotional stress or discomfort answering the interview questions. At any time during the interview, you may skip any question or stop speaking. Second, there is a small chance that someone outside of my research team could find out that you participated in this study or could somehow connect your name with the information collected about you. To reduce this risk, the following steps are being taken:

- In the study and in all study-related documents, the company identity will remain confidential and referred to using only a pseudonym.
- Interview recordings and transcripts will identify the participants by unique alphanumeric codes and job position identifiers only, and will be stored in secure paper and electronic files with the coding key maintained separately.
- All personally identifiable information, including coding key(s) and recordings, will be destroyed after completion and acceptance of this research.
- The principal investigator and The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development are willing to comply with the research site's nondisclosure agreement, provided as an appendix to this consent.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any published articles or presentations, we will not include information that will make it possible to identify you personally as a subject; however, you may be referred to by your hierarchical level in the company and/or by participant code (e.g., Vice President A). Your records for the study may be reviewed by The George Washington University Graduate School of Education and Human Development and by departments of the university responsible for overseeing research safety and compliance. While we cannot guarantee the privacy of group meeting proceedings and discussions, we request that all participants respect the group by not telling anyone outside the group what is said, with the exception of required business-related information.

Taking part in this research will not help you directly; however, the benefit to society will be a better understanding of the composition of executive groups and the impact of group composition on decision-making. Talk to the research team if you have questions, concerns, complaints, or think you have been harmed. You can contact the principal investigator listed on the front of this form at (484) 919-1562. For questions regarding your rights as a participant in human research, call The George Washington University Office of Human Research at (202) 994-2715.

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign below. After you sign this consent form, I will provide you with a copy. Please retain a copy of this form for your reference.

_____

Participant Signature

_____

Participant Name and Date

_____

Principal Investigator Signature

_____

Principal Investigator Name and Date

APPENDIX D:

CEO INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Executives' Deep-Level Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study

Date of Interview: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Thank you for agreeing to spend this time with me. You will be assigned a pseudonym, and your responses will be kept confidential. With your permission, this interview will be digitally recorded for the purposes of transcribing and analyzing the data for use in my dissertation. You may stop the interview at any time, for any reason.

To begin our interview, I would like you to know that my research interest is in understanding executive group composition and high-stakes decision-making. High-stakes decision-making occurs at the executive level of an organization. Decisions at this level include the determination of organizational strategy and structure, operational goals, the investment of assets including people and capital, and the values and philosophy of the organization. Such decision-making is arguably the most important leadership activity executives engage in, as these decisions have the potential for long-term, even far-reaching organizational and individual outcomes, including failures. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how values, beliefs, and cognitions impact these processes.

As a participant in the research study entitled "Executives' Deep-Level Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study," you will be asked to answer a few questions about your experiences as a participant in executive decision-making processes.

Questions

1. For the purposes of this study, would you please provide a summary of your professional history?
2. Would you please provide a description of the CEO role in your own words?
3. I'd like to talk about high-stakes decision-making. Please tell me a bit about your role in the process of making high-stakes decisions regarding current organizational employees.
    a. What things come into play in your high-stakes decision-making regarding employees?
        i. Please describe them for me.
        ii. What is the purpose or reason for each of these things?

iii. How did they come to be important in this decision-making process?

4. I'd like to ask you about decisions regarding the promotion of current organizational employees.
    a. Would you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was consistent with your own values and beliefs?
        i. In what ways was this decision most consistent with your values and beliefs?
            1. How did these come to be important in your decision-making process?
            2. How did this consistency shape your decision-making?
    b. Would you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was inconsistent with your own values and beliefs?
        i. In what ways was this decision inconsistent with your values and beliefs?
            1. How did these come to be important in your decision-making process?
            2. How did this inconsistency shape your decision-making?
5. I would like to discuss your other high-stakes decision-making activities.
    a. In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions similar to decisions you make about employees?
    b. In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions different from decisions you make about employees?
6. Would you please confirm the core members of the PPDT[1] for me?
7. Is there anything else you think I should know, or you would like to share, that you believe would be helpful to my research?

[1] This is the People and Promotions Decision Team, which was renamed the Talent Management Steering Committee on October 17, 2012.

APPENDIX E:

CORE MEMBER PREMEETING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Executives' Deep-Level Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study

Date of Interview: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Participant: _____

Job Title of Participant: _____

Thank you for agreeing to spend this time with me. You will be assigned a pseudonym, and your responses will be kept confidential. With your permission, this interview will be digitally recorded for the purposes of transcribing and analyzing the data for use in my dissertation. You may stop the interview at any time, for any reason.

To begin our interview, I would like you to know that my research interest is in understanding executive group composition and high-stakes decision-making. High-stakes decision-making occurs at the executive level of an organization. Decisions at this level include the determination of organizational strategy and structure, operational goals, the investment of assets including people and capital, and the values and philosophy of the organization. Such decision-making is arguably the most important leadership activity executives engage in, as these decisions have the potential for long-term, even far-reaching organizational and individual outcomes, including failures. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how values, beliefs, and cognitions impact these processes.

As a participant in the research study entitled "Executives' Deep-Level Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study," you will be asked to answer a few questions about your experiences as a participant in executive decision-making processes.

Questions

1. For the purposes of this study, would you please provide a summary of your professional history?
2. Would you please provide a description of your current role in your own words?

3. I'd like to talk about high-stakes decision-making. Please tell me a bit about your role in the process of making high-stakes decisions regarding current organizational employees.
    a. What things come into play in your high-stakes decision-making regarding employees?
        i. Please describe them for me.
        ii. What is the purpose or reason for each of these things?
        iii. How did they come to be important in this decision-making process?
4. I'd like to ask you about decisions regarding the promotion of current organizational employees.
    a. Would you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was consistent with your own values and beliefs?
        i. In what ways was this decision most consistent with your values and beliefs?
            1. How did these come to be important in your decision-making process?
            2. How did this consistency shape your decision-making?
    b. Would you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was inconsistent with your own values and beliefs?
        i. In what ways was this decision inconsistent with your values and beliefs?
            1. How did these come to be important in your decision-making process?
            2. How did this inconsistency shape your decision-making?
5. I would like to discuss your other high-stakes decision-making activities.
    a. In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions similar to decisions you make about employees?
    b. In what ways are your non–employee-related high-stakes decisions different from decisions you make about employees?
6. Is there anything else you think I should know, or you would like to share, that you believe would be helpful to my research?

APPENDIX F:

CORE AND PERIPHERAL MEMBER POSTMEETING

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Executives' Deep-Level Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study

Date of Interview: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Participant: _____

Job Title of Participant: _____

Thank you for agreeing to spend this time with me. You will be assigned a pseudonym, and your responses will be kept confidential. With your permission, this interview will be digitally recorded for the purposes of transcribing and analyzing the data for use in my dissertation. You may stop the interview at any time, for any reason.

To begin our interview, I would like you to know that my research interest is in understanding executive group composition and high-stakes decision-making. High-stakes decision-making occurs at the executive level of an organization. Decisions at this level include the determination of organizational strategy and structure, operational goals, the investment of assets including people and capital, and the values and philosophy of the organization. Such decision-making is arguably the most important leadership activity executives engage in, as these decisions have the potential for long-term, even far-reaching organizational and individual outcomes, including failures. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how values, beliefs, and cognitions impact these processes.

As a participant in the research study entitled "Executives' Deep-Level Attributes in High-Stakes Decision-Making: A Case Study," you will be asked to answer a few questions about your experiences as a participant in executive decision-making processes.

Questions

1. Introductory question/statement:
    a. Please tell me a bit about your role in the organization (for those who did not participate in the premeeting interviews).

b. As a follow-up to our previous interview (for those who participated in the premeeting interviews)

2. I'd like to talk about the promotional process, first in general. Please tell me a bit about your role before this meeting in the process of promoting and selecting individuals for roles at higher levels of leadership (director level and above).
   a. What criteria do you believe are most important in evaluating a candidate for promotion? Please describe them for me.
      i. What is the purpose or reason for using each of these criteria to evaluate candidates for promotion?
3. With respect to the regular PPDT[2] meeting, including the meeting we just had:
   a. How many PPDT meetings have you participated in and within what timeframe?
   b. Have the PPDT meeting(s) in general, including the one we just had, influenced your people-related decision-making?
      i. In what ways has this meeting influenced your people-related decision-making? Please describe.
4. Can you share an example of a promotion decision, presented during one of these meetings, that you felt was consistent with your values and beliefs?
   a. In what ways was this decision most consistent with your values and beliefs?
   b. How did your participation in the meeting shape your feelings about the proposed promotion?
5. Can you share an example of a promotion decision that you felt was inconsistent with your values and beliefs?
   a. In what ways was this decision inconsistent with your values and beliefs?
   b. How did your participation in the meeting shape your feelings about the proposed promotion?
6. What values, beliefs, and cognitions of the PPDT meeting participants were evident in the most recent meeting?
   a. How were values evident?
   b. How did they shape the decision-making?
   c. How were beliefs evident?
   d. How did they shape the decision-making?
   e. How were cognitions evident?
   f. How did they shape the decision-making?
7. Is there anything else you think I should know, or you would like to share, that you believe would be helpful to my research?

[2] This is the People and Promotions Decision Team, which was renamed the Talent Management Steering Committee on October 17, 2012.

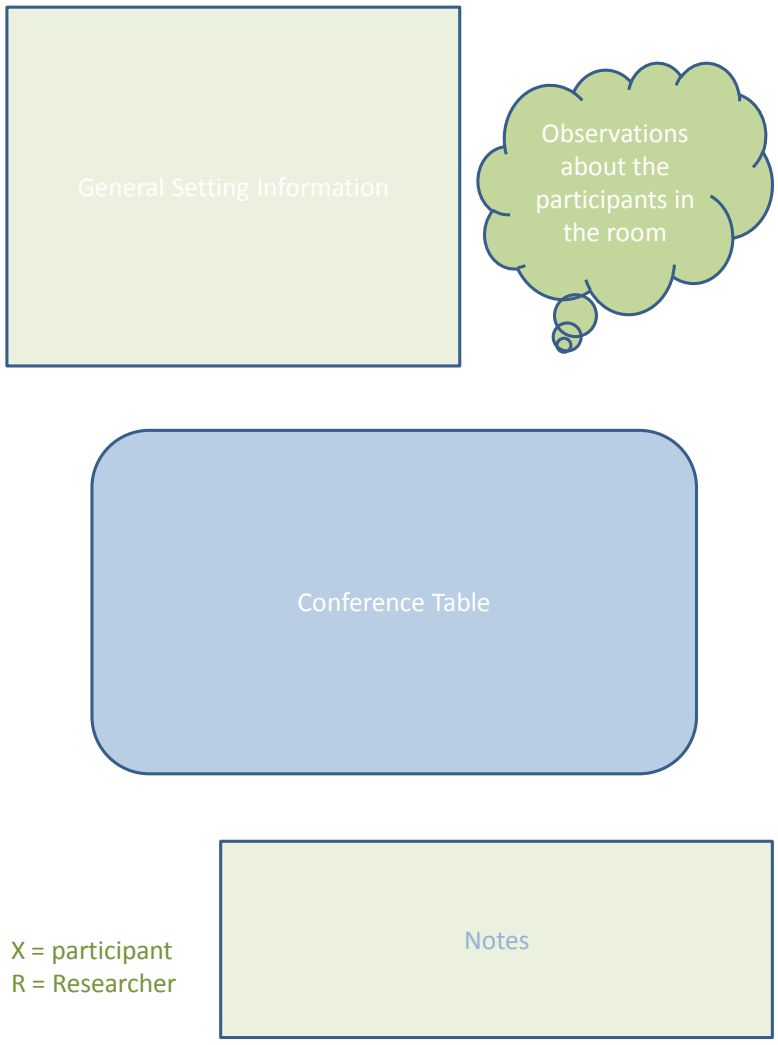
APPENDIX G:

OBSERVATION RECORD: DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Participants (coded): _____

Time/date/location: _____

Setting:



Area of Focus	Notes
What words or phrases are exchanged by the meeting participants that highlight participants' values?	
What words or phrases are exchanged by the meeting participants that highlight participants' beliefs?	
What words or phrases are exchanged by the meeting participants that highlight participants' cognitions?	
What are the pivotal statements of importance and/or critical moments in this meeting? Describe in detail.	
Other social interactions, nonverbal cues, and manifestation of previously identified items of interest related to the research study	

APPENDIX H:

ORIGINAL LIST OF CODES

Abilities—nontechnical	High-stakes decisions
Accomplishments	Impact on people decision-making
Adaptability/flexibility	Importance of people
Attributes	Independence or autonomy
Attributes: deep-level	Interplay
Attributes: surface-level	Leadership
Beliefs	Level of influence
Business need/requirement	Managing expectations
Business outcomes	Measures of success/performance
Cognitions	Mistakes
Collaboration	Options/contingency plans
Communication	Organization complexity
Complex thinking	Organization size
Complexity of role	Organization strategy
Compliance	Organization structure
Compromises/trade-offs	Organizational context
Confidence	Others' perspectives
Data or facts	Parity/equity
Dealing with conflict	Partnering with the business
Decision-making	Past behavior
Decision-making group process	Past leadership experience
Decision-making non-people related	People assessment
Decision-making people related	People development
Decision-making process	Personal satisfaction
Dedicated	Politics
Deep-level attributes	Problem solving
Demographics	Reflection
Devil's advocate	Relationship building
Discipline	Resource allocation
Diversity	Right person and right role
Do the right thing	Risk
Educational background	Role responsibilities
Efficiency	Selection criteria
Ego	Selection or deselection
Evolution of my thinking	Smart or intellectual horsepower
Executive groups	Surface-level attributes
Experience	Team leadership/building
Fit	Technical or functional skills
Globalization	Trust
Group heterogeneity	Values
Gut or instinct or intuition	Years of experience
Hard-working	Years with company

APPENDIX I:

FINAL LIST OF 31 CODES

1. Beliefs
2. Cognitions
3. Discipline
4. Diversity
5. Educational background
6. Experience
7. Fairness (also parity and equity)
8. Fit
9. General selection criteria
10. Group decision-making
11. Gut (instinct or intuition)
12. High-stakes decision-making
13. Importance of people
14. Influence of CEO
15. Interplay
16. Leadership criteria
17. Managerial criteria
18. Non–people-related decision-making
19. Organizational context
20. People-related decision-making
21. Personality criteria
22. Politics
23. Reflection
24. Risk
25. Role responsibilities
26. Selection criteria
27. Surface-level attributes
28. TMSC meeting
29. Values
30. Years with company
31. Years of experience