

DISSERTATION

KUWAITI FEMALE LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES:
THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON THEIR LEADERSHIP
IN ORGANIZATIONS

Submitted by

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY OMAYMAH AL-SUWAIHEL ENTITLED KUWAITI FEMALE LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES: THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON THEIR LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

KUWAITI FEMALE LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES: THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON THEIR LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

This research reveals the interactions between the Kuwaiti culture, gender, and leadership from the perspective of 5 Kuwaiti female leaders. The primary focus of the research is to contribute to the literature, currently lacking, that discusses the phenomenon of female leadership development in the State of Kuwait.

Recently, the number of Kuwaiti females seeking leadership positions has been increasing in governmental and non-governmental organizations. This development has its challenges, given some of the barriers that exist relative to some aspects of Kuwaiti culture, gender roles, and people's perceptions about female leaders.

Within a qualitative design approach and narrative inquiry methodology, I interviewed 5 Kuwaiti females who shared their stories about their personal and professional experiences about the interactions between culture, gender, and leadership. The analysis and interpretation of this research uncovered two key findings: (a) the influence of Kuwaiti culture on female leadership and (b) the commitment of these female leaders to have a positive impact on their culture. The development of female leadership within Kuwait represents a collaborative effort by all the country's female leaders. As this research shows, these female leaders took advantage of every opportunity to prove their capabilities as leaders who deserve to serve effectively beside male leaders.

The research data include some recommendations that can provide significant support for the development of female leaders, not only in the State of Kuwait, but also in other countries that could benefit from such progress. In addition, this project includes some implications for further research studies focused on issues related to the interactions between female leadership and cultural influences.

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DEDICATION

I first want to gratefully thank Almighty Allah for all blessings, then my greatest appreciation is to my husband, Sami; my dream wouldn't be attained without your support and motivation. I am also grateful to my daughter, Ruby; I appreciate your patience and bravery to be away from me all these years. To my father's soul, my mother, brothers, and sisters, thank you for your powerful support with love and care during my dissertation journey. I am proud of having you all as my heroes who have loved and encouraged me to accomplish my goal.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Researcher's Perspective

I am a Kuwaiti woman who came to the United States in 2004 to study for my Ph.D. in Education. Ten years ago, I could not have imagined that I would leave my family to study abroad. Different factors such as culture, traditions, religion, social life, and homesickness would have kept me in Kuwait. I faced numerous barriers in Kuwait to achieve my goal. Although I had been an excellent student in my undergraduate and master's degree programs, I faced discrimination when I applied for a scholarship to attend a university in the United States. I had to overcome barriers placed by male Kuwaiti leaders who had the authority to make decisions based on their limited perceptions of my intellectual, religious, and political orientations.

In 2004, I struggled with the sponsors to approve a graduate program in a school to which I had been accepted. Three universities admitted me as a graduate student; however, the sponsors postponed my requests to start the program. In 2005, the sponsors terminated the scholarship without clear reasons, even though my GPA was 4.00. However, nothing could stop my dream, and I continued my program with my husband's financial support. In retrospect, my experiences through this process would play an important part in my goal to receive my Ph.D. degree.

Thus, when I thought about a research topic or focus for my dissertation, the first idea that crossed my mind was the political rights of Kuwaiti females. As I watched the roles of Kuwaiti females expand, I also noticed the impact of these different perspectives

about these changes via newspapers and my friends' perceptions. It seemed to me that social, political, religious, and cultural factors were the most important influences, either positively or negatively, in improving the Kuwaiti females' positions in leadership. As a Kuwaiti woman, I felt proud when the government of Kuwait granted females the right to vote and to stand in Parliament alongside men. This major change occurred in 2005. More recently, I had noticed that the international media was focusing on the perspective of females from the Middle East and the different factors that influence political changes. As news of the evolving status of Kuwaiti females continued, my friends and instructors in the United States encouraged me to focus on how culture influences female leadership in Kuwait. In addition, just as my family had deeply supported me, I wished to support and motivate other females to share their experiences and show the whole world how strong and patient they have been throughout their tough times, and how they need a fair opportunity to also assume governmental responsibilities.

Frequently, people ask me questions about life at home, females' status in Kuwait, culture shock, and the purpose of my being away from home and family. I always answer them, "I have a dream that I believe one day will become real." My dream is to achieve a Ph.D. degree, to have the opportunity as a female to obtain a university-level teaching position, and to be seen as qualified to be an effective leader. I have always desired to be different from those who fulfill the traditional Kuwaiti female role, and I strive to obtain the next goal and succeed. Because of this viewpoint, my friends call me Miss "O," as in Outstanding Omaymah. I have the spirit that always tells me, One day, your life will start again, new every day. As a Kuwaiti female, my culture has had an impact

on me. Similarly, this study focuses on female leadership and the influence of the Kuwait culture on the country's females who become leaders.

Background

The literature I reviewed on leadership discussed several concepts: styles, processes, perspectives, and strategies (Giessner & Van Knippenberg, 2008; Hare, Koenigs, & Hare, 1997). Kotter (1996) defined *leadership* as a set of processes that establishes the direction, develops the vision, and produces the strategies for making changes needed to achieve that vision. Some authors have suggested that gifted leadership occurs “where heart and head—feeling and thought—meet” (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002, p. 26).

It is possible to define *leader* as a person who has authority to manage an organization, lead meetings, and make decisions by sharing with others the thoughts, abilities, and communication skills to help them understand tasks, develop their professional experiences, and encourage their creativity (Fertman & Van Lindin, 1999). In addition, Wheatley (1992) claimed that a leader is one who has been appointed for the needs and position that he or she is to handle, control, manage, and organize. Therefore, when an organization searches to find a leader, *who*, *when*, and *why* are the questions that it should follow and for which it should have appropriate answers in order to appoint that leader (1992). From my course work, I have come to understand that leaders bring with them individual characteristics that result in effectiveness. Thus, researchers have examined leaders' personal characteristics, including their behaviors, styles, gender, skills, and effectiveness. In addition, researchers have developed theories about how

these factors correlate with or influence how leaders demonstrate effective leadership in their particular work environments.

Typically, many factors influence leadership, such as gender roles, culture, beliefs and practices, social dynamics, and the workplace environment (Collard & Reynolds, 2005). From my course work and readings, I have realized that *gender role* seems to be the systematic social characteristic that a particular culture associates with the masculine and feminine. Gender roles have been differentiated on factors such as age or type of measurement more than on the psychological differences between men and women (Hyde, 2005).

Many assumptions have been made, however, about the differences between men and women, such as brain size and physical abilities. Similarities and differences in gender-role perceptions might influence how societies fill leadership positions within organizations. Collard and Reynolds (2005) found differences between male and female leadership in which males saw themselves as stronger leaders and more supported at work than female leaders saw themselves. However, Al-Mughni (1993) pointed out that both men and women have similar characteristics in terms of the abilities to think and feel, and their morality, wisdom, and intelligence. Where the differences did appear was in the tendency for males to exert power and control more often, and for females to have more responsibilities for the family, such as household duties, child rearing, and meal preparation (Al-Mughni, 1993; Collard & Reynolds, 2005). Collard and Reynolds claimed that, in terms of leadership, there were no great differences between males and females unless males acted on their tendency to exert power and control. Conversely,

women were different from men in the past by having more responsibilities for their families, as housewives who raise children and cook.

Although females have been working to develop their status in positions of leadership, they hold a much smaller percentage of upper-management positions than males did (Broadbridge, 2004). For example, some research found that, in the United States, females hold 16.4% of top management positions; in Germany, females hold only 6.9% of top management jobs (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Some higher authorities throughout the world have attempted to ensure social justice by developing equal opportunities for males and females, thereby reducing the internal and external influences that have created barriers to leadership opportunities for either gender. Yet, female leaders have been more likely to face discrimination, especially in work environments such as industry (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006).

Generally, culture has had an impact upon leadership and gender roles, and every society has had its own definitions of effective leadership and its own distinct attitudes toward leaders. The culture has determined these attitudes (House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002). Lederach (1995) defined culture as “the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them” (p. 9). He said that the shared knowledge and schemes were different in each culture, and that they influenced the expectations of leadership. The culture of Kuwait has been no exception.

Historically, most Kuwaiti females were housewives, responsible for taking care of their families while their spouses traveled for business (Tetreault, 2001). A small minority of Kuwaiti females had the opportunity to improve their education and go on to

hold essential positions in government departments, such as positions in primary and higher education, health-related fields, engineering, politics, diplomacy, and law (Al-Mughni, 1993; Rizzo, 2005). In the past century, and particularly in the past two decades, Kuwaiti females have improved their skills and, for example, risen to positions as ambassadors and to roles as educational administrators and business managers. They have also played a role in international conferences (e.g., UN conferences in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980, and in Nairobi in 1985). In these positions, they have participated beside men and demonstrated the accomplishment of Kuwaiti females in organizations (Al-Mughni, 1993). Furthermore, the progress in democratization and social development in Kuwait has created opportunities for females to hold different organizational leadership roles in formal groups at the local, neighborhood, and national levels (Rizzo, 2005). Although the opportunity for women to participate in leadership positions has increased, the attitudes toward females in those leadership positions vary among the Kuwaiti people, depending on the cultural backgrounds of male leaders.

In 1999, the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, took major steps to improve the political status of Kuwaiti females. For example, he established convincing agreements with government entities, including Parliament, to bridge the gap between the different viewpoints. Approximately 4 years later, Emir issued a royal decree granting Kuwaiti females equal rights (Al-Kazi, Lubna, Vital Voices). Kuwaiti females were granted the right to vote and to stand in Parliament on the 16th of May, 2005 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). They subsequently participated in elections for the first time in June 2006. In contrast, men had been eligible to vote since 1963 (Al-Mughni, 1993). In the June 2006 election, 28 female candidates ran for Parliament, but none of

them had a chance to win (*CNN Arabic*, 2006). A year later, the first woman to hold a position in the Kuwaiti government was appointed as both Minister of Planning and Minister of Administrative Development (Freedom House, 2006). One year later, females were appointed to the posts of Minister of Communications, Minister of Health, and Minister of Education (*People's Daily Online*, 2007).

To keep peace among the members of Parliament and safeguard national unity from internal division, a phenomenon that had been threatening the stability of the government, the Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah approved a decree to dissolve the Parliament of Kuwait on March 19, 2008 (*KUNA*, 2008). He decreed that the next election would be held on May 17, 2008, and females would have a second chance to participate (*KUNA*, 2008).

After years of struggle, the expansion of political participation by females has led to a new vision for the role of females in Kuwaiti society. But these changes have not been without controversy. The changes have been debated formally by government and elected officials in Parliament, and informally by Kuwaiti citizens at social gatherings and in the course of everyday conversations. The many aspects of Kuwaiti culture have influenced these formal and informal discussions. In other words, arguments about female leadership and the impact of culture on that leadership are enduring.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify how Kuwait female leaders perceive the cultural influences on their personal and professional experiences in leadership positions. Thus, this study presents Kuwaiti female leaders' perspectives on the interactions of the Kuwaiti culture, gender, and leadership in governmental and non-governmental

organizations, and recounts their journeys as they have risen to higher leadership positions.

Research Questions

The present study sought answers to several sub-questions that support the central research question. The central question is: How do Kuwaiti female leaders experience the impact of culture on their leadership?

The research sub-questions are

- How do female leaders' culturally based personal experiences influence their leadership?
- How do female leaders' culturally based professional experiences influence their approach to leadership?
- What new cultural experiences are female leaders gaining from their positions?

Significance of the Study

Studies in the literature presented various points of view regarding the interactions of leadership, culture, and gender. Some studies examined the influence of culture on leadership and gender in general, while others investigated how culture had affected leadership in specific organizations or regions. Such differences between studies are attributable to many factors, such as the cultural differences, masculine and feminine orientations, a variety of participants' perspectives, and social class. Researchers declared that a culture's values and traditions have an impact on leadership and on leaders' behaviors (House & Aditya, 1997). In other words, leadership and practices are considered a reflection of a culture's concepts that constitute the individuality of each

society. Therefore, because Kuwait has its own cultural values and concepts, it is important to investigate the influence of Kuwaiti culture on female leadership in that country to better understand similarities and differences between leadership across cultures.

Moreover, the interactions of leadership, gender, and culture are an interesting concept for many studies in different parts of the world. For example, Weiner (2005) examined the influence of leadership and gender differences individually and collectively in the United States and Mexico. Another example is the study of Kvaerner (1999) in Oslo that examined the interaction of gender and promotion within medical leadership. In addition, Cellar, Sidle, Goudy, and O'Brien (2001) investigated the interactions of gender and leadership from Midwestern urban university students' perspectives. Related to Arabic culture, Atiyyah (1992) reviewed the results of research published in Arabic. These studies discussed the relationship between managers' styles in different Arab cultures, in countries such as Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Jordan. Atiyyah found that more studies with larger samples were needed to explain the characteristics of different cultures across Arab countries that might have an impact on the leadership practices of Arab managers. Moreover, he claimed that Arab cultural norms and values are consistent with the leadership practices of managers.

Overall, the findings in studies about the interactions of culture, gender, and leadership varied among different regions and organizations. In addition, because a culture's values and practices influence leadership, more studies are needed to focus on local cultures (e.g., Arab and Islamic) to specify the findings and implications

(Kabasakal, 2001). In addition, research about the influence of Middle-Eastern culture especially that of Kuwait, on female leadership is extremely limited.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter includes the following five topics: (a) overview of leadership, (b) gender and leadership, different views; (c) the interactions of culture, gender, and leadership; (d) appreciation of the Kuwaiti culture, and (e) awareness of the roles of Kuwaiti females.

Overview of Leadership

To understand the concept of leadership as it relates to this study, I will briefly highlight some of the key literature that focused on the definition of leadership. The research discussed the concept of leadership from different perspectives, such as the leader's character, organizational management skills, and relationship with personnel.

Leadership is a concept that has been difficult to define over the decades (Donald, Dale, & Sonya, 2006). During the 1800s and through the 1930s, leadership theories focused on control and power; as an example, the "Great Man" theory emphasized that leaders are born, not made (2006). Thus, the characteristics of leaders originally were considered to be part of the person's genetics, which then developed through life experiences and other professional training courses. Later on, in the 1940s through the 1960s, leadership theories focused on the social role of leaders within groups and organizations. In addition, these theories proposed that leadership had multiple attributes that leaders should be concerned about—attributes such as task oriented, achievement oriented, supportive, and participative. These attributes took into consideration each leader's personal traits and characteristics, and the organization's rules and culture

(2006). Later, in the 1970s, views of leadership transformed to focus more on the organization's behaviors and the science of management. The leadership concept in the 1980s became more associated with the principle-based relationship between leaders and followers, and a new leadership definition related to "vision" and responsibility of leaders evolved (2006). Currently, leadership concepts reflect a theme of individual perceptions, in which the perceptions of both leaders and followers depend on their specific situations and individual experiences.

Hence, over time, the concept of leadership has developed independently based on various research theories. In addition, Donald, Dale, and Sonya (2006) have suggested that effective leadership involves aspects such as self-awareness, organization of ongoing communication and reinforcement, a shared future vision, and some motivating action.

Researchers also have looked at leadership as it relates to the dynamic between the leader and the organization, and how the leader might control the organization by rule and structure. For example, Wheatley (1992) suggested that leadership is designed to be appropriate for the organization's tasks, work schedules, and business needs. Wheatley also offered the following observations and claims: Some organizations have their own procedures and protocols to control employees and policies by requiring employees to follow strict regulations and guidelines (1992). In addition to strict guidelines, some organizations keep their employees isolated within their departments, with no human connections other than those with their immediate colleagues. Other organizations welcome their new employees by giving them a list of guidelines they should follow and offenses they must avoid or they could be fired (1992). In contrast, Manning and Haddock (1989) encouraged leaders to inspire their team and motivate them to reach the

organization's goals. To effectively lead the team, leaders were responsible for treating employees equally, setting a good example, interacting with and benefiting from employees' ideas, clarifying goals, and acting positively (1989). Therefore, an effective leader was a person who had charisma that attracted others to follow, as a magnet attracts certain substances (Adams & Yoder, 1985).

Furthermore, leaders themselves during this period characterized various leadership styles in the respect that each leader had his or her own style that worked, each attained the organization's goals, and each satisfied the workers (Manning & Haddock, 1989). Having an effective leadership style during this time meant leaders identified their goals and the organization's objectives; demonstrated productivity; provided open communication channels; and designed appropriate performance criteria that fit with the time, funding, quantity, and quality of the specified goals (1989).

The research literature discussed leadership as it relates to style and behaviors. For example, the literature suggested that particular behaviors leaders exhibit are effective in motivating those who report to them. Smith (2006) argued that leadership influences followers' thinking, attitudes, and behaviors. Yet leadership behaviors also vary according to each leader's particular reactions to situations, depending on gender, culture, knowledge, experiences, communication skills, and relationships; and those same elements shape leaders' behaviors. Some of these behaviors often are influenced by differing cultural expectations for men and women. Smith (2006) added that leadership behaviors are linked to two categories: task behaviors, which concentrate on attaining the organization's objectives (autocratic structure), and relationship behaviors, which are

concerned with developing a healthy atmosphere where personnel feel more comfortable (democratic structure).

Moreover, according to the literature, because leadership is conceptually connected with behaviors, leaders can improve their productivity, and their professional and personal experiences, by following 10 principles. Some of these principles deal with making timely decisions, caring about one's followers, taking responsibility, and leading authentically (Morgan & Lynch, 2006). Leaders who follow these principles will notice a difference in their personal relationships and professional achievements.

In addition, the literature about leadership style focused on how leaders' behaviors obviously have had an impact on followers, and these behaviors have been considered as part of their leadership style (Adams & Yoder, 1985). So from the behaviorist view, leadership has been viewed as the leader's behavior that directs followers to stick to procedures to attain objectives (1985). Within this view, effective leadership depends upon how leaders match the appropriate style with the situational contingency they are experiencing (1985). Thus, "the key to effective leadership is the degree to which [the] leader's style and the properties of the situation are well matched" (p. 16). Furthermore, Adams and Yoder (1985) confirmed that the leader's personality and character influence leadership, and these traits reflect the differences between leaders and followers.

One author (Hardwick, 2008) could not define the concept of leadership without addressing the concept of followership. From this view, leadership is determined by leaders and their followers, and effective leaders are those who do have followers. Hardwick stated that recently several studies pertain to personal characteristics that

connect leadership and effective followership. These connections are integrity, charisma, and vision (2008). Thus, when followers possess these characteristics, leaders become effective.

Ohm (2006) emphasized definitions that combine leadership and leading with the leader's character. According to Ohm, leadership is defined as *influence*. This definition suggests that, in one respect, leaders influence followers and consumers to bring about significant change in the organization's culture, and to positively increase the organization's achievement. In addition, leaders are working more than talking (2006); so this consideration of effective leadership focuses on practical application and achievement, not just the formation of plans and strategies. Moreover, Ohm pointed out that one characteristic of effective leaders has to do with how successfully they empower followers.

According to Yukle (1991), leadership encompasses a broad characterization that includes several processes: determining the group's or organization's objectives, motivating task behavior to achieve those objectives, and influencing group unity and the culture. Yukle's definition focused on the multiple processes that a leader manages, and that the leader's ability to maintain the unity of the group and influence its culture is key (1991).

Some researchers defined leadership as skills that leaders should embrace to manage their organizations. Bunderson (2008) declared that leadership develops through three critical skills: thinking skills, relating skills, and achieving skills. Thinking skills improve the leader's characteristics to be a good planner, organizer, problem solver, and decision maker. Relating skills enhance the leader's ability to be a good communicator

with (and listener to) others, and to motivate followers and consumers. The third skill, focused on achieving, deals with the leader's self-management and personal accountability in achieving goals.

Additionally, effective leadership consists of three major skills referred to in the literature as the "3 Ds": decision making, delegation, and diplomacy (Marotta, 2007). According to Marotta, the three Ds complete each other and interact to create effective leadership. Decision-making skills direct the organization, its supportive personnel, and the superiors to accomplish their objectives. Leaders should develop a decision-making strategy to use when they present the organization's vision, discuss personnel issues, and focus on problem solving.

The second skill is delegation. In practicing this skill, leaders become personally involved to delegate the responsibilities that might take the staff time to process or handle. This skill benefits the organization by saving leaders' time; instead, leaders spend the time initially training personnel in how to handle these tasks and attain the expected quality and outcome. Thus, leaders should learn the proper delegation skills and specific techniques to enhance their staff's accomplishment of the tasks.

The third skill is diplomacy. According to Marotta, because diplomacy is dealing with communications and people, developing this skill would effectively improve the other two skills (Marotta, 2007).

Some researchers, such as Rhode (2003), argued that leadership characteristics are developed by learning. Rhode indicated that effective leadership is partially learned, since the correlation between leadership and learning is strong. Therefore, leaders learn from social situations to improve their professional and personal experiences by

observing and interacting with others; these situations enhance their leadership style and effective growth as leaders (2003).

Gender and Leadership, Different Views

Masculinity and femininity are differentiated by their unique traits, according to Weiner (2005). Masculinity is characterized by rationality, hostility, rivalry, and technical ability, while femininity is characterized by empathy, receptivity, and upbringing. Weiner has argued that the Western societies value the masculine over the feminine.

Using snowball sampling, Spain (2006) interviewed eight female leaders from different educational organizations in the eastern United States. The study examined how the life experiences of female leaders in educational organizations led to differences in their institutional climates and cultures. One of the findings of this research was the discrimination the female leaders faced in terms of gender, age, and salary. The female leaders were principals, superintendents, deans, department chairs, and directors of centers; they applied their leadership styles as a challenge, without blocking their success. Although the female leaders in education held fewer positions than males, they were successful in their work and had abilities that enabled them to achieve their goals. The participants shared their special experiences in dealing with the differences between the educational levels (K–12) and school cultures, within higher education, and in the individual work climates within each educational institution. Furthermore, the study found that male colleagues treated their female counterparts differently. Female leaders tended to be advisors to others, risk takers in their job, and familiar with leadership styles. The study indicated that female leaders adapted their leadership styles to fit the

organization's culture, and they made better use of their previous experiences in a new work environment (2006).

To determine the impact of gender on leadership, Twombly (1998) investigated the lives of professional Latin American females. The researcher interviewed 18 of 25 female leaders at Costa Rica University (UCR). The women indicated that they worked twice as hard as male leaders to prove their leadership skills and advance within the organization. They felt that men had better chances just by being men. The females held various leadership positions, including those of Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Vice-President of Community Outreach, and Director of the University Council. These participants were successful either as students in most majors or in their careers as leaders. The study findings indicated that young females appreciated their husbands' support in improving their abilities to hold administrative positions. In addition, these female leaders in UCR had greater responsibilities in their larger communities than their male colleagues did. For instance, cultural expectations that females would fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and family members sometimes delayed their advancement as leaders. The female participants in the study suggested that female leaders might advance to higher positions if they were free from family responsibilities; in other words, if they were single or divorced.

Scott (2005) designed quantitative and qualitative data procedures to describe the leadership styles and philosophies of female police officials who worked in the Phoenix, Arizona Police Department. The sample was 36 female leaders, and Scott interviewed them to identify their leadership styles. Female officers sought supervisory positions even though they faced a masculine environment that resisted their advancement. The study

recommended that police organizations needed more training programs to improve the leadership tactics of female leaders to deal with gender barriers.

In another study, Williams (2005) investigated the differences among elementary school principals' awareness and implementations of leadership standards in specific organizational areas: vision, relationship, culture, management, ethics, fairness, and social and political awareness. Within the quantitative method, Williams developed a questionnaire, which she administered to a sample of 349 female principals. The research results indicated that more than two-thirds (68%) of the women in the sample regarded themselves at a higher level in vision, ethics, and integrity of learning than they regarded their male colleagues. Because of the sample limitations, the researcher recommended further studies to explore the differences between gender and leaders' perceptions toward leadership styles.

In looking at the influence of gender on leadership, Sered (1998) interviewed people from Okinawa Village, Japan to discuss the reason for females being appointed as religious leaders. She described the rise of women to religious leadership in Okinawa in the absence of a male elite religious gender ideology. The king had grown weary of poor leadership from the men of the Ryukyu Islands, men who were frequently inebriated and fighting one another. Consequently, he invited the women to assume important positions in religious rituals and take on other positions of religious leadership. In addition, the women, who were middle-aged and elderly, and were used to attending the rituals, tended to be far busier and work far harder than men who were elderly.

One study explored the influence of the voting franchise for women on the work experiences of women who held high positions in Kuwaiti government organizations

(Alsarraf, 2008). Within a qualitative design, Alsarraf interviewed 12 people—2 men and 10 women. The findings demonstrated that political participation exerted a positive influence on female leaders in government organizations. In addition, the female leaders experienced a positive influence in their work following the franchise because of the new political power that they had gained. Moreover, the study noted that females should be aware of their capabilities, communication skills, knowledge, and leadership competence in order to enhance their status.

To discover the difference between values expectations for effective male and female leaders, other researchers used a questionnaire of 26 items with 260 managers (130 males, 130 females) (Hare, Koenigs, & Hare, 1997). The questionnaire covered three sections: (a) dominant versus submissive, (b) friendly versus unfriendly, and (c) accepting task oriented versus opposing it. The study found that the task-oriented characteristic was associated with a male leadership style, while female leaders scored higher in being friendlier, identified as a female leadership style. However, both male and female managers who participated in the study displayed similar values on their jobs. Female leaders saw themselves as friendlier than male leaders, and coworkers preferred their female leaders to be friendlier, to match the female stereotype, rather than to follow the task-oriented leadership style.

According to John Gray, both male and female leaders can be effective team leaders; however, female leaders instinctively can use a teamwork approach, while males need to be taught (as cited in Wood, 1998). Furthermore, female leaders in general know about the employees' families and their out-of-office lives more than male leaders do. Therefore, female leaders are more attuned to their employees' motivational needs.

One issue the research has addressed is how gender influences or affects access to higher-level positions within the private and public sectors. Rhode (2003) suggests that, during recent decades, females have been developing their status and working their way to top positions. They also have been treated somewhat equally with males, even though they have encountered barriers with gender discrimination. However, the percentages of female leaders remain still generally lower than those of male leaders in terms of their presence in different fields, and in both the public and private sectors (2003). According to Rhodes, the shift to female leaders being equal to males in top management positions would take approximately 3 centuries (2003).

Relative to appointments to leadership positions, the research suggests that gender has its influences, enhancing the privilege of males to occupy such positions. Kvaerner (1999) reviewed the master file of the Norwegian Medical Association, which included almost all Norwegian physicians, to discover how gender affected the medical staff in terms of their assuming leadership positions in Oslo. The study included age, sex, specialty, and job categories for 13,844 non-retired Norwegian physicians (3,939 female, 10,131 male). The study concluded that female medical leaders did not reach higher positions as easily as their male counterparts (5.1% female leaders, 14.6% male leaders).

Gender and Leadership Style

Several studies examined multiple leadership styles from different perspectives, and how gender influenced leadership styles; the studies showed various results.

Following are some of these studies.

One meta-analysis examined the influence of gender on leadership style (Van Engen, 2004). Van Engen reviewed 26 studies from 1987 through 1999 that discussed the

influence of gender on leadership styles. These leadership styles were democratic, autocratic, transformational, interpersonal, and task-oriented. The analysis illustrated that females tended to use more democratic and transformational leadership styles than men did. However, no gender differences were found with the other leadership styles.

Another study used a quantitative method to compare male and female leadership styles (Chapman, 1975). Leadership and biographical questionnaires were developed: The study followed Fiedler's Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) questionnaire. The sample was randomly selected from one military and one civilian organization. The military sample included 146 males and 60 females, while the civilian sample included 49 males and 28 females. The study found no significant difference between male and female leadership styles as measured by the LPC instrument. However, women leaders tended to be more relationship oriented than men leaders.

A descriptive, quantitative study by Joyce (2005) examined the similarities and differences in leadership styles, sex roles, and academic culture characteristics among female leaders at various institution types. Seventy-five female leaders who occupied high positions (Presidents, Vice presidents, Provosts, and Deans) were selected as a purposive sample. Three questionnaires were developed to identify the relationships among the research variables: academic culture characteristics; leadership style; and sex-role characteristics, which the study clarified as masculine, feminine, and androgynous, for senior women administrators at four institutional types (Doctoral/Research Universities-Extensive, Master's Universities or Colleges, Baccalaureate-Liberal Arts, and Associate Colleges). The research design was cross-sectional, with comparisons among the four institutional types. In addition, the study used an explanatory ex post

facto research design to analyze the similarities and differences in leadership styles and sex-role characteristics by institution type.

The study had 11 variables. The independent variables were institutional type and characterization of academic culture as perceived by participants. Dependent variables were self-reported sex-role characteristics, and self-perceived leadership style. The study indicated that primary leadership styles were characterized by high relationship behaviors, which were considered as selling and participating. Therefore, in responses to the LEAD-Self instrument, women chose selling behavior, characterized by low task and high relation, as a primary leadership style nearly 70% of the time. Used less often were participating, characterized by high task and high relation (27.3% of the time); telling, characterized by high task and low relation, was used approximately 2.5% of the time; and delegating, characterized by low task and low relation, was used .6 % of the time.

In another study, Pfeffer (2008) examined the influence between the coach's gender and athletes' perceived satisfaction with the coach-player relationship. The study used standardized questionnaires to measure leader behavior. The participants were 150 female soccer players from 10 teams of the second and the third leagues and their coaches—5 female and 5 male. The study found that female coaches were less democratic and more socially supportive than male coaches. In addition, how athletes perceived their interactions with their coaches was related to the coach's gender and the level of competition.

Within the topic of the influence of gender on leadership styles is the issue of female leaders' abilities to balance professional and personal roles. Cook (2007) examined female leaders' experiences, and how they balanced their professional and

social roles as leaders, mothers, and wives. Cook chose a qualitative method and interviewed 3 female principals from Western states. The female principals who participated in this study had their work roles in addition to their family roles. These participants suggested that balancing both roles was a more challenging task for female leaders than male leaders. In addition, the study indicated that female leaders wore different hats during their daily routine: one as a mother, one as a wife, and one as a leader. The study suggested that female leaders also needed to know when they could switch their roles during their lives for the purpose of synchronizing their lives. In addition, the female leaders who participated in the study were supported by their families and their administrators.

The female leaders who participated in this study shared some important thoughts: Abby, one of the participants in Cook's study (2007), mentioned that her motivation was enhanced when she helped students succeed and prepared them for the twenty-first century. Betty, another participant in Cook's study (2007), had experience as a teacher, and she liked to help people. She worked with new teachers and encouraged the school staff to work cooperatively. As an effective principal, she accepted challenges to make a difference for others: students, parents, staff, and teachers.

Democratic Versus Autocratic Style

The democratic-autocratic style seems to be associated with gender stereotypes. Eagly, Karau, and Johnson (1992) used a meta-analysis to review 50 studies that examined leadership styles of principals across gender. Their results indicated that female principals scored higher than male principals in the task-oriented style. In addition, female principals implemented a more democratic and less autocratic style than male

principals. However, female principals who used a democratic style of leadership were rare (Thompson, 2002).

Some research (Thompson, 2002) suggested a paradox in that some qualities of women leaders that led to successful anti-dictatorship efforts in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Phillipines also interfered with achieving democracy in these regions. The men who tried to defeat these new governments believed that women should serve in figurehead roles but not actually govern. And when these female leaders and their daughters fought for justice for the men in their families who had become martyrs in the struggles for democracy, their opponents accused them of using their political influence for revenge. As a result, some of these female leaders were charged with leadership that was biased toward their personal, rather than their country's, best interests.

One study (Cellar et al., 2001) looked at the relationship between leadership style, gender of leader, follower agreeableness, and leader effectiveness. The study investigated the interactions of several independent variables (autocratic versus democratic leadership style, male versus female leaders, high versus low subordinate agreeableness) with three dependent variables (leader evaluation, rated effort, task interest). From a large Midwestern urban university, 165 undergraduate students participated (99 women, 62 men, 4 unspecified). Participants were randomly assigned to view one of four videotapes showing autocratic or democratic leadership style that a male or female presented. Then, participants rated the effectiveness of the leader, and their experience expectation in the future if they were to work with a leader who had a similar leadership style to that of the leader on the videotape. The study found that leadership style had a significant negative correlation with ratings of leader effectiveness: Higher scores on the leader-style measure

indicated a more autocratic leadership style. In addition, high-agreeableness participants tended to rate democratic leaders higher than autocratic leaders, while participants low on agreeableness rated autocratic leaders as more effective. Moreover, the study revealed a significant interaction of leader style by leader gender ($F(1,152) = 3.90, p < .05$). In other words, ratings of effectiveness by participants low in agreeableness were lower for female leaders using an autocratic style of leadership and male leaders using a democratic leadership style. Overall, leader sex had no effect on ratings of leader effectiveness, even though female leaders were rated as being less effective when they used an autocratic style of leadership. Participants tended to be more motivated when the leader was democratic, regardless of the leader's gender.

In conclusion, these studies indicated differences with findings that supported various types of female leadership styles, depending on the studies' limitations. In other words, Joyce (2005) found that the majority of female leaders tended to use more democratic than autocratic approaches of management, while Thompson (2002) stated that female leaders who used the democratic style were rare. In addition, from the college students' perspectives as future followers, they preferred to work with democratic leaders (Cellar et al., 2001).

Agentic Versus Communal Style

Social cognition theory defines the *agentic* leadership style as a method of action that reflects personality traits related to agency (Mosher & Danoff-Burg, 2005).

According to Blatt, *agency* refers to the central themes of "self-protection, self-assertion, self-expansion, and an urge to master the environment and make it one's own" (as cited in Singer, 1990, p. 300). Scott and Brown (2006) examined whether gender bias arises

during the encoding of leadership behaviors. They used quantitative methods and developed three studies to meet the research objectives (study 1, study 2a, and study 2b). Study 1 tested how gender influenced the encoding of leadership behaviors into participants' underlying prototypical trait concepts. The population was 139 Canadian University undergraduate students (81 females and 58 males). This study found that participants faced difficulties with encoding leadership behaviors when the leader was female. Study 2 investigated whether participants would encode leadership behaviors differently for males than for females. Forty-seven students from a large Canadian University were recruited to participate in study 2a, and 82 students were recruited to participate in study 2b. Both studies found that female leaders had less accessible agentic leadership than males. Men focused on self and autonomy, while women focused on people and relations. However, there was no significant difference between genders in the encoding of communal traits. The research recognized some limitations—i.e., participants' young age, lack of information about the differences of leader prototype aspects even though the pilot study supported these aspects, and the effects of the research environment (Mosher & Danoff-Burg, 2005).

Koch (2004) presented a study that focused on the influence of the leader's gender in his or her leadership. The study examined the communicative construction and the agentic and communal style of gender in leadership positions. The research sample included 110 participants; (67 women, and 42 men). This study indicated that women were rated higher on agentic traits than men. In addition, men were rated higher on communal traits than women.

Within her article, Eagly (2007) claimed that females in the United States recently were improving their leadership skills, and that they achieved more effective leadership styles than males. However, some females experienced more obstacles than males to become leaders, in terms of male-dominated leadership. She argued that female leaders had a conflict between their roles as women and their roles as leaders. “In general, people expected and preferred that women be communal, manifesting traits such as kindness, concern for others, warmth and gentleness and that men be agentic, manifesting traits such as confidence, aggressiveness, and self-direction” (p. 4).

As part of their studies that focused on the development of female leadership, Murray and Simmons (1994) investigated the connection between women’s leadership styles and site-based management. These researchers suggested that leaders who desire to develop their leadership abilities need to improve their interpersonal skills to deal with followers. The study indicated that these interpersonal characteristics are key in developing the leadership style of administrators, especially females. Additionally, they recommended that future female administrators have a cooperative style, and the ability to empower their followers.

Participative Versus Directive Style

Some researchers discussed the directive and the participative leadership styles and how leaders, followers, and organizations would benefit when these styles are implemented. Somech (2005) shared a study that examined the influence of a directive leadership approach as compared with a participative leadership approach on school-staff teams’ motivational mechanisms (empowerment and organizational commitment) and effectiveness (team in-role performance and team innovation). Within a quantitative

method, Somech selected 140 teams. The study found a positive relationship between directive leadership and organizational commitment. In addition, there was a positive relationship between directive leadership and school-staff team in role performance. The results also illustrated a positive relationship between participative leadership and teachers' empowerment, and a positive relationship between participative leadership and school-staff team innovation.

Another study that relates to participative and directive leadership style was one by Skinner (2006). The study investigated the impact of the climate surrounding leadership and the climate of the organizations on females' perspectives of their fit in leadership roles. The study variables were female-friendly participative leadership style, organizational tolerance for sexual harassment, and family-supportive organizational perceptions. Skinner administered the survey to 404 adult workers (203 females and 201 males). The findings showed a positive relationship between participative decision making and perception of fit with leadership ($r = .51, p < .001$). In addition, there were no differences between males and females regarding motivation for leadership and pursuit of advancement opportunities, especially promotion opportunities. Moreover, females thrived in participative environments, and they preferred to act participatively. Furthermore, females who had higher perceptions of participative leadership style were positively related to higher perceptions of fit.

According to Judy Rosener, faculty member at the University of California's Graduate School of Management and author of *Workforce America*, female leaders chose a participative style to encourage and persuade followers to achieve their objectives (Chapman, 1997). Chapman declared that female leaders mostly encouraged followers to

participate, and that they shared power and information with them to positively reflect their belief and motivate them to work properly to benefit themselves and their organizations (1997). Female leaders usually tend to apply the participative leadership style because they believe that when followers work in an appropriate environment and feel good about themselves, their performance will be enhanced.

Female leaders succeed as well as male leaders by using a participatory leadership style (Richardson, 1999). For the most part, according to Richardson, female leaders choose a participative leadership style rather than a directive style. However, she also stated that one woman preferred the directive style over the participative style because of the directive style's effectiveness.

Based on the studies above, there seem to be differences between women and men in terms of their leadership styles that sometimes predict a better fit for females or males. Furthermore, some research (Skinner, 2006) has indicated that female leaders tend to be more participative than directive in their leadership styles. However, other research (Somech, 2005) has demonstrated that employing the directive style probably improves staff performance.

Leadership Communication Style

Some researchers have studied the effect of gender on leadership styles related to communication, and these researchers also have shared their perspectives and findings. For example, Jurczak (2006) pointed out differences between male and female communication styles, suggesting that males use an assertive style while females use a tentative style.

Another study (Beasley, 2005) explored whether good communication is gender sensitive by examining the different dynamics of male and female leadership styles in work environments. The researcher indicated that the most effective leadership style for both male and female leaders would be related to their communication style. In addition, the study demonstrated that leadership styles are influenced by differences in male and female communication styles. Males appear to communicate in a hierarchical and goal-oriented style, which was viewed as authoritative, aggressive, decisive, and efficient. However, females appear to communicate emotionally “with a focus on process and the engagement of others in reaching goals and making decisions” (p. 91). Women tend to be good listeners while men tend to be decision makers. Beasley (2005) declared that men are likely faster than women when it comes to making decisions. However, women are more willing to ask questions. In general, women prefer to work with other women in a level, ‘dead-even’ style, or at different levels of authority. In addition, when the leaders know the appropriate choice of communication styles to meet the situation’s need and the followers’ talents, they can become effective leaders and empower their personnel to enhance their productivity to reach the organization’s objectives.

In summary, the studies above investigated the influence of gender on leadership styles. The results of the studies minimized the influence of gender on leadership styles, within the context of the studies’ limitations. Additionally, the studies indicated that female leaders are mostly identified by high-relationship orientations with their organizations’ members. Furthermore, female leaders hold more feminine roles than males, which means their tasks become increasingly challenging as they assume more

leadership duties at work. Furthermore, the studies demonstrated various leadership styles that are influenced by gender.

Interactions Between Leadership, Gender, and Culture

Within society, human identity is closely associated with gender. Stereotypes about gender also have an impact on what people believe, their behaviors, and their self-concepts—whether or not they're aware of that effect (Rhode, 2003). These same gender stereotypes influence how individuals view leadership. They can have a negative impact on the progress of women as leaders (2003).

Masculine and feminine orientations are related to cultures; but, in general, masculinity is more highly valued (Wiener, 2005). In cultures that value masculinity more highly, men dominate in relationships with women (2005). In other words, culture influences how masculinity and femininity are seen within the culture. Some research validated the stereotypes that characterize masculine and feminine leadership; males were described more by aggressiveness, while female leadership was characterized more by assertiveness (Smith, 2006).

In one of the studies that investigated the influence of culture and gender on leadership style, Smith (2006) examined the effects of critical life events on Appalachian women as leaders. The study selected a convenience sample of past and current executive MBA female students from West Virginia University; the target sample was 347. The study included five hypotheses that met critical life events: education, gender bias, family/work issues, class, and traumatic events (family violence). These hypotheses were moderated by culture-style fit and self-actualization, and women's leadership influence. The study found that critical life events influenced Appalachian women's leadership as

those events related to their education and gender bias. The critical life events based on gender, environment, and education in the study referred to the women's acquisition of knowledge through learning (school, higher institution).

Another study examined the influence of culture on leadership practices in three countries: the United States, Slovenia, and Nigeria (Zagorsek, Jaklic, & Stough, 2004). The leadership practices included challenging the process; inspiring a shared vision; enabling others to act, which was defined as fostering collaboration, and empowering and strengthening others; modeling the way, which was defined as practicing values; setting an example; and encouraging the hearth, which was defined as giving positive feedback, recognizing individual contributions, and celebrating team accomplishments. The sample consisted of 351 MBA students in the respective countries (110 MBA students from the United States, 105 MBA students from Nigeria, and 134 MBA and master's degree students from Slovenia). The study found that culture had a direct impact on differences in the leadership practices and influence of male and female leaders. These differences were greatest for Nigerian respondents and smallest for Slovenian MBA students. Also, there were almost no differences between leadership styles of male and female leaders in Slovenia, except males scored higher in challenging the current leadership practices. However, in the United States, women scored higher in participative leadership styles; and in Nigeria, men scored much higher than women in all leadership practices. In general, this study aligns with other gender and leadership research that has found female leaders use participative, consulting, and empowering leadership styles more often than male leaders. The study concluded that, within the culture contingent, gender differences appear in leadership practices.

Within a cross-cultural study of approximately 56 countries, Hofstede (1991) analyzed the influence of the dimensions of masculinity versus femininity in leadership style. The analysis focused on the degree to which traditional gender roles are assigned within a culture. For example, in some countries, men are considered as aggressive within a culture, while women within the same culture are expected to be gentle and to be concerned about their role in home and family. The study demonstrated that culture influences “masculinity versus femininity” gender leadership roles that are dependent upon cultural expectations. In addition, cultures that have strong traditional values, such as Greece and Portugal, influence gender leadership style more than cultures with less-traditional values.

In one of the cross-cultural studies that focused on the influence of gender and leadership, Gibson (1995) used a questionnaire to examine the influence of gender leadership behaviors and styles in two culture dyads (Norway-Sweden and Australia–United States). In the study, 209 managers participated across the four countries—45 from Norway, 55 from Sweden, 64 from Australia, and 45 from the United States. The results illustrated significant effects depending upon gender and country. Across all four countries, males emphasized the goal-setting dimension, while females emphasized the interaction-facilitation dimension. In addition, male and female leaders emphasized different leadership behaviors regardless of their country of origin.

Regarding how culture relates to managers’ styles, one study (Atiyyah, 1992) reviewed research studies and their findings that discussed management and organizations. Within this focus, the researcher compared studies that were published in Arabic with others that were published in English. As a result of this exploratory

comparison procedure, some studies indicated that the leadership styles Arabic managers implemented were influenced by culture, specifically the Arabic culture. In addition, the managers in some Arabic countries (e.g., Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan) favored a consultative style, which was based on the Arabic culture's characteristics and Islamic religion (1992).

In the context of studies that examined the interaction of culture, leadership, and gender, Weiner (2005) examined the influence of leadership styles and gender differences individually and collectively in the United States and Mexico. Weiner took a quantitative approach, surveying 234 American and 276 Mexican college students (of these, 71% was female). Across different cultures, the researcher focused on the leaders' gender and their preferences for one of two leadership styles: task oriented and relationship oriented. The findings showed significantly higher effectiveness for relationship-oriented leaders than for task-oriented leaders, with no differences between the participants relative to their cultural influences. According to the research participants, students from both cultures reacted positively to relationship-oriented leaders because they experienced that relationship-oriented leaders were more effective than task-oriented leaders. The study indicated that the stereotype of the leader's gender has no effect; in other words, these college students believed that a leader can be effective regardless of gender.

Another study explored the support of female family members in leadership positions. Latin families supported their female members in their educational goals and saw their leadership success as consistent with their roles within the family. Other females in the study attempted to prove their talents to husbands and families by completing their higher education, and they accepted the challenge to occupy

administrative positions in Costa Rica University (Twombly, 1998). Most females were successful as students and as administrators, and the university system facilitated their access to positions in which they had more votes by elections (1998). In addition, in terms of job solidarity, men in jobs were more supportive to men than women were to other women.

Overall, the studies had different points of view regarding the influence of culture on female leaders. These differences were attributable to many factors, such as the cultural differential, masculine and feminine orientations, the variety of participants' perspectives, and society's level of development. Similarly, a cross-culture study of the United States and Mexico that focused on leadership styles found that leaders preferred to use a relationship-oriented style, and no cultural influences among participants were found (Weiner, 2005).

Appreciation of the Kuwaiti Culture

Culture shapes people's behaviors, ideas, and attitudes from birth and determines how people are categorized within a society (Al-Ajmi, 1995). With its economic influence, Kuwaiti society has maintained an obvious position among Arab and Islamic countries with different social, political, and cultural views while keeping its traditions as the country's heritage (Al-Naser, 2001).

Kuwaiti culture is differentiated from that of other Arab nations by a number of complex factors, including its strategic location, which significantly influences its economy. In spite of some differences, Kuwait shares its Islamic religion, Arabic language, economic status, and identity with other Arab states. I will explain the multiple

characteristics that differentiate Kuwaiti culture from others in the next section, to provide a background for this study.

Location

Kuwait is located in the Middle East. It is a small state on the Persian-Arabian Gulf (Tetreault, 2001). It sits at the head of the Arabian Gulf, between latitude 28 and 30 north, longitude 46 and 48 east (Appendix A). It has an area of approximately 27,818 square kilometers (about 7,000 square miles). Large and powerful neighbors, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran, surround Kuwait. It is bounded on the west and north by Iraq, on the south by Saudi Arabia, and on the east by the Arabian Gulf (Alsuwayeh, 1985). O'Shea (2000) located Kuwait at the northwest corner of the Arabian (Persian) Gulf.

Before 1930, Kuwait and Bahrain were the only two important harbors along the Arabian Gulf (Scarce, 1985). The harbor of Kuwait was an excellent spot for merchants and sailors to develop their business because the harbor facilitated the access to trade entering and leaving the northeast of the Arabian Gulf and Iraq (1985).

Kuwait's location has positive and negative ramifications. Its location north of the Arabian Gulf makes this tiny state important and provides its people with multiple opportunities for a better life. At the same time, Kuwait is surrounded by huge neighbors—Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq—that potentially threaten its security.

Population

Nearly two million people live in Kuwait (O'Shea, 2000); half of these are Kuwaiti citizens, and half are foreigners (Alyoha, 2007). In 2008, the Central Intelligence Agency (2008) cited that the population in Kuwait was 2,505,559, including 1,291,354 non-nationals, with a 3.561% population growth rate. In response to a statement about

Kuwait's small size and population, the previous Amir, Sheikh Jabber Al-Ahmed, said that nations were measured not only by population or size, but also by people's capacity for achievement (Joyce, 1998). The age structure in Kuwait is as follows: 0–14 years: 26.7% (male 340,814/female 328,663); 15–64 years: 70.5% (male 1,128,231/female 636,967); and 65 years and over: 2.8% (male 44,542/female 26,342) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

Identity

Cultural identity is the foundation of any society. Kuwait's cultural identity is probably called "Gulfian" because Kuwait is part of the Arabian Gulf (Crystal, 1992). Although Kuwait is an Arabian country (the second concentric circle in Figure 1), and shares some common cultural identity with Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Iraq (Joyce, 1998), the Kuwaiti people have characteristics that set them apart from other Arabs. In addition, Al-Ajmi (1995) suggested that cultures dictate different levels of status—from high prestige to low prestige—that create a system of social stratification.

Crystal demonstrated that the Gulf identity was shaped by trading goods such as wood and pearls with India and Africa (1992). During the rule of the first ruler of Kuwait "Sheikh Sabah bin Jaber," from 1756 to 1762, pearl fishing was the job that most people had because of the profit in that work (Scarce, 1985). Later, imported rice, wood, coffee, and spices from India, dates from Iraq, and wheat from Persia have been the principal goods traded since the early 20th century. In addition, Kuwait exported most of these goods to other parts of the Arabian Gulf (1985).

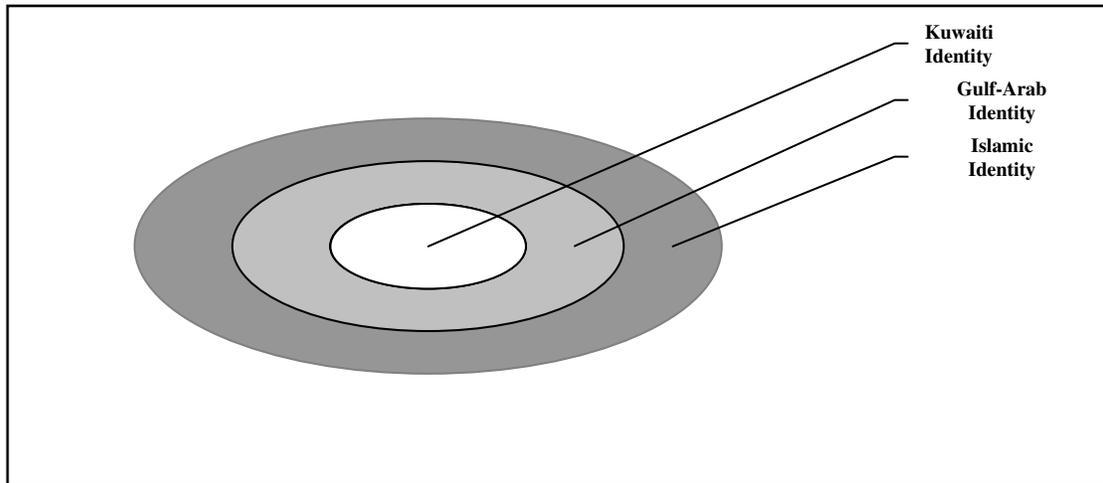


Figure 1. Kuwait Identity

Crystal claimed that the Kuwaiti citizens' sense of their cultural identity is very strong. This particular Kuwaiti identity materialized from the shared experiences of immigrants who settled in Kuwait (1992). O'Shea clarified that Kuwait has a different and independent identity from its neighbors (the first concentric circle in Figure 1); business and trade activities have helped Kuwaitis to assimilate other cultures to enrich Kuwait's culture with a unique identity (2000).

Unlike many Middle Eastern states, where the political borders bear no relation to the borders of the communities within, Kuwait's borders come close to surrounding a people who feel they share a distinct identity. This Kuwaiti sense of unity is built on a base of concentric circles (Figure 1): Islamic, Gulf-Arab, and Kuwaiti. (Crystal, 1992, p. 65)

Kuwait identity is manifested in its Arabian Gulf roots, Islamic identity, and the reflection of other cultures through trade and pearl diving. Kuwait identity is strongly differentiated despite some similarities with some neighboring states. For instance, when Arabs meet outside their homes, they recognize Kuwaitis from other Gulf countries by their unique appearance, dialect, and intelligence.

In addition, another aspect of identity is nationality. Kuwaiti citizenship is highly restricted. The government introduced the Citizenship Law in 1959 (Al-Mughni, 1993). It granted nationality only to families who had come to Kuwait before the 1920s, and who were living there in 1959 (1993). This restrictive law limited Kuwaiti identity to those who originally characterized the culture's concepts since the early twentieth century.

Overall, Kuwaitis have a unique characteristic in their special identity at the regional level in particular and at the Arab level in general due to their long history of trade and interaction with other cultures. Kuwaitis' appearance, transactions, and behaviors are somewhat different from those of their neighbors.

Religion

Kuwait's culture is influenced in many ways by religion (the third concentric circle in Figure 1). Alsuwayeh (1985) mentioned that most of the Arab world, of which Kuwait is a part, has Islam as the predominant religion. Indeed, the official religion in Kuwait is Islam, which is part of the Arabic and Gulfian identity. Nearly all Kuwaitis are Muslims, and most of those are Sunni Muslims; 20% to 30% are Shi'a (Rizzo, 2005).

In Arabic, Islam means "to submit, and a Muslim submits to the will of God, which was revealed through prophets, including those recognized by Judaism and Christianity" (O'Shea, 2000, p. 77). Muslims believe that the last prophet was Mohammed, peace be upon him. Prophet Mohammed established a new religion when the angel Gabriel revealed the word of God in the seventh century (2000).

Religion and culture in Kuwait interact in various ways. For instance, as a part of Islam, most Kuwaiti females in the past wore a veil when they went outside their houses (Al-Mughni, 1993). Moreover, meetings were gender separated on social occasions.

Although most Kuwaitis are Muslims, churches, Catholic cathedrals, and other religious places have been established in Kuwait to allow foreigners to practice their religions (O'Shea, 2000).

Language

The official language in Kuwait is Arabic, while English is widely spoken by citizens and foreigners (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008). Usually, spoken language is different from the written language in all cultures. In Kuwait, Arabic is used as the formal language in all written forms; however, citizens speak local dialects (Maps of world, n.d.). The influence of other languages is evident in Kuwaiti dialects due to surrounding neighbors, business, traveling, and foreign laborers. In education, both Arabic and English are taught in public and private schools, with some differences among curriculum settings (Maps of world, n.d.).

Economy

Economic and cultural activities have multiple interactions with each other. Economic activities in Kuwait historically depended on pearl diving, seafaring, and boat building. The strategic location of this small country led to its development as a first-class gulf port (Alsuwayeh, 1985), and it was considered the finest boat-building port on the Gulf (Joyce, 1998). The boat-building industry in Kuwait met the needs of the seafaring industries by producing different types of boats for different requirements (Alsuwayeh, 1985). Kuwait was linked with India and East Africa in trading goods such as boats, black teak, and mangrove poles. It was ranked as the chief pearling center in the Gulf area, even though pearling was one of the most hazardous and arduous businesses in the past (1985).

After the discovery of oil in Kuwait in the 1930s, the Kuwaiti class structure changed radically as the country was modernized with Western-style buildings, which were planned by foreigner experts (Al-Mughni, 1993). The switch from trading and pearling to oil production made Kuwait one of the wealthiest countries in the world (Crystal, 1992). Modern Kuwait has been shaped by oil and government control of the industry, which helped create the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1960 (OPEC, 2007). In addition, the Organizations of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) was established in 1968 in Kuwait through an agreement with Libya and Saudi Arabia (Al-Turki, 2007). While petroleum accounts for 95% of export revenues and 80% of government income, agriculture accounts for 0.4%, industry for 48.3%, and services for 51.3%, with 8% as a total economic growth rate (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

Tetreault (2001) pointed out that urban Kuwaiti society is arguably the most modern in the Gulf region because of the multinational oil industry, which is deeply embedded in the economically driven structures and processes of global modernity. While in the past, trade, pearl diving, seafaring, and shipbuilding defined the social and political aspects of Kuwaiti culture, today, as noted, the oil industry has changed the culture, including its social life, architecture, and lifestyle. In spite of its importance, the oil industry is not the only economic factor in Kuwait. Also, a number of other light industries and businesses that help to develop and diversify the economy are traded on the Kuwaiti Stock Exchange.

Education

Culture and education are closely tied; education in Kuwait has developed and contributed to the culture. The government of Kuwait has been concerned about education and improving literacy since 1911 when the first school, “Al-Mubarakiya,” was established (Historical features of education, n.d.), followed by the foundation of the second school, “Ahmadiya,” in 1922 (Al-Mughni, 1993). Before Al-Mubarakiya was opened, the teacher’s house was the school, where males learned their religion, language, and math. Females, in contrast, were first offered education in 1916 in a female teacher’s house (1993). In 1936, the first female school, “Alwosta,” was established (Historical features of education, n.d.), and 140 Kuwaiti females enrolled in school for the first time in 1937 (Alsuwayeh, 1985). Later, females wished to continue their education; therefore, secondary schools were established in 1952 to let them pursue their ambitions (Al-Mughni, 1993). Later still, it was decided that higher education for females was necessary so that Kuwaiti females could be qualified as nurses, teachers, and doctors in order to replace foreign workers doing those jobs (1993).

Generally, the government offers free education for all citizens from kindergarten through university, providing books, buildings, uniforms, healthy food, and health care (Alsuwayeh, 1985). The Kuwaiti pre-university education system is divided into three stages—elementary, middle school, and high school, with an optional pre-school stage. Moreover, the literacy rate, defined by the percentage of the population able to read and write by the age of 15, is now 83% in Kuwait—males 85.1%, and females 81.7% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

In terms of higher education, Kuwait University (KU) was established in 1966 (O'Shea, 2000). Although the Kuwaiti education system supports gender segregation in education, KU was previously a coeducational institution, in which males and females studied together in the same classrooms (2000). In 1996, the Ministry of Education with the Kuwaiti Parliament's recommendation mandated gender segregation at KU and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) (Al-Mulaify, 2008), based on the consideration of cultural and religious influences (Levit, 2005).

Furthermore, all public schools in Kuwait are gender segregated. In the past, some private schools and universities were coeducational or gender segregated in accordance with the private school law issued in 1967 (Historical features of education, n.d.). In 2000, however, law No. 34 was issued cooperatively by the government and Parliament's representatives to require gender segregation in all private schools and universities (Alwatan, 2006).

The educational system in Kuwait continues to grow for the improvement of Kuwait society. Currently, seven private universities and institutions in Kuwait present different educational approaches to help Kuwaiti people and foreigners build the society with the appropriate foundations (Private Universities Council, 2005). Public schools are increasing to meet the population growth rate (School Directory, n.d.). In the academic year 2007/2008, among all private primary and secondary schools in Kuwait, there were 42 Arabic schools, 74 foreign-language schools, 10 bilingual education schools, and 8 schools for special needs (Department of Private Education, n.d.). In addition, Kuwaitis receive scholarships from multiple institutions and ministries to study all over the world.

The educational system, like other aspects of Kuwaiti society, is influenced by cultural aspects. For instance, the Ministers, stakeholders, and Parliament members debate whether to construct new educational strategies, to apply other countries' experiences that may be appropriate for Kuwait society, or to maintain the more traditional educational styles (e.g., the school reconfiguration, learning English in first grade). Additionally, the separation of students into formal and non-formal education, and public and private schools is an obvious sign of how the culture's values and traditions have influenced educational settings since their beginnings in 1911.

Dewaneya

“Dewaneya” is a unique institution that exists throughout Kuwait culture (the first concentric circle in Figure 1) (Ministry of Information, Kuwait, n.d.). The Dewaneya (alternately spelled “De-wa-ne-ya”¹) is an historical phenomenon that started thousands of years ago. The head of the tribe used to sit surrounded by a circle of his advisors, colleagues, and ministers to discuss trial matters, receive complaints, listen to poets reciting their works, and engage in social affairs (Al-Naser, 2001). Today, the Dewaneya usually takes place in a large room where a family leader meets with his relatives and friends to discuss different topics such as business, politics, and social life, while they enjoy Arabic coffee (Crystal, 1992). The modern Dewaneya can also provide a forum in which citizens and state officials can address grievances.

Some define a Dewaneya as a place where men share jokes, recite poems, entertain themselves, and enjoy company. During their relaxation and amusement, men discuss business and general matters, play cards, sing, or engage in conversations. On

¹ Dewaneya also can be found in other resources spelled Diwaniya or Diwaniyya. However, based on current usage and pronunciation, I have chosen the Dewaneya spelling.

some occasions, they may debate various subjects such as education, science, public services, and utilities (Al-Naser, 2001).

In the past, only wealthy families had Dewaneya because the building, food, drinks, and servants were costly. Al-Naser mentioned that the first schools in Kuwait began within the Dewaneyas. Sharing and imparting knowledge to younger members of the Dewaneya and passing on the understanding of the social order were all responsibilities of the learned and experienced elders. Creativity in the arts (poetry, music, and literature) and, in fact, all educational activities, were encouraged and even fostered (2001).

The characteristics and goals of the modern Dewaneya differ from those of its predecessor; it has developed into a professional forum. Many professions, such as engineering, medicine, law, education, and politics, have their own Dewaneyas. Some Dewaneyas are more like open forums where specialists and experts in their respective fields come together to lecture on topics of specific interest. Another development in the modern Dewaneya is the increased regular presence of foreigners. It has become a normal practice for local members to invite foreign friends such as ambassadors, visiting dignitaries, and artists to attend the sessions and become acquainted with this unique aspect of Kuwait culture (Al-Naser, 2001). Almost everyone who owns a house designs his house to include the Dewaneya (2001). Today's Dewaneyas are meeting places where topics such as politics, business, and the stock exchange are discussed. They provide a forum for staying in touch with friends, exchanging ideas, and keeping relationships alive in today's fast paced life (Kuwait Information Office, n.d.).

Social values are modeled and inculcated within the Dewaneya. As a part of the Dewaneya mission, the Kuwaiti cultural values of equality, unity in diversity, and respect are highlighted and practiced. Depending on the owner, the Dewaneya may separate genders, devoting specific days for each gender, or specific days for both. The gathering of men (or women) unifies the individual, the family, and the society. Social development, particularly changes of attitudes toward females, the behavior of females, and the treatment of females and children, has occurred with the Dewaneya (Al-Naser, 2001).

Furthermore, the social roles of the Dewaneya system have expanded to meet the expectations and the new challenges of involvement in world intellectual and cultural movements. Every district of Kuwait has a public Dewaneya that serves as a place for open discussions on educational, scientific, social, and cultural issues. (Al-Naser, 2001). The Dewaneya, as a unique and inherently interesting institution, has no written rules, no agenda, no bureaucracy, and no hierarchy of authority. It is a significant social institution that plays an important role in maintaining the Kuwaiti culture. The distinct aspects of Kuwaiti social, cultural, and political life make it essential to associate such uniqueness with a major social institution like the Dewaneya (2001). The Amir now encourages participation in weekly Dewaneya in homes, where issues of concern are discussed, because of the major role that Dewaneya plays (Joyce, 1998).

In conclusion, the Dewaneya is a unique part of Kuwait culture that encompasses most Kuwaiti males' activities, such as social life, communications, political debates, and hospitality. Dewaneya plays a role in preserving Kuwait values and traditions through generations, making it an obviously important aspect of Kuwait culture. Dewaneya used

to be a term that related to males only. However, females, especially Parliament's candidates, try to open Dewaneya now to discuss issues that relate to culture, politics, social concerns, and females' status, perspectives, roles, and orientations. Furthermore, fathers sometimes allow their male adolescents to join Dewaneya to learn more about their traditions, values, and communication skills, to understand their culture.

Awareness of the Roles of Kuwaiti Females

Historically, the roles of Kuwaiti women have been based on social, familial, and job responsibilities. The following sections clarify the roles of Kuwaiti females: an overview of Kuwaiti females' history, perspectives on female status in Kuwait, and female leadership in Kuwaiti organizations.

Overview of Kuwaiti Females' History

During the economic and social development of Kuwait, females have played different roles that demonstrate the importance of their missions. Historically, females had limited education to help them read the Quran (the holy book) and mail (Tetreault, 2001). In the past, they were housewives with the responsibilities of child care while their husbands were working away from home. Because of trade and seafaring, Kuwaiti men left their families for extended periods; the wives learned to be more independent and deal powerfully with their daily lives (O'Shea, 2000). One of their essential social roles in the community was when they were responsible for their families for nearly 5 to 6 months while their husbands traveled for their trades (Alsarraf, 2008). They also played a significant role during the Iraqi invasion in 1990 in both civil and armed resistance fields (2008); during this time, they were honored as heroes and showed the entire world how Kuwaiti females were patient, responsible, and brave in the face of obstacles. In addition,

Kuwaiti females have made noticeable efforts that have demonstrated their concerns about developing their social, educational, and political status (Al-Mughni, 1993, Rizzo, 2005).

With modern life, Kuwaiti females have become teachers, engineers, doctors, ambassadors, lawyers, managers, administrators, and Ministers at various levels (Tetreault, 2001). The government sent women to study in Egypt in 1960 before Kuwait University (KU) was established. Since KU was opened, the majority of students, about 60%, has been women (O'Shea, 2000). As the education system for females in Kuwait has developed, females have had greater opportunities to play important roles in business, even within the practice of strict traditions (Alsuwayeh, 1985). The Kuwaiti government supports equality between men and women in several areas. However, females usually hold jobs in areas such as health care and education.

Some Kuwaiti women work outside the home, so they hire servants to help with cooking and child care (O'Shea, 2000). Other women have left work or stayed at home to raise their children, cook, and manage their families.

Perspectives on Female Status in Kuwait

As already noted, females play an important role in Kuwaiti culture. They have held essential positions in the past, while today their positions have developed to place them at the top of political, educational, economical, and social organizations. Females' position is an issue that has different perspectives in Islamic and Arab cultures in general, and in Kuwait in particular.

From a religious perspective, Islamic principles, like those of Christianity, offer equality between male and female as part of the support for each other throughout life

(Tétreault, 2001). Islamic societies, in addition, have been open to the idea of female leaders and female participation in various social and religious organizations. Egypt and Kuwait provide examples of progress for female Muslims. Some Kuwaiti females have been enlisted as religious leaders with access to the public sphere, even though Islamic organizations in Kuwait have preferred to limit females' roles to the home (Rizzo, 2005).

From a cultural point of view, power fell primarily to fathers and other men within traditional Kuwaiti families (Tetreault, 2001). "Women are placed under the guardianship of men (husband/father/uncle)" (Al-Mughni, 1993, p. 60). Other families have attempted to combine their culture, religion, and modern life to bring about changes. Kuwaiti females have had opportunities to participate in public life by sharing activities and voluntary work with men in political and social organizations. Views about females' political rights in Kuwait have varied widely throughout its history: Liberal groups have encouraged the government to allow females to serve in leadership roles, while some political and Islamic groups have opposed this move on religious grounds (Berkowitz, 2004).

From the social activity perspective, some Kuwaiti females' associations have tried to develop Kuwaiti females' political rights to ensure the democrat process, while other females have turned their attention to other issues affecting women (Rizzo, 2005). Of all the Gulf countries, Kuwait has made the most progress in democratization and the development of society, and this is reflected in the participation of Kuwaiti females as members and leaders in some organizations and committees.

Female Leadership in Kuwaiti Organizations

Following Kuwait's independence in 1961, many organizations were established for the country's development (Al-khaldy, 2007). The first two women's associations were established in 1963: the Cultural and Social Society (CSS) and the Arab Women's Development Society (AWDS); and then, in 1964, the Arab Feminist Union (AFU) (Al-Mughni, 1993). "In 1974, the Kuwaiti Women's Union (KWU) was formed as the sole representative of Kuwaiti women" (1993, p. 83). Later, Kuwaiti women increased their involvement in different organizations (e.g., educational, political, voluntary, professional, Islamic) that related to women's issues, and nearly 1,752 of 179,582 (3%) reflected the total membership of women's organizations in 1985 (1993).

In the 1960s, the Kuwaiti government developed strategic plans to deal with the increased need for specialized employment brought about by the growing oil industry (Tetreault & Al-Mughni, 1995). The labor market required more engineers, assistant engineers, and non-specialized employees. Between 1973 and 1974, the oil boom increased the revenues, and this led to economic development projects for infrastructure and urban expansion. It was necessary to attract skilled foreign labor to these efforts, plan for the expansion of housing projects, and create roads and other projects and services (Al-Anzy, February 2000).

As a general principle, educated individuals help their countries move from traditionalism to modernity (Meleis, El-Sanabary, & Beeson, 1979). Education provides the skills that individuals need for economic and political development. Because Kuwait has been more advanced than other Arab countries in the education of females, Kuwait has also led in the expansion of females' roles and status in society. Educational

development, both in Kuwait and throughout the Arab states, has led to more career opportunities for females within government. However, females' full participation is still limited by gender-role barriers (Rizzo, 2005).

With the growth of the state and widening of the labor market, the Kuwaiti government has had to intervene in labor relations to ensure the protection of workers' rights (Al-khaldy, 2007). Because women comprise half of the society and society protects their rights and duties, the government's interest in improving the role of women in Kuwait has increased. Kuwaiti women have gone to work even though opportunities for men and women are not equal in most Arab societies in general and in the Gulf in particular.

Kuwaiti females successfully participate in professional life. They hold prominent positions in journalism, universities, private business, health care, government ministries, and oil companies. Within the political and social development arenas in Kuwait, the number of Kuwaiti females who hold higher positions has increased and their voices have confidently become obvious in government and non-government organizations, Parliament, social associations, and public meetings (Alsarraf, 2008).

In addition, women are flourishing in academic life in Kuwait, where, as mentioned earlier, they constitute more than 70% of the students at Kuwait University. And about half of these women are studying engineering and medicine (Berkowitz, 2004).

Among recommendations from the country's strategic plans was the idea of offering job opportunities to Kuwaiti females to curb the increasing use of foreign labor and as a step to "Kuwaitize" the labor market (Tetreault & Al-Mughni, 1995). Therefore,

in 2002, the number of laborers was around 1.364 million; about 19% of this number represents Kuwaiti nationals, among whom males represent 62.7% and females 37.3% (U.S. Department of State, 2002).

Kuwaiti people have been encouraged to work in private organizations; therefore, the total number of employees in private organizations in 1996 was about 588,610 workers: 548,577 males (93.2 %) and 40,033 females (6.8 %). And Kuwaiti workers who worked in administration, supervision, and business, represented 1.7% of the total workers in 1996 (Kuwait National Assembly, 2007).

Kuwaiti females constituted 49% of Kuwait's labor force in 2006, one of the highest proportions in the Gulf region. They work primarily in government organizations that include engineering, architecture, medicine, and law (AAAS, 2007). Additionally, the government appointed a female ambassador in 1994. In January 2000, she became the permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations organization in Vienna (IAEA, 2007).

Some females in the Middle East have made efforts to expand the limited rights of females in the political process (Rizzo, 2005). In addition, "there is a core of educated, religious, organized, politically active females that can use Islam as an aid instead of barrier to political participation" (p. 87). Furthermore, Arab female employees have worked harder than males to prove their worthiness as laborers, and the number of private businesses having female employees has increased (Atiyyah, 1992). For instance, within the conferences of The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), diplomatic Arabic females were Ambassadors of Morocco, Egypt, Syria, and

Jordan who discussed and developed scientific, educational, and cultural issues (Ameen, 2007).

In conclusion, in consideration of the cultural impact of women in Kuwait, Kuwaiti females have made noticeable progress toward improving their status and attaining gender equality in the political, social, educational, legal, and medical professions. For example, The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) granted its leadership award for Arab Women to Kuwaiti lawyer Kawther Al-Joan. This recognition is considered the Committee's biggest prize and the first of its kind for a Kuwaiti woman to receive (*Today's World*, 2007).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify how Kuwaiti female leaders perceived their cultural influences on their personal and professional experiences in leadership positions. In addition, the study examined the interactions between the Kuwaiti culture, gender issues, and the leadership roles that female leaders had experienced since they had been appointed to higher positions. To support those objectives, I invited female Kuwaiti leaders to share their experiences and perspectives about leadership within the organizations they manage.

Research Design

I chose to use a qualitative research design to meet the study's purpose and answer the research questions in depth through the female leaders' experiences (Creswell, 2005). Qualitative research as an empirical strategy poses questions through interviews or observation of people's experiences for the purpose of understanding individual and group interactions in specific social contexts (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000). Therefore, the qualitative method is appropriate to show different perspectives (Creswell, 1998). In this study, I have presented participants' views about the interactions between their culture and their experiences that influenced their leadership, and I have discussed their different perspectives about these interactions.

Research Methodology

Educational studies are an area of human experience in which the narrative approach is an effective way to represent participants' experiences (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). The narrative approach was designed for the researcher to collect and analyze data by representing connections between events (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Data in the narrative approach can be a life or personal story collected by interview, observations, or library materials (1998). However, the narrative approach represents more than simply the telling of a story. “It makes sense to use narrative and narrative analysis as inclusive categories, restricting the use of ‘story’ to those genres that recount protagonists, events, complications, and consequences” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 54). Additionally, the narrative approach assesses the participants’ responses individually, and emphasizes their narratives within specific social, cultural, and institutional discourses (1996), such as those that were the focus of this research. Therefore, because understanding different human perspectives and life experiences was the core of this study, I chose the narrative research approach.

It is human nature for participants to be willing to narrate their stories and experiences by organizing events to help others understand their topic (Creswell, 2005). Moreover, the narrative approach allows the social life and historical periods of a specific culture and its subgroups to be deeply understood (2005). Within this context and for this study, selected Kuwaiti female leaders, as participants, narrated their stories about their personal and professional experiences as leaders.

Efficacy of Proposed Methodology

The current study applied the narrative approach, which I deemed appropriate for various reasons. This approach fits with the current research phenomenon and the research design. In terms of the research phenomenon, the narrative style helped in the discovery of the influences of culture on female leaders in Kuwait by allowing them to

share their experiences and perspectives about leadership. Furthermore, the narrative method supported the research design and data collection, and it permitted the research questions to be answered in depth. As Lieblich et al. (1998) reported, narrative inquiry is effective when used for smaller groups to provide deep understanding and knowledge about social phenomenon through life stories.

Research Questions

The central question for this study is: How do Kuwaiti female leaders experience the impact of culture on their leadership? The research sub-questions are

- How do female leaders' culturally based personal experiences influence their leadership?
- How do female leaders' culturally based professional experiences influence their approach to leadership?
- What new cultural experiences are female leaders gaining from their positions?

Participants

For this research, I selected a number of Kuwaiti female leaders who occupied higher positions in government or non-government organizations. I defined *organizations* in this study as the systematic arrangement of people into groups to collaborate and plan a strategy for achieving specific goals and sharing objectives. These organizations included ministries, school districts, and social associations; they came from the business and financial sectors; and from private business.

The research followed the narrative inquiry approach, and 5 participants shared their stories and experiences in depth. Participants provided information with details

about events and consequences that assisted me in comprehending their perspectives through the entire analysis process.

I chose a purposeful sample to meet the research objectives. This purposeful sampling provided useful information from selected participants to help with understanding the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). In using purposeful sampling, I chose three sampling strategies: *criterion*, *convenience*, and *snowball sampling*. The criterion sampling was the strategy that I chose before the data collection step; however, I used the convenience and snowball sampling strategies after I began collecting the data (2005). The criterion sampling strategy for this study can be characterized as a Kuwaiti female leader who had managed an organization that represented at least 20 employees and whose title was Minister, Vice Minister, Superintendent, Supervisor, or Manager. In addition, the other criteria were that the participant occupied a leadership position for at least 2 years, and that she understood the research phenomenon well enough to participate effectively during data collection and analysis. In addition, I used the criterion sampling strategy to select the sample from a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations: ministerial, educational, financial, political, and social.

After I started collecting the data, I used the convenience sampling strategy as a second strategy to save time, money, and effort (Creswell, 1998). So I selected the sample based on participants' availability, and with consideration for the participants' ability to provide insightful and credible information (1998).

The third strategy that I used was snowball sampling. The snowball sampling strategy took advantage of identifying other participants who were interested in the study, were willing to share their experiences with others, and at the same time met the criteria

established for the sampling selection variables. With this strategy, study participants who had met the criterion and convenience sampling strategy requirements then recommended others who might also be part of the study sample (Creswell, 2005). So 2 participants recommended participation in the study to other potential participants. As a result, 2 more participants accepted becoming part of the study.

Furthermore, to meet the ethical issues that protect the participants' privacy, I changed the participants' names, I omitted their organizations' names, and I kept their identifying information anonymous. Therefore, some of the organizations that the participants worked in are unspecified and I have mentioned them only as ministries.

Data Collection Procedure

This section includes details about the data-collection process. Data-collection procedures include the interviews, anticipated interview questions, the process for contacting participants, and language used for conducting the interviews.

The Interview

I collected the data by interviewing 5 participants whom I selected from among Kuwaiti female leaders. The entire interviews occurred in Kuwait. The interview approach I used to meet the study criteria was the one-on-one interview (Creswell, 2005).

The interviewing process consisted of six steps:

1. I started by eliciting participant demographic information, for the purpose of introducing myself to the participant, breaking the psychological barrier between us, and bridging the distance between us because the data would be influenced by the interactions between the interviewees and me (Lieblich et al., 1998).

2. I presented the Consent Form (Appendix B) for each participant to review and acknowledge all issues that she might be concerned about before, during, and after her participation.
3. I organized interview questions into categories based on the research questions.
4. I administered the questions by category: unstructured, structured, and open-ended (Creswell, 2005).
5. I recorded the interviews on audio tape.
6. I transcribed the interviews—three for each participant (Creswell, 2005).

I contacted participants regarding the interviews by invitation (Appendix C). To satisfy the required administration procedures in Kuwait, I sent the invitation form to be approved via email to female leaders who occupied higher positions in governmental and non-governmental organizations. I contacted by phone those participants who had been selected using the snowball sampling strategy. I contacted each research participant either by phone or via email to provide details about the data-collection procedure, to ensure that she understood the research phenomenon and understood her responsibilities during participation.

Interview Questions

I organized the interview questions into five categories. The first category, which consisted of two questions, elicited information about the interview and each participant's background. The other three categories were linked to the sub-research questions: How do female leaders' culturally based personal experiences influence their leadership?; How do female leaders' culturally based professional experiences influence their approach to

leadership?; and What new cultural experiences are female leaders gaining from their positions? (Appendix D).

After I received the participants' authorizations to participate in the study, I scheduled interviews at times convenient to the participants in comfortable and quiet places. Locations of interviews were various: I conducted 7 interviews in participants' offices, 6 interviews were in participants' houses, and 1 interview was in a coffee shop. Each interview typically lasted from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. In addition, each interview had a specific topic around which I had developed questions, as follows:

- The first interview started with the participant's background: name, age, education, years of work experience, title of position currently held, organization's name, organization's purpose, work responsibilities, length of time in current position, and length of time in other leadership positions.

The topic that the first interview focused on was the female leader's responsibilities, her position as a female leader in Kuwait society (e.g., rank or location relative to male leaders), and how culture influences leadership.

- The second interview questions concentrated on the participant's personal and professional experiences, and how these experiences influenced her leadership style.
- The third interview questions discussed new cultural and other experiences that each participant had had since holding her current position, and summarized her perspectives about the interactions of female leadership and culture.

During the interviews, I asked some questions that depended upon each participant's responses and her experiences, to clarify events and expand stories.

Because the first language in Kuwait is Arabic, 4 participants chose to respond to the interview in Arabic, while 1 participant chose to speak in English. I was prepared to use either language that the participants felt comfortable with for responding, communicating freely to state their experiences, and participating appropriately. Most participants preferred Arabic because its convenience as their native language made it easier for them to tell their stories smoothly. For those who participated in Arabic, I had the interviews translated into English. I hired a translator to help me with the translations. Because of language variations and specific expressions, it was challenging to translate some of the participants' responses into English. Therefore, I wrote notes to describe those untranslated concepts, and then those notes assisted me with clarifying participants' expressions. Because the fifth participant chose to participate in English, the interview transcripts are written directly in English. After I transferred the interview responses and data into a written transcript, I organized the transcripts so they were ready for coding, analysis, and interpretation.

During the data collection phase, I also prepared the content of the second and third interview questions dependent upon the previous interviews. In other words, I formulated the second interview questions after I had analyzed the transcript of each participant's first interview. Similarly, I analyzed the transcripts of the second interviews to prepare the third set of interview questions. This procedure helped me to understand and clarify the main concepts and experiences that each participant had explained in previous interviews. In addition, by reviewing the transcripts during the preparation of

subsequent interview questions, I was able to ask participants to expand upon some previously mentioned interesting stories and important events during their following interview.

In summary, I collected the data through three interviews for each participant. The interview questions facilitated conversation between the participants and me. I scheduled the interview time with participants at their convenience, and I selected environments favorable to conducting the interviews in a quiet setting.

Data Analysis

The data analysis section of this study includes two sub-sections. First is the procedure that the research followed for answering the research questions. Second is the data analysis method that I used.

Data Analysis Procedure

The process of how to answer the research questions started with organizing the interview transcripts, which, as noted, were in English after translation. I gathered data about attributes—such as age, education, years of work experience, an organization’s purpose—from the first interview to analyze it (Richards, 2005). So that the data became more meaningful and allowed me to start coding, I read the data several times and kept in mind these attributes. As I coded the data, patterns emerged, and I explored and reviewed relevant parts of the research questions to better understand the data.

The concept of coding is to keep reading and re-reading the data to categorize and assign codes and generate initial relationships between these codes, for the purpose of developing coherent themes. Using such an open-coded strategy allowed me to explore more rational thoughts during coding. Specifically, this open coding of data collection

consists of initially breaking the data into categories that relate to the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). This strategy was appropriate for the data that I collected by interviews for this research; it allowed me to identify relevant categories and subcategories, which I then processed for analyzing the data (2005).

The next step after I coded and built categories from the data was to organize a story that represented each participant's life stages, along with her professional and personal experiences. The stories, in addition, provided the influence of the participants' families over time, from the point of the participants' early environment until they narrated the story.

Then I analyzed each story by categorizing themes that related to the research sub-questions. Themes can be a phrase, or two to four words that consist of codes aggregated into major themes (Creswell, 2005). This process reduced the number of codes into logical themes and enabled me to label each theme with an appropriate name, which described the concept (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using the major and minor themes types, I organized themes on two levels (Creswell, 2005). The themes clarified important events and different perceptions, and grouped multiple experiences so I could compare cases.

Overall, for the research phenomenon of clarifying and answering the research question, I analyzed descriptions of attributes, sequences of events, data about group interactions, and different perspectives of participants. This allowed me to make interpretations about how culture influenced leadership (Creswell, 2005).

Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method that I used to represent data collection was the *categorical-content* perspective (Lieblich et al., 1998). The categorical-content method focuses on the entire content of data, such as the stories to be read, understood, and categorized into major themes for analysis (1998). Thus, this method was appropriate for my analysis of the stories that participants narrated by letting me break each participant's story into descriptive components to express her different experiences and various perspectives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In addition, by using the categorical-content method, I could submit the entire relevant sections of each event or theme in a subtext. So this approach helped me to clarify the events, major changes, relationships, and cultural issues that this research sought to address individually (Lieblich et al., 1998). Therefore, I defined each category and its content independently. Furthermore, this method provided a means for me to organize themes and participants' perspectives from the deep reading level to that of words and sentences in stories (1998). Finally, this method enabled me to capture the major and minor features of the research framework from the participants' perceptions, so I could present and analyze those features to understand the phenomenon in this study.

As I read each story through its transcripts, meanings and aspects of the story became more understandable, including unusual features such as contradictions and unfinished descriptions (Lieblich et al., 1998). Furthermore, it was important for me to pay attention to transitions between actions to follow the development of essentials. In addition, repetitive aspects within a story probably indicated significant points that might highlight specific themes relating to the study focus (1998). Themes appeared as I coded

the data, allowing me to explore associations and develop relationships between these themes and the research phenomenon to answer the research questions and meet the study objectives. Thus, I tracked each theme from the beginning of the story to the end for interpretive themes progression. Moreover, I simplified and emphasized themes individually to comprehend details about multiple experiences and cultural influences that participants illustrated. And finally, I recognized and reported the connection between some themes for a rationalization phase of interpretation, to further authenticate and explain the research framework and phenomena and answer the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Evaluation of the quality of qualitative research involves assuring that the value of the research problem, methods, findings, and discussions are believable and trustworthy (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Therefore, in this section, I address the trustworthiness of the research method.

Trustworthiness deals with methods used to evaluate the internal and external quality and generalizability of research (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Merriam (2002) proposed some strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative research method.

- First, the *peer-review strategy*, in which colleagues' discussions assist with development of the research processes, data collection, and interpretation techniques, supports trustworthiness. Thus, during the data collection in Kuwait, I sent transcripts to colleagues for their review, and I contacted them by phone for discussions and recommendations that helped me to prepare the interviews that followed.

- Second, this research comprises rich and thick descriptions within the research framework and perspectives, to allow readers of this study to match the perspectives of participants, the study framework, and the findings at the end.
- Likewise, the *audit-trail strategy* provides details of the extant methods I used that were consistent with the research applications and procedures.

Additionally, handling ethical issues not only during the data collection processes but also during all the research steps is considered part of the trustworthiness principles by which good research is evaluated (Merriam & Associates, 2002). These ethical issues deal with respecting participants' rights, honoring the research sites, and reporting the research results honestly (Creswell, 2005). In particular, data-collection processes should meet the ethical standards that most professional and educational associations have established (2005). For example, in this study, I respected participants by requesting their permission to participate in the study, allowing them to choose an appropriate time and place to participate, using their personal information and experiences for study purposes only, and enabling them to gain something from the study as compensation for their time and effort in a way they suggested or that fit with their organizations' policies (2005).

Moreover, participants acknowledged by signing a consent form that they fully agreed regarding the study focus, participation procedures, the guiding of questions, and their role during data collection and data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition, risk-free participation protected participants' rights and privacy (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Similarly, I considered the ethics of the researcher-participant relationship, discussions, and debates during the interviews and the development of my interpretation, findings, and research report (2002).

Overall, following these strategies during the research process increased the trustworthiness of the research investigations and strengthened the findings; this in turn helped in answering the research questions and explaining the research framework.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This study aimed to identify how Kuwaiti female leaders perceive the influences of their culture on their personal and professional experiences in leadership positions. The conceptual background of the data analysis method for this research is based on the narrative approach. The data analysis method I used was the categorical-content perspective (Lieblich et al., 1998). This method allowed me to organize the data that I collected from interviewing 5 Kuwaiti females. I translated and managed the data into 15 transcripts because I interviewed each participant three times. Since the categorical-content perspective method focused on the women's entire life events and experiences, the transcripts are structured and narrated as stories that keep the sequences of events and the participants' experiences classified by content area. In addition, this method helped me as I analyzed the five stories to individually label each participant's different life experiences and various perspectives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

To present the data analysis, I have organized this chapter into five primary components: data presentation of each of the 5 participants' stories, the analysis for each story, the componential analysis for the set of stories, research question findings, and conclusion.

Data Presentation

The data that I collected was rich, varied, and vast. It organized as a story for each participant. Each story represents the data and transcripts of the respective participants.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to present all the data and provide an in-depth analysis and discussion of that data to address the research phenomenon. The subheading for each of the five stories includes the participant's name. Later, in the Data Analysis section of the chapter, the subheading related to each participant includes her name and the main theme that her story reflects.

Dana's Story

My name is Dana, and I am 62 years old. I have spent 24 years in leadership positions. To start my story, I'd like to state that I come from a big family. I have 12 siblings, 6 brothers and 6 sisters. I am actually the 12th child in the family. Even with a large family, my parents gave due care to me. My family did not distinguish between the treatment of boys and girls.

My late father, mercy upon him from Allah, was firm in managing the home despite his wisdom and tenderness. My father appreciated women. This was clear when he dealt with my mother and girls in the family. He had a strong personality and commitment. His directions to me, and his way of managing my big family and assuring cooperation, understanding, and solidarity, have given me self-confidence. I really see that my confidence is based on solid foundations given to me by my father. It has enabled me to make decisions and participate in decision-making and job privacy.

In contrast, my mother is very sociable; she was keen on exchanging information with our relatives and neighbors. With no doubt, the personality of my mother had a great effect on me because she had too many children at that time. Raising 7 girls and 6 boys was not an easy task. She was wise and, therefore, all of us respected her and obeyed her. She chose the right way to raise each one of us individually. My mother always used to

help us in what we loved. Even in financial matters, she had excellent management. I think all these matters affected my life and work positively.

In the 1950s, education was limited for girls. For example, my elder sisters did not resume their education at that period. In the 1960s, education outside Kuwait was limited for girls; as a result, they did not go on to college. In the 1970s, however, education was apparently open for girls to study outside Kuwait. My brothers did go on to community college after high school, to help my father. They studied applied education, such as commercial applied education. They worked in the commercial field, and they had their communications abroad. My brothers were working with my dad in commerce most of the time. They did not go on for a bachelor's degree.

During my high-school period, my ambition was to finish my education and join the medical college because that was my desired field. When I graduated from high school I had an obstacle at that time: My father refused the idea of me studying after high school. This changed my life from studying medicine to working after high school. Because of this I decided to consider the idea of having a degree in higher education. I followed my father's recommendation, and I worked in the teaching field, with the great help of my brothers. I became a primary school teacher. My students were in good standing and their achievements were good.

During my time as teacher, I still had the ambition of studying. So another chance was available for me. There was great support from most of my family for me to complete my education. All my siblings agreed that I should achieve my goal and continue my study. My mother accompanied me to Lebanon so that I could enroll as a

distance learning student and attend the exams during summertime. I can say that fate played a big role in my life, and I was lucky to complete my education.

Although my father did not know about my study abroad, I completed my first and second years in university. But when I was in the third year, I told my father that I wanted to attend my fourth year courses and study as a regular student in Lebanon. The issue of my study abroad was discussed on the basis that I had an intention and readiness to study abroad, and not simply on the basis that I was a girl and my brothers were boys. My mother knew how to solve the problem with my father. When my issue was discussed, he accepted it. At that time my sister, who is 1 year younger than me, was completing her advanced studies in the medical field, and that was in the sixties [1960s]. Therefore, the solid foundation of respect, cooperation, and consolidation from my whole family remain with me.

My majors were economics and political science. My grades were very good. When I joined the university, my objective was only to resume my studies and to get the bachelor's degree. I had studied general commerce, and then economics and political science, at advanced levels. I studied economics in depth at the third and fourth years. I received my bachelor's degree and returned home from Lebanon. I submitted my papers to the Ministry of Education, and surprisingly they appointed me to be a headmistress at an elementary school. This was in the early seventies [1970s]. What I had learned at the university helped me to do my work well, and I tried to apply what I learned. However, my career at that time was convenient to my life; teaching was a means to an end.

Shortly after I became the headmistress, I got married and I started a new life with my small family. I remember that I made great use of the good relationship that connects

me with my husband and children because it was based on consultation and discussion most of the time.

But during this time, around 1973, I felt that there was a goal far away from what I had achieved, and for which I would have to work hard. What I really I wanted to do was make use of my studies. By this I mean I had a strong and serious desire to continue on with my education in economics and obtain a Ph.D. At this time, it was only dream.

In 1975, I had a certain view and great expectations since I found myself managing the school perfectly. At that time, I considered my real abilities and decided to take advantage of all the fundamentals, values, and principles that had a positive influence on me when I was younger, in addition to the considerable experience I had gained from my greatest colleagues. Many of them were female teachers from different nationalities such as Lebanese, Palestinian, and Egyptian, who had created for me a good educational atmosphere, full of information, and in which we could exchange unlimited ideas and approaches. At the same time, I had developed a new character that differs from a teacher's character. No doubt that this was a good stage in my life, in which I achieved powerful results and gained much experience.

This perspective transferred to the school through my work as a leader in the learning and educational process. So there was a good atmosphere of consultation and suggestions that led to solving problems before they occurred. There was also a wonderful and positive atmosphere among teachers and between them and the students' parents. This gave me the chance to form strong relationships with most of my colleagues.

Later, I started a new stage. I decided to complete my study, so I chose to enroll in the advanced studies of economics and political science in Kuwait University. I saw there a lot of young people; I mean girls and boys in general. There was a great number of youth, but only 50 students applied to take the final exam. My husband supported me in taking the final exams, and fate played a great role, too. When I finished the advanced studies in Kuwait University, I discussed with my husband the matter of studying abroad for the master's degree. So he accepted the situation and started to manage our life so we could settle away from home. He looked for a house, schools for our young children, and other things in Cairo (my place of study); so he paved the way for me to achieve my goal. In this stage, we planned that my husband would finish his tasks in Cairo, and the children and I would follow him later. There was great flexibility in dealing with the situation, whether from my family or my husband.

I started my research. It was about economic theory and the public budget, whereas Kuwait at that time hadn't known much about these fields. This was clear when my professors admired my research so much. In the exam, I had three major subjects and one optional, which was public finance. At that time, the State of Kuwait was encouraging Kuwaiti people to study abroad. Thanks to my husband and my family, I didn't face any obstacles; in addition, the financial aspects were available, so everything was ready for me to complete my master's degree.

Our aim was always for a change to the better; we always faced hardships. But the most important thing was to achieve the goal at the end. My husband worked in the diplomatic service at this time, and I was studying for the master's degree, which was in the public finance field, about the state budget.

So I had to meet officials in a Ministry in Kuwait for references and data. They helped me more and didn't hide any piece of information. They gave me information about the Ministry activities that I was unfamiliar with. It is worth mentioning that all people I met inside the Ministry were male, and there wasn't any female participation because there wasn't any woman in the balance and finance section of the State. I didn't even take notice. I was sitting with the youth. The number of Kuwaitis was limited. The non-Kuwaitis were present in different departments. All my interest was focused only on the budget and monthly and annual statements, revenues, and expenses of the State as a whole. I knew about the state funds, the taxation funds, and the state expenses. These were what I needed to complete my thesis.

I completed my master's degree and I came back to Kuwait. After the request of the Ministry of Education for me to return to the teaching sector in the high school, I was not satisfied, since I considered the teaching period only as a bridge to reach my greatest objective. Reaching a higher position is not in itself an objective because women in that period did not obtain their political and comprehensive rights. However, my objective was to leave teaching for a private or public sector.

Moreover, there was major difficulty in my returning to the Ministry of Education again when some officers in another Ministry contacted me and told me that they had reviewed my efforts with an enthusiasm for the balance sheet. In addition, they reviewed my mission and asked to conduct an interview with me to see whether or not I was willing to work at the Ministry.

I consider this stage the real stage in which I felt self-development, and in which I determined the work I needed and through which I would develop myself. I knew that I

wished to work in this field because it was one of the closest things to my goals at this stage of my life. This was in 1979 when I started work at one of the ministries in Kuwait. And through this work I discovered many things as a result of the practical aspect, beyond the academic aspect I experienced in the period preceding this time.

Now I can say that the period during which I worked at the Ministry of Education was not the real work I was aspiring to, despite all the successes I achieved in that period, with the promotions I passed up during this time being the proof.

The other aspect is that they assigned me to the position of Budget Supervisor. This was a good thing, and it is the other piece that gave me a strong push in building a practical character during this period. This position motivated me to boost my personality to be strong enough for this stage. So I look at this position and responsibilities very differently. This sector was characterized by requirements for complete confidentiality and being very sensitive because it had connections with the People's Assembly and Council of Ministers; and thus there was a fear of women entering into this sector.

I started actual work. The first task was to prepare the monthly and final financial arrangements of the State of Kuwait. My work included several tasks and jobs that had importance. I consider this stage the stage of hope, and there are a lot of considerations that should be paid attention to, the most important of which was the fate that put me in this position I was aspiring to.

In this stage, which I consider the stage of my real work, there were many considerations that could be represented within the element of work, such as manners, principles, negotiating, and working as a group within the sector, and particularly a balance of power within the sector, which was one of the important business models. We

respected the work supervisors, who had control over the staff's violations and deviations during work.

The focus in this period was how to harmonize with my colleagues, whether supervisors or managers, who worked with me on the budget. Because, in fact, one day the Undersecretary of Ministry, who was considered the second man in the Ministry after the Minister, was paying serious attention to my work. My work was to supervise and monitor the budget; and then I worked as the budget director of certain ministries' budgets, which I followed up on. And I followed up on their accounts as part of the State budget, so I would be completely ready for any issue or report given to me.

The budget was the plan that determined the State objectives within a period of time, in addition to the plan to enhance income, whether it was for specific occasions or for other things, such as products and services. These were the important aspects that the budget was concerned with. And my colleagues were supporting me to achieve these objectives.

Again, it is worth mentioning that I was the only woman among a team of male colleagues; this reinforced my position through letting me use and gain the required experience.

This period was one of the important driving forces at work. It started by my gaining self-confidence from my supervisor's suggestions. At that time, I was the manager of the balance sheet. So those who were in charge in the Ministry had trust in me by choosing me to prepare myself to attend the People's Assembly discussions and negotiations about the State budget, although I was insufficiently qualified at this time for practical activities. What I can say is that I witnessed worthy competition during this

period, and I didn't add or remove anything, but this was the reality in my work. In other words, I was honest when I discussed the financial plan without adding or skipping any facts, and I talked candidly about the work.

The encouragement of the Ministry's higher management gave me self-confidence since I was chosen for this task. As an official responsible for the balance sheet of the Cabinet, I was required to present the balance sheet for the Financial Committee in the People's Assembly. We were required to show our capabilities as government representatives and discuss the balance sheet with the Financial Committee.

As for me, I was afraid. However, I had a desire and a capability to discuss matters with the members of the Financial and Economic Committee in the People's Assembly because this was the first opportunity for a woman in the history of the Ministry. I was encouraged by the officials in the Ministry. I felt that they were strongly supporting me. Their encouragement and assistance consolidated my existence in the Committee. The Committee boasted of having a solid background of experience working with financial issues at that time. The Committee used to present and discuss the balance sheet, which was based upon the law designed for balance sheets. Therefore, they were completely ready for negotiations and discussions. We were so ready to work in the People's Assembly and the Ministry because work was progressing as a whole. So work was distinguished by integration and discipline most of the time, and respect was the most common characteristic. So all of us respected each other and dealt effectively, and I can say that I gained a good advantage during this period. No doubt that I faced a lot of obstacles, just as anyone beginning his work does, and this [overcoming these obstacles]

has led me to achieve most of my dreams and ambitions in terms of the quiet confidence I've gained through my colleagues.

The Ministry's Under Secretary and the Vice Under Secretary tried to keep themselves away from the meetings and discussions except during the big affairs, and this gave me a wide range of opportunity to evaluate the discussion process in all sections. This situation gave me the chance to make the difference in terms of my experience in my field as a budget auditor and budget director for some ministries. We were entering a period of preparation for work relationships, and arranging new systems for the State's public balance of income and expenses. Of course there was great support from the Cabinet. And when we talk about the Cabinet, we are then talking about executive power. There was also support from the People's Assembly, which represents the legislative power. We found that the two powers essentially maintained the financial development for the State. This gave us great confidence in preparing the State's financial balances.

Being prepared to receive the Committee was something that aroused feelings of fear and worry in me. However, after starting the meeting and presenting the points that should be discussed, I felt comfortable because they gave me vast opportunity for discussion and responding to inquiries. They accepted my presentation and numbers because the balance sheet was a complex thing, and it included different methods for how to prepare it. I felt that they simplified the process. My feelings of awe began to disappear and I had a desire to participate in the cooperation between the executive authority (the State, represented by the Cabinet, and we were part of it) and the legislative authority (the Financial and Economic Committee, which represents one of the important committees in the People's Assembly). Trust and encouragement by the Financial Committee at that

time gave me added value for doing the work of a woman in a field that had not been trodden before by any woman.

Frankly speaking, I remember that the head of the Committee at that time was directing his questions to me specifically, by name, although the Undersecretary and Assistant Deputy Minister were there. He said, for example, "Please, Mrs. Dana, give us a hint about so and so." It was not a matter of a woman and men. However, he accepted my arguments and found that they were reasonable and logical enough. In the breaks during the sessions, I sat with them, and doing this consolidated the discussions and made them more intimate. As a result, I developed a great motivation to prove myself.

When we finished, all the team members received great thanks. The Undersecretary also said frankly, "Well done, Dana." And he meant women in general by this congratulation. It was because women weren't accustomed to discussing important issues such as the balance sheet, since it is a complicated issue related to the State, its economic resources, income distribution, economic resources designation, justice in income distribution, and the methods for balance sheet preparation. It had been difficult to talk about all these matters because they did not allow me to take too much time. However, we discussed them simply.

This process also gives another advantage to the Ministry. That is, the approach was to qualify the leaders to bear the responsibility. The administrative approach applied in the Ministry represents cooperation and understanding. The general characteristics and functional framework during this period were that work doesn't depend on any specific individual, but on a disciplined plan or framework, and good management, to provide the citizens with the best quality and services. We were preparing the balances and

implementing the budget to the utmost to ensure that the citizens were satisfied with the functioning of the various resources.

My occupations in the Ministry were developed until I became the Assistant Undersecretary in the Ministry. Therefore, my appointment to this higher position led me to take advantage of the Ministry's opportunity to be a supervisor.

In the Ministry, the accounting and balance sheet sector was dedicated to offering some types of bonuses because studying the balance sheet and the final accounts of the State was tiresome. The starting point was establishing a training center in the Ministry. This center was concerned with training the new employees because the specialized training courses created a wide area from which to consolidate the culture, and at the same time to consolidate the scientific and technical parts of the process. Then, a process or a system for training was provided to all the employees of the Ministry, including those who were newly appointed. Specialized courses were designed for every sector, such as courses on taxes or accounting. On that basis, a center that encompassed the newly appointed employees was established to develop their capabilities and enable them to be well prepared. That approach also gives due care to evaluating new employees by setting a training program for them at the beginning of their work in the Ministry, and for 4 years during the course of their promotions from beginner employees to developing employees who can occupy higher positions. In this way, employees can take advantage of their training and specialized studies. They have the right now to give their opinions in the meetings and to offer their suggestions and results.

During this time, as I prepared the balances, I was so eager to have the Ph.D. certificate, which in turn would open to me a wide range of work when I entered the

accounting field, which was not far away [too much different] from the budget field. My opportunities in the financial work at the Ministry reinforced women's presence in these jobs, especially because their work was presented to His Highness the Emir. So women were submitting applications to the Ministry to acquire the various jobs.

In my post, I was entitled to manage the financial balances of the State. This was an example of giving a woman a leadership position in the country. Similarly, since the Minister of Planning let women participate in planning the financial statement and relating the statement and the economic aspects, I was appointed to be Undersecretary in another Ministry. This position was attractive, so I accepted it. Work in the particular field of this position was closely connected with finance. Officials in this field were also closely related to their peers in finance. I was transferred to the other Ministry, and we started to connect the 5-year plan and other statements in accordance with the objectives, such as the developmental objectives. As representative of the executive body in front of the legislative authority in the People's Assembly, the Minister keeps in mind the goal of achieving this objective.

The Planning department was responsible for editing a strategic plan, a 5-year plan, and the government program. Therefore, it was important to connect the specialized areas of focus in the statement with those of the Ministry.

My transfer to the other Ministry consolidated my experience. In statistics, the decision-maker cannot take the right and appropriate decision that represents the least financial, social, and political expense if he is not totally organized. This decision provides numerical indicators for the future and accurate studies in all fields that researchers should cover.

I attempted to apply my method of work in the previous Ministry to the other Ministry. However, the system used in the previous Ministry was not used in most ministries. It is important to acknowledge all the supervisory levels in the other Ministry, such as the Assistant Deputies, the Minister, and the supervisors because the employee can communicate with his seniors directly.

Organization and assessment by the authorized bodies provide the necessary information for studies and suggestions for follow-up. Then, work is documented by all parties and at all levels by those participating in decision-making. That administrative direction was applied in the previous Ministry. It was not applied in most other ministries. Therefore, I attempted to transfer that administrative approach to the other Ministry. Such meetings determine a yearly plan for each administration in the Ministry through which a strategy is distributed to cover short periods. This period is determined on a monthly basis. The managers of all administrations meet with the members of the committees for a short time to discuss the affairs of each administration. The administrative hierarchy here allows the manager to receive the plan from the Assistant Undersecretaries: The Undersecretaries take the plan from the Deputy Minister, who receives it from the Minister, who takes it personally from the Cabinet.

The Planning Affairs Committee used to meet with the managers to present the plan of execution for the following plans. That overall plan includes the quantitative and monetary aspects, as well as a financial translation for the execution of the plan. The quantitative objectives include the aspects that can be counted, such as the numbers of employees, tools, and required instruments for work. The managers, heads of departments, and supervisors in each department determine the required balance to

provide all the requirements needed for the execution of the plan. The objective of the manager, heads of departments, and supervisors editing such a plan is to prevent authoritarianism from the higher administrative bodies. That plan allows the Assistant Undersecretaries to identify managers who are not under their administrative authority. Therefore, a manager can be identified through the plan set forth, and can negotiate with all the Assistant Undersecretaries, even those who are not related to his specialty. The Assistant Undersecretary does not initiate negotiations at all during the presented plan related to his administration. Therefore, we aspired to be distinguished in evaluating the supervisory bodies such as the supervisors, heads of departments, and managers through their discussions in these plans, even though assessments of the Assistant Undersecretaries of the different supervisory bodies were not necessarily considered valid.

That approach of presenting plans, having discussions, and using committees for all the administrations in the Ministry required a period that was not less than 3 weeks of work. After the end of the fiscal year, any manager can contest the approach of any Assistant Undersecretary in the Ministry because of the lack of availability of the tools and requirements needed to finish the plan. For example, the Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs can contest that he hasn't been provided, or helped with providing computers to departments and employees. Therefore, the execution of the plan at that stage is temporarily delayed because of these problems and difficulties. Hence, the manager defends himself and his failure to execute the plan because of the delay or failure of the Assistant Undersecretary; he does this by making a presentation of the status of the plan in front of the Planning Committee.

After the Planning Committee meets, the members choose the best and most accurate administration in terms of the work, and also the administration that made a good presentation. If it is possible to make the presentation, this is the real approach by the administration that serves more than one body, such as the supervisory bodies and the employees. Therefore, presentations support meaningful directions and decentralization in the dealings of the administration. A difference in opinion might occur during the meeting. However, the outcome depends on the power of your presentation of the subject, and your character. And in the end, all agree that the objective is to accomplish the execution of the plan without any consideration to any personal perspectives. Because this approach served a group of employees who did not have the opportunity to have training courses in this field of work, I transferred it also to the Ministry.

I transferred that administrative approach with its details from the previous Ministry to the other Ministry, to ease the burden of the administrative authorization by the higher supervisory bodies, such as the Assistant Undersecretaries. In their decisions about the final assessment of the employees' performance in the Ministry, Deputies are not involved in that administrative authorization. That administrative approach also serves every Assistant Undersecretary, who knows the size and scope of the responsibility assigned to him, and also knows the responsibilities and tasks of the other Assistant Undersecretaries. In fact, the administration works according to a time schedule coordinated with the Planning Committee and the administration. It is worth mentioning that every Assistant Undersecretary knows all his or her duties and rights to do the work well and works independently with his or her administration.

It is acknowledged that, in the Cabinet, the Assistant Undersecretary or the Undersecretary is asked about issues such as the annual and 5-year plans. However, that approach allows even managers to discuss the plans in the Cabinet because managers trust the Deputies and the Assistant Deputies. The managers trust the Assistant Deputies' capabilities to discuss the presented plans and inquire about the objectives that are prepared on the level of the Ministry, and to assess the input and output, the income received and its outcome [that is, how well the financial objectives were achieved]. I transferred all this to the Ministry in the interest of the work because this approach was not available there. I didn't take that approach as a result of studying and education. However, I learned it from the basics of my work since the beginning of my job in the previous Ministry. I learned also from the officials who gave me the chance to attend meetings with the different supervisory bodies. For example, I attended the People's Assembly as a member of the committees responsible for the State's financial balance and its details.

All this interaction stemmed from the Planning Committee headed by the Undersecretary. It included a number of Assistant Deputies, and its objective was to implement a very strong system for training. In the second part, assistance was requested from the Civil Service Department to designate specialized training courses in negotiations style, and then in restructuring the balance sheets. What was important was the field of human development because the Ministry in which I worked gave due care to preparing the 5-year plan of the country and a development program for employees. Therefore, it was highly important to see the most successful experiments in human development. When the [employment] time of the employee exceeded 1 or 2 years and

the employee had a sufficient period of training, he or she was assigned some official tasks to identify the most modern methods for preparing the balance sheet and presenting its results.

All these aspects are related to the public and private accountants. There was no distinction made to exclude women from attending the courses or the official tasks. Sometimes, when there were official international conferences, they would include one of their relatives in these conferences, and we accepted this because the relatives attended on the employees' account. The remunerations were based on the degree of attendance at the courses and the official tasks.

That approach in management was home based because we had been used to consulting family members before taking any decision. These decisions include social, financial, and future outlooks. All family members discuss the matters and different subjects because they are considered important decisions. Thus, they are related to the public interest in the family. The same thing applies at work. Suggestions are presented; however, we choose what is suitable for the public interest of the country.

In addition, as for me, I did not make authoritative decisions. In our family, we used to discuss matters frankly and convince each other of the right thing. I transferred this approach to my work in the other Ministry and also in the previous Ministry because this approach is a typical example of decentralization. Because my parents treated us with faithfulness, I applied the same approach with my employees in the two ministries. Thus, my upbringing affected me in my career. Therefore, I was keen on faithfulness and objectivity in evaluating the work of the clever employees, and in their right to have annual bonuses, allowances, promotions, or missions outside the State. Moreover, I'd like

to mention that the educational fundamentals at home were based on respect, so home manners were so good that our relationships at home depended on love and respect most of the time.

What distinguished my work most was the decentralization at home. For me, the concept of faithfulness was depicted by how my family was maintained. This was also transferred to my work in the two ministries. Therefore, we used a decentralized approach at work, as well as horizontal and vertical communication with the specialized bodies in the Ministry, and respecting opinions in the Ministry.

From my perspective, leadership is an art. It is one of the important practical arts, which are based on three fundamentals: behaviors, morals, and qualifications. In addition, it's a matter of how to designate the resources with the highest quality and least cost. Again, leadership is an art. When I say "resource designation," I do not mean financial resources. However, I mean human resources; and when I offer them the highest quality, there must be various benefits. When I connect these things with each other, this means that I use certain methods that give me a clue with little cost.

Furthermore, leadership is like engineering, and it is not exclusive to men or women. There are some capabilities for women and [some] for men. How can they use this to achieve their desired goal? However, a woman has a very important aspect because she is patient. She also cares for her family and community. I do not criticize men. Thus, leadership for men or women is based on behaviors, morals, and qualifications.

For me, leadership was a great burden because women's behavior was under the microscope. Leadership, also, is a type of engineering that is controlled by certain factors. There are some factors that measure the results in the end.

Leadership doesn't mean only of a certain group of people. At school, I was a leader for 60 female teachers and employees. However, I was a leader for 150 employees when I was a manager in the Ministry. The number increased to 850 employees when I was a Deputy Minister. Therefore, leadership is not based on number. However, it is based on certain methods of offering inputs to achieve outputs. In addition, having authority does not entitle me to be authoritarian because this is not acceptable behavior. The one who has authority should respect his rights and tasks, and should instruct any new employee of his or her rights and tasks. Therefore, bonuses in the two ministries are based on the productivity of each employee. Each employee has the right to obtain a bonus, based upon the leadership ethics that the manager should understand and apply.

The actual morals have roots and basics, and one of the roots is the human mind. What constitutes morals is respect, cooperation, and logical values based on the Islamic doctrine and trust. Raising children is a trust for parents. I also mean by morals maintaining the human element at work; cooperation; and participating in building a family and creating entities that have the ability to survive.

Almighty Allah gives every person different characteristics in his or her personality. The State has law and decisions that should be respected. That respect arises from upbringing. Respecting the law ensures not offending any person. Our Islamic doctrine sets forth that a person who is productive and achieves success and added value to his work can't be equal with a person who doesn't work or respect work. Therefore,

we cannot equate a person who commits to work hours with another one who does not and always makes trouble because these are among the moral values at work.

We realize that morality stems from the mother at home because mother is a school. She prepares the members of the community. Therefore, if mothers are good and have good values, we will have a good generation in our community.

In my job, I used to discuss matters with objectivity. I also used to maintain the interest of the State. Therefore, the human elements were the most important thing that I gave due care to during work to get the required productivity. However, if there was a clash between the private and public interests, the public interest took the highest priority. Furthermore, my concept was always to look at all the elements of work as interactive elements that do their job to achieve a certain objective through commitment and seriousness at work.

According to my view, I can say that Kuwaiti woman has the capability for patience when facing problems and obstacles. Besides, I would like to clarify that with my presence in the Ministry, I was interested in developing the skills and capabilities of the employees and encouraging females to participate in training courses. I can say also that the Kuwaiti woman has excelled in recent times in many fields, whether they are political or economic or otherwise. I can say that the most important activities of the State that have been run by women have been the financial statement, strategic plans, and private national plans and strategies of the country. Furthermore, I cannot neglect the role of those women who have occupied important positions in the Public Authority for Investment, the Ministry of Oil, oil institutions, and Kuwait University.

I think, if the Kuwaiti woman wants to work, she can do anything she is capable of, and her ambitions are not stopped by any obstacles. For example, we can see examples of female leadership in the NBK [The National Bank of Kuwait], investment and real-estate corporations. Woman also had a capable role in extinguishing the oil fires in 1991. These are female leaders who are distinguished by certain characteristics that enable them to work and prove their capabilities.

About the influence of the culture of Kuwait, I cannot count the items of Kuwait culture because this issue is very great. There are government ministries and administrations, each of which has a team. When a Ministry submitted all its requirements, I would have to attend meetings in each Ministry to gather its requirements, revenues, and expenditures. The ministries accepted our arguments. In addition, the ministries' approval of a balance sheet report made by a woman was an indicator of the approval of the female role. This was in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. However, the community as a whole is governed by elements other than the executive or legislative authorities.

From the cultural perspective, Kuwait is a different case than other countries because in other countries there are aspects of autonomy and independence for a girl after she becomes an 18-year-old. However, our religion, Islam, and the Arab parents are the ones who raise the family as a whole; and in this religious and social view, we cherish our Arab families in general. So, with these qualities, we can change society for the better, not worse. The Almighty Allah said, "God does not change what is inside people until they change what is in themselves."

Although a woman has not been accepted in political posts, there has been approval of a woman's participation in political matters, as is indicated by the assistance of some women in the ministries. For example, there were Assistant Undersecretaries before I came to the Ministry. They were Fedha and Soad. They were prior to me; however, I took precedence in a place that had not been trodden by any other who has had any role in having a greater influence in the civil [private] sector. I did not join the civil [private] society, which plays a significant role and represents different layers. Our role was a governmental one. However, this does not refer to the female associations that require seminars and lectures.²

As for the number of women and their development in their situations as female leaders, let's take into consideration that there were not any female members in the Ministry, especially in those sectors and accounting. Experience played an important role in promotion. The Civil Service Department (Diwan) promotes on the basis of experience. Moreover, efficiency also plays an important role. The law also supports years of experience and service. There were a number of female managers at the time I worked there because there were managers for Public Relations, a female manager for Financial Affairs, and a female manager for Training, and so on. The number was small. Why? Because these fields were male dominated. Then, the Kuwaiti women had a chance to join men in these positions and to become leaders. The field was open for women to be promoted, from being a head of department to being a general manager. However, men had the precedent in occupying a position in the balance sheet and accounting areas. Promotions were limited, but not for the female members. There were training managers,

² This means that although she was involved with the governmental role, she still participated in other female associations in the civil/private sector, such as seminars and lectures.

administrative projects managers, and there was a kind of public relations manager. There were some female members in all these areas. However, when I retired, I did not follow up on the number of female members at that time.

As for the Ministry where I worked, there were two female Assistant Undersecretaries. Then I came as an Undersecretary and we became three. Also, the activities of the ministries increased. That expansion gave women a greater field for joining leadership work, and not only in the two ministries where I worked. There were women occupying other ministries' higher positions; Seham Al-Rezouki was in the oil sector, and Dr. Rasha Al-Sabah was in the Higher Education Ministry. However, this was a small number. I can say that the female element that represents the higher percentage remains few until now. However, this number is increasing recently. I'll give an example: The female members joined the Tender (Procurement) Committee. This committee is related to the Higher Council of Planning, which had no female position. When I joined it, there were two women. Now, it boasts having more than three or four.

Recently, in my previous position, I had no male or female superiors. Instead, I was their senior at the supervisory level. They used to help me. The young men who worked with me had a strong desire to help. They were assigned a task, a symposium or a conference. Frankly speaking, I was comfortable assigning them tasks.

I can say that I still notice, honestly, that my real relationships with the leadership positions and supervisory positions in the ministries are good. They respect my views. Even after I left the Ministry, they still consulted me, and this indicates the effect that I left during my work.

I was approved and respected by my subordinates in the Council of Ministries. These factors relieved me of many burdens and gave me a sense of being comfortable. Although there were some problems, I enjoyed my work because of my subordinates' trust and encouragement. I can say that I mostly dealt with males in work, as leaders or employees, and in university, as professors and students, and I did not feel any gender influences or discrimination.

Yet, I was an Undersecretary when Dr. Masoma was a Minister. As a first female Minister, I can say that her approval was there. The Cabinet formation is often based on the Constitution articles. When the Cabinet is formed, the government work agenda is presented. When academic graduates occupy certain positions in the government, they apply the practical theory and, therefore, management style differs. In this case, we knew how to connect the theoretical academic style with the procedural, practical, executive style.

The second thing in approving the Minister is his or her ability to connect the government work, academic studies, and academic theory. Many academics can join the Cabinet formation not only in Kuwait but also in any country. In Egypt, for example, the Cabinet formation requires the combination of both the academic and practical experience for procedural work in the government. The work succeeds when there is a connection between the two. In addition, connection succeeds with time, based on experience.

Making the connection between academic studies and government work to applied executive work is a difficult task that takes much time. Our problem in Kuwait is that the Cabinet formation occurs very quickly. The Ministry was changed two times in

Dr. Masoma's period. Therefore, it was difficult to evaluate this process because production quantity cannot be estimated till it makes a complete cycle. At that time, we were very happy that Dr. Masoma was the first Minister. It is also important to connect theoretical studies with practical ones. Doing this requires a long time. However, unfortunately, Dr. Masoma did not last for long, and I did not resume my period in the Ministry. Unfortunately, I presented my resignation before the appointment of Dr. Masoma as a Minister. Dr. Masoma considered work in the Ministry; however, I had already presented my resignation to Sheikh Ahmed Al-Abdullah. Therefore, I did not work much with her.

Overall, I acquired new professional experiences through my work in leadership positions in the two ministries. With no doubt, I joined the Ministry after I was a headmistress and I had a master's degree in economics. When I was assigned as Balance Sheet Supervisor, it was important to identify [and understand] the balance sheet. I had already studied it before. My job gave me an opportunity to be professional in those balance sheets. It was important to identify the theoretical academic methods in preparing the balance sheet, to be able to create it. I left the Ministry and had a good knowledge of the Zero B project and of G.F.S. (Governmental Financial Standards). In addition, I had a good knowledge of the studies presented by the Web Bank. I knew how to make feasibility studies. I didn't study all this. However, I acquired the knowledge through my work. Therefore, I left my work having a good knowledge and accumulative strong experiences.

It was important in the Ministry to study planning, to identify whether planning was central or not. I was also required to know what was available for some countries and

for us in Kuwait. Do other countries present a statement for the Ministry? Studying strategies was not available in the right sense of the word. This was the most important academic thing that we had identified. As for planning, the process was different. In the Ministry, it depended on studies, and then a decision was taken or not taken.

Furthermore, my work in the Ministry enhanced me because I had a look at lots of studies, and it gave me an opportunity to communicate with other individuals to benefit from their experience. I also visited some countries to benefit from their experiences, including the G.C.C. [Gulf Corporation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf area], and European and Asian countries.

In terms of leadership skills, when I started my work in the previous Ministry, I didn't have the art of meetings management because I didn't acquire this characteristic when I was in the Ministry of Education. There are lots of principles in meetings management—presentation style and discussion principles, for example. I acquired all these principles during my work in the Ministry. Therefore, my seniors put me in some of these management positions. This is a strong aspect of my personality that I acquired. I have also acquired the ability to present my argument and attract the attention of the attendees. There are some questions that do not have sufficient data. However, the answers to these questions should be clear and good. Negotiation also is an important skill. The tasks that I was assigned required that I should be a good negotiator, having the ability to convince others. All this was developed in the meetings that I attended. There was also another very important part, which is self-confidence in presenting numbers, data, and suggestions.

In the formal job functions to which I used to go, I took employees and heads of departments. I was very close to employees. Although I was an official, I was a friend to all the employees because I believe that the social part is very important in work. I was very keen on preparing training programs for the employees, to consolidate their skills at work.

It is worth mentioning that women at that time worked in many sectors (leadership or regular sectors). It was possible to identify the number of female employees at schools and their leadership positions as school headmistresses. If we have a look at higher education, we will know that woman is superior. We see that there are great numbers of female university professors. There are also great numbers of female doctors. The religion doesn't prevent or prohibit the work of women in any of these jobs. The head of those who participated in extinguishing the oil fires on November 6 was a woman. All studies are open to women. Traditions and customs don't prevent this. Woman sometimes doesn't have the bravery and efficiency to play an important role in the community. However, she is qualified to play a great role.

Let's agree first that community is not a category; rather, it is a group. From the political perspective, there are parties, but we don't have parties in Kuwait. However, we call them groups, like the Islamic groups. In the previous period, those groups weren't there. Each university and each association has its special agenda. Each applies its principles and directions. Some members who belong to those associations are convinced of the association's direction and strategies. They are also convinced of its style of work. We cannot separate ourselves from the community.

Additionally, the People's Assembly has certain parties. The governing party is that party which plays a role in public directions and strategies. But in Kuwait, we do not have parties, we have groups and gatherings. In our earlier, primitive Bedouin community, there was a higher, medium, and lower strata. However, there are other things. The existing groups have their system, strategy, and structure. Now, many people prefer to join these groups to defend their rights.

All this plays an important role in forming the public culture in the community. The categories in the community cannot be counted. In the 1960s, it was divided into classes.

About the reaction of having a woman occupying a leadership position, what I remember is that in the Ministry, some young men came to us. I said to them, "Why do you laugh with me?" They were Bedouins and I was the manager. They were not used to dealing with females as leaders. They told me that I was sociable and they felt an intimate relationship when they talked with me. The city people as well as the Bedouins had guidelines about girls' education at schools. However, I see that the Bedouin, a member of an Arab tribe living in or near the desert, is keen on teaching his daughter. All these guidelines weren't there in the past.

Over all, I can give an example of how females can develop their status and prove their abilities. When someone applied to get, for example, the Ph.D. degree, she had the desire to have it, and it wasn't the circumstances that qualified her for it.

From my perspective, people can modify their type of thinking to deal with their new life. Then we can say that, at this time, the matter became a social and economic life story. There are many young men with whom I have worked in the Ministry who have

become managers and Assistant Undersecretaries. They were the first employees with us. To deal with life changes and develop economic status, they encouraged their wives to work in private enterprises. For example, they asked them to make sweets or any other goods to be sold, to diversify their sources of income. (I want the State to diversify its sources of income instead of depending on petroleum.)

The diverse income sources in the family should be managed. From my perspective, the problem is that I cannot judge or calculate what is typical or usual for others, but I can say that life is now more economic than social.

Overall, female status in Kuwait has grown and females now are holding more senior positions in governmental and non-governmental organizations. I now manage my own business and apply my experiences as a financial counselor for the organization's benefit.

Mariam's Story

My name is Mariam. I am a Kuwaiti female, and I am 60 years old. I have a Ph.D. in political science and international relations. I worked approximately 35 years as a faculty member of Kuwait University and was the department chief two times, from 1985 to 1987 and from 2001 to 2002. In addition, I am proud to be the first female Minister in Kuwait history. I served as a Minister for three different ministries.

I started my professional life with Kuwait University, College of Commerce, as a faculty member, and I am still teaching political science. After awhile, I was chosen to be the head of the Political Science Department. At the university, the choice of the department chief depends on an agreement rather than an election; this means that there is a committee that chooses the chief according to the agreement, without voting. This

means that the appointment process for the department head occurs without the agreement of remaining members. This situation helped with getting both male and female faculty appointed to hold positions in the university.

When I occupied a leadership position in the university, I faced some difficulties. But this period, 1985 to 1987, witnessed very few difficulties. Hence, every university chief has his or her supporters, and there are also protestors who wait for the mistake he or she may make. Because I was a woman, there were some protestors, who I know very much constantly opposed the idea that a woman should hold a leading position, even among the university staff members. The professors did not accept that their senior was a woman. However, this fact did not deter my work because they understood well that I did not interfere in their syllabuses or work. It became clear that a huge percentage of those men who had a view that women are [and should be] passive, not leaders, were the Conservative group. This was indicated from their view of the woman leader and me in that role. They did not express their complete rejection of me as a head of the department with words. They said it in other ways. They couldn't say it frankly out of respect to themselves, the chief, and the institution that chose her. However, their behaviors were more expressive than words. They created some confusion and some coalitions inside the department that caused a disturbance and created a negative atmosphere. They did not attend the department meetings. They created obstacles in my way as a head of the department. For example, they didn't participate in the committees, so they prevented the committees' operations. Thus, these deeds generally caused obstacles in the chief's way which I experienced as a woman and department chief, and I suffered from them. However, this did not stop me from occupying this position for 2 years.

There were also some colleagues who had a positive view of me as a leader. Our community had two teams: One of them was supportive and advocated the role of the woman as a leader, whereas the other one didn't believe in the role of the woman as a leader.

In fact, the university is an educational institution that has its own requirements and system of work. Since I dealt with my colleagues and junior employees only as colleagues, and not as senior and junior workers, I did not face many difficulties in my leadership position. This difficulty, I believe, might be more apparent among political science colleges since there are differences in perspectives between the professors of these colleges and their counterparts in other countries, and these differing perspectives might create more barriers about this issue.

Now, I think that the present phase is negative because the graduates are negative toward the role of the woman. Therefore, the task is more difficult than before. Instead of going forward with freedom of expression and other positive trends, our community is somehow retreating. So when I became the department chief for the second time, I left my position after 1 year because I couldn't tolerate the conditions. Nowadays, the conditions have become worse than before for either women or men.

No doubt, occupying the position of a Minister is a positive trend and great victory for women in Kuwait. It was believed that the woman was unable to occupy leadership positions because she was unable to lead others. My choice to be a Minister was based on a principle of qualifications and experiences, and not as a development position. In other words, appointing a female Minister was not only a cultural decision or

one to develop the female status but was because females deserve to be leaders. So, I felt that I had something to do and I wanted to prove something when I joined the Cabinet.

Because I was the first female Minister to join the People's Assembly, I was sure that I would face many difficulties when I first entered the People's Assembly, However, I wanted to prove my capabilities and to achieve the expectations of the Prince of the State, may Allah preserve him and the father Prince, may Allah bless him. I was also given all kinds of support from the Prime Minister. After giving my oath in the People's Assembly, I gave a speech for Kuwaiti women. However, I experienced a negative opposition, full of contradictions. This was very difficult for me. I encountered great opposition because there was great fanaticism against women.

However, since I occupied the position as a Minister, I felt that this position served the woman greatly. It gives the woman self-confidence that she is efficient and can occupy any position and do any work because the experiment was successful.

The nature of work in the Cabinet requires that there must not be criticism of others. There should be cooperation between ministries, and I gained their respect and help on all levels. They did not treat me as inferior or as female. On the other hand, I treated Ministers with full respect and strength.

During my responsibilities in the Cabinet, I remember when I presented a detailed proposal of the work plan in governmental organizations to His Highness, Prince of the State, Sabah. I was afraid to present it to the Cabinet directly because it might face great opposition. The proposal was about offering jobs for people without gender preference. So I told him that the organizations require the work of men and do not require the work of women in spite of the fact that females are cleverer than males. This is indicated by

statistics that show that 85% of the brilliant students are women, not men. His Highness replied that the organizations may be more comfortable in dealing with men than women because it feels that it is a male-dominated society.

He asked me, "What do you suggest?" I replied that it should be common in all ministries not to specify or determine the gender when meeting the requirements for filling job vacancies. He showed his instant approval of my suggestion. Thus, it is apparent that the Prince is an open-minded personality. I asked him to present this issue in the People's Assembly in the first meeting. He asked me to prepare my issue with statistics and said that he was backing me.

Thanks to Allah, I succeeded in defending the issue in which I believe. A decree from the Cabinet was issued that stated that the gender of the employee should not be designated. I considered this as a positive step, which was achieved in my second month in the People's Assembly.

Another positive experience was about organizing the process of females' registration to be ready to vote. When women in Kuwait had the right to vote, I proposed a plan that automatically prepares all Kuwaiti women who have the right to vote to be ready for elections without letting them go through the process of registration as males do. Men usually register for elections manually in specific government offices and at a specific time. So we should confirm that we have each female's official records in our computer system. During my time, women were registered automatically without any intervention by other officials or money.

Through my experiences as a female in Kuwait University or the Cabinet, I can say that there are many issues that have influenced my job. One of them is the culture and

its aspects. Culture is a social heritage to each one of us. The culture of some of us has changed. However, some of us retain our old culture and tradition as it has always been. For example, suppose that there is a direct relationship between the view of the woman and the educational level. As the educational level of a person increases, the more positive that person's view is of women in the working world and as leaders.

The effect of culture is of course the most important effect on female leadership. The general culture shows that the woman is not suitable for political work and public work. In a male-dominated society, there will be sensitivity and resistance to female leadership. All the ministries I entered couldn't deal with a woman as a Minister. However, in an open community that accepts female leadership, the female leader can freely make creative things without a supportive cultural heritage.

The community in the State of Kuwait, for example, has been a male-dominated one since 1960 and till now because it has seen that there are some jobs and work that cannot be practiced by women. The state has designated some jobs for women. In order for a woman to work, she should have some basic skills on which she can depend during her transition into leadership work.

I can say that culture affects female leadership more than male leadership. Choosing a leader is supposed to be an objective, studied, and irrevocable decision because otherwise the leader may lose confidence. The leader should have patience and be stern in his or her decisions to commit.

Thus, the leader may be affected by pressures in our community. For example, students apply pressures on the professors to give them better grades. There are

conditions in place for choosing an agent, manager, or head of a department. Examples of such conditions and requirements include the following:

- Individuals should have a university certificate.
- Individuals should have worked in their field for 10 years.
- Some individuals have a diploma certificate, and when they apply for a job and have “wasta” [connections, power, or influence] such as knowing a member in the Parliament, for example, they are hired.

Having “wasta” represents bargaining, and the Kuwaitis are the most bargaining people and are called “the Jewish of the Gulf.” Therefore, this type of culture affects some people. For example, for one Ministry’s expenditures, instead of sending the 5 persons abroad who are needed, the number increases to 10 or more.

As part of culture, our community consists of tribal and civilized societies. Naturally, the tribal society is very negative in its view of the woman. Unfortunately, members of tribal society play an important role in changing views. Some of the men have changed their view toward women and their role. However, others do not have any readiness to change their views. The first group of men has changed greatly because I felt this change at their houses. Although the tribal group had a negative view of the role of women at the beginning, now they are more desirous of employing women, and they participate more significantly in developing social thinking that favors females in working and leadership positions. The working woman in recent times has become more attractive for marriage proposals because she participates positively in the marital life because she contributes financially.

In addition, since the religion has its effect in the culture, the religious trends obviously opposed the role of women and community development at the beginning. These trends called for returning to the Conservative group. This conservative view of the role of woman was the offspring of certain religious perspectives at the time. This trend suggested that women should stay at home or serve in positions that deal with females, such as education. However, the men with this view considered religion and traditions at that time from a single perspective. This call for the woman's return to the home was ascribed to the fact this would allow more job opportunities for men. Another reason is that the women occupied important social roles. And these are the most important reasons that men were alert to the leading role of women in the community. This [potential change in women's role] made the men fear that women would excel as leaders in the near future.

These influences are constantly fighting social change and view such changes as risks to the society. I can say that there are other religious groups in Kuwait that are more lenient in their thinking than the Conservative group.

The other groups depend on developing qualified women—and let me say something (for example in the Shi'a thought, the woman can be a leader); that is, they acknowledge the woman's position and support her rights. But in the previous election, I asked one of the chief Shi'a thinkers, "Why don't you nominate a woman and support her as a nominee among the nominees' lists in the different election constituencies?" He replied that they studied this matter but there weren't any qualified persons, therefore there wasn't any nominee on the Shi'a coalition's lists. This is nonsense.

The liberal coalitions tried their best to support the woman in the last elections. Whether or not I agree, they at least nominated a woman, Dr. Aseel Alawadi, from outside the coalition and supported her even though she wasn't known in the political field, and she was studying outside Kuwait in the last years. This woman hadn't a public or popular base. This shows that it's important to have the party support. If she had been nominated without the movement support, she wouldn't have extruded 11 nominees. This nominee didn't have any public or social activity. So if she had been nominated without a support of any party such as other females recently who have attendance in the society, I say clearly she would have been out early in the elections and she couldn't have even reached the eleventh position, which was so close to winning. I respect her and her ability to face the media and her electors and get this support while other nominees who had attendance in the society didn't reach advanced positions during the elections. I think, in the future, movements and groups have to support more than one woman so that one can reach her desired goal.

Then there are movements that have learned the lesson and will follow it in the future. There are movements that will benefit from the lessons that happened in other countries, such as the reformation group (the Constitutional Movement) (the Muslims Brothers group) in Egypt, who nominated a woman in the last Egyptian election. So the constitutional movement in the reformation group and the Muslims Brothers group will nominate females. So will there be a day in which the woman can have her right to be on the electoral list and not leave the field to those who deprive her of her right? Because we have qualified women in the different working political movements, except the ancestral movement, there are qualified women who are able to have the responsibility as a leader.

Additionally, men and associations in Kuwait society began to call for creating a league for the woman as a housewife. Thus, they started to find a solution for the issue from a psychological and emotional perspective, without declaring explicitly that women should return to the home again. So they encouraged working women to stay at home as retired, before they completed specific years of work. This way, the women would receive a salary through these organizations while they were at home, without working. The men and associations were certain that there was a great percentage of women who would want to take a salary without exerting any effort.

Conversely, there are those who agree that woman should work, and they don't obstruct her activities or her family life. There are even those who provide the working woman with assistance, to participate in her success.

Although it is difficult for a woman to attain a leadership position in our community, when she occupies that position, she cannot escape the cultural heritage of her community. For example, there was a leading position in the university for Dr. Fayza Al-kherafi. There were questions and anticipation that she would fail, and that she couldn't do this role. She formed a staff in which there were many women. She was the only one who served as a leader in the university for 9 years. We need successful pioneer persons. This breaks the psychological barrier for her and supports her, in addition to changing the male mind. Dr. Al-Kherafi has given us a good example of the female leader throughout the university because she is the first female manager of a university who occupied this position for 9 years.

As another example, we have Dr. Modai Al-Hamoud. She was the dean of our college, College of Commerce and Political Science, and she was stern and kind at the

same time. Therefore, I say that woman has the ability to make decisions in the matters she encounters without any hesitation. Thus, the successful model of the woman in our community affects the social heritage.

For all these arguments among society's groups and perspectives about females' leadership, I was shocked when I held the Minister position because the sheik Sabah's support of me was so important in removing all these obstacles from me. The doubt existed that woman could hold a leading position. When there was an investigation or questionnaire, the majority said that woman cannot, and the minority said that woman can hold leading positions.

The storm that was reaching the alarm level in the other movements was when I held the Minister position. My destiny was to be the first Minister; this is the reality and I should deal with it. Thus, I became an example. Now the concepts have changed. Every experience changes part of the thinking. When the sisters Noreya Alsabeh, the Minister of Education and High Education, and Dr. Modai Al-Hamoud, the Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Administrative Development Affairs, were appointed as female Ministers, the reaction was not observable at all. The criticism was only about wearing Alhejab, the scarf that covers the head to respect the religion and some other trivial matters.³ Furthermore, sister Genan Bo-Shahri was the first female candidate in Kuwait history who registered for municipal elections in 2006; this was a break in the barrier against a woman's nomination. Consequently, 30 women were

³ Also, when I refer to "sisters," in Arabic this means that I considered them as my sisters without any title. Because I was the first female Minister in Kuwait history, and because I got the whole reaction at that time, the community or the society or the Islamic groups did not have a strong reaction to those females who followed in the Minister position. Issues were more easily discussed or approved, such as the traditional forcing of those females to wear scarves on their heads to cover their hair, in Arabic referred to as "Alhejab."

nominated in the following elections. So everything new needs someone to open the door for it.

Among the Kuwaiti females' leadership improvement, there has been an accumulation gaining ground in the culture. The positive experiments of women have changed the woman's role and her leadership. This success creates incentives to change some traditions and conceptions of the community toward women. However, some parties are not convinced that the woman should attain leading positions, and I say it frankly that this is from the Conservative group, which propagates that the woman is a subordinate, not a leader, whether at the political level or at other levels. Hence, they have a preexisting attitude toward women, regardless of their competence and positive effect in their work. This attitude will continue in the future, and they give many reasons and speeches that justify their point of view and prove its truth. However, the view of the community toward women is changing gradually from a negative view to a positive one. In addition, circumstances have changed, and men's views are becoming more positive in general toward female leadership.

In addition, Kuwait culture has been affected by the role of women. This point can be made clear through examples of social interaction, which includes thought, culture, behavior, and materials. So if the culture is influenced and has been changed by humans, I think the manner of people's thinking could be changed. For example, in the past, men built houses from mud and with fixed design that met the requirements of the family. However, with the evolution of social and cultural thinking, we now build our houses to be in step with the developed, civilized world, with different designs that meet both men and women's needs. What helped us to achieve this progress is the availability

of money and the intention for change. Furthermore, the Kuwait community likes travel and tourism. Thus, they have a broader perspective of other cultures. Therefore, women occupying positions in political life also have changed the view of men toward women's role. This strong barrier, which has evolved with time, has been broken. However, it is time to *destroy* that barrier.

It is worth noting that there are some positive situations to analyze that I can remember now, situations in which male leaders lately have thanked me and have shown appreciation for my support of female political rights. There was a strong opposition to a woman occupying a leading position, such as a Minister. However, when I occupied the position of Minister, I did not hear any word of opposition from women and also not from a great percentage of men. This example is reflected in the elections that followed, as we saw about 30 women who nominated themselves. The election tents [the location that every candidate has as her place to meet people, talk, and discuss her plan for election] for women were full of men and women to support and elect a female candidate. Thus, there has been a change in the community view of women in our society.

We have a proportion of leadership positions that we cannot forget; it's not right that the leading positions have a male domination. At present, and it's the best condition, the percentage of women in leading positions doesn't exceed 11%, and it's closer to 10%. Women nowadays are moving slowly to break through the glass ceiling and persuade the decision makers to allow women to hold leading positions, whether in the private sector or the governmental sector. But women are still far away from having these decisions made in their favor. Women are so proud of the existing examples. So, thanks to Allah,

we have now two Ministers and one Vice Deputy Minister! I say that this isn't enough because the female positions in our society are still few.

The woman is always under the microscope; they always look at woman from the view that she will definitely err; therefore, they anticipate her mistakes. There are many men who have failed to hold leading positions, but no one talks about them. This is not an easy thing, but I can say that this situation is because of the society's view of woman that was influenced by our oriental culture. When the woman errs, they say, "She failed as we expected," "we expected her to fail," and so on. But I can explain this in another way. We have a traditional concept in Kuwait that everybody knows well. It is that the man carries his fault, so even if he errs socially or professionally, his excuse is acceptable and his sin is forgiven. But the woman is always seen as the cause of sin. We talk from the cultural side, which states that the man's sin is forgiven but the woman's is not. Therefore, woman fears to lose or fail because there isn't a way for the loss or failure. This doesn't result in a negative effort, but a positive one in most instances. Woman always does her work perfectly. She always doesn't want to fail; hence, she does her work more perfectly than men.

Depending on the cultural influences, there is a difference between male and female leadership. Our Arabic culture states that it's normal for the man to be leader, but when the woman seeks to be leader she has to prove that she deserves and is worthy of that because there is an anticipation for the woman to fail or to have a disability. There is a big difference [between expectations for men and for women], not only in Kuwait, but I think it is also in the United States. For example, what does (Hillary Clinton) need of experience or any other thing in order to be nominated as the President? This is because

there are some sections of electors that have dominated male culture. We see that Obama has a black skin; but he is a man, so he defeated (Hillary Clinton), and so on ... And we know that the society is formed of social classes influenced by the general culture.

To convince those who oppose the woman in work, first, from coexisting experiences inside and outside the society, I note that we can assume woman hasn't been accused of corruption or calling for wars on the political level. Furthermore, I assure you that the institutions or leading positions don't need the muscular strength of a man, but they do need experience and wisdom. We women and men are equal in our minds. We have a strong proverb in the Islamic Sharia that says "The mind consists of charging areas," not muscular or related to appearance.⁴ The leading positions need minds, not the [physical] shape. So not every woman can be a leader and not every man can be a leader. Thus, the mind represents charging areas. Just as I have the mental abilities and skills that enable me to be a leader, so also others who have more competence and ability are able to hold these leading positions. Woman has proved her mental abilities in education. Typically, female leaders are superior over men. So then if we were in a society that appreciates people's mental abilities and skills when they are choosing the leader, there would be no difference between women and men because women are qualified and have the abilities.

Additionally, protestors say that woman is emotional and rushes into her decisions. These are false calls and fragile reasons in order to put her down and support the choice of man. For example, if I'm a Minister and I had two persons who had the competence to be Vice Deputy Minister but one of them was aggressive, then I would not

⁴ "Charging areas" means the mind is the part that should be focused on, and this is the advantage of being human.

choose him. And in this case my negative emotion affected my decision, leading me to choose the quietest and the better for the position. Even we women sometimes represent the emotion as negative; but, on the contrary, it's not negative at all.

From my point of view, leadership has certain characteristics that should be available in a male or a female. For example, leaders should be an example for their employees. Leaders should start with themselves first. They should not arrive at 10 o'clock and ask other people to arrive at 8 o'clock. Thus, they should be good examples.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of my management is that it is based on partnership. It is not a dictatorship management style. I always collect views before taking any decision, whether that decision is simple or complicated.

However, it is apparent that a woman is more decisive in her decisions because she has practiced the administration of her house, and this is the most difficult administration—that of raising children and educating them with the right basics and values.

Through the teaching and leadership fields, I gained personal and professional experiences. As a leader, I don't pretend the prestige, personality, and the smile, but I have to be normal. Whatever you pretend, and even if you have acting ability, human nature prevails and the truth will appear. So if one pretends that he is serious and doesn't accept the discussion, they will be afraid of him. On the contrary, if one pretends that he is lovely with a false smile on his face, his or her truth will inevitably prevail. So I always advise my children not to pretend with a character different from their inner character.

I advise others to study well any decision before making it. This will comfort them in the future and after making the decision. This served me when I was in the

university and when I became a Minister. This is an important step to making any decision, whether at home or in work. So I have to study everything well with its positive and its negative aspects in order to be convinced of the decision I make.

Developing leadership concepts or trying to adjust the terminology depends on the belief inside the person himself. Some people may see leadership as a big office, decoration, a door guard, and a staff. Some people see that the leader must have this glory, the policy of the closed door, and the manager at the meeting, in order to show the importance of this leading position. The Minister doesn't go to anyone; they only come to him. I followed the policy of the open leader having to communicate, definitely not the reverse. I go to the officers myself, and if anybody wants anything, he can come to my office anytime. This style changed at least in the Ministry positions I held. The officers felt that it was not necessary for the leader to be in a high tower, but instead chose to meet everyone, and to laugh with them.

Everyone wants a comfortable atmosphere of work whether or not he is the department chief. This is not a new theory; these theories coexist in the administrative sciences (closed-door management, open-door management, firm management). The leader has to choose from them what is suitable for his personality. I cannot sit inside a room enjoying the ostentation and splendor. I don't want to say (I, I, I), but I'm talking about my experience. When I went to the first Ministry and my office was very simple, the manager came to me and said, "Doctor, we have fifty thousand Dinars [approximately \$170 thousand] to renew the office." I told him that the office was comfortable and I didn't want anything. I mean, we have to change the minds and concepts, not the office. This was my concept of leadership.

Many of the Ministers, deputies, and managers, when they come to their new offices, change everything, so they are engaged by things that aren't their purpose for being in these positions. I don't say this so that someone says that I am an angel. I'm not an angel, but I understand things in a different way.

I encountered the same thing when I was transferred to another Ministry position. I know that Kuwait isn't an agricultural country, and we don't plant flowers, and it's so expensive. When I first held this Ministry position, they sent me an invoice for a big sum of money for the Ministry's office flowers. I asked the office manager, "What is this invoice?" She said that this was the invoice for changing the manager's and my office flowers every 3 days. I swear to God, I said, "I don't want it." And I told her, "When there are delegations or visitors, present them coffee or tea, just for hospitality; and there is no need for fresh juices. This is not a coffee shop." This isn't greed, but the responsible moment doesn't allow for the manager to open his office as a Dewaneya for people. He has to communicate with them in an inexpensive way and without false aspects. I remember that I entered the office of the British Minister of Foreign Affairs (it's one of the developed countries), and its building was historical and ancient. When I entered it, I found it a very simple office. I felt the ancient furniture and its ancestry. But this furniture didn't detract from the Minister's office or his dignity. Rather, his dignity is in the trust that the government put in him. I stayed with him around 45 minutes; they didn't offer us a cup of water, so we talked about the important matters. This is the good, positive administrative mind.

After all, I think I gained some experiences during my administrative life. I can talk about the concept of modesty because I'm not an arrogant individual. When I knew

that I had been promoted to the position of Minister, I refused the idea of bodyguards. I adopted the approach of a mobile administration because I visit the various administrations myself. This idea is inherent in my nature. My employees consider me a good example for them because this characteristic has affected them greatly.

At the same time, I also take care of my responsibilities as a housewife. To this day I go to the supermarket myself and deal with people naturally. I treat ordinary people humbly in markets and socially because this has been my character at all times since I was a university student, and after I became a professor at the university and a Minister. I thank Allah that I haven't changed my behavior.

Currently, I am writing a book about my experience. That book includes my experience and related issues because it is important to let other generations identify these experiences.

Finally, I hope that the Kuwaiti woman achieves her role in the community, and her effectiveness, and will not be deterred by her cultural heritage.

Ruba's Story

My name is Ruba. I am about 50 years old, a wife, a mother, and just lately became a grandmother. I have a master's in business administration (MBA), and I worked in different organizations in Kuwait for approximately 23 years. I have held leadership positions for 9 to 10 years.

Really, for myself, I was brought up in a good atmosphere; I can mention, to be grateful, that my mother always said the appropriate words. In other words, she talked to us using good language.

Paying attention to work encourages me to also pay more attention to my family, husband, and children. All these matters have taught me how to take and give, and at the same time to achieve a balanced life. Although I'm now a grandmother, I work hard, with persistence. There is no obstacle that prevents me from achieving success in work and life.

I started work at the age of 21, and I really tried hard to understand my work at that time. I had training in all the areas. I had learned the basics of everything correctly, not just how to perform the actual duties. However, I had another task to do, more than my work, which was raising my children and giving them due care, and to be a good example for them. Therefore, I set aside my work, the leadership position and the practical experience, to take care of my children and their upbringing. I didn't want my children to be brought up only by the housemaid or nanny. In spite of the importance of the job and the introduced facilities to continue my work [in other words, the benefits they offered, such as reduced work hours so I could spend more time with my children], I preferred to stay at home and raise my children because I did not want to be successful in my career away from my children. I was always with them in events during their elementary. I was responsible for driving them to school and their studies.

From my point of view, the responsibilities the woman has at home as wife and mother from one side, and the work responsibilities from the other side, depend on the woman's personality. In other words, the ultimate character of the individual determines these dealings. I cannot say that my leadership of the home affected me in my leadership or in my work outside the home. If the woman has the characteristics of a leader, then she can perform her work inside and outside the home easily. Therefore, the character is the

basic criterion. If someone has the stem or gene of leadership, he or she can do his or her work inside and outside the home easily. The personality is the basis because my personality at home encouraged me to be responsible for all matters.

In my opinion, leadership is a matter that cannot be learned; it is an innate thing. The ability is built on natural talent. This is evident in the successful leader, whether it is a male or female—i.e., the manager should have the capacity to manage the company or the organization in the best way. Most important is that leaders have a love of people and the country; a desire for personal development, a respect for everything they create, and not a wish just to exploit the effort of others. The manager should have the capacity to make decisions at all times. He or she needs to make judgments about employees in an objective way. He or she should not support anybody only for his nationality as Kuwaiti, or any other nationality; he should just evaluate the person's performance and work. For example, I was on the committee for deciding the promotion of some employees. My chairman asked me to promote an employee based on how quickly he worked and through the opinions of his co-workers, who had much praise for him, although I did not know him in person. I took this action based on the witness of his fellow employees, and their praise about him and his work. My role in this process was to ascertain that this employee deserved promotion and was efficient, someone who could conduct work in the best way. This has always been my way in work. It will remain this way.

Most often, I notice that a lot of people see that woman is an intruder at work, as if work is monopolized by man only. This is a wrong conception because work is a right for both men and women. Leadership is deserved for the fittest of them. Some people do

not see a difference between male and female leadership. They only want the fittest to occupy the position. This trend should be common and should spread.

There are some men who oppose the equality of men and women, especially in leadership positions. However, I can say that experience and the ability to lead are the decision points in the end. This means that the one who has the ability to achieve objectives and achievements is the fittest for occupying the leadership positions, whether that person is a man or a woman.

Currently, competition is one of the characteristics of human nature. Women are facing fierce competition in a male-dominated society, especially when women are effective in their thoughts. In our competition with men, they call us aggressive. We are only aggressive to maintain our rights. Because of female excellence in many fields, men describe us as aggressive, especially when men do not want hard work and achievement.

I mean by *aggressive* that the female leader persists to achieve her goals. She is very accurate in her work and does not leave anything to chance. She is always aspiring for more achievements. She does not accept failure. It can also be said that *aggressive* means that the woman is insolent, and that is what some people think. However, it means in my perspective that I am serious in my work and in dealing with employees. However, I am always ready to help those clever employees who work hard for the interest of the work. In contrast, strict measures are applied toward those employees who are lazy or negligent at work after I have taken all suitable means to reform them.

In addition, competition with men becomes very fierce. Competition now appears normally between men. A man nowadays should prove that he is capable to have a job or a leadership position. The appearance of women in leadership roles makes that big

difference between now and previous times. Therefore, men look at the success of women as a fast train passing by. In that sense, women's success reveals men's weakness. The success of a woman nowadays indicates the degree of her strength, especially when she attains certain kinds of achievements. In addition, it has become common to see a male manager leave a company to be hired in another one.

For me, I believe in the concept of the best management for the best person because I do not see one's gender as determining the best leader. The leader should be that kind of person who is successful in his or her work, and who has many consecutive achievements and advancements to be an example for the rest of the employees in the institution. This makes the institution, because of its multiple recognitions, an attractive element for all the employees of different specialties.

I can confirm that for a woman to be assigned to higher positions, there are some difficulties. In my case, I was not confronted with major obstacles through my career. At the same time, I can say that something like an obstacle got in the way of my promotion from the position of a supervisor to a director. The laws were the reason for this. I can confirm that my direct supervisor was not that good a man. He continued in his position while I had all the responsibilities, and I moved to a higher position than is normal with my promotion. Noteworthy is that I did not see any difference in treatment by my fellow employees, especially men; just because I'm a woman (I have never seen a difference in treatment).

However, I had a different experience with a male manager when I was working in the bank. He was a Western manager and he was appointed as a general manager of the bank. First of all, he had no knowledge at all of the Kuwait community, and he did not

know how to deal with customers in the Kuwait community. Moreover, he was totally ignorant of Kuwait culture in general. However, we are well acquainted with the relations between individuals in our community and know well how to deal with customers on the personal and business levels. That manager lacked the knowledge of Kuwait culture.

Among the basics of dealing with customers is to let them feel at ease by treating them intimately so they are encouraged to deal with the institution on a continuous basis. For example, when a customer comes to us, we might present him a cup of tea or another beverage while he is waiting for his work to be finished in the institution. The general manager did not believe in such basics. He used to just let customers take their work and leave.

We, as managers of various administrations, respected the opinion of our general manager on this issue. We respected the idea that we should not waste time by presenting a cup of tea or coffee to the customer because doing this makes the customer spend a longer period of time with the employee. We created a balance between the manager's opinion and our respect for our Kuwaiti culture, which encourages showing hospitality to our guest, by presenting him or her with a cup of Arabic coffee, which is a very small cup of coffee that does not take 2 minutes to drink.

Although I believe as a leader that one of my main duties is to execute the work of the customer, I also believe that hospitality is one of the main duties, as we have learned in our community. These are the simplest examples by which I can clarify his method.

As for myself, I cannot ignore the rules of hospitality in the institution that is subject to my leadership. We all agree that customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal.

Therefore, we should show hospitality to our customers and treat them with good manners. This is a great responsibility and represents one of the most important of the many points of skill at work to maintain the progress and status of the institution.

Among the subjects that aroused so many controversies and arguments between the general manager and me is that he wanted to reduce the number of employees, to reduce the expenses in order to prove himself as a good leader. Therefore, he decreased the number of employees from 100 employees to 60 employees, without any review of the role or the function of each employee in the institution, and that was within a very short period. To achieve this, he selected some employees from all departments so he would have the determined number. He terminated their contracts on a random basis and without any prior notification.

It was my opinion at the time that I could end the services of any foreign employee for the organization's benefits and I could do this immediately because he or she still had another chance in his or her country. But in ending the duty of a Kuwaiti citizen, I would take time, in order not to demolish a whole family. I remember only two times that I ended the duties of a Kuwaiti. Before I did this, I asked the employees to search for another job. I would not end their duties unless the matter had no other solution, and the employees could not deal with the case in a good way.

Therefore, we as a Kuwaiti institution cannot terminate the contract of a male Kuwaiti employee without a reasonable cause because he cannot live in any other country. However, foreign employees can travel to their countries and find a suitable job. We have a right to maintain smart Kuwaiti employees, and we cannot terminate their services without giving them sufficient time to search for alternative work. So the general

manager gave us an opportunity to examine and say more about his decision of reducing the number of employees, but to do so in a safe way that would not affect their future or their social or economic life. I cannot say that I do not terminate the services of employees because they are Kuwaitis; however, I am interested in maintaining the intelligent employee. However, other employees who cannot work with us should receive sufficient time to search for other work.

My problem with the general manager was a big one. His way was wrong; also, the study that he presented about the bank at that time was wrong and impractical. I understand the nature of bank work and can understand that this was wrong. In addition, I cannot accept what is imposed on me or be subject to a fact that does not suit me. My responsibilities in the institution encourage me to reach the goal and to find a solution that is suitable to all parties. Besides, the general manager tried to get a lot of work done very quickly. That period was the worst of any throughout my career between me and any general manager.

The general manager thought that he had sufficient experience that would enable him to manage the institution without negotiating with us as managers of different administrations. We are also managers who have sufficient experience that enables us to manage the job well. He or anybody else like him thinks wrongly that he works alone for the success of the job, and he showed this significantly for the board. He had a view of the institution that exceeded our view. Therefore, he didn't complete his work in the institution, and his services were terminated by the decision-makers; and we developed the institution by ourselves.

As for me, I do not work for the purpose of showing employees and other people that I work. However, I work for the sake of the work. The results of my work demonstrate my performance. It is worth mentioning that I work as an example for all the employees at work. I maintain the privacy of work. As long as my position requires honesty from me, I should have honesty, clarity, and transparency that qualify me to do the work.

Furthermore, I also have the capacity to bear the responsibility of my decisions, whether they are right or wrong. My work is only for the sake of the work. I do not work just to let others say that I work. I consider myself as an example for all the employees in respect to secrecy and honesty.

What distinguishes me, like many female leaders, is that we are objective in our evaluation of employees. Our relationships inside the work environment should be work based.

The only criterion that distinguishes one employee from another is the excellence of that employee and his or her achievement at work. Our criteria of evaluation are based on the employees' performance, without any compliments. In addition, I headed the administration through my realistic experience. The public concept of the manager is that person who always gives orders to make the work progress. However, what distinguish me from other managers is that I have a good long-range view of the situation.

In our community, it is very important for a woman to prove her capabilities and her efficiency to reach a leadership position. It is also necessary for the man to prove his capabilities. However, the woman should exert more effort to prove her capabilities at each stage to reach a stable superior position. Many Kuwaiti women have occupied

leadership positions because of their scientific and academic capabilities. Therefore, it can be said that women have patience and persistence. For example, when I think of doing a certain project, I participate with the team and receive their feedback and their opinions on the project. From that perspective, I realize who can give me a correct and logical opinion and who can't.

I think there is difference between a man and a woman as leaders. Most of the time, we see that the woman tries to prove herself. However, that aspect makes no difference for a man. I have evidence to prove my words. My management positively affects the place in which I work. The environment is based on routine work. However, I try to develop my management and raise the work environment to the highest standards to achieve the desired goals.

In addition, a Kuwaiti woman is not self-centered in her work. I always seek to defend the rights of the employees under my supervision without knowing them personally. We are all one team, and we always seek to develop and improve the performance of the institution.

Noteworthy also is that it is rare to see inefficient women in top management positions in the private sector, but we can see inefficient men in such positions in the private sector. In brief, I conduct my work in an efficient way. I'm not satisfied with just doing my duties, and I give myself enough time during work to assure it will be right and efficient. I have the capacity to do the different jobs of many employees in my field of work. I have noticed that men have no patience or zeal to do this.

I think that our culture as Kuwaitis affects the relationship with the personnel. This matter affects me greatly because there are some negative examples, such as persons

occupying positions without the necessary efficiency or qualifications. No commitment to work schedules is also among the negative behaviors that can rarely be seen under my administration. In addition, some staff form negative groups that are critical of the management or the company, and this is not seen in my administration because it is characterized by calmness and stability.

Besides, I like positive teamwork, which improves positive situations and handles negative ones. This can be achieved by inquiring about the achievements of the personnel, and following up and achieving the principle of mutual benefit through our shared experiences.

In this case, the effect of culture is apparent on the male and female leader. The effect becomes mostly significant during meetings and training courses because such things show the difference between the culture of the male and female leader. For instance, when I attend meetings, I do not act like a statue. Instead, I am always ready for what shall be discussed. So, I prepare everything that shall be discussed at that meeting. I respect others' views. Therefore, I can say that I have achieved the difficult equation of loving work, seriousness, and good behavior with others for the interest of the work and the employees. I don't say that men don't do the same thing. However, I'm speaking generally. I have now a woman at the meetings who doesn't do what I do because she is not capable of success and feels that she is weak before men. She doesn't do the assigned role that she is supposed to do. This issue exists in each community; it is not exclusive with one gender or the other.

However, our culture does not affect male or female leaders [on the basis of whether they are male or female]. From my point of view, I can see that the family

upbringing since childhood constitutes that idea, the influence of culture on gender, for the person. In contrast, I have the ability to distinguish between my relations with employees and the interest of the work. For example, at the level of work, there are those who work with me at the same position, or higher than it, or lower, and we have good relations. At a meeting of the committee, I don't care about the position of the person who is discussing a certain matter because we are all members and equals. We are all at that place to achieve the objectives set at that committee. We all work as one team. But there are some people in these meetings who have different opinions. In other words, they agree on certain projects for the interest of certain groups or because of certain relationships. The other groups should also respect their opinions or suggestions, even if they are not useful.

As for me, to approve a project, I should be convinced by the project or the seriousness of the suggested subject [and not just because of personal interests or benefits from affiliation]. I do not consider this an obstacle.

Concerning personal relationships, I believe that men have the strongest relationships with others. This is because of their long-term interaction with each other, and because of the Dewaneya. For instance, once, one youth came to me and he was accompanied by the chairman, in order to make me interested in this youth. But I refused to be influenced by an intermediary and said that I have the right to evaluate the young man frankly and according to the needs of the job. Even though I gave this youth all the chances to be successful and to identify his job skills, he was not successful in any test, even the easiest. He thought that he would be admitted at work under any conditions. I did not do this because his limited capacities would not permit him to achieve anything or

even to understand the nature of the work. At that time I did not look at the practical experience; at first I considered his personal capacities that could assist him, with intensive training, in getting the practical experience. This is what makes me distinctive as a leader compared to other leaders.

I remember another example about how relationships and recommendations are considered among business. Once I applied for the job as a director in a certain establishment. There were 11 applicants; three of them were chosen, and the others, me included, were not chosen. Really, the general atmosphere there was not encouraging for achievement.

For me, my relationship with personnel doesn't affect my work. Also, my proposed arguments and different perspectives couldn't influence my relationship with others. Here I remember a certain situation, which is that, in the scope of work, one of my friends is always in disagreement with me, but our personal and family relations have been, till now, continuous. Till now, I have had a good relationship with her. Really, I have benefited from this professional and personal relationship. I learned to separate my professional life and my personal life. Now, I am the product of this professional and personal relationship. So of the important relationships that I try to maintain, my intention is that my relationships with the directors and the employees shall be good relationships.

Regularly, I work only for the sake of my work and nothing else. I work to prove my capabilities and for the sake of my job. So if I didn't feel comfortable with the organization's environment, or the work's procedure wasn't convenient for me, I would make my decision to quit.

For instance, one of the previous jobs that I occupied was in a bank. My department was called a bank-within-bank organization. There were many reasons that led me to leave my work. I kept thinking of this issue for a year. I waited some time, hoping that matters would improve. However, unfortunately, the situation became even worse because a new manager who did not know much about administrative matters was appointed. From my first interview with him, I realized that he did not understand. In other words, he did not have a comprehensive vision about the organization's structure. I did my best in my work. However, the general atmosphere was not rewarding or encouraging. I did not want to participate in the general decline of the administration. I decided to withdraw to protect myself from being a part of the administrative decline. As a leader, I witnessed so much evidence of the peculiarities of the job, in which I didn't want to participate. If we seriously consider this type of organization, it does not have many opportunities for professional development. After noticing this; finally I decided to leave my work because the situation was interfering with my management effectiveness and with personal matters. There was disintegration in the teamwork, and this led to a decline in effective management. Most often, tasks were assigned to me. I used to think of the task before I started to do it. It is worth mentioning that I don't remain negative when I see anything wrong. Instead, I try to fix the situation.

It is my real concern for the personnel in the institution or the company that leads me to hold regular meetings with them. And the negligence of the employees in the institution that I left was my main reason for leaving it.

When I left my position, it was just to maintain my professional reputation. I did not hesitate in leaving my work, as would be the case with some men. Men usually

hesitate in deciding to leave their job because of the financial obligations that should be maintained for their family and children. I did not hesitate in leaving my work because I'm not responsible for the costs of my family; work is just a personal matter.

Usually, work for me is not a matter of liking and disliking, I really respect and evaluate work, and have patience in what I do—not like men, who always say, “I do not have patience; this is not my duty.” For myself, I really appreciate leadership in the private sector for its discipline.

In my opinion, female leadership has many advantages over that of men. For example, in my organization; I assist the employees at all times in order for them to benefit from my experience. It's not just a matter of giving orders. I usually get involved with employees to gain the benefits and the practical knowledge through our interaction and consultation. In contrast, male leadership is dictatorial in the opinions expressed. For example, he just gives orders as a director, as if there is no other capacity for him, except giving orders. The other way makes it possible to transfer experience among the employees and the director, and vice versa. At the same time, a director should be an example.

My leadership is also characterized by giving a lot of time to the new employees, in addition to training them in practical ways, so they will not be judged as ignorant. They should have this chance. This approach has had a great effect in maintaining the relationship between the employees and me. For example, I have had relationships with employees who worked with me in 2004 that have lasted until now; they keep calling me to maintain our relationship and their enthusiasm for the job. This reflects the strength of

the relationship that was built at that time and has lasted till now. So I confirm that female leadership is often better than that of men.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that I give my personnel full opportunity to participate with the other employees' opinions and actions to ensure the success of the work. I believe that involving personnel in the decision-making process is an important component of creative and innovative work. Doing this gives work a tension-free atmosphere and allows personnel to give their opinions freely. If someone can't do a specific task, he just tells me, to ensure the quality of the work.

Many of those who have worked with me know that I'm someone who is very serious in her work. I also have a good administrative vision and give others the benefit of my experience. Taking responsibility is one of my most important characteristics as a female leader. I am proud to be a leader teaching Kuwaiti young employees and helping them to understand the importance of their job. Furthermore, I sometimes used to offer much advice and guidance in order to transfer my experience to the employees who might hold leading positions in the future, in order to increase the efficiency of those employees at all times. Doing this is in the best interest of the organization, and also to try to develop the social relationships with employees. All these elements come together to give positive results. I also have prepared some training programs for all the branches so that they can learn about methods of leadership because they might hold any position at any time, and with this training they can manage their position effectively.

The leader should have some special skills that enable him or her to be successful. As for me, one of the most important skills as a female leader is integration with the other

personnel. During work, I become full of enthusiasm for work only. I involve myself and integrate my body's cells with the work to make it accurate.

I consider myself as an example, for all the staff to imitate me in my work and to be encouraged to do their work in a better way. As I've said, I am dedicated to my work. I always encourage them to cooperate and practice teamwork. In this way, I affect the professional life of my staff in a positive way.

I think the leader's character sometimes influences his or her job. For me, there are some things that affect my thinking and not my work. For example, I was impatient and got upset too easily. This was in the past. However, the condition is totally different now because I'm more calm than before; I'm more patient than in the past. In addition, as an example, if there is a certain subject that I feel is important, I keep thinking of it, especially if this subject is related to me. However, I should be more calm when dealing with personal matters.

When the matter comes to choosing a leader, I think that will need more time to think and decide. Noteworthy is that when we as managers are choosing a Kuwaiti director, he or she should have certain qualities that give him or her the capacity to be successful. We should not make an ignorant choice, but we should have time to choose the suitable person for the position, whether it is governmental or private work. My choice will be based on the work requirements. Accomplishing technical tasks requires technical and administrative experience. Therefore, if he has good technical experience, say 70 percent, and the administrative experience is weak, say 55 percent, then I am going to choose the good technician and develop his administrative capabilities because I am in need of exceptional technical skills to develop the institution or the company.

I think the development of female leadership has had an influence in our culture. I can see that through my good relations with the employees who have been under my control. I was their example in many things. For example, the manager of a company who worked with me told me that a group of employees should attend a specialized course. She told me that I was the subject of the discussion between male and female employees in that company because I provided them with services in the field of work development and personal relations.

In addition, when I was appointed as a manager of the Training Administration in that organization, a manager who held that post for more than 20 years asked me, “Why do you want to work in that organization?” And he also asked, “Why do you want to remove our dust? We don’t want any training after that long time.” However, after a reasonable period of time, he came to thank me for my efforts in presenting training courses and new experiences in the interest of work and the development of the employees. For example, one of the employees told me that he refused to attend one of the training courses because he could not balance the time between the course and his work. I worked with him to arrange matters and organize his time to attend the course without affecting the time designed for his work because, in the end, he would benefit from that important course in his field of work and on the personal level. Therefore, the male and female employees who worked with me in different sectors discussed matters with their colleagues through my management and dealings.

Furthermore, I always seek to encourage new employees to attend the specialized training courses and to benefit from the training in their field of work. In addition, if I

attend a conference or a synopsis, I present the papers and the studies that have been discussed in these conferences and synopses, so they can benefit from them.

It also can be said that I do not like to appear in the mass media. All I care for is my work, upon which I concentrate.

Throughout my work experiences in different organizations, I can say that I have succeeded in the professional field in managing and developing institutions. My career success was significant for all people through meetings, conferences, and achieving the objectives of the institution. I can say that I have therefore been successful on the professional level.

Moreover, I have communicated with many people through whom I gained experience and insight. I have also gained patience in dealing with others and in facing different situations. In addition, I learned to work hard to produce an accurate piece of work. My long track record of experience has gained me self-confidence in dealing with others.

Furthermore, work in all the previous and current sectors has given me social relationships that connect me with male and female employees who greet me in different places with pleasure because they consider me a positive personality who has affected their professional and social life. Some of them make me feel that I'm their example of contributions and achievement.

I think also that the work circumstances and my transfer among different sectors such as the bank have contributed to consolidating my personal and leadership capabilities. I remember that in one of my previous positions at work, all the staff observed that I was so efficient and successful. However, this was not mentioned in the

annual report. I went to the manager and told him what happened. He told me that his assessment for me was excellent. He gave me a copy of the assessment. However, I went to the chairman immediately, and he was sure that I deserved an excellent grade. I realized from this that the supervisory bodies have certain measurements for assessment. The higher administration couldn't approve granting me an excellent grade for administrative, technical, and financial reasons. Therefore, the chairman corrected the mistake through one of the officials.

Overall, as a part of my personality and social responsibility as a female leader, I should give help and assistance to improve the female leadership achievements in Kuwait and appreciate their efforts in working hard for the advancement of our country.

Nadeyah's Story

My name is Nadeyah; I am 42 years old. I grew up in a very healthy environment. We are five sisters and one brother, who is the youngest. I was the first granddaughter of my mother's family, so my grandparents and uncles from my mother's side gave me appropriate care, love, and attention. This familial love and care were the most important elements of my developing trust.

I can say that my father played an important role in my life. He always encouraged me and authorized me to be a leader because I was his elder daughter. I am very indebted to him because he created the roots of leadership in me during my personal and scholastic life. As an open-minded person, he used to discuss economic, cultural, social, and personal matters with me. All these factors inspired me with a political sense because my father encouraged me to give my opinion on any issue.

About my father: He was born in the 1930s, and he was a self-reliant man. Although he was illiterate, he liked poetry and the life of poets very much. When he was about 10 years old, he worked as a mechanic in the first garage in Kuwait, in the early 1940s. Then he opened his own garage when he was 15 years old. Vehicles at that time were English, American, and German. When he was 21, he spoke German and English as a result of his interaction with these companies in Kuwait. I learned a lot from his experience.

Although the nature of my father's work in the vehicle workshop was mainly male focused, he always took me to work with him when I was on vacation. He was always proud of me in front of his friends and customers; he used to tell them that his 8- or 9-year-old daughter Nadeyah worked with him and that she would take over the affairs of the workshop after him. In this way, my father was preparing me to be a leader.

My relationship with my father was based on mutual understanding, as our connection was more than a father-daughter relationship. Our relationship was so strong not only because my father affected my personality since I worked with him, but also because the mutual understanding between us encouraged me to discuss social and political matters. During that period, he would talk to me as if I was an adult. He used to tell me how to manage money and work.

It is worth noting that my father had partners—Lebanese, Armanis, Iraqis, and Palestinians. I used to sit with those partners, talking to them about their families and their life. They talked to me as if they considered me an adult, although I was still in my childhood. Therefore, social relationships strengthened the leadership characteristics in

me. Since my early childhood, I was very self-confident among my social group and classmates.

The most important element that affects the leader anywhere is the environment in which he or she is raised. The leader's surroundings play an important role in forming his or her character. From that perspective, I can say that my father raised me since my childhood to be a leader and be responsible for many jobs after his death. I remember a situation during my scholastic years in which a play was to be performed, and I was given the second role in it. The teacher saw me weeping and asked me why I wept. I answered that I wanted to be the heroin of the play. She replied that there was another heroin for the play and that I could not act her role. Besides, she assured me that my role was very good. However, I was not convinced. Fortunately, a few days before the play's performance, the heroin excused herself and said that she could not act the role. The teacher then asked me if I could act the heroin's role. I answered with assurance that I knew the role very well and could perform it. From this experience, I learned that persistence makes things happen.

Regarding my personality when I was young, I think I was sociable and had many friendships. My family encouraged me to make lots of friendships, and it is worth noting that my decision at that time to do so seemed to be correct. This success with friendships was another strong motivation that has created persistence in me to achieve my goal.

The previous narration explains the first phase of my life and my leadership nature. The second phase started after the death of my father, when I was 17 years old. I can't forget that time when my father was affected with angina. When he became sick after a heart attack, I grew somehow. Before he died, he told me about the bank

operations related to the garage. This kind of information wasn't usually given to a girl at my age. As the elder daughter, I took over all the procedures related to the death of my father and the procedures related to his properties. I took the position of a man with responsibilities. Thank Allah; I bore all the burdens after my father's death because his words were guiding me all the time.

All the previous factors created strength in me as a woman, with good aspirations for the future. As I mentioned, my father's work was mainly male work, in garages and public and private warehouses. I took over all these properties and made agreements with the employees to maintain their rights and continue the work of my father, in spite of the fact that my siblings and I were all resuming our studies. Many people wanted to exploit my family during our vulnerable situation. However, Allah protected us because we were a unified family.

After my father's death, my family and I experienced many hardships. However, I enjoyed my personal life very much. I experienced love in adolescence and managed to coordinate between my personal and professional life. I had great aspirations. When I saw any successful person, I wished him further success. However, I also wished to achieve this success for myself.

After the loss of my father, I was searching for an alternative man in my life, to share my life and to support me. So I got married during the university stage, at the age of 18, and our family was stable to a great extent. I was committed to being successful professionally during my marriage. During the first year of my marriage, I realized that I was mistaken [in expecting the combination to work]; however, I decided to continue

with my husband. But I remained 5 years without children. And then I had a boy and a girl, to whom I devoted a lot of my time to raise them as I wanted.

When I graduated from the College of Commerce accounting department in 1979, I was looking forward to a bright future, to working in the banking sector or companies. However, at the beginning of my marital life, I faced reluctance from my husband and his relatives. It was customary at that period that a woman work in the field of education, at schools. So although I was qualified to be a leader, I executed the wishes of my husband and worked in teaching. For me, this was a negative position [not what I wanted to do] and an ideal separate from my own. In other words, I obeyed my husband's wishes without any argument, and my attitude at that time could be defined as an idealistic woman who was looking for peace even if my view was not accepted or wasn't like others' perspectives.

With that perspective, I worked in the teaching sector, and I tried to change my work every 2 to 3 years, working in different areas, to find what I was looking for. I started with teaching at the kindergarten level, and then in special-needs schools. After that, in 1988, I worked in The Public Authority for Applied Learning. I was a member of the faculty for 5 years. I discovered that the students always had a lot of demands.

However, I did not find myself remaining in those fields. I proposed a plan to my family for me to be a Minister one day. This objective was still in my mind; and I sought to reach it because one of the most important characteristics of the successful leader is to identify his or her objectives and then attain them.

That period witnessed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. During the invasion period, the rebellious spirit in me was aroused. My husband, my children, and I were in

Cairo. From the first day of the occupation, I volunteered in the Kuwait Embassy in some female work, and I recruited to help Kuwaiti people oppose the Iraqi occupation. We formed a female committee to interact with the crises. These circumstances qualified us to work in any field and under any circumstances. I felt that we developed the power of our personality and skills, and we had the ability to initiate, organize, plan, and work for long times during each mission to achieve its goals.

During my volunteer work in Cairo, I decided to go with my children to Kuwait 3 months after the invasion, and I volunteered in some work related to the opposition. It was really a period of suffering for many young men, women, and children of all ages. Then the liberation was the stage of rebuilding Kuwait again. In this way, I enjoyed many experiences because I volunteered to do any work in spite of its difficulty.

I consider myself lucky to have witnessed this event because it added to my experience and developed the characteristics of being a good leader. In addition, I benefited a lot from the information and experiences during this stage because I joined many volunteering societies and a civil society in Kuwait in all the fields that were available to me.

My relationships inside and outside Kuwait helped me to be a leader. At the same time, there were many jobs that were prohibited for women. For instance, working in the media was prohibited for women. Many limitations were put in the way of the ambitious woman. I think man fears any woman who actively chooses to get involved in public work or public efforts, and especially an ambitious woman, because his view is that she is too bold. Therefore, teaching was the only way for Kuwaiti women. This view was

changed at the end of the 1980s because there were many Kuwaiti females who led those institutions and companies at that time.

Since the Kuwait Liberation in 1991, things have changed because the women exhibited a positive role during that time. As for me, I made an important decision in my life, and my husband felt a great change in me as I became no longer able to bear the burden of work in which I couldn't prove myself. The [Iraqi] invasion period was a turning point in my life because there were frequently many doubts about my capabilities.

Soon after, in 1993, I joined a tourism company as Marketing and Public Relations Manager, and my working there was not customary. The decision to work in the tourism field while the politics and the culture were blocking female positions was very difficult at that time. In addition, it was unusual work because there was much communication through the mass media. A woman at that time was not allowed to appear in the mass media. However, I participated in building the community, and I was working day and night, moving from place to place, even at home.

This trend had a great effect on Kuwait women at that time. Therefore, the dominant culture of the community began to change positively, and men began to thank me for my work and efforts as a woman. First, I faced a kind of attack, and some annoying words were said to me, such as, "Nadeyah, we don't have women who appear on television or the press." So I didn't appear in the press or the television at the beginning; however, within my job responsibilities, I communicated with all people everywhere, and they were friendly and chatted with me whenever we had an activity or show. Nowadays, the staff of the Department of Public Relations are women.

The nature of my work in the tourism company necessitated dealing with people, and this required a fluent person who was careful about every word most of the time. He or she also needed to be able to distinguish between his or her behavior among family and at work. I saw so many leaders from whom I learned a lot. Some of the things that I learned are how to manage employees and develop a feeling of loyalty for work. I also learned to select the employees who are suitable for their positions.

No doubt, any leader should be fully acquainted with business administration because that is very useful for the success and development of work. When a person occupies a leadership position, he or she thinks of two things: The first thing is to maintain his or her position, and the second is to consider his or her impact on that position.

Reaching leadership positions requires a continuous development of a person's capabilities and skills because one of the main characteristics of a leader is to coordinate between the employees in the institution or the company for the sake of the work. It is worth noting that occupying a higher position such as that of a leader is the result of several promotions from one position to the next one. As leaders, persons become more efficient, to appropriately increase production capacity; and this was the case in the - tourism company in which I worked.

No doubt, the leader should have set objectives to achieve. Persistence, planning, and hard work have enabled me to achieve my objectives. In addition, the personality of the leader plays an important role in achieving objectives. To be a successful leader, I should be an example for my employees. Therefore, I am the last one to leave work, and I

commit to the rules of the job. I see that leadership is a group of personal traits in addition to some traits acquired through experience in the field in general.

After inaugurating my mission in the tourism company and setting up programs and mass-media programs and shows, I was able to prove my capabilities that I had developed throughout my lifetime. I achieved success after success. At the same time, I took care of my children, who were successful in their studies.

During that period, misunderstanding between my husband and me prevailed because we did not accept each other's opinions. Most often, I used to sit with him to solve our problems, but he refused to talk or discuss matters at all. I thought about a solution for my family problem. Divorce was the civilized and ideal solution. We agreed to divorce calmly without problems, and nobody knew about our internal issues.

The most important thing I want to talk about is the power—i.e., the greatest thing that made me strong and able to endure all the changes that have come to my life, especially when I separated from my husband and got divorced (at the time I had a girl and a boy, who are under my care now). I had to face our society that rejects having to coexist with the divorced woman. I was then very famous in the media, so I had to appear normal, and no one felt any change in my life. I got divorced that day and I went to work the day after, and no one felt anything. My thoughts were for the future, and I folded this page of my life.

Basically, I got the strength from my family, and now I feel it. For example, I now have several big projects: for my children to grow up and go through their future; my work, the importance of my relationships with others, and the development and place of work, on which I want to leave my print.

After all this, I have to transfer [the benefit of] these experiences to the young people and those who have less experience, through visiting them and directing them. It is worth noting that the junior employees aspire to occupy higher positions. From this perspective, I try hard to qualify those personnel to be leaders one day at one of the institutions or companies. I still have these relationships and this love of making new relationships. Nearly every day I go out with some of my friends.

Furthermore, the personal balance has played a big role; I thank Allah that I had the personal balance that leads to everything being balanced. To reach this place, there should be everyday observation of the psychological and inner matters as a leader in order to achieve the concept of personal balance. The thing that annoys me nowadays is that I don't practice any kind of sports.

From all these achievements, I feel that woman can do more and more. Thanks to Allah, I was able to manage the private companies and institutions, as well as the care of my children. In addition, acting a different role of the woman in Kuwait, I'm building a new house; I'm supervising and following up with the construction workers because I want to feel that I'm always achieving something in my life in order to feel success. So I have made use of my time in a good way. And recently I feel that I'm continuing my social life; therefore, I wear the current styles and travel many places. Thanks to Allah I have had a history and great experience.

When I was a supervisor and became responsible for a lot of employees, I noticed that these included many kinds of people. I met various characters, and I had to learn how to deal with all this variety of people. I can't have strong reactions every day. Every successful leader or supervisor has to control his or her personal emotions in order to

succeed in work at all levels. So how to treat these matters every day: Even saying “Good morning” with a friendly voice every day has a great effect on people. Also, when I praise one of the employees, like saying, “You seem pretty today,” “you have nice hair,” and so on, these phrases have a positive effect. I don’t apply this approach just on the work level, but also through my ordinary life. I have dealt with the people I worked with this way, although I have never overlooked mistakes. Work must be perfect; I am obliged with my work time, and to finish all my work in the best way.

I was active and dynamic, and I loved my work. But there are also limitations in dealing with work. Using these methods, we solved many problems; but there are people who like problems. When I dealt with this kind of people, and I had to deal with them, I was always searching for the special and positive things inside them in order to open the door for a conversation between them and me.

Some employees say that certain managers are not good leaders and they never consider the employees’ conditions. Those leaders don’t see themselves as wrong, but unfortunately the wrongness is inside them. Usually, I develop friendships with the employees to make the workplace a tension-free place. Therefore, when my ex-employees see me, they welcome me heartily because of the feelings of mutual respect since we have worked together as one team.

I consider this trait frankness in me. I like to talk frankly with everyone. Also we have to work with everyone according to his or her responsibility, especially when the institution is big. So the manager cannot observe everything in the work. However, I thank Allah that, in the tourism company, one thousand employees were working with me at all levels. It is worth noting that the junior employees aspire to occupy higher

positions. From this perspective, I have tried hard to develop those personnel to be leaders one day at one of the institutions or companies.

I say again that leaders should be aware in every situation they face. When I became a leader at home as a big sister, and when I became a leader at work, I felt I had the special character of a leader. Also, a leader has to be a good ideal for others, meaning that I have to control everything inside the workplace. I have to endure mistakes even if others made them. A leader also has to support those employees because this reinforces my value and position, that I undertook the responsibility and never throw it onto others, because we have to work as a team. The spiritual aspect I'm always talking about is the family atmosphere we work in. Thus, when there is a certain problem inside the workplace, I discuss it with the employees and try to find solutions to work with them. But the most important thing is to give everyone his own role, and to make them feel that everyone is important in his position. So the leader has to be the center of the work without telling them that. Therefore, you shouldn't stay in your office and the employees come to you, but you have to move to them and observe their work. I have a place like a Dewaneya, or the salon, where I meet with them when there is any problem. I always sit in this corner in order to make a friendly atmosphere. It's important to have communication between the leader and the staff, even sometimes during work. Glory to God! I have worked in jobs in which work doesn't finish at the end of the normal work time.

I have found that I have some characteristics that have helped me to be a successful leader, such as helping others, so my colleagues have found me always ready for help at any time. The positive thing was that when I was taking a course or training

program, I made two or three copies and distributed them to the staff in order to develop their performance. There is a statement that says, “He who behaves humbly, Allah will promote him.” This statement is 100 percent right. No one observes this goodness, but it is very important inside the workplace.

I remember one day someone had been employed in our company, and his work was perfect. He applied with his papers to another company with a salary three times the salary he had in my company, in addition to the prestige. Within myself I hoped that he would stay. But it was better for him to go, so I supported him to go and join the other company. The same thing happens with those who don't work well. I was dealing with them in a way that made them feel that they weren't suitable for this work, so they willingly resigned. And then I advised them to search for the appropriate opportunity for work for them, and helped them get that work. This is my way. I helped many people to resign peacefully from work and without any problems, and to this time they are my friends, brothers, and sisters. There are limitations that cannot be exceeded.⁵ It is worth mentioning that a lot of them still visit me, although I'm not their leader now. But they always appreciate me and value me.

Through these 10 years in the tourism company and after having accomplished all these projects, when I see the people I worked with, I feel that we are very close to each other, as if we were at work just yesterday. When one of them sees me, he or she says,

⁵ This means that even though she has many friends, males and females, inside work or outside, and she always stays with them in formal and informal discussion, the limitation of relationship is important to be kept between them at work; and also the limitation of refusing to have lazy or bad employees, even if they are her friends, because work is serious and with no special favors.

“Come in, please!” And I feel I’m their sister. I think that all my relationships were good and successful with most people.

In 2002, I joined a tourism division in a Ministry as an Assistant Undersecretary, and it was a new sector. I was the first employee in it and I formed the rest of the staff after that. My accounting qualifications and 10 years of experience are the factors that assisted me in occupying this position. When I began working in this field, employees in other departments offered to work with me because it was a new field, and all the projects and everything were new.

Persistence is one of the most important characteristics of a leader. As I said when I worked in the governmental sector, I found a deadly routine [meaning boring and tedious]. There were some individuals who put up obstacles in order to delay work. They said that success was to stay on the same projects and read about them in the newspapers, and the media attention sparkles [i.e., reflects well on] you.

I remember when I occupied the position as an Assistant Undersecretary in a tourism division of the Ministry, which does not exist in the organizational structure of that particular Ministry; many people bet that I wouldn’t do anything because tourism was a neglected idea in the Kuwaiti society. All the State’s sections said that tourism isn’t one of our priorities because we are a rich state that has billions from the extracting of petroleum. Whatever money tourism brings to the State, they are just fils [in other words, just a very small, meaningless amount of money]

The first thing that I was able to change was the governmental thinking to one of pride among the employees inside the Ministry. At the beginning of my work in the Ministry, they gave us just a one-room office for me. They promised to provide us with

another suitable location. I started with 2 employees, but after that I interviewed the employees in the Ministry, whom I describe as the invisible employees. So we began to increase from 4 employees to 6, to 8, then to a staff of 10 men and 1 woman, then 20 more employees.

We started our work from this humble office—not all employees had chairs. Some of them sat and some of them stood due to the narrowness of the place. I had a very wonderful picture in my mind; we were 20 persons and there were just 14 chairs. This was because all the resources of the Ministry of Planning were devoted to the army and the national security of Kuwait. We were all in one office, and we were sitting and stopping in turns. This was the beginning.

From the first day, we began working. The Secretary's staff was working from 8:30 A.M. or 9 A.M., the employees from 9:30 A.M. or 10 A.M., and the deputies were coming at 10:30 A.M. or 11 A.M. I was the first one to be in my office. In that period, Kuwait was supposed to launch tourist projects.

I sat with all these employees for about a year in that place. We planned for tourism in Kuwait, and started to call all institutions in Kuwait to inform them that there was a new tourism sector. We addressed the Ministry and the United Nations Developing Programme (UNDP). I gave my viewpoints and helped make decisions related to the financial planning, both of which represented my persistence to participate in the planning process.

The thing that I could change was that I managed to find a place outside the Ministry with offices. So I told them I wanted a high-class place like the other Gulf tourist institutions. So they gave us a place in the Shuweikh area, which is close to

carpenters and workers. Surely, this location was not suitable for our work. So I chose the best location in Kuwait in the best commercial tower. Then, I went to the Ministry of Finance because it was the responsible authority to rent us the location. For 6 months, I insisted on this situation, until they granted us the approval for the best location among Kuwait ministries. Therefore, we hired two floors in the most elevated building in Kuwait. We furnished it with splendid and luxurious furniture. Everyone saw our offices; they thought that we were a private, non-governmental sector. But there was still the routine, and those people who bet on our failure. I stayed for 4 years, till I finished my tasks and the projects under my responsibility, and our budget was then more than \$1 million.

The thing that was missed [before I implemented changes] in the governmental institutions and in the private sector was that the superior manager was always walking as a peacock on the ground, as if this position was for him or her alone, and as if this chair was always for him or her. In contrast, I always met with the new officials and managers, and I respect my culture by not being alone with males.. I was used to meeting the young people in the company, and also the more experienced ones, in order to become familiar with meetings because there are many officials who stay in their job for 5 or 6 years and they still don't know how to manage meetings or deal with them, or how to follow them. So usually I let young employees attend meetings to enhance their experiences. They found me taking them with me to the interviews. For example, some juniors were with me when I arranged a meeting with (Sara Al-Duwaisan), the Undersecretary of the Minister of Planning, to discuss the tourism budget.. Many of the employees in the governmental institutions, and also the managers, were visiting me. I was calling to some

of the employees, “Come, come in!” in order to learn how to manage meetings and conversations. So then, when I finished my work period and left the place, they would have gained the experience and responsibility and be able to lead.

The second thing I kept in my mind when I was in the Ministry was that there wasn't a budget for the overtime work. We had a strategic study process, and we invited an international company and experts from abroad. They came to work from 8:30 A.M. or 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., while in the Kuwaiti government the official work hours were until 2 P.M. So there was overtime that reached 3 or 4 hours. I tried to persuade my staff to stay without overtime [pay]. If there was overtime, it would reach 3 hours that the employees would be paid overtime, which would equal only two Dinars per hour (i.e., nothing).

To persuade them, the project was 2 years, so we distributed it in stages. The first stage was considered the most important stage, and it was the first 6 months. So I told them that if they stayed with those experts for these 6 months, they would surely gain more information and great experience.

Secondly, we had a lot of courses, displays, and external conferences that related to our areas of specialization and job responsibilities. These conferences were for marketing management and research. The purpose of these conferences was the knowledge we gained from them, and I was putting the employees in these activities instead of the overtime payment, which was worthless. So I scheduled shifts for them. And after the new employees had spent a period of time working, I even entered them in this schedule. We had three exhibitions outside Kuwait, in more than one country. I made a schedule, for example (A, B, C), and now there are (H, N). And so no doubt attending these conferences or the exhibitions abroad was something like a reward. All the staff

went and participated and saw the exhibitions, and took courses abroad. In this way, I managed to cover many weak aspects of the overtime issue. Even the foreigners admired our patience and persistence in order to achieve our aims.

I consider myself lucky that I worked in various places—I worked first on the teaching staff in many fields, and then I joined the tourism branch of a Ministry, and then I worked in the private sector. So my professional experience is around 28 years in governmental and private sectors. The important thing in these jobs is that I was and still am communicating with people inside the school, whether the employees, teachers, or students. When I was an administrative manager of the general relationships, there was an atmosphere of communication. In my new role as an Undersecretary of the Ministry in the tourism division, I was supposed to visit all the State institutions and every tourist authority because they were supposed to have roles in the Kuwaiti tourism business. The atmosphere was new to me in all these places I worked, whether in the teaching field, the government sector, or the private sector.

I had a good relationship with my colleagues and teachers in the school. And when I saw an old woman I would go near her; and when I saw people I smiled to them and shook hands with them. This made me deal socially and effectively with people.

I discovered that the closer you get to someone, the more you gain his or her love. And the more you call them with their names, the more you break the ice with them. When I was under someone's authority, and I had leaders, I got closer to them in this way. But I am always serious in my work. When I make new friends, this doesn't mean that I disregard their mistakes because everyone has positive and negative aspects in his or her character; I focus on how to enhance the strengths and reduce the weaknesses..

What I mean is that I want to reduce the space between personnel and me in order to reduce the sensitivity between me and the person; I want to get close to and gain his friendship.

In my work, naturally I have dealt with all the social categories, whether Bedouins or, in cities, men or women; boys and girls and children; or persons from the ruling family or from the public. I thank Allah of all mankind that I have dealt with all kinds of people; it's a blessing from Allah. I have dealt with every category in the society, even the handicapped people. I put two things into my mind. The first is that my face keeps smiling beside the strong character, so no one can dare to deal with me wrongly. I have been used to giving to the utmost degree. I don't have the inner problems that prevent me from dealing with these various groups. Therefore I have tried to solve every problem in time. People from various categories have loved me. This is the blessing that Allah gave to me; it's the "people's love." When any one of them sees me, they say, "We saw you on the television, and we picked up your pictures and keep them." So thanks to Allah that I have had this amount of love inside people's hearts. When I love someone, I love him or her as a person, not for anything else.

At the same time, our reputation and manners have been at the top of our general goals. That is because any simple break in the Arabic woman's reputation affects these things through her dealing with men and the other aspects as a public personage. All these things have been accomplished by my efforts because I put it in my mind as an Arabic Kuwaiti woman.

There are two choices for the working woman: The first is to wear the Islamic uniform [i.e., Hejab, which is covering her head with a scarf, and covering her body with

Abaya] and to be serious in her clothes in order to avoid dealing with men. The second is to be casual [unfashionable by wearing sporty and or unfeminine styles], and appearance becomes bad. I had my own style. I always say that the professional woman who loves her work tries to succeed in everything—not only the work, but also her appearance. I have always been interested in my clothes and appearance in every way. So I have to dress formally and be aware of my feminine touches in order to be satisfied with myself.

I always have had a kind of caution. There are two kinds of men in their dealings with women inside work, especially beautiful women. The first type is a man who avoids dealing with women at all. The second is a man who uses many ways to deal with women. Although this topic is considered ordinary, it's missed in our Arabic society. Many of those people are found in the workplace. Some women deal with this kind of man through wearing unattractive clothes and not wearing make-up. However, I was very formal in my clothes and work, and I was doing my work perfectly. And at the same time, I was keeping my relationships with others within limits and following the new fashion and authentic life. There were many men who tried to use some of their deceptive ways with me, but I was able to stop them.

There are many elements of manners. It starts from home, so everyone has to protect himself or herself with manners because it's the first motivation of any person. So, first the home and the family; all of us have the manners seed. The relationship between employees inside the workplace should be based on manners. I came from home, education, and media. These three things form people inside the society. If these manners disappeared from someone, he or she might cheat and neglect in work and life. The more a person gets himself or herself away from these negative things, the more he

or she becomes better. Thanks to Allah I came from a house that loves responsibility. All these things are the result of honesty, so it's never honest to take a fils [a fils equals a penny] by mistake. Honesty is the most important characteristic for the leader. If there are no manners, people will never have comfort in life.

There are some other values, such as seriousness about work and honesty, that are all elements that form manners. Thanks to Allah all these values are inside me and also that I developed them. If I sat one day in my office and felt that I didn't want to work, I would then make the decision from inside that I would withdraw and leave the place for someone else. I always like change, in order to find a new place that suits me and suits my thoughts, and where I can give through it. However, there are many people who are afraid of change; they never initiate anything in their work. So before they get out, they should know first their way or next step; and also they have to plan for it to know whether or not the opportunity is available. And they shouldn't look at the destructive opinions that are said behind them. So when I made any decision, I was thinking more and trying to make the right decision.

Successful leadership depends on participation in the society, so leaders should have an important role in the society and the civil institutions, the private and public ceremonies. Therefore the media has become a very important thing. So leaders have to deal with all the media, not deal with one channel and leave the others. That is because if they deal with just one channel and neglect the others, those who are neglected might search for leaders' negative characteristics and show them in ways that affect the leaders' reputation. So I didn't want to close the door, and if it is closed today, it will be opened the next day for anyone. The open-door policy is the better administrative policy.

Sometimes I was working from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. All these changes in the work helped me to gain a great personal experience.

In Kuwait, women have achieved concrete success, whether in the private or the public sectors. Since women aspire to prove themselves, they do their best in leadership positions without affecting their family life. This is evidence that the successful woman wants to increase her efficiency and her skills in a positive way. I would like to say that if there is a desire to succeed, then persistence is the way to success. I do not ascribe success to myself only, but to the good teamwork of those who have been with me. From this perspective, I can say that success is participation.

I can also say that we should refute those who allege that the female leader is strong and denies her femaleness to be successful, and that she makes matters difficult for those working with her (that is, she makes them bear more than they can afford to bear). Although there are a few examples of poor female leaders, there are many good examples of female leadership.

I hope I am able to provide you with rich material that helps you in your study, and I hope this study and message will benefit our society.

Sama's Story

My name is Sama, and I am 48 years old. I am married and I have twins, a boy and girl, who will celebrate their 10th birthday soon. I earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Kuwait University in 1981. I have worked in three different private organizations since 1982 and have held leadership positions for about 20 years.

In our culture a woman can't be successful without the support of a man—mainly the father, or husband, or brother. From my personal experience, the first man who

supported me was my father. He continued the support until I got married. This is a key issue for women to succeed.

My father was very supportive. He brought us up, my siblings and me, to be independent. My father taught us to be responsible for our choices, and this gave us self-confidence, which is rare in the current generation. He paid attention to us on a daily basis, and this is very important. He was understanding with us and let us enjoy our life. But when it came to educational principles, he was very serious. For example, I was used to going to sleep at 9.00 P.M. until I graduated from the university; it was the discipline of our home. I remember very well that I wanted to see a popular TV show, which presented questions and answers. It showed at 9:30 P.M. once a week, and I had to ask my mother and grandmother to get permission from him to let us see it. This was the only time we were able to violate the usual discipline. However, on weekends we could watch videos or go to the theater or cinema. We could even go to the park and anywhere else for the whole day. The weekend was a family time, while other days were dedicated for school.

My father was a great support to me because he followed my progress at school, and he helped me in identifying what was best for me in my educational life. Even when I wanted to go to the university and wanted to decide which career to major in, he supported me with his opinion and suggestions. I was very much interested in being a lawyer. Although my mother was against my wish, my father discussed this issue with me and what was best for my future. He guided me in the economic aspects. He decided with me my career major, not by imposing his opinion on me, but by convincing me. He planned the best for my future by guiding me to the economics and financial field even though he was working in the informational sector.

Our society at that time was not that accepting of girls returning home late from the university—at 8 P.M. or 9 P.M. Returning late from the university was not a normal thing. I cannot forget the support of my father on those days that he accompanied me to the university and waited for me till I finished my sessions and lab research. I think things like these were a great support for me. I seldom can find people who have such support. He supported me like this because he believed that I had to have a fair choice in my education and future career. When I accomplished anything, I used to tell my father (may Allah have mercy on him) because he was open-minded and democratic. I considered all his support as a great responsibility and a burden on my shoulders. So I wanted to prove myself to pay back his support.

I remember that when I succeeded in the first year of the university I was included in the honor list, and the university arranged a trip for us. My cousin was in the group too. I went to my mother and told her. It was a shock for her. She told me, “No way!” She refused to let me travel with my colleagues. I was very disappointed in my mother’s response because she knew the mothers of most of my friends in the group. My father supported me at that time. He asked me, “How many days would you spend on that trip?” I replied, “About 13 or 15 days.” He suggested he would make the trip with us. The group was 21 girls and their 6 brothers who were with them. In this way, my father was encouraging me and giving me incentives. He supported me, and said that my mother was sincere because she cared for us. This was in 1977. We [those who went on the trip] still remember the experience and talk about it when we get together.

My mother worked in the educational sector, at the Ministry of Education. She was the manager of a nursery school for a long time. She worked as a teacher until I was

the age of 15. She taught us a lot of principles. She influenced how we have been able to be promoted. One of the things that I can't forget is before we could visit a friend, she asked us who her father was, who her mother was, and when would I come home from her place. She had to make sure that she knew our friend's mother and her family well. She scrutinized our friends and told us which friend was allowed and which friend was not allowed, without question. This continued until we were in high school. We were at the age of 16 or 17, and we were not allowed to make friendships with girls if we did not know their background, their mothers, and their fathers. We were very upset, my sisters and I. Why did she interfere? But now we recognize that what she did was the right thing, and this what I practice with my children now. I do not allow them to make friendships until I know the background of their friends' family and their mothers because I believe that the mother is the backbone of the family. If the backbone is healthy, the whole body will be healthy. My mother was the leader at home, and my father was the support and source of the essential foundation. But he gave her this role because of their love.

In addition, I can say that all my family is educated and open-minded, my grandfather, as well. Therefore, I am so happy to be part of this family. We regularly meet as a family, with uncles and aunts, boys and girls, and go to the cinema, the park. I have a good relationship with my cousins, some of whom are older than me.

During school days, my male cousins and I were separated because I was in a government school that followed gender-segregated education. However, on the weekends, we made journeys together in which my father took us all to enjoy our time. So there was no gender segregation in our life. We are used to this type of life because it was normal for us. So we are not afraid of dealing with the other sex.

I can remember from my childhood that my sister used to buy dolls when we were young and I used to buy guns, to fight with my cousins. I also used to play with boys in the neighborhood. When we moved to another house, in the Mansoria area, it wasn't ready with all the facilities such as electricity. So I used to play outside with my neighbors, and they were mostly boys. When I graduated from school, I promoted this way.

When I joined the university, it wasn't gender segregated yet. My male cousins were together with me, and I had many male friends that I introduced to my father. During university, we frequently became mixed groups. We used to gather in ceremonies; and this is very rare here: to find ceremonies where there is so much mix [of men and women]. It was a little bit strange that we still remember that we were the only college in Kuwait that had male and female students together inside and outside classes. It wasn't normal in those days to have this mix, and it wasn't very acceptable to see girls and boys in the classes or the cafeteria together. For me it was normal, and I influenced my girl friends, although they were coming from different cultures. But it was normal for them by that time to sit in the cafeteria and share friends. And we created a group of boys and girls, and it was not normal at the university. It was a very healthy atmosphere, which we miss today. They don't have it. For example, sometimes we had to stay late in the library, and boys were sitting guarding us until we reached our cars, to be sure that we left safely. They seemed to be as our brothers. They were caring for us. There weren't any unhealthy relationships. No one of them looked at us as in a sexual relationship, and it was really a very healthy atmosphere.

Dealing with a mixed group in college was not acceptable to my mother, and she created many problems because of this. She believed that it should not be allowed for a girl to have male friends. However, my father was open-minded and had the ability to convince her that it was a pure friendship under their supervision. We graduated together, boys and girls, and we are still friends.

Most of my university male friends are still my friends, and we share different positions in different sectors. We meet from time to time. Unfortunately, this atmosphere is not found nowadays in the new generation. Now the education in Kuwait separates girls from boys, and this is leading everybody to think that there is something wrong in this relationship: Why do you sit with him? On the contrary, if you brought up the girl perfectly, gave her the self-confidence, watched her, gave her the trust, I think this would build a very strong person who would stand in the future against any problem. Even now, when we separate or isolate girls from boys, we don't create a safe atmosphere. I believe that in our times it was safer than today.

In my opinion, I don't believe in gender-segregated education, but I heavily believe in very close follow-up and watching our children. We have to build the religious aspect inside them from the beginning. I have to make them understand that it is not forbidden to have the boy as a friend. Even the relationship between a girl and a boy, if we build it from the beginning on a solid ground, won't be the way we are saying it now.⁶ Honestly, all my friends were males, and it was normal to talk to them because each boy friend was a friend that I could trust; I could depend on him, tell him my secrets, and ask him for help—not the boy friend we are talking about today. So this is the relationship;

⁶ In other words, if the current generation had the same chance to communicate normally with the other sex during their education and in society, it wouldn't be different or weird to have a friendship between boy and girl in normal life.

it's not a sexual relationship. I believe that this is what we miss in our culture; we have to educate our young people that the relationship between the two sexes is not the sexual relationship. It's different from that. I think if we have built this in them from the beginning, and have watched them closely, educated them, and tried to adjust their actions, it would be much better than segregation. What is the use of segregation without watching them? It's useless, because they will do wrongs behind our backs.

However, if we look at the current generation, they have missed the meaning of friendship, and this is apparent from the way they act. They did not possess such relationships as we enjoyed. My experience shows how the family supported me through education and built the skills in character to be strong and flexible, and taught me how to depend on myself. They built confidence in me. It is not something strange because, in the end, how much can we segregate? We are sisters, brothers, cousins, and colleagues, and more; then how can you isolate all these? We have made two segregated schools, two universities, one hospital, and one place of work. So how can we isolate male and female, and then at work have them work together?

After I graduated from Kuwait University, I worked in a semi-governmental organization. At that time, it was very lucky for someone to work in this organization because of its benefits and prestige. I remember I was there for 9 months in the economic department. I was very dedicated to my work there.

Although I felt lucky to work in that organization; I felt it was not the place for me. One day, I had been visiting one of my friends in the bank, and during the visit she told me that the manager wanted to interview me. Honestly, I did not imagine that I would work in the financial sector. The last thing I was thinking of was working in a

bank. HR, human resources, called me. At that time I was searching for a job. What could I do? I just accepted to work in the bank. I think this was my destiny.

I am talking about 30, 35 years ago, being a Muslim society, and very conservative in those days, and having an open-minded father, and his understanding my being involved heavily in the banking sector, where in these days 80 percent it was a male-dominated society. I was working late hours in the afternoon, and having a tough time. He was the one who was taking me to work in the morning and getting me back from work (because when I was late, my mother was not accepting me coming late with the driver). Sometimes I remember that my father sat outside the bank in the car just waiting for me, just to satisfy my mother, so that when I worked late at night, it was OK; my father was with me. So I was very lucky to have such a father with all this support. He believed that I should have a fair chance to reach the career I wanted to achieve in the future. This is a very simple example.

Another example of my father's support is when I needed to travel abroad for a course in those days. Again, I'll be honest; there was a resistance from my mother about how I would travel alone. So my father traveled with me. I went twice to the courses, and my father was with me. All this was very important for me because it put more responsibility on me to work harder and harder to prove that I deserved all of this. So it was important that when I got all this support, I had to prove myself, not to put him down. And always remember that is what my father told us: "Never ever tell lies, so you are safe. Even if you have mistakes, admit it, tell the truth; then you will be saved from telling lies. Truth is the safest for you."

Furthermore, my father was a good leader and he supported my mother to be a good leader, as well. I think the success of the woman is because of the man's support, and I believe in this. Again, woman can't succeed without a man.

When I got married, my husband, thank Allah, cared for me. He came from a very conservative family. I remember that in the first years of my marriage, for his family, it was difficult having somebody who was really heavily exposed to work in the financial sector because up to 90 percent of my business was with men. It wasn't easy for them to accept it. But he agreed with me and supported me and my work when it came to his family. And now I have proved that I deserved this, and he is proud of me to be a member of his family. This is essential.

Dealing with men is not an easy issue that everyone can accept, even my children. I can remember that one day my husband and I, my daughter, and my son were sitting, and I was talking on the mobile. And after I finished, my daughter said, "I wish one day I can hear you talking to a lady on the mobile; all whom you are talking to are men." Then she turned to her father and said, "I wonder, how do you accept my mother talking to that many men?" I was shocked, as if she wasn't my daughter. So we laughed, and she said, "This is serious."

My husband said, "All your mother's friends are my friends, and your mother is talking in business. And believe me, a man to talk with as a friend is much better than a woman. It is better than getting a headache from ladies' gossip and chatting."

She said, "Will you accept me having a boy friend?"

“Yes, why not, if you could do the same as your mother is doing, respecting herself, being very sharp in dealing with people. I’ll be very proud of you even to introduce your boy friend to me.” She was shocked.

I feel happy that my husband is open-minded, and he has continued the support of my father. He represents for me a husband, brother, and father. I think that, without him, I could not have continued my career when I was promoted to a higher position. It was really a challenging task because I had to stay at work 11 hours a day. So not every man would approve of this. I was willing to quit because I thought that this was unfair to my family to spend this long time away from them. However, he insisted that I should continue. He told me, “It is your career; it is your life,” and that I had to prove myself.

During my career at the bank, I used to travel and be at work late. Because of having many economic problems in Kuwait, I used to work until late at night, and especially in Ramadan, the Holy month, sometimes till one o’clock or 4 o’clock in the morning. We sometimes used to work for 24 hours. Therefore, without the support of my husband, I couldn’t have done this.

Thus, being a female in this community, I couldn’t do this without the support of my family and my husband. So, I’m greatly indebted for having had a man’s support for this. Therefore, I considered all his support as a great responsibility and a burden on my shoulders. I wanted to prove myself to pay back his support. Sometimes, I felt that I could not attend a meeting, and he supported me to attend the meeting, or do my best to go. He helps our children to study. So it has been a combination of both of us [for me to have a successful career].

So imagine, in this society, to have such a husband who is open minded and trusts his wife. And as I mentioned, my daughter was noticing me and kept asking me, “Who’s taking with you? What’s his name? What is his position? Why you are talking to him?” So I believe that I have to be very transparent and very honest. This is the best.

Even now, a few days ago, because of the financial crisis, and I had been working very hard at night with all the tensions and pressures, I came home late. And I was honestly exhausted; I couldn’t even talk or think about anything. So I agreed with my husband on these days for him to take the responsibility of doing the homework and checking the children. And he agreed and understood the situation. He said, “Fine, don’t worry; you have your rest and I’ll handle the children’s homework.” Yes, it’s always... it’s a combination. I believe that when the family sees that I deserve this trust and this support, things will work much smoother, thanks to Allah.

Besides, I have tried to be a friend to my children, to understand their needs and let them trust me to be near them in all situations. However, their lives and attitudes are different. For example, when I was reading a newspaper, I read an article about a young boy in India, around 13 years old. He graduated from medical school and started his career as a surgeon. He also started to manage and develop medical procedures. I discussed this article with my children, and I told them how this boy was brilliant and a genius to be a surgeon at this age. So my daughter told me, “So what? This is a boring matter.” Therefore, we need to promote the education system in Kuwait. It is not a matter of giving them huge textbooks and encouraging them to learn them by heart. Teachers do not teach them in a way that is useful—how to use this knowledge in their future careers.

I don't blame them because this new generation is influenced by the Internet, media, and the school.

Overall, I give due care to my children, and I have the ability to coordinate between my studies, my children, and my job. If my children want my help, I stand beside them.

From my experience, I always believe that success is the result of the efforts from more than one person. For a person to succeed in his or her life, he or she should have the support. For me, I have had all the support from my direct family—from my father, from my mother, from my husband. On top of that, I had the support from my bosses in the organization, and then this helped me to attain seniority. When I attained seniority, I got the success from my team.

I think that both men and women depend on each other. The success is a matter of two partners. The woman supports the man in her different relationships with him. She can support him as a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, and a girlfriend. A man can also have the support of individuals in his organization. Those individuals are a mixture of men and women. Therefore, no one can succeed individually without the support of the other partner. This means that there should be someone backing the other person to succeed. So I believe that success can't be achieved individually. It is a matter of different parties exerting their efforts.

As a work support, I think of the manager who trained me in the job to be a leader, and the atmosphere of the organization. Yes, everything. It is the atmosphere and the manager of the job. He made me attracted to his charisma. He had charisma, and I was a young graduate, and in the Arab world we like to have a leader. So once I had the

opportunity to choose a charismatic leader, I didn't miss it because he would be the model and I wanted to follow him.

As for me, I was influenced by my parents, and I wanted to experience someone else outside the boundaries of the family. I couldn't find an alternative in the first organization, so I worked at the bank. Since that time, I have not thought to change my career at the bank; it has actually been 27 years. That is a long period of time.

I was supported by my leaders within my different jobs and until I started to be in middle management. My boss recommended me to attend a course; it was a credit course and it was the first course dedicated to my job in the management institution. Then, after I graduated from that course, and I was motivated. And when I went to work in the morning, my manager had to stop to tell me about my role. She told me that my task was to handle the maintenance and organization of all the files. "At this time, you have to finish them all."

I went back. I was really upset. I wondered, "How come, a university graduate with high scores has to finish all the files?" I was wondering, "I completed a full-time course, which was 4 months and its education was a test for everything; and now, after all that, my role will be checking or maintaining files?!" I was very upset. I said, "This is my job?! No way."

I returned home. My father asked me what was wrong. I told him angrily that my boss told me to classify and check files. Was that fair? After all this study and success, to assign me to this job!

He said to me, "This is what your boss wants you to do. How come you left your job?"

I asked him, wondering, “What do you want me to do?”

He said, “Go to your job; this is your task and challenge, and you have to prove yourself.”

It was a blow to me. However, I kept thinking about the matter, and I decided to go to the filing room. I went to it the next day at 7:30 in the morning, and I finished the task. Later, I told my female manager that I had accomplished this task. Really, I am grateful for my manager, who built the right foundation in me.

During my work in the bank, I realized that the management of the bank treated males and females equally, and I can say that it all depended on the employees’ capabilities and their influence on their manager. I took this task with good faith, not with bad faith that the manager did not want me or that she wanted to oblige me to leave the work. I considered this a lesson, a hard lesson. And I recognized from this incident that I am resistant and a fighter. If I like my job, I work hard for it and always I accept a challenge. And these are important things to build a strong personality if someone wants to be a leader in a senior position.

Regularly, when I want to learn something new, I need to understand it by practice. Those who believe that it is sufficient to sit with somebody for a week to learn are not right; because I must practice it myself in order to learn. So I did everything required from me in the filing department, to learn everything. Also, when my supervisor told me to send this paper to a department, I went to that department to learn about it and its manager. Doing this taught me how to communicate and to identify personalities and who was who. And this helped me later when I started a senior position. I understood

who could influence getting the work finished quickly because I had had a relationship with them since I was a junior employee.

When I started my career in the bank sector, as I mentioned before, I started very sincerely as a trainee until I reached the position of the Acting Chief General Manager of the bank sector. During all those years, my 27 years in the bank sector, I was ready to work on everything, just for the sake of understanding and knowing all the tiny individual processes of the organization. I believe real-life experience is the best educational process, and it's more effective and useful than only going through the academic study. Yes, the academic study is essential, to build a solid base, but the real-life experience is more effective to develop the person's skills. I've tried very hard to be very close with my seniors in order to grab as much as possible of their experience and knowledge.

Initially, to build a strong foundation for the organization, we should choose the right leader for the right job. This is, I think, the most important thing for any organization to establish. Once an organization has a clear policy, view, and clear procedures, then each individual will know his or her role exactly. The strong and efficient leader also helps to secure the automatic operation of the other elements of the organization.

Actually, my view regarding leadership is having the skill of managing people or creating a model for the team to follow. This is the main thing—to manage the team and make this team dedicated to a specific goal. So since I started at the senior level, I have treated my team like my children and built a relationship with them because the leader should understand his or her team. The first thing the leader should do is choose the right team, then bridge the gap between them and communicate with each other. The leader

has to give them confidence in their capability to maximize their loyalty to the organization, which is very essential; and he or she should open different channels of discussion with them about social problems and the like. Thank Allah, the team I work with has a good reputation. This is the ultimate level of success, when I see the fruit of my work. This is a very important thing, when a person feels that his or her message has been heard.

I believe that grouping my staff and designating responsibilities and tasks is very important for the success of the organization. Furthermore, creating open discussion among groups related to each month's achievements will motivate group members to do better and better in the following months. Therefore, they will decide to work hard to achieve this position each month. I think that this is the best way of creating a very challenging atmosphere.

I think that in order for the leader to influence the team, he or she should have the trust, loyalty, and confidence of that team; and this can happen only if the team members can interact well with the leader. Unfortunately, people nowadays start to lose credibility and confidence in their leaders, and this is very crucial. The creativity of the leader is necessary to build this confidence and trust in his or her team in order to be able to direct them however he or she wants.

I believe the responsibilities of a leader are having a clear vision, and then setting defined goals and strategies for the team, and then helping them to achieve the goals. In addition, leaders should have an action plan to achieve these goals to reach the ultimate target. Furthermore, leaders should educate and coach their team to be able to achieve these goals because, for example, I cannot achieve goals without the support of my team,

and this support will come by them believing me, believing my vision, and working hard to achieve all the targets and the objectives that we agree on. I believe that this is the major framework that should be available in a creative leader. In my point of view, a leader cannot be a leader without a proper, clear vision and a target. So, I think if we have clear targets for our organization and have an absolute determination to achieve those targets, all challenges will be overcome.

I can say that at the end of my experience in the bank, my objective that I wanted to achieve was to develop the area of investment banking, but the top management did not believe in investment banking. So I didn't have the chance to continue. And what I understand now and they recognized later is that it's essential and progressive to adopt that philosophy for this organization.

Well, when I was appointed to be the leader of this organization, I built it to follow the international style of management. There is a clear vision for our organization. The role of the executives is limited to setting the target goals and the vision of the organization. They also have to lead the members toward these goals. We also delegate teams that can bear the responsibility. We have confidence that they can do it. I do not interfere in their work because they are responsible for their work and decisions. I have to make them accountable for the responsibility.

A creative leader could be defined in the way that he or she has to understand the organizational structure, the nature of the people in this organization, the culture of the organization. He or she has to adapt himself or herself within this organization and come up with all the ideas and tools for how to change. If he or she wants to change the culture and the structure of the organization, it will depend on him or her coming up with

different tools and actions to adopt. Because I believe that it's the toughest thing to come up with these things and change an existing culture in the organization; that is true in the organization or even among the people or the community around the leader. I believe in the way I'm trying to influence myself and my team, to let the older team members on the executive team around me feel that everyone around them is very important to me, and that I cannot work without them. So if leaders have to come up with... how to explain it... For example, when I came here, to the new company that I'm joining now, it was totally different from how I'm used to doing business, how I believe in business; it was totally different. I can almost say it is technically better than here... just to make the people understand how I'm doing my business, and they have to believe in my approach, and recognize it. It is how to influence people to understand the leader's way, process, culture, and to believe in it so they will adopt it and it will be successful. Otherwise, it is useless. Even if the leader came and tried to influence them by force, people who don't believe in it will cause him or her to fail. The leader has to let them understand it, and he or she has to explain to them, believe in it; and then they will help him or her to influence and achieve success.

It's not jealousy; but you know, the uncertainty, the lack of confidence among some leaders within their job environment, will lead them to act in a way that doesn't help them move ahead. Such leaders possibly interrupt others' performance, say, to waste time in obligating the employees to do tasks or deal with proposals in certain ways. Those leaders try to create problems for the other members just to delay their progress, just to be in the lead, ahead of them; in other words, some leaders always keep themselves ahead of others without admitting others' success. This is normal in human nature. So the role of

the leader is to know how to eliminate all these factors so that the members can focus only on the business and doing it. I think this has been the topmost challenge facing me during my work life. Leaders have to be close to their staff, but not only in work; I have to understand their social life, whether they have any social problems, how to settle socially, and their families. Leaders can put a lot of pressure on their employees' work, so it's a combination of different things: how I'm working, and how to let the team work with me in the same way as I'm working.

The most difficult part of management is to deal with people, different types of personalities, and understand their conditions, their characters. This is the toughest thing. I was forced to deal with the messengers, the chief executive of the banks or the companies, and the seniors of the government. I had to tailor-make my personality with each one of them. And this is the success of the good leader who knows how to deal with all this number of personalities.

Furthermore, leaders have to know the personality of the persons they deal with in order to succeed in what they want. For example, last week I wanted to go and meet somebody, a senior person in the government, who I needed something from. It took me 2 days to understand and check the personality of this person. I have to know, what does he like, how is his personality? I have to tailor-make my personality to reach him, to know how to approach him. I have to understand this person, how to talk with him, what things I should tell him about, and what things I shouldn't tell him. Everyone has his or her own way through which to approach a person. For example, a person can communicate with everybody, but not be able to influence them, to leave his or her effect. So he or she has to know their weaknesses and strengths in order to approach them. It is a

talent that Allah gives to some certain people. Thus, people may meet many different people, but they aren't influenced by any of them. In contrast, they may meet someone just once in all their life and yet he or she has great influence on others.

Currently, it is too early to talk about my organization in terms of evaluation. When I think about the culture of the organization, I feel happy and sad because I did not want it to be this way. I did not want the loyalty of employees to a person; it should be to an organization. I want to leave behind me a solid base. I think I have been capable of building a style of management. It has been very, very effective. Changing a culture, and especially the culture of an organization, is very important. However, it is a very difficult task, and people refuse change because they do not know whether it will be good or bad until they recognize it is for their benefit.

As a leader, I think I have made some changes since I have held my current position. When I joined the current organization, I was really feeling very lonely because it was a new organization and new place. I didn't know anyone here. Because I was new, and I came from a different culture, I didn't know anyone. Even my direct boss—I didn't know him. But I feel now I'm so close to him, and he understands my way, and I can understand him. I don't want to appreciate myself, but I was reading what was in the head of my previous boss even before he said anything. I have almost reached this stage with my new boss. Sometimes when he requests something, I understand him directly.

Now I think I'm a part of this organization. I feel like I'm tough, aggressive, and not an easy person to deal with in business. But now it's different. The personnel are totally different: They are motivated, accepting pressure on them. So I tell them, "Go home and relax on the weekend; don't stay late." But, thanks to Allah, they now have

confidence in me and appreciate and trust me. And I have supported them, and throughout almost 9 months we have done a great job in our work.

When I first came to this organization, it was suffering from miscommunication among the team. The company was split up into two different companies—the thing that I hated, because we should work in one team. So all the heads of the departments were separated and isolated from each other, not even talking with each other. Everybody was managing his department in total isolation. Now I've seen shared spirits inspiring everybody. There is now transparency among everybody. Success in one department is the success of the other departments. I feel very satisfied when I see things happening that fast. This is an example: Before the past 9 months, the heads of the departments were coming in at 8:00 or 8:30 to work, leaving at 3:00. Now they are coming in at 7:30 and staying late, trying to deliver as much as possible, initiating new things to improve the process. This is because they have felt the change that someone is caring about them; there is someone who appreciates their efforts. There is someone who recognizes them and rewards them for what they do. So all this will affect the performance of their organization.

In my opinion, the main element to being a successful leader is that I have good communication skills, which I believe are very important in our industry. Secondly, I have good connections and relationships with people, so I have built very strong social networking and communications. Third, credibility. I think that these elements are so important before we reach the technical side. Therefore, I think that, besides experience, a leader should have those three things: the credibility, connections, and good

communication skills. Once he or she has those three elements and complements them with technical experience, then they form a proper mix for a successful leader.

I think, as a leader, I have an internal objective I have to achieve in this organization. Secondly, it's my role to create a new generation of future leaders for the organization and the society. In the society, I have a responsibility to guide my children, to train them to be useful for the society. But for my plans and dreams after retiring, when I think of retiring, I can't sit at home doing nothing. I intend to be part of the voluntary associations and the charity associations, to do something for the society that has given me everything.

In regard to gaining new experiences, I believe that every day there is a new thing to be learned. As long as I am exposed to other people or organizations, I have always to learn. Since I have joined this organization, I have learned a lot of things every day. Every day I learn and discover new things, whether technical steps or personal steps. There is no one who knows everything. In life, a person contacts people, clients, and organizations. Every day he or she knows new rules, persons, and information. It's an ongoing process. So from the technical side, I have been very much involved in the accounting side of, for example, the bank, how the balance sheets are structured. I'm now always tackling all the daily base of the financial controller, reviewing the balance sheet, every single item in the balance sheet, and what the structure of it is. The matter is that I hated accounting, and my husband is an accountant. Even in the university, it was one of the subjects that I didn't like. But now I'm enjoying it. My concern is the balance sheet and what the new rules of accounting rates are, and the updated rules. It's something really very interesting. This is what I know—what is the indication of business in the

balance sheet? Before, my concern was how to do business and increase the profits, but now I'm on the other side. This is for the technical aspect.

From the personal side, I'm trying to be better under more pressure. I believe that the bank sector is the most stressful sector. I'm trying to be more patient and calmer in the process. And this is what I have felt has changed in me. I wasn't patient before, but now I'm more patient.

Furthermore, gaining new relationships, being exposed to different types of business, these are things I wasn't exposed to it before. Before, I was in the side of lending money in the banking sector, but now I'm in the investment sector, where I have to go and explain to the investors and collect money. So it's a totally different experience. But I'm enjoying it, thanks to Allah.

However, I think that no one is absolutely good. Everyone has to improve himself or herself. There is always a way to improve. Leaders should continuously improve their technical and educational skills. There are certain things in my character that need to be improved. For example, I am very shy in certain situations, and I do not want to be exposed to the media. However, I think I should change this attitude, and I'm trying to change it. I think there is a room for improvement for me. That's why I'm thinking of taking courses and workshops. However, I don't have time to do this at the moment. At the most important time, during Ramadan, the Holy month, I finish my work at 4:35 P.M. I finish cooking, and then I spend an hour helping my children with their homework. By 9:30 P.M., I am done with praying Taraweeh. Then I visit my mother and go with her to my relatives as part of this month's gathering. At one o'clock in the morning, I come home totally exhausted. Even after Ramadan I am still extremely busy. Yesterday I was

talking to my friend. I told her that we do not have time to enjoy our social activities. Consider, for example, in Ramadan, if I am planning to go for 3 hours in a day. I start at 9:30 P.M. If the distance should take 10 minutes, it will take 2 hours [because of the traffic]. So we can't enjoy what we do. We can't even enjoy our social activities.

From my experience, I don't think that the new generation is prepared to shoulder the responsibility because its members always expect everything to come easily. However, leadership requires great effort to be put forth. In order to be a leader, I have to do a lot of things. Prosperity in Kuwait makes everything available for the new generations. If they want the newest model of cars, they have it. I remember that although my father had the ability to buy me a car during my university years, he wanted to make me feel that I should work hard to have it. I got my car only when I graduated from the university. Now, the new generation does not feel the value of what they have since they have everything easily. Parents now do not give their children incentives to achieve excellence in their studies. Even when students are graduated from the university and do not find their chosen jobs, they are paid too much by their parents while they are sitting at home. I think this is bad social behavior because it spoils our young people. We are not challenging our youth to go ahead and overcome challenges themselves. Students now just wait for their graduation to have a convenient job. We did not have things this way. Now, the new employees want to have secretaries and act as managers when they graduate from the university. They want to be in an enclosed office and have their work hours be limited from 7.00 A.M. to 1:30 or 2:00 P.M. They do not want to work late. They are finding the easy way, which is not the right way to create a strong foundation. Never depend on others. Favoritism does not give a person experience, and he or she does not

stay long. I worked without favoritism because it was not easy to work in the banking sector in Kuwait. I worked with different cultures, know-how, and knowledge. I worked with five chairmen. No one of them was related to another in residence. I have faced two ownership changes. I have been accounted for based on my skills, capabilities, and experience, and I did not depend on any favoritism.

Therefore, I don't see that some of the new employees show a hard effort now because culture has changed. It has changed greatly. It's not only our culture; it's the whole globe. Even in the other cultures, in the United States, in Europe, I believe that they are suffering a lot. Looking to the previous time, I don't want to go far, but during the fifties, the sixties, the society was totally different from now. The social relations, the families' relations, even in the West it was not like now. I think the whole globe has changed. But I think it has changed to the worse socially.

Actually, the Kuwaiti community is an open society that is exposed to different cultures from different backgrounds. Early in history, Kuwait was exposed to different cultures from Africa and Asia, and it's still exposed to different cultures. So it is a mix of different cultures. This was the direct reason that the women in Kuwait were leaders in their homes, in the absence of their brother or father or husband. So it is not surprising that the woman is a leader in her job, since she proved that she is a leader in her home, which represents her kingdom. Leadership is not a matter of job attendance. The woman is the greatest leader at home. Well, I think Kuwaiti women proved themselves a long time ago; leadership is not a new thing for Kuwaiti women. A long time ago, women were capable of being teachers at a time when the concept of schools was not accepted. Kuwaiti women traveled to several countries and proved themselves as successful

students. At the time of diving for pearls and pearl fishing in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti women were leaders in their house. The man was outside the house. The woman held the responsibility of managing the house financially and socially. She also took due care of raising her children during the absence of the brother, father, husband, or son.

Those leaders who were at home have created the present leaders who are at work today. I think that the Kuwait location and the passing cultures created an attitude that could be recognized in our fathers and grandfathers. The present generation doesn't have the same opportunity because attitudes change. Therefore, I think that our fathers and grandfathers are more civilized and cultured than the present generation.

From my perspective, I do not see a difference between male and female in terms of leadership. The leader is a leader, regardless of the sex. In other words, I can say that there is no differentiation between a male and a female in the private sector, but it is just a matter of how capable he or she is. From my experience, it all depends on the person's qualifications, skills, and efforts. However, the culture of our community imposes certain conditions on the woman to work harder in order to prove herself.

Recently, Kuwaiti women have become capable of or have penetrated certain positions that were blocked off for men, such as to be a minister or head of a university. However, I believe that there are certain positions that are still blocked, such as a judge. We still in Kuwait don't have any females as a judge, and I don't see it coming in the near future. This is because of some political pressures from certain political groups. Or it's because of some religious pressures of certain religious groups, and again, because of the politics. I think it is mainly political influence rather than males. I think they are using the religion in order to serve their interests. Unfortunately, all the leading positions in the

State are held by men. And if the woman doesn't have party support, she will not reach it alone. So the control is much more for men in politics, and women are still in the beginning. Therefore, I think that everything will be changed shortly. Once the political rights are given to women and to the female electors, we will see more and more women coming to the senior positions in the government. In the end, it's all politics that are playing games in the State.

However, in a short time, I think women will get it, get the right position and improve their status, although there is a lack of experience in the Ministry position. In a very short time, when women in Kuwait held this position, they achieved success in this field. I think the woman's success comes from herself, her capabilities, and her personality, her experience, in addition to the support of the direct bosses or the family. It's a combination from many aspects to achieve the success, but definitely she should have the base to be successful. Sometimes she has the support and all the other components for success, but she doesn't have the character or the abilities for success. So she has to believe in her abilities and to have the faith in addition to being provided the appropriate conditions.

Sometimes, I don't want to talk about politics; I hate to talk about it, but I don't believe that women don't succeed because of women. I think women have mismanaged their case, their political case. We have a good example: Dr. Aseel Alawadi. She was alive with men. She was a part of their group, so she had her first political life even when she wasn't known socially as a politician. I believe she had a very good chance. I think she took the correct way, not to be against men but to be a part of their group. As a start up, until they prove their case, women have to do that. It is something new for us; we

aren't used to it. They should have the chance, and to speed up the process. If they need another 10 years to reach that point, they can speed it up and get it faster. So a woman has to cross the way, using her intelligence, her wisdom, through men. This is my own view. But once they step the first step, no one can stop them. Honestly, because I see that Kuwaiti women are well educated, very aggressive, self-confident, well spoken. If they believe in something, they will fight to attain it to the last moment. And we have a lot of successful examples in our society. Overall, if we give women the chance and opportunities, they will prove their capabilities.

I believe that challenge gives people the opportunity to be more creative. So the challenging atmosphere in our community has pushed women to be creative in their work in the financial sector, or educational sector, and in all sectors where we can see women have reached to a certain level of leadership. Now we can see women have reached the position of Ministers, Undersecretaries, and heads of departments. They have the chance. However, there are still areas in Kuwait that are forbidden areas for women, such as judges in court. I think there are some differences between men and women here in Kuwait. There are certain areas that are not allowed for women, not because of women's lesser capabilities but because of the fact that men are putting hurdles in women's way.

I think that talking or writing in the newspaper and magazines will not do as much as proving women's capabilities practically. For example, in the financial sector, woman did not talk but at the same time she has proved that she is capable. So I think that, in the end, she has to prove. Thank Allah, I have been given a fair chance, and I was very serious about proving myself. I have been treated fairly, and I got the chance.

I think the development of females' status has an impact on the Kuwaiti culture. For instance, when I see the new generations of girls in my family, they always come and ask me about my experience. I'm inspiring them in their career. So I'm so proud to be the example for them. In the society, when I've been met outside by the university students, they come and try to ask me questions and meet me. It's important to motivate and direct the new generation about how we have achieved this. This is something that gives me self-satisfaction. At least I have done something useful in my life, and I have set an example for others to follow.

From my perspective, women shouldn't be only technically good. They have to complement this technical experience with communications and social contacts. So if a woman is equal with a man on the technical side, she has to complement this with a wide base of communications skills and social relationships and contacts.

Generally, discussing the female status socially, politically, financially, and so on specifically in Kuwait and the world in general is an important issue. It is really a very interesting subject; I believe that it deserves to be explored. I believe that no one has given this type of study the proper attention. Still, we as Kuwaiti people are not known to the other world in terms of what our culture is and what our capabilities are. They are taking only a side that is, I think, unfair. I think we do have capability; we do have people who really can set examples and do have a very useful story to talk about. But our media is not doing their job properly.

Data Analysis

The data analysis method I used was the categorical-content perspective because it helped me manage the applicable sections of events within categories that I organized

for the participants to answer and discuss the research sub-questions. These categories assisted me with developing an understanding of key themes and acknowledging life periods that participants identified through their stories.

The data analysis section included individual analysis for each participant's story. Each story analysis begins with a brief introduction about the participant, including demographics and attributes, followed by the three focus areas that relate to the research sub-questions: How do female leaders' culturally based personal experiences influence their leadership?; How do female leaders' culturally based professional experiences influence their approach to leadership?; and What new cultural experiences are female leaders gaining from their positions?. Within these three focus areas, I organized categories that fit the participants' responses and comments. Based on variations in the stories, I have omitted a few categories from the analysis for some participants.

Dana, the Leader Who Challenged

Dana had a pleasant, calm personality that kept me thinking about her social life and professional experiences. She was well-organized and lived her days to create her tomorrows. She was a superior leader because she was a great communicator, found it easy to deal with others, and was extremely cooperative and helpful. Her confident leadership style inspired me tremendously, as it did her followers.

Demographics

The demographic information for Dana is as follows:

- Age: 62
- Education: Master's in Economics and Public Finance
- Work Experience: 42 years
- Leadership Positions: 24 years

Focus Area 1: Impact of Culture on Personal Experiences

When I analyzed the impact of Dana's personal cultural experiences on her leadership, I found that this part of her story fit into the following four subcategories: early environment, role of family, formative personality and character, and hardships endured.

Early environment. As in various other cultures, some Kuwaiti families in the past were big families that included at least six or seven children. The philosophy behind large families was that parents were concerned about having support from their children as they aged, and that their children also would support each other. In this "big family" concept that is part of the Kuwait cultural heritage, the parents and children live together within the same house until marriage. After the wedding, the daughter moves into her husband's house, which typically would be his family's house. So the married sons would stay with their families, as part of the big family. In contrast, another term, *the big house*, refers to all the grandparents, parents, married sons, and single daughters who live and share their lives together. This concept has in some ways changed with today's new lifestyle, as the families have become smaller and the grandparents often live alone. For Dana, the big family was part of her personal history.

I come from a big family. I have 12 siblings, 6 brothers and 6 sisters. I am actually the 12th child in the family. Even with a large family, my parents gave due care to me. My family did not distinguish between the treatment of boys and girls.

Role of family. Dana's father had his own style as leader of his big family, even though some of the family's responsibilities were part of her mother's duties. He managed the family's issues with wisdom and control that balanced his sons' and daughters' education and financial support on the one side and on the other provided a

fair atmosphere that enhanced discussions, discipline, and positive emotions and feelings. These principles and her father's personality provided a foundation for Dana's character and helped her develop her leader's charisma.

My late father, mercy upon him from Allah, was firm in managing the home, despite his wisdom and tenderness. My father appreciated women. This was clear when he dealt with my mother and girls in the family. He had a strong personality and commitment. His directions to me, and his way of managing my big family and assuring cooperation, understanding, and solidarity, have given me self-confidence.

Dana's mother had special skills that helped her to manage this big family. She was socially active and kept her communications with relatives and neighbors in her awareness. Besides, she was concerned about raising her children on an individual basis that would fit each one in particular. Her mother had a positive impact in developing her personality, and Dana appreciated the great effort that her mother took to take care of all the family issues.

In contrast, my mother is very sociable; she was keen on exchanging information with our relatives and neighbors. With no doubt, the personality of my mother had a great effect on me because she had too many children at that time. Raising 7 girls and 6 boys was not an easy task. She was wise and, therefore, all of us respected her and obeyed her. She chose the right way to raise each one of us individually. My mother always used to help us in what we loved. Even in financial matters, she had excellent management. I think all these matters affected my life and work positively.

When Dana was in high school, she desired to complete her education and study medicine. But her father refused the idea of her studying after high school. So she obeyed her father and worked as a teacher. This situation wasn't unusual at this time; a review of Kuwait culture and history shows that girls would study until they completed high school and then they worked or married.

Even though Dana honored her father's wishes and taught school, she still dreamed of more education and took steps to realize them.

During my time as a teacher, I still had the ambition for further study. So another chance was available for me. There was great support from most of my family for me to complete my education. All my siblings agreed that I should achieve my goal and continue my study. My mother accompanied me to Lebanon so that I could enroll as a distance learning student and attend the exams during summertime. I can say that fate played a big role in my life, and I was lucky to complete my education.

Although my father did not know about my study abroad, I completed my first and second years at university. But when I was in the third year, I told my father that I wanted to attend my fourth-year courses and study as a regular student in Lebanon. The issue of my study abroad was discussed on the basis that I had the intention and readiness to study abroad, and not simply on the basis that I was a girl and my brothers, who were permitted to study abroad, were boys. My mother knew how to solve the problem with my father. When they discussed my issue, he accepted it.

When Dana married, her husband continued the same type of support she had received from her family of origin.

My husband supported me in taking the final exams, and fate played a great role too. When I finished the advanced studies in Kuwait University, I discussed with my husband the matter of studying abroad for the master's degree. So he accepted the situation and started to manage our life so we could settle away from home. He looked for a house, schools for our young children, and other necessities in Cairo (my place of study); so he paved the way for me to achieve my goal. In this stage, we planned that my husband would finish his tasks in Cairo, and then the children and I would follow him later. There was great flexibility in dealing with the situation, whether from my family or my husband.... Thanks to my husband and my family, I didn't face any obstacles; in addition, the financial resources were available, so everything was ready for me to complete my master's degree.

Formative personality and character. Dana pointed out that she had gained her self-confidence from her early environment. In her household, she was encouraged to participate, discuss, and communicate freely with her family. This environment reinforced her understanding that her opinion was important to the family, and that she was capable of making decisions. Over time and with experience, Dana became strongly

self-confident in her social and professional life, which created her leadership personality.

I really see that my confidence is based on solid foundations given to me by my father. It has enabled me to make decisions and participate in decision-making and job privacy.

This period [initial job] was one of the important driving forces at work. It started by my gaining self-confidence from my supervisor's suggestions.

During her supervisory responsibilities, Dana was friendly with her colleagues and co-workers in a way that still preserved her role as an official leader. This aspect of her personality helped her in wisely balancing her social and professional relationships with employees.

In the formal job functions to which I used to go, I took employees and heads of departments. I was very close to employees. Although I was an official, I was a friend to all the employees because I believe that the social part is very important in work. I was very keen on preparing training programs for the employees, to consolidate their skills at work.

During her educational journey; Dana faced some obstacles that still couldn't discourage her from accomplishing her mission. With her ambition, motivation, determination, and family support, she always prevailed over hardships and achieved her aims.

Our aim was always for a change to the better; we always faced hardships. But the most important thing was to achieve the goal at the end.

As part of her personality, Dana had communication skills that she developed at home with her brothers. So during the work on her master's thesis which was about finance and budget issues in Kuwait, Dana collected data and worked with employees in a Ministry. She stated that even though all the employees who were involved and participated in her study were males; they cooperated with her and helped her to complete her research.

I was studying for the master's degree, which was in the public finance field, about the state budget. So I had to meet officials in a Ministry in Kuwait for references and data. They helped me more and didn't hide any piece of information. They gave me information about the Ministry activities that I was unfamiliar with.

Respecting rules was one of Dana's priorities as a leader. She believed that, together with the individual personalities and abilities that Allah has given people, she was responsible for protecting those people's rights and appreciating those who gave their efforts. She stated that Islamic principles supported the idea of inequality between the productive and inactive employees.

Almighty Allah gives every person different characteristics in his or her personality. The State has laws and decisions that should be respected. That respect arises from upbringing. Respecting the law ensures not offending any person. Our Islamic doctrine sets forth that a person who is productive and achieves success and added value to his work can't be equal with a person who doesn't work or respect work. Therefore, we cannot equate a person who commits to work hours with another one who does not and always makes trouble because these are among the moral values at work.

Hardships endured. The first hardship that Dana faced was how to continue her education. She dreamed of being a doctor, so as soon as she graduated from high school she wanted to start her medical studies in Kuwait University; however, her father didn't agree.

During my high-school period, my ambition was to finish my education and attend the medical college because that was my desired field. But when I graduated from high school I had an obstacle: My father refused the idea of my studying after high school. This refusal changed my life from studying medicine to working after high school. But I decided to consider the idea of still having a degree in higher education. I followed my father's recommendation, and I worked in the teaching field, with the great help of my brothers.

When Dana started working for a Ministry, she faced some difficulties. She was assigned to be part of the negotiator's team that presented the balance sheet to the Financial Committee of the People's Assembly.

No doubt that I faced a lot of obstacles, just as anyone beginning his work does, and this [overcoming these obstacles] has led me to achieve most of my dreams and ambitions in terms of the quiet confidence I've gained through my colleagues... My feelings of awe began to disappear and I had a desire to participate in the cooperation between the executive authority (the State, represented by the Cabinet, and we were part of it) and the legislative authority (the Financial and Economic Committee, which represents one of the important committees in the People's Assembly)... I was encouraged by the officials in the Ministry. I felt that they were strongly supporting me.

Focus Area 2: Impact of Culture on Professional Experiences in Leadership

My analysis of the impact of Dana's professional cultural experiences on her leadership identified six primary categories in her story: educational environment, balancing professional and family life, work experiences, applying life experiences to professional life, leadership style, and lessons learned and wisdom shared.

Educational environment. Dana was given a fair chance to complete her education, while other women were unable to do so at that time. Her father was wise in encouraging his sons and daughters to study until they attained the level they needed to manage their life as they desired. Tradition was that boys should be qualified to work in careers that ensured a good life for themselves and their families in the future. So because Dana's brothers were involved with commercial issues, they studied in community colleges to help their father with his business and gain professional experiences for their own businesses.

In the 1950s, education was limited for girls. For example, my elder sisters did not resume their education at that time. In the 1960s, education outside Kuwait was limited for girls; as a result, they did not go on to college. While in the 1970s, education was open for girls to study outside Kuwait.

My brothers did go on to community college after high school, in order to stay and help my father. They studied applied education, such as commercial applied education. They worked in the commercial field, and they had their communications abroad. My brothers were working with my dad in commerce most of the time. They did not go on for a bachelor's degree.

Since she had her family's support, Dana studied abroad, and she was in good standing. Although her dream was in the medical field, she specialized in economics and political science. She completed her studies and came back home.

My major was economics and political science. My grades were very good. When I joined the university, my objective was only to resume my studies and to get the bachelor's degree. I had studied general commerce, and then economics and political science, at advanced levels. I studied economics in depth in the third and fourth years. I received my bachelor's degree and returned home from Lebanon.

After marriage, Dana decided to continue her education. Even with her job of convenience, an appropriate atmosphere, and a great team, her aspirations motivated her to take on another challenge in her life.

I started a new stage. I decided to complete my study, so I chose to enroll in the advanced studies of economics and political science in Kuwait University. I saw there a lot of young people; I mean girls and boys in general. There was a great number of youth, but only 50 students applied to take the final exam. My husband supported me in taking the final exams, and fate played a great role too.

Dana started her master's research abroad, in Egypt; the research focused on economics and finance issues related to Kuwait. Her professors appreciated her efforts, and she completed her master's degree successfully.

I started my research, which was about economic theory and the public budget. Kuwait at that time hadn't known much about these fields. This lack of knowledge was clear when my professors admired my research so much. In the exam, I had three major subjects and an optional one, which was public finance. At that time, the State of Kuwait was encouraging Kuwaiti people to study abroad.

Balancing professional and family life. During her professional life, Dana didn't forget her social life. She married and established her small family with her husband. She transferred the principles and atmosphere from her big family to her small family.

Shortly after I became the headmistress, I got married and I started a new life with my small family. I remember that I made great use of the good relationship that connects me with my husband and children because it was based on consultation and discussion most of the time.

Work experiences. Dana began her job experiences after she graduated from high school; this was at the end of the 1960s. As noted earlier, as part of the cultural influences, teaching was the position that most families sought for their daughters.

I became a primary school teacher. My students were in good standing and their achievements were good.

I submitted my papers to the Ministry of Education, and surprisingly they appointed me to be a headmistress at an elementary school. This was in the early seventies. What I had learned at the university helped me to do my work well, and I tried to apply what I learned. However, my career at that time was convenient to my life; teaching was a means to an end.

After Dana achieved her master's degree, her chances for acceptance in the Ministry of Education were increased because the Ministry sought professionals and educators. However, Dana was no longer interested in working in the education field. Her research experiences related to the Ministry, and she was ready for a change.

I completed my master's degree and I came back to Kuwait. After receiving the request of the Ministry of Education to return to the teaching sector in the high school, I was not satisfied, since I considered my teaching period only as a bridge to reach my greatest objective. Reaching a higher position was not in itself an objective because women in that period were not obtaining their political and comprehensive rights. However, my objective was to leave teaching for a private or public sector position.

Moreover, there was major difficulty in my returning to the Ministry of Education again when some officers in another Ministry contacted me and told me that they had reviewed my efforts on the balance sheet with enthusiasm. In addition, they reviewed my mission and asked to conduct

an interview with me to see whether I was willing to work at the Ministry. I knew that I wished to work in this field because it was one of the closest things to my goals at this stage of my life. This was in 1979 when I started work at that Ministry. And through this work I discovered many things as a result of its practical aspect, beyond the academic aspect I had experienced previously.

Dana often said that fate played a significant role in her life, and I agree with her. Because she had proven her capabilities to the management, she was in the spotlight for promotions.

...they assigned me to the position of Budget Supervisor. This was a good thing, and it is the other piece that gave me a strong push in building a practical character during this period. This position motivated me to boost my personality to be strong enough for this stage. So I look at this position and responsibilities very differently.

Dana was promoted to higher positions during her work in this Ministry. The top management appreciated her qualifications and capabilities.

My occupations in the Ministry were developed until I became the Assistant Undersecretary in the Ministry. Therefore, my appointment to this higher position led me to take advantage of the Ministry's opportunity to be a supervisor.

While her ambition had been renewed, Dana still seriously sought to complete her studies. Her plans were put on hold for yet another new position.

I was so eager to have the Ph.D. certificate ... But ... I was appointed to be Undersecretary in another Ministry. This position was attractive, so I accepted it. Work in the particular field of this position was closely connected with finance. Officials in this field were also closely related to their peers in finance.

Dana was always optimistic regarding the development of female leadership in Kuwait. She stated that females were controlling important organizations, both governmental and non-governmental.

Overall, female status in Kuwait has grown and females now are holding more senior positions in governmental and non-governmental

organizations. I now manage my own business and apply my experiences as a financial counselor for the organization's benefit.

Applying life experiences to professional life. During her job as a headmistress, Dana combined her life experiences from within her big and small families on the one hand with her life experiences that she had gained from her colleagues on the other hand. Her international colleagues also brought multiple experiences from different backgrounds that enhanced her knowledge to develop a proper educational environment. This environment resulted in the establishment of strong relationships between Dana and other teachers, and between the teachers and students.

In 1975, I had a certain view and great expectations since I found myself managing the school very well. At that time, I considered my real abilities and decided to take advantage of all the fundamentals, values, and principles that had a positive influence on me when I was younger, in addition to the considerable experience I had gained from my greatest colleagues. Many of them were female teachers from different nationalities such as Lebanese, Palestinian, and Egyptian, who had created for me a good educational atmosphere full of information, and in which we could exchange unlimited ideas and approaches...

At the same time, I had developed a new character that differs from a teacher's character. No doubt that this was a good stage in my life, in which I achieved powerful results and gained much experience. This perspective transferred to the school through my work as a leader in the learning and educational process. So there was a good atmosphere of consultation and suggestions that led to solving problems before they occurred. There was also a wonderful and positive atmosphere among teachers and between them and the students' parents. This gave me the chance to form strong relationships with most of my colleagues.

Dana clarified the concept of morality and its connection with respect, cooperation, and trust that the Islamic religion was concerned about. Honoring these aspects enhanced people's behaviors and values, on which their treatments and attitudes toward others, both in social and professional life, developed.

The actual morals have roots and basics, and one of the roots is the human mind. What constitutes morals is respect, cooperation, and logical values based on the Islamic doctrine and trust. Raising children is a trust for

parents. I also mean by morals maintaining the human element at work; cooperation; and participating in building a family and creating entities that have the ability to survive.

Leadership style. Dana declared that the management style she followed in her work was based on what she experienced at home. She practiced discussions and decision making in social and financial matters with her family in a way that reflected respect and manners. So the principles and techniques that she grew up with were continued during her professional life, facilitating her tasks and enabling her to develop connections with colleagues for the benefit of the organization's achievements.

That approach in management was home based because we had been used to consulting family members before taking any decision. These decisions include social, financial, and future outlooks. All family members discuss the matters and different subjects because they are considered important decisions. Thus, they are related to the public interest in the family.

The same thing applies at work. Suggestions are presented; however, we choose what is suitable for the public interest of the country. In addition, as for me, I did not make authoritative decisions. In our family, we used to discuss matters frankly and convince each other of the right thing. I transferred this approach to my work in the two ministries because this approach is a typical example of decentralization.

Because my parents treated us with faithfulness, I applied the same approach with my employees in the two ministries. Thus, my upbringing affected me in my career. Therefore, I was keen on faithfulness and objectivity in evaluating the work of the clever employees, and in their right to have annual bonuses, allowances, promotions, or missions outside the State. Moreover, I'd like to mention that the educational fundamentals at home were based on respect, so home manners were so good that our relationships at home depended on love and respect most of the time.

The leadership style that Dana followed at work was partly influenced by her family's approach. Dana and her siblings grew up using a decentralization strategy in which they shared control and responsibility with their parents. She stated that this strategy was one of the major aspects that characterized her leadership style.

What distinguished my work most was the decentralization at home. For me, the concept of faithfulness was depicted by how my family was maintained. This was also transferred to my work in the two ministries.

Therefore, we used a decentralized approach at work, as well as horizontal and vertical communication with the specialized bodies in the Ministry, and we respected each other's opinions in the Ministry.

Dana established good relationships with her colleagues and employees. They interacted positively in the way they helped her and she supervised them. Even when she left her job, they communicated with her, taking her advice as an expert and benefiting from her experiences. These connections enhanced the life experiences for both leader and workers, and encouraged them all to make the effort to accomplish tasks. Besides, their asking Dana for her advice and recommendations after she was no longer working with them empowered her self-confidence, made her feel appreciated for her professional experiences, and motivated her to work hard to maintain her social and professional reputation.

Recently, in my previous position, I had no male or female superiors. Instead, I was their senior at the supervisory level. They used to help me. The young men who worked with me had a strong desire to help. They were assigned a task, a symposium or a conference. And frankly speaking, I was comfortable assigning tasks to them.

I can say that I still notice, honestly, that my real relationships resulting from my leadership positions and supervisory positions in the ministries are good. They respect my views. Even after I left the Ministry, they still consulted me, and this indicates the effect that I left during my work.

Dana described leadership in unique ways. She added that the development of the human resources is essential for improving the organization's accomplishments.

From my perspective, leadership is an art. It is one of the important practical arts, which are based on three fundamentals: behaviors, morals, and qualifications. In addition, it's a matter of how to designate the resources with the highest quality and least cost. Again, leadership is an art. When I say "resource designation," I do not mean financial resources. However, I mean human resources; and when I offer them the highest quality, there must be various benefits. When I connect these things with each other, this means that I use certain methods that give me a clue with little cost.

From Dana's view, leadership was similar to engineering, and she argued that females were more capable than males to be leaders because females were more patient.

Furthermore, leadership is like engineering, and it is not exclusive to men or women. There are some capabilities for women and [some] for men. How can they use this to achieve their desired goal? However, a woman has a very important aspect because she is patient. She also cares for her family and community. I do not criticize men. Thus, leadership for men or women is based on behaviors, morals, and qualifications.

Leadership as a concept was not related to the number of people that the organization or the leaders had under their supervision. Instead, Dana simplified her definition of leadership to creating a balance between efforts and achievements.

Leadership doesn't mean only of a certain group of people. At school, I was a leader for 60 female teachers and employees. However, I was a leader for 150 employees when I was a manager in a Ministry. The number increased to 850 employees when I was a Deputy Minister. Therefore, leadership is not based on number. However, it is based on certain methods of offering inputs to achieve outputs.

Dana indicated that she was not an authoritarian leader; instead, she employed her power decisively for the employees' benefit, not against them. For her, that method represents manners and behaviors that a leader should have.

...having authority does not entitle me to be authoritarian because this is not acceptable behavior. The one who has authority should respect his rights and tasks, and should instruct any new employee of his or her rights and tasks. Therefore, bonuses in the two ministries are based on the productivity of each employee. Each employee has the right to obtain a bonus.

Because of her private and professional responsibilities, Dana dealt with her duties and decisions independently. However, when there was a conflict between her private and public affairs, she explained that the public part would have priority.

In my job, I used to discuss matters with objectivity. I also used to maintain the interest of the State. Therefore, the human elements were the most important thing that I gave due care to during work, to get the required productivity. However, if there was a clash between the private

and public interests, the public interests took the highest priority. Furthermore, my concept was always to look at all the elements of work as interactive elements that do their job to achieve a certain objective through commitment and seriousness at work.

Lessons learned and wisdom shared. Dana cared about improving the staff's professional skills and experiences. So she organized a training center that would benefit either new or current employees. They took advantage of the specialized courses that had been structured to develop their proficiencies for their specific jobs. In addition, these courses prepared junior employees to actively participate in meetings and confidently share their perspectives.

The starting point was establishing a training center in the Ministry. This center was concerned with training the new employees because the specialized training courses created a wide base from which to consolidate culture, and at the same time to consolidate the scientific and technical part of the process. Then, a process or a system for training was provided to all the employees of the Ministry, including those who were newly appointed. Specialized courses were designed for every sector, such as courses on taxes or accounting... That approach also gives due care to evaluating new employees by setting a training program for them at the beginning of their work in the Ministry, for 4 years during the course of their promotions from new employees to developing employees who can occupy higher positions. In this way, employees can take advantage of their training and specialized studies. They have the right now to give their opinions in the meetings and to offer their suggestions and results.

Dana shared some wisdom about holding judgment on the work of others. She explained that Ministers often couldn't be properly evaluated because they didn't remain in their positions long enough to achieve their plans and improve the organization's approach. In her own experience, Dana couldn't objectively judge the female Minister, Dr. Masoma, or evaluate Dr. Masoma's perspective toward her responsibilities. Dana argued that when academics such as Dr. Masoma, who worked in institutional organizations, held such positions, their theoretical approach often didn't match the organization's practical approach. Their task to coordinate the Cabinet's plans with the

academic theories and the organization's structure was difficult during such a short time in the Cabinet.

I was an Undersecretary when Dr. Masoma was a Minister. In her position as the first female Minister, I can say that approval was there for her. The Cabinet formation is often based on the Constitution articles. When the Cabinet is formed, the government work agenda is presented. When academic graduates occupy certain positions in the government, they apply the practical theory and, therefore, their management style differs. In this case, we knew how to connect the theoretical academic style with the procedural, practical, executive style.

Such a change [in management style] might or might not be accepted. This depends on the character of the Minister. The executive levels always suffer when the Minister has no acceptance. Therefore, the acceptance of the Minister is the first thing.

The second thing in approving the Minister is his or her ability to connect the government work, academic studies, and academic theory. Many academics can join the Cabinet formation not only in Kuwait but also in any country. In Egypt, for example, the Cabinet formation requires the combination of both the academic and practical experience for procedural work in the government. The work succeeds when there is a connection between the two. In addition, connection succeeds with time, based on experience.

Making the connection between academic studies and government work to applied executive work is a difficult task that takes much time. Our problem in Kuwait is that the Cabinet formation occurs very quickly. The Ministry was changed two times in Dr. Masoma's period. At that time, we were very happy that Dr. Masoma was the first Minister. Yet, it was difficult to evaluate this process with her because production quantity could not be estimated till it made a complete cycle. ...unfortunately, Dr. Masoma did not last for long, and I had already presented my resignation ... before her appointment ... and did not resume my period in the Ministry.

Dana clarified that Kuwaiti females were more qualified to hold leadership positions as the result of their patience and capabilities. For example, various successful females held vital organizations in Kuwait and in different fields. She added that she encouraged employees, especially females, to attend the specialized courses to take advantaged of the benefits they offered.

According to my view, I can say that Kuwaiti woman has the capability for patience when facing problems and obstacles. Besides, I would like to clarify that with my presence in the Ministry, I was interested in

developing the skills and capabilities of the employees and encouraging females to participate in training courses. I can say also that the Kuwaiti woman has excelled in recent times in many fields, whether they are political or economic or otherwise. I can say that the most important activities of the State that have been run by women have been creating the financial statements, strategic plans, and private national plans and strategies of the country. Furthermore, I cannot neglect the role of those women who have occupied important positions in the Public Authority for Investment, the Ministry of Oil, oil institutions, and Kuwait University. I think, if the Kuwaiti woman wants to work, she can do anything she is capable of, and her ambitions are not stopped by any obstacles.

Focus Area 3: The Interactions Between Culture, Gender, and Leadership

My analysis of Dana's story in this third area of focus fits within three categories. These categories are cultural influences, interactions, and changes; new experiences; and advice to others.

Cultural influences, interactions, and changes. Within this topic, Dana's story focuses more on the cultural change that her leadership position represented. There were interactions between culture and female leadership; cultural change resulted as more women served in leadership positions; at the same time, women in leadership roles helped to bring about cultural change. As part of these cultural changes, Dana was proud that her superiors appreciated the vital role she played during the financial discussions in front of the People's Assembly. She represented Kuwaiti females who sought real opportunities to prove their capabilities.

The Undersecretary also said frankly, "Well done, Dana." And he meant women in general by this congratulation. It was because women weren't accustomed to discussing important issues such as the balance sheet since it was a complicated issue related to the State, its economic resources designation, justice in income distribution, and the methods for balance-sheet preparation.

Among cultural and gender influences at work, Dana was concerned about all employees who needed or deserved to attend professional courses in either local or

international locations. As an encouragement for female workers to attend these international courses, they were allowed to travel with one of their relatives so they would feel comfortable in regard to respecting the cultural standards.

There was no distinction made to exclude women from attending the courses or the official tasks. Sometimes, when there were official international conferences, they would include one of their relatives in these conferences, and we accepted this because the relatives attended on the employees' account. The remunerations were based on the degree of attendance at the courses and the official tasks.

The Kuwaiti culture is considered as part of the Islamic and Arabic identity, and its cultural aspects have been influenced by traditions and norms, and the practice that parents should educate their children to value these principles in their lives. Therefore, Dana declared that respecting and practicing the religion and tradition was essential for the society.

From the cultural perspective, Kuwait is a different case than other countries because in other countries there are aspects of autonomy and independence for a girl after she becomes an 18-year-old. However, our religion, Islam, and the Arab parents are the ones who raise the family as a whole; and in this religious and social view, we cherish our Arab families in general. So, with these qualities, we can change society for the better, not worse. The Almighty Allah said, "God does not change what is inside people until they change what is in themselves."

From Dana's point of view, gender has influenced some occupations that males had controlled. The number of female leaders was low compared with the number of female workers in non-leadership positions. This was true even though the Civil Service Department was concerned about years of experience and other qualifications for promotion. More recently, the number of females in leadership positions has increased.

As for the number of women and their development in their situations as female leaders, let's take into consideration that there were not any female members in the Ministry, especially in those sectors and accounting. Experience played an important role in promotion. The Civil Service Department (Diwan) promotes on the basis of experience. Moreover,

efficiency also plays an important role. The law also supports years of experience and service. There were a number of female managers at the time I worked there because there were managers for Public Relations, a female manager for Financial Affairs, and a female manager for Training, and so on. [But still] the number was small. Why? Because these fields were male dominated.

Then, the Kuwaiti women had a chance to join men in these positions and to become leaders. The field was open for women to be promoted, from being a head of the department to a general manager. However, men had the priority in occupying a position in the balance sheet and accounting areas. Promotions were limited, but not for the female members. There were training managers, administrative projects managers, and there was a kind of public relations manager. There were some female members in all these areas.

As an example of gender and cultural influences on Dana's leadership, she broke new ground in her role and duties in the Ministry; these responsibilities were in the area of budget and finance. From the cultural perspective, females couldn't previously work in such fields because they represented one type of job that was controlled by gender and traditional roles. Dana stated that another reason for this restriction related to the secrecy of the State's business. Overall, she broke new ground and encouraged other females to also participate in this segment of business.

This sector was characterized by requirements for complete confidentiality and being very sensitive because it had connections with the People's Assembly and Council of Ministers; and thus there was a fear of women entering into this sector ... it is worth mentioning that I was the only woman among a team of male colleagues; this reinforced my position through letting me use and gain the required experience.

One example among these cultural changes is that Kuwaiti females were developing their status by being appointed to higher positions. Dana gave several examples to demonstrate how female leadership in Kuwait has been enhanced and how women have become proficient in their fields.

As for the Ministry where I was working, there were two female Assistant Undersecretaries. Then I came as an Undersecretary, and we became three. Also, the activities of the ministries increased. That expansion gave

women a greater field for joining leadership work, in the two ministries. They were occupying other ministries' higher positions; Seham Al-Rezouki was in the oil sector, and Dr. Rasha Al-Sabah was in the Higher Education Ministry. However, this was a small number. I can say that the female element that represents the higher percentage remains few until now. However, this number has been increasing recently. I'll give an example: The female members joined the Tender (Procurement) Committee. This committee is related to the Higher Council of Planning, which had no female position. When I joined it, there were two women. Now, it boasts having more than three or four.

Dana clarified that during her university study and her work experiences, there wasn't any discrimination toward her as a female that influenced her relationship with her male colleagues or professors. The males at the university and at her work sites were very supportive and helpful. She felt respected and motivated to achieve her tasks.

My subordinates in the Council of Ministries approved of and respected me. These factors relieved me of many burdens and gave me a sense of being comfortable. Although there were some problems, I enjoyed my work because of my subordinates' trust and encouragement. I can say that I mostly dealt with males in work, as leaders or employees, and in university, as professors and students, and I did not feel of any gender influences or discriminations.

Dana claimed that neither culture nor religion negatively influences females from holding leadership positions in different sectors. Kuwaiti females have developed their status by occupying various positions in vital fields, and nothing will prevent their progress—neither traditions nor customs. Dana added that Kuwaiti females are capable of playing a great role in society when they reveal their bravery.

It is worth mentioning that women at that time worked in many sectors (leadership or regular sectors). It was possible to identify the number of female employees at schools and their leadership positions as school headmistresses. If we look at higher education, we will see that woman is superior. We see that there are great numbers of female university professors. There are also great numbers of female doctors. The religion doesn't prevent or prohibit the work of women in any of these jobs. The head of those who participated in extinguishing the oil fires on November 6 was a woman. All studies are open to women. Traditions and customs don't prevent this. Woman sometimes doesn't have the courage and

efficiency to play an important role in the community. However, she is qualified to play a great role.

A cultural influence toward female leadership has been the male's reaction. Dana mentioned that males from various social perspectives were in some ways coming to accept the idea of dealing with a female as their leader. She had a situation with some of her employees who were Bedouins, and they normally interacted with her without consideration of gender role. She used this example certainly because Bedouins are considered one of the more conservative groups remaining in the culture.

About the reaction of having a woman occupying a leadership position, what I remember is that in the Ministry of Finance, some young men came to us. I said to them, "Why do you laugh with me?" They were Bedouins and I was the manager. They were not used to dealing with females as leaders. They told me that I was sociable and they felt an intimate relationship when they talked with me. The city people as well as the Bedouins had guidelines about girls' education at schools. However, I see that the Bedouin, a member of an Arab tribe living in or near the desert, is keen on teaching his daughter. All these guidelines [limited education, specific jobs] weren't there in the past.

Dana declared that within the social and financial changes that occur in life, people have tried to adjust their philosophies to improve their lifestyle. She brought up some examples about how Kuwaiti males have encouraged their wives to work in the private sector although it wasn't commonly accepted before.

From my perspective, people can modify their thinking to deal with their new life. Then we can say that, at this time, the matter has become a social and economic life story. There are many young men with whom I have worked in the Ministry who have become managers and Assistant Undersecretaries. They were the first employees with us. To deal with life changes and develop economic status, they encouraged their wives to work in private enterprises. For example, they asked them to make sweets or any other goods to be sold, to diversify their sources of income. (I want the State to diversify its sources of income instead of depending on petroleum.)

New experiences. When Dana occupied the supervisory position, she tried to develop teamwork by building relationships with all staff levels. She believed doing this would improve their achievement of tasks and enhance the work atmosphere to the organization's benefit. It would have a positive impact on the connections between management, whether at the horizontal or vertical level, and would keep the organization on the same track.

The focus in this period was how to harmonize with my colleagues, whether supervisors or managers, who worked with me on the budget. Because, in fact, one day the Undersecretary of Ministry, who was considered the second man in the Ministry after the Minister, was paying serious attention to my work.

Dana's manager trusted her to be part of the team who would represent the Ministry in front of the Cabinet. It could be said that the top management supported her in gaining more self-confidence in her negotiations and discussions with the Financial Committee in the People's Assembly. She was seen as an effective member of the team, and she encouraged the parliamentarians to actively communicate with her during and after the discussion.

I was the manager of the balance sheet. So those who were in charge in the Ministry had trust in me by choosing me to prepare myself to attend the People's Assembly discussions and negotiations about the State budget, although I was insufficiently qualified at this time in terms of practical experience. What I can say is that I witnessed worthy competition during this period, and I didn't add or remove anything, but this was the reality in my work. In other words, I was honest when I discussed the financial plan, without adding or skipping any facts; and I talked candidly about the work. The encouragement of the Ministry's higher managers gave me self-confidence since I was chosen for this task. As an official responsible for the balance sheet of the Cabinet, I was required to present the balance sheet for the Financial Committee in the People's Assembly. We were required to show our capabilities as government representatives and discuss the balance sheet with the Financial Committee.

Dana considered learning to be a sequence or progression that she moved through during her professional life. So she learned a lot from her supervisors' and managers' structures, such as the approach that the Ministry developed that involved all departments and sectors in the Ministry. In addition, she gained valuable experiences because she was allowed to attend meetings and discussions with different management levels.

I transferred all this to the Ministry of Planning in the interest of the work because this approach was not available there. I didn't take that approach as a result of studying and education. However, I learned it from the basics of my work since the beginning of my job in the Ministry of Finance. I learned also from the officials who gave me the chance to attend meetings with the different supervisory bodies. For example, I attended the People's Assembly as a member of the committees responsible for the State's financial balance and its details.

Dana also gained access to professional experiences because of her educational work as a teacher and then a headmistress. She studied economic theories and all the issues related to her specialization. However, her work experiences were distinct as long as she was implementing the specific economic theories; the real work would be applying the practical theories to the economic issues that her organization dealt with. Dana became an expert in her field by comprehending all issues that connected with and had an impact on the balance sheet in Kuwait. Furthermore, because she had acquired other professional experiences during her various jobs, her colleagues sought to benefit from her proficiency by seeking her advice and consultation.

Overall, I acquired new professional experiences through my work in leadership positions in the Ministry of Planning or the Ministry of Finance. With no doubt, I joined the Ministry after I was a headmistress and I had a master's degree in economics. When I was assigned as Balance Sheet Supervisor, it was important to identify [and understand] the balance sheet. I had already studied it before. My job gave me an opportunity to be professional in those balance sheets. It was important to identify the theoretical academic methods in preparing the balance sheet, to be able to create it. I left the Ministry and had a good knowledge of the Zero B project and of G.F.S. (Governmental Financial Standards). In

addition, I had a good knowledge of the studies presented by the Web Bank. I knew how to make feasibility studies. I didn't study all this. However, I acquired the knowledge through my work. Therefore, I left my work having good knowledge and cumulative strong experiences.

When Dana was appointed to hold another leadership position in the Ministry of Planning, she obtained new professional experiences that related to the planning sectors that she hadn't experienced before she worked there. Furthermore, her work within planning affairs gave her a big advantage for reviewing studies and other countries' strategies to improve her knowledge before she processed significant decisions.

It was important in the Ministry of Planning to study planning, to identify whether planning was central or not. I was also required to know what was available for some countries and for us in Kuwait. Do other countries present a statement for the Ministry of Finance? Studying strategies was not available in the right sense of the word. This was the most important academic thing that we had identified. As for planning, the process was different. In the Ministry of Planning, it depended on studies and then a decision was taken or not taken. Furthermore, my work in the Ministry of Planning enhanced me because I had a look at lots of studies, and it gave me an opportunity to communicate with other individuals to benefit from their experience. I also visited some countries to benefit from their experiences, including the G.C.C. [Gulf Corporation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf area], and European and Asian countries.

Good leaders try to learn what their positions need and how they can improve their abilities in terms of a specific component. Dana was one of those leaders who realized that, during her background in education, she hadn't experienced meetings and she needed to develop her meeting skills to meet the new position's expectations. Therefore, she learned the techniques of meetings, discussions, presentations, and the basic principles of meetings. These new experiences benefited and enhanced her personality as a good leader during meetings, and helped her improve her organization's status within local and international forums.

In terms of leadership skills, when I started my work in the Ministry of Finance, I didn't have the art of meeting management because I didn't

acquire this characteristic when I was in the Ministry of Education. There are lots of principles in meeting management—presentation style and discussion principles, for example. I acquired all these principles during my work in the Ministry of Finance. Therefore, my seniors put me in some of these management positions. This is a strong aspect of my personality that I acquired.

Dana's job in the finance sector required specific skills that she had to develop to be qualified. Because one of her responsibilities was connected with the Finance Committee in the People's Assembly, she had to improve her abilities to present arguments and to convince others to her point. She also realized that negotiation was a skill that she should develop to interact with the committee as part of cooperating with them.

I have also acquired the ability to present my argument and attract the attention of the attendees. There are some questions that do not have sufficient data. However, the answers to these questions should be clear and good. Negotiation also is an important skill. The tasks that I was assigned required that I should be a good negotiator, having the ability to convince others. All this was developed in the meetings that I attended. There was also another very important part, which is self-confidence in presenting numbers, data, and suggestions.

Advice to others. To create a strong society, we should start with the new generation. Dana has strong advice for mothers. She recommended that enhancing morals and values were the mother's responsibility because the educational environment inside the house was the base from which people developed their characters and personality to interact in society.

We realize that morality stems from the mother at home because mother is a school. She prepares the members of the community. Therefore, if mothers are good and have good values, we will have a good generation in our community.

Dana also had advice for females who desire to access higher education and pursue positions in governmental and non-governmental organizations. She suggested

that ambitions motivate females to develop their status, and nothing will block their desire. In addition, females have the capabilities to accomplish their objectives, and these capabilities are not obtained by chance.

I can give an example of how females can develop their status and prove their abilities. When someone applied to get, for example, the Ph.D. degree, she had the desire to have it, and it wasn't the circumstances that qualified her for it.

Conclusion and Reflection

From the first time I talked with Dana, I realized that she had a great challenge in her life. She challenged herself, her circumstances, and her culture to achieve her goals. She was always thinking of new challenges when she had accomplished the previous one. Her life was full of exciting experiences that truly encouraged both males and females.

Dana narrated various events that were part of her life experiences. Yet, from my view, two situations frequently stayed in my mind as I analyzed her story. First was her dream to pursue her bachelor's degree in Lebanon. She challenged her circumstances and attained her family's support to continue her education, even though her father didn't agree with her. Her ambition was stronger than any obstacle that got in her way to hold her back.

Second, she became the first female who participated in the Financial Committee within the People's Assembly. She broke the ground and proved her capabilities as an effective committee member. Generally, she encouraged other females to work hard and confront and overcome their difficulties in order to accomplish their goals.

During my interviews and other conversations with Dana, I can say that she had a leader's charisma that made me wish I was working with her. She had great communication skills and a modest personality, and she was truthful and caring about

others. She was a fine example for other leaders, especially females. She really deserved the thanks she received from the Finance Committee and her management. In my opinion, she was a great leader, and I very much appreciate her time and effort during her participation in this project.

Mariam, the Pioneer Leader

Mariam was a leader who convinced others to believe in her capabilities to hold higher positions. She had the ability to deal with all the difficult situations that she experienced after she was appointed to be a Minister. Those who were stakeholders in that position provided her with the opportunity to be honored as the first female Minister in Kuwait history. Overall, she had the charisma of a leader that most leaders seek to develop.

Unlike other participants, Mariam didn't actually talk about her personal life to explain the periods of her childhood or youth. As a leader, she preferred to separate her private life from her professional life, and to her that was respectable. Therefore, I have omitted from my analysis some categories related to personal experiences under focus areas 1 and 2 that are included in the analyses of other participants.

Demographics

- Age: 60 years
- Education: Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations
- Work Experience: 35 years
- Leadership Positions: 6 years

Focus Area 1: Impact of Cultural on Personal Experiences

In my analysis of the impact of cultural experiences on Mariam's leadership, I identified the following two subcategories: formative personality and character, and hardships endured.

Formative personality and character. Mariam stated that she always acted consistently with her actual character. She wouldn't accept showing a fake reaction when she wasn't satisfied with the actions or behaviors of others. She also maintained her perspective regarding people who would pretend other personalities, and then when they would act in their natural way, others would be shocked. She believed that, as a leader, she should convey the same personality that she had in her private life.

Through the teaching and leadership fields, I gained personal and professional experiences. As a leader, I don't pretend the prestige, personality, and the smile, but I have to be normal. Whatever you pretend, and even if you have acting ability, human nature prevails and the truth will appear. So if one pretends that he is serious and doesn't accept the discussion, they will be afraid of him. On the contrary, if one pretends that he is lovely with a false smile on his face, his or her truth will inevitably prevail.

Mariam tended to be modest and self-effacing. For example, she did not try to get the attention of others by having security guards, as other leaders did. She acted simply and tried to be a good leader who could positively influence other workers and colleagues.

I can talk about the concept of modesty because I'm not an arrogant individual. When I knew that I had been promoted to the position of Minister, I refused the idea of bodyguards. I adopted the approach of a mobile administration because I visit the various administrations myself. This idea is inherent in my nature. My employees consider me a good example for them because this characteristic has affected them greatly.

Mariam simply communicated with people whenever she met them out of work. She believed that a person should keep the same personality within formal or informal situations.

I treat ordinary people humbly in markets and socially because this has been my character at all times since I was a university student, and when I became a professor at the university and a Minister. I thank Allah that I haven't changed my behavior.

Hardships endured. As a female leader, Mariam struggled with her male colleagues who didn't accept the idea of a female leader having been appointed in the university. Their reactions clearly appeared during meetings and committees. However, these behaviors didn't negatively influence her but instead enhanced her ambitions to expand her professional experiences and to prove her abilities to earn the leadership position.

When I occupied a leadership position in the university, I faced some difficulties. But this period, 1985 to 1987, witnessed very few difficulties. Hence every university chief has his or her supporters, and there are also protestors that wait for the mistake he or she may make. Because I was a woman, there were some protestors, who I knew very much constantly opposed the idea that a woman should hold a leading position, even among the university staff members. The professors did not accept that their senior was a woman... It became clear that a huge percentage of those men who had a view that women are [and should be] passive, not leaders, were the Conservative group. This was indicated from their view of the woman leader and me in that role. They did not express their complete rejection of me as a head of the department with words ... their behaviors were more expressive than words. They caused some confusion and some coalitions inside the department that caused a disturbance and created a negative atmosphere. They did not attend the department meetings. They created obstacles in my way as a head of the department... Thus, these deeds generally caused obstacles in the chief's way, which I experienced as a woman and department chief, and I suffered from them. However, this did not stop me from occupying this position for 2 years.

As a pioneer, Mariam faced different perspectives and challenged the social norms. She faced some obstacles from the general public as well as opposition from Parliament's members who disliked having a female Minister. However, she dealt with these difficulties and tried to manage them to the best of her abilities and understanding.

Because I was the first female Minister to join the People's Assembly, I was sure that I would face many difficulties when I first entered the People's Assembly... I experienced a negative opposition, full of contradictions. This was very difficult for me. I encountered great opposition because there was great fanaticism against women.

As I mentioned in chapter 2 within the Religion section, Shi'a is a minority in Kuwait society. Mariam explained that the Shi'a said they couldn't propose a female as a candidate to represent them in Parliament, even though they accepted females to be leaders. But she didn't agree with their statement that there weren't any qualified female leaders because she believed there were several females who the Shi'a group could have supported.

...in the Shi'a thought, the woman can be a leader; that is, they acknowledge the woman's position and support her rights. But in the previous election, I asked one of the chief Shi'a thinkers, "Why don't you nominate a woman and support her as a nominee among the nominees' lists in the different election constituencies?" He replied that they studied this matter but there weren't any qualified persons, therefore there wasn't any nominee on the Shi'a coalition's lists. This is nonsense.

Focus Area 2: Impact of Cultural on Professional Experiences in Leadership

My analysis of this focus area as reflected in Mariam's story is grouped into the following four categories: family experiences, professional experiences, leadership style, and lessons learned and wisdom shared.

Family experiences. Even with her busy life, Mariam cared about her family. For example, she didn't depend on maids or others to shop and buy household and personal goods for her. Organizing the time for her social, private, and professional life was her secret to providing balance for all the responsibilities that she had and the tasks that she planned to accomplish.

At the same time, I also take care of my responsibilities as a housewife. To this day I go to the supermarket myself and deal with people naturally.

Professional experiences. Mariam was a faculty member in Kuwait University, and this was the starting point of her career. She has been teaching since that time and

hasn't retired yet. She enjoyed teaching political science at the university because she could transfer her rich experiences to her students to enhance their knowledge.

I started my professional life with Kuwait University, College of Commerce, as a faculty member, and I am still teaching political science.

Mariam had worked professionally for about 35 years, and she twice had served as a department head. She was one of the Kuwaiti females who broke the ground for women to hold leadership positions during the 1980s. And this was just the beginning of the revolution.

I was chosen to be the head of the Political Science Department two times, 1985 to 1987 and 2001 to 2002.

After the Kuwaiti females were allowed to practice their rights to vote and run for political office, the government chose Dr. Mariam to be the first female Minister in Kuwait history. After that, she was appointed to hold other Ministry positions because the government trusted and appreciated her efforts as a reformer.

I am proud to be the first female Minister in Kuwait history. I served as a Minister for three different ministries.

Regarding her responsibilities toward improving public services, Mariam suggested a new procedure that facilitated female registration to vote in elections. Her suggestion, to be precise, saved time and efforts for both employees and citizens as a whole. It could be said that her critical thinking skills served in the appropriate place.

Another positive experience was about organizing the process of females' registration to be ready to vote. When women in Kuwait had the right to vote, I proposed a plan that automatically prepares all Kuwaiti women who have the right to vote to be ready for elections without letting them go through the process of registration as males do. Men usually register for elections manually in specific government offices and at a specific time. So we should confirm that we have each female's official records in our computer system. During my time, women were registered automatically without any intervention by other officials or money.

Leadership style. Based on Mariam's statement, there are no differences between genders for potential successful leadership. She clarified that a leader can be a leader regardless of gender, and he or she should be a good model for the other gender. For Mariam, if leaders plan to improve their organizations, they should start by improving themselves.

In my point of view, leadership has certain characteristics that should be available in a male or a female. For example, the leader should be an example for his employees. Leaders should start with themselves first. They should not arrive at 10 o'clock and ask other people to arrive at 8 o'clock. Thus, they should be a good example.

In terms of leadership styles, Mariam followed the democratic style, allowing employees to share ideas and opinions within a team atmosphere. She didn't agree with a dictatorship or the autocratic style that reduced team interactions.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of my management is that it is based on partnership. It is not a dictatorship management style. I always collect views before making any decision, whether that decision is simple or complicated.

From Mariam's point of view, females practice their responsibilities as leaders in the home. So if they typically make appropriate decisions for their families, that means they can handle their job responsibilities at work. She clarified that since the mother is able to manage her family life, which she considered a complicated task, then that person also can be a good leader and make critical decisions that have a positive impact on her organization.

However, it is apparent that a woman is more decisive in her decisions because she has practiced the administration of her house, and this is the most difficult administration—that of raising children and educating them with the right basics and values.

Mariam declared that leadership as a style can be defined by the leaders themselves, in that everyone has a different approach, and different needs and aspirations

for planning an individual leadership concept. She clarified some of these styles that others might follow, but she had designed her own style that she believed matched her personality and offered benefits and improvements to her organization.

Developing leadership concepts or trying to adjust the terminology depends on the belief inside the person himself. Some people may see leadership as a big office, decoration, a door guard, and a staff. Some people see that the leader must have this glory, the policy of the closed door, and the manager at the meeting, in order to show the importance of this leading position. The Minister doesn't go to anyone; they only come to him. I followed the policy of the open leader having to communicate, definitely not the reverse. I go to the officers myself, and if anybody wants anything, he can come to my office anytime. This style changed at least in the Ministry positions I held. The officers felt that it was not necessary for the leader to be in a high tower, but instead chose to meet everyone, and to laugh with them.

Mariam defined *leader* in terms of work, not talk, and a task, not a form. She believed that real leaders will be in the actual field of work, not that the field will be transferred to them while they sit in their fancy offices. Unlike some leaders, she was looking to serve the organization before expecting it to serve her.

Everyone wants a comfortable atmosphere of work whether or not he is the department chief. This is not a new theory; these theories coexist in the administrative sciences (closed-door management, open-door management, firm management). The leader has to choose from them what is suitable for his personality. I cannot sit inside a room enjoying the ostentation and splendor. I don't want to say (I, I, I), but I'm talking about my experience. When I went to the planning Ministry and my office was very simple, the manager came to me and said, "Doctor, we have fifty thousand Dinars [approximately \$70 thousand] to renew the office." I told him that the office was comfortable and I didn't want anything. I mean, we have to change the minds and concepts, not the office. This was my concept of leadership.

Many of the Ministers, deputies, and managers, when they come to their new offices, change everything, so they are engaged by things that aren't their purpose for being in these positions. I don't say this so that someone says that I am an angel; I'm not an angel, but I understand things in a different way.

Lessons learned and wisdom shared. Females in Kuwait are very proud since they have been granted their political rights. They also seem to be more confident in their professional situations and highly motivated to work harder.

...since I occupied the position as a Minister, I feel that this position did a great service for women. It has given the woman self-confidence that she is efficient and can occupy any position and do any work because the experiment was successful.

We can understand from Mariam's opinion that Kuwaiti culture has had interactions with leadership and gender in which females have been influenced negatively more than males. She declared that leadership shouldn't have differences regardless of, or as a result of, one's gender.

I can say that culture affects female leadership more than male leadership. Choosing a leader is supposed to be an objective, studied, and irrevocable decision because otherwise the leader may lose confidence. The leader should have patience and be stern in his or her decisions to commit.

In regard to organized support for females becoming leaders, we can conclude from Mariam's view that coalitions in Kuwait should organize their movements to better manage their efforts for achieving their objectives. Specifically, she was concerned about developing the status of females by employing the lessons that they could learn through others' experiences.

Then there are movements that have learned the lesson and will follow it in the future. There are movements that will benefit from the lessons that happened in other countries, such as the reformation group (the Constitutional Movement; the Muslims Brothers group) in Egypt, who nominated a woman in the last Egyptian election. So the constitutional movement in the reformation group and the Muslims Brothers group will nominate females. So will there be a day in which the woman can have her right to be on the electoral list and not leave the field to those who deprive her of her right? Because we have qualified women in the different working political movements, except the ancestral movement, there are qualified women who are able to have the responsibility as a leader.

When we consider cultural influences, we recognize that Kuwaiti female leaders have had challenges, and that others have doubted their chances for success. However, females have proven their abilities to hold higher positions. Mariam gave an example of one female leader who was in the top management of Kuwait University for 9 years. Mariam argued that if the leader wasn't capable of holding this position as a manager, those who were the stakeholders in the university's success wouldn't have re-appointed her several times to that position.

Although it is difficult for a woman to attain a leadership position in our community, when she occupies that position, she cannot escape the cultural heritage of her community. For example, there was a leading position in the university for Dr. Fayza Al-kherafi. There were questions and anticipation that she would fail, and that she couldn't do this role. She formed a staff in which there were many women. She was the only one who served as a leader in the university for 9 years. We need successful pioneer persons. This breaks the psychological barrier for her and supports her, in addition to changing the male mind.

Focus Area 3: The Interactions Between Culture, Gender, and Leadership

Mariam's life offered many opportunities related to career and cultural influence. In her story, I identified three associated categories of the impact of the cultural experiences on female leadership. These categories are cultural changes, interactions, and influences; new experiences; and advice to others.

Cultural influences, interactions, and changes. Like many other societies, Kuwaiti people have different cultural roots. These various roots have influenced citizens' perspectives toward social and political issues. Mariam stated that some men have been able to adjust their views about females' status to be consistent with the current circumstances. Therefore, they have encouraged females to advance in their education and jobs because these factors have become important for their prospective

future. In contrast, other men are still influenced by their social norms and religious principles and remain more conservative regarding the emerging status of females.

As part of culture, our community consists of tribal and civilized societies. Naturally, the tribal society is very negative in its view of the woman. Unfortunately, members of tribal society play an important role in changing views. Some of the men have changed their view toward women and their role. However, others do not have any readiness to change their views. The first group of men has changed greatly because I felt this change at their houses. Although the tribal group had a negative view of the role of women at the beginning, now they are more desirous of employing women, and they participate more significantly in developing social thinking that favors females in working and leadership positions. The working woman in recent times has become more attractive for marriage proposals because she participates positively in the marital life because she contributes financially.

In general, religion and its principles have influenced Kuwaiti culture both negatively and positively. In that context, religious groups also have had their perspectives toward issues that relate to social and political matters. One of these groups, the Conservative group, has usually held Islamic and social principles that have opposed the development of female leadership. However, this group has accepted the idea of having females in specific fields of work, such as education. Mariam claimed that men are concerned about female leadership because it has an impact on their positions. In other words, the culture and religion influence female leadership, and men are afraid of gender competition at the level of leadership positions.

...since the religion has its effect in the culture, the religious trends obviously opposed the role of women and community development at the beginning. These trends called for returning to the Conservative group. This conservative view of the role of woman was the offspring of certain religious perspectives at the time. This trend suggested that women should stay at home or serve in positions that deal with females, such as education. However, the men with this view considered religion and traditions at that time from a single perspective. This call for the woman's return to the home was ascribed to the fact this would allow more job opportunities for men. Another reason is that the women occupied important social roles. And these are the most important reasons that men

were alert to the leading role of women in the community. This [potential change in women's role] made the men fear that women would excel as leaders in the near future.

These influences are constantly fighting social change and view such changes as risks to the society. I can say that there are other religious groups in Kuwait that are more lenient in their thinking than the Conservative group.

At the same time, the development of female leadership in Kuwait has been influenced by culture in general and by liberal coalitions in particular. Mariam stated that the liberals have been more organized during elections in how they have supported a female as a candidate. In a recent election, the woman they supported wasn't generally well known as a personality in Kuwait society, but she came close to winning. Mariam argued that the coalition's support is very important, not only for females but also for males.

...the liberal coalitions tried their best to support the woman in the last elections. Whether or not I agree, they at least nominated a woman, Dr. Aseel Alawadi, from outside the coalition and supported her, even though she wasn't known in the political field, and she was studying outside Kuwait in the last years. This woman hadn't a public or popular base. This shows that it's important to have the party support. If she had been nominated without the movement support, she wouldn't have extruded 11 nominees. This nominee didn't have any public or social activity. So if she had been nominated without support of any party, such as other females recently who have attendance in the society, I say clearly she would have been out early in the elections and she couldn't have even reached the eleventh position, which was so close to winning. I respect her and her ability to face the media and her electors and get this support, while other nominees who had attendance in the society didn't reach advanced positions during the elections. I think, in the future, movements and groups have to support more than one woman so that one can reach her desired goal.

Mariam argued that some males and some social and religious associations have had an agenda toward working females. Their agenda has had two aspects: One aspect was determined by men who would like a comfortable environment for females as mothers and housewives, and so they paid them salary and benefits if they went to work

within the home. This phase touched females' essential position at home and gave them cause to think critically about whether to agree with this approach. However, the other aspect had another basis, in that men sought to keep females away from the actual field of work. Thus, females couldn't be in crucial professional positions, and that would offer more opportunities for men to be in control.

...men and associations in Kuwait society began to call for creating a league for the woman as a housewife. Thus, they started to find a solution for the issue from a psychological and emotional perspective, without declaring explicitly that women should return to the home again. So they encouraged working women to stay at home as retired, before they completed specific years of work. This way, the women would receive a salary through these organizations while they were at home, without working. The men and associations were certain that there was a great percentage of women who would want to take a salary without exerting any effort.

Unlike these men, other males have supported females in their jobs and have tried to facilitate the removal of all obstacles that have blocked the success of females in a career outside the home. This group believes that each gender is a positive influence and encouragement for the success of the other, and that competition between men and women might increase the experiences, benefits, and achievements for both genders.

Conversely, there are those who agree that woman should work, and they don't obstruct her activities or her family life. There are even those who provide the working woman with assistance, to participate in her success.

Regarding the role of females as leaders, people's perspectives have changed in relationship to the increasing diversity among Kuwaiti society; and those changes haven't necessarily all been positive. Within recent decades, the Kuwaiti culture has been affected by different components such as religion and civilization, which have complicated people's perceptions toward the advancement of female leadership. So it

seems natural that people who supported females earlier might actually oppose them later just because the cultural, political, and ethical norms have changed.

Now, I think that the present phase is negative because the graduates are negative toward the role of the woman. Therefore, the task is more difficult than before. Instead of going forward with freedom of expression and other positive trends, our community is somehow retreating. So when I became the department chief for the second time, I left my position after 1 year because I couldn't tolerate the conditions. Nowadays, the conditions have become worse than before for either women or men.

Mariam mentioned that social aspects of the Kuwaiti culture have changed, and some people have adapted to these changes while others have maintained their customs. Therefore, the liberal groups have accepted the development of female leaders; however, the conservatives have refused to change their norms and continue to give priority to respecting the traditional cultural and religious principles.

Through my experiences as a female in Kuwait University or the Cabinet, I can say that there are many issues that have influenced my job. One of them is the culture and its aspects. Culture is a social heritage to each one of us. The culture of some of us has changed. However, some of us retain our old culture and tradition as it has always been. For example, suppose that there is a direct relationship between the view of the woman and the educational level. As the educational level of a person increases, the more positive that person's view is of women in the working world and as leaders.

From Mariam's perspective, the Kuwaiti culture has been the essential influence in the development of female leadership. She claimed that because the Kuwaiti society was traditionally male dominated, some people haven't been able to accept the idea of appointing female leaders within different organizations. These differences in cultural perspectives have increased the gap between people generally and in politicians specifically. Thus, retaining the culture's customs has contributed to impeding the progress that females might have otherwise attained regarding their professional status.

The effect of culture is of course the most important effect on female leadership. The general culture shows that the woman is not suitable for political work and public work. In a male-dominated society, there will be sensitivity and resistance to female leadership. All the ministries I entered couldn't deal with a woman as a Minister. However, in an open community that accepts female leadership, the female leader can freely make creative things without a supportive cultural heritage.

Since the governmental and non-governmental organizations have trusted females to hold leadership positions, the Kuwaiti culture has continued to provide advanced opportunities to females to prove their abilities as leaders in higher positions. Mariam declared that Kuwaiti females have the characteristics of leaders that have assisted them in being appointed to important positions. She gave Dr. Modai Al-Hamoud as an example of those females who deserve to manage such organizations. And later, Dr. Al-Hamoud also was assigned as Minister of the State of Kuwait for Housing Affairs and Administrative Development Affairs.

...we have Dr. Modai Al-Hamoud. She was the dean of our college, College of Commerce and Political Science, and she was stern and kind at the same time. Therefore, I say that woman has the ability to make decisions in the matters she encounters without any hesitation. Thus, the successful model of the woman in our community affects the social heritage.

Among her official responsibilities, Mariam played an outstanding role that had a positive impact on others' actions and reactions toward working procedures and outcomes in the Cabinet. She presented a great proposal for the state-run interests that was reasonable and that the Cabinet found acceptable. Her decision to propose this plan to the Prime Minister at the right time reduced the opposition's negative reactions toward her proposal. Her proposal was appropriate enough for the Prime Minister's approval and gained his support when she presented it to the Cabinet.

During my responsibilities in the Cabinet, I remember when I presented a detailed proposal of the work plan in governmental organizations to His

Highness, Prince of the State, Sabah. I was afraid to present it to the Cabinet directly because it might face great opposition. The proposal was about offering jobs for people without gender preference. So I told him that the organizations require the work of men and do not require the work of women in spite of the fact that females are cleverer than males. This is indicated by statistics that show that 85 percent of the brilliant students are women, not men. His Highness replied that the organizations may be more comfortable in dealing with men than women because he had asked and it feels that it is a male-dominated society.

He asked me, “What do you suggest?” I replied that it should be common in all ministries not to specify or determine the gender when meeting the requirements for filling job vacancies. He showed his instant approval of my suggestion. Thus, it is apparent that the Prince is an open-minded personality. I asked him to present this issue in the People’s Assembly in the first meeting. He asked me to prepare my issue with statistics and said that he was backing me.

Thanks to Allah, I succeeded in defending the issue in which I believe. A decree from the Cabinet was issued that stated that the gender of the employee should not be designated. I considered this as a positive step, which was achieved in my second month in the People’s Assembly.

Based on Mariam’s view, cultural aspects have had their influences on society regarding gender preferences in professional positions. She argued that males have had the privilege to hold higher positions, while females have been assigned to work in certain jobs that require simple skills.

The community in the State of Kuwait, for example, has been a male-dominated one since 1960 and till now because it has seen that there are some jobs and work that cannot be practiced by women. The state has designated some jobs for women. In order for a woman to work, she should have some basic skills on which she can depend during her transition into leadership work.

Within her professional life, Mariam interacted with different people—politicians, parliamentarians, religious representatives, and the public. She recognized that there were strong arguments being defended officially, mostly by men, in favor of delaying or even blocking the increase in female leaders. However, she was supported by a male who recommended her to be a Minister and encouraged her within her Cabinet responsibilities.

For all these arguments among society's groups and perspectives about females' leadership, I was shocked when I held the Minister position because the sheik Sabah's support of me was so important in removing all these obstacles from me. The doubt existed that woman could hold a leading position. When there was investigation or a questionnaire, the majority said that woman cannot, and the minority said that woman can hold leading positions.

Like other cultures, the Kuwaiti culture's norms and traditions that influenced some people's perspectives in the past have been revolutionized. In that process, some people have adapted to these changes and have modified their perspectives to be consistent with the general circumstances and within the progress that the State has made. In addition, female leaders' accomplishments have served to help convince the opposition by demonstrating women's capabilities to hold such positions. The evidence of these accomplishments then has become part of the cultural influences that affect female leadership issues over time.

Among the Kuwaiti females' leadership improvements, there has been an accumulation gaining ground in the culture. The positive experiments of women have changed the woman's role and her leadership. This success creates incentives to change some traditions and conceptions of the community toward women... Kuwait culture has been affected by the role of women. This point can be made clear through examples of social interaction, which includes thought, culture, behavior, and materials. So if the culture is influenced and has been changed by humans, I think the manner of people's thinking could be changed ... women occupying positions in political life also have changed the view of men toward women's role. This strong barrier, which has evolved with time, has been broken. However, it is time to *destroy* that barrier.

While practicing her responsibilities in the Cabinet, Mariam was sustained by the strength of her ability to be a good example for female leaders who were looking for a supporter who also could demonstrate their potential capabilities to society. Through her strenuous efforts, she also encouraged some females to interact positively with the

elections process and nominate themselves to prove their abilities and to be optimistic about their success.

It is worth noting that there are some positive situations to analyze that I can remember now in which male leaders lately have thanked me and have shown appreciation for my support of female political rights. There was a strong opposition to the idea of a woman occupying a leading position, such as a Minister. However, when I occupied the position of Minister, I did not hear any word of opposition from women and also not from a great percentage of men. This example is reflected in the elections that followed, as we saw about 30 women who nominated themselves. The election tents [the location that every candidate has as her place to meet people, talk, and discuss her plan for election] for women were full of men and women to support and elect a female candidate. Thus, there has been a change in the community view of women in our society.

New experiences. Mariam gained new experiences after she was appointed to be a Minister. These experiences were different than if she had held other positions because, in her role as Minister, she had various influences among all groups in the Kuwaiti society. Clearly, she was comfortable with the Emir's significant decree stating that females deserved to serve in higher positions.

No doubt, occupying the position of a Minister is a positive trend and great victory for women in Kuwait. It was believed that the woman was unable to occupy leadership positions because she was unable to lead others. My choice to be a Minister was based on a principle of qualifications and experiences and not as a development position. In other words, appointing a female Minister was not only a cultural decision or one to develop the female status but was because females deserve to be leaders. So I felt that I had something to do and I wanted to prove something when I joined the Cabinet.

Advice to others. Based on all her experiences, Mariam advised others, especially leaders, to think critically before they made decisions. She clarified the benefits of being a respectable decision-maker in private or professional life, and that this quality could have a positive impact on a person's entire life.

I advise others to study well any decision before making it. This will comfort them in the future and after making the decision. This served me

when I was in the university and when I became a Minister. This is an important step to making any decision, whether at home or in work. So I have to study everything well with its positive and its negative aspects in order to be convinced of the decision I make.

Mariam expected that Kuwaiti females will practice their legitimate rights and deal with the obstacles to realizing those rights that can be dealt with. She also recommended that they shouldn't let negative influences decrease their motivation toward realizing their ambitions.

I hope that the Kuwaiti woman achieves her role in the community, and her effectiveness, and will not be deterred by cultural heritage.

Conclusion and Reflection

Dr. Mariam was qualified to be a leader and deserved the honor to be the first female Minister in Kuwait history. She managed organizations very well, with a special leadership style that she had gained through her life and professional experiences. Furthermore, she proved in a short time that a female Minister was capable and available when the culture and stakeholders chose her to serve as a Minister.

I recall two situations that inspired and motivated me during the data collection and analysis. First, Dr. Mariam had a modest personality that suggested she could naturally deal with both formal and informal situations. I felt that trait in her personality from the first time I contacted her. She welcomed me and encouraged me before and during her participation. She simply expressed her opinion and feelings without any formal performance because she acted consistently with her actual character. She had the same personality in private and public life.

Second, she broke new ground as the first Kuwaiti female Minister. She made every effort to manage her organizations to achieve the objectives she had planned. In

addition, she motivated other females to challenge themselves to gain top management positions in governmental organizations.

She had a great charisma that was very engaging; I couldn't take my eyes off her. I am glad that I met with her because she was truly a pioneer who has led other females in Kuwait to be proud that they hold higher positions. I really appreciate her time, effort, and courage during the interviews. I hope she and I might someday cooperate to serve in the educational field and in social activities.

Ruba, the Effective Leader

Ruba had her own style of managing and leadership. She was effective and reasonable in her arguments. So she had great impact on her listeners by providing evidence and examples to convince them about what she said. She was quite a hard worker and unselfish leader. Overall, she worked more than talked.

Demographics

The demographic information for Ruba is as follows:

- Age: 50
- Education: Master's in Business Administration (MBA)
- Work Experience: 23 years
- Leadership Positions: 10 years

Focus Area 1: Impact of Culture on Personal Experiences

When I analyzed the impact of Ruba's personal cultural experiences on her leadership, the content fit into the following three subcategories: early environment and role of mother; formative personality and character; and hardships endured.

Early environment and role of mother. Ruba was raised in a healthy environment that taught her to grow up with a respectful attitude. Her mother influenced her behavior

by communicating courteously and using polite words. These manners helped Ruba to be an effective communicator in her social and professional life.

Really, for myself, I was brought up in a good atmosphere; I can mention that my mother, to be grateful, always said the appropriate words. In other words, she talked to us using good language.

Formative personality and character. Ruba claimed that whether an individual has the personality of a leader depends on one of two things: the character that a person has developed growing up, or the individual's genetic material that naturally develops. She added that a true leader acts as a leader wherever he or she is in a position of leadership. She concluded that her personality had formed her leadership character. She also stated how important it had been for her to embrace responsibility at home.

From my point of view, the responsibilities the woman has at home as wife and mother from one side, and the work responsibilities from the other side, depend on the woman's personality. In other words, the ultimate character of the individual determines these dealings. I cannot say that my leadership of the home affected me in my leadership or in my work outside the home. If the woman has the characteristics of a leader, then she can perform her work inside and outside the home easily. Therefore, the character is the basic criterion. If someone has the stem or gene of leadership, he or she can do his or her work inside and outside the home easily. The personality is the basis because my personality at home encouraged me to be responsible for all matters.

Ruba showed her support of Kuwaiti female leaders by describing them as altruistic. As an example, she was willing to do things that benefited co-workers in terms of their personal and professional development.

...a Kuwaiti woman is not self-centered in her work. I always seek to defend the rights of the employees under my supervision without knowing them personally. We are all one team, and we always seek to develop and improve the performance of the institution.

Patience was also part of Ruba's character. In terms of job responsibilities, she thought that female leaders are more patient than males. Therefore, females have the

ability that enables them to remain patient until the mission is completed, while males seem to be increasingly impatient in terms of their ability to follow the entire progression to the end, to achieve the goal.

Usually, work for me is not a matter of liking and disliking. I really respect and evaluate work, and I have patience in what I do—not like men, who always say, “I do not have patience; this is not my duty.” For myself, I really appreciate leadership in the private sector for its discipline.

Unlike other leaders, Ruba preferred to be behind the scenes in respect to the media. She appeared to be a humble person. She believed that participation in the tasks to be accomplished was better than speaking about doing them. So she followed her ambitions to develop her personal, social, and professional experiences that would enhance her self-satisfaction.

It also can be said that I do not like to appear in the mass media. All I care for is my work, upon which I concentrate.

Ruba determined that she wouldn't hesitate to provide all possible services and support that might improve Kuwaiti females' status as a part of her responsibilities toward society and the principle of fairness.

Overall, as a part of my personality and social responsibility as a female leader, I should give help and assistance to improve female leadership achievements in Kuwait and appreciate their efforts in working hard for the advancement of our country.

When Ruba described herself, she shared how women can seem to be aggressive. She clarified that women are aggressive in the respect that they seriously want to prove themselves professionally.

Currently, competition is one of the characteristics of human nature. Women are facing fierce competition in a male-dominated society, especially when women are effective in their thoughts. In our competition with men, they call us aggressive. We are only aggressive to maintain our rights. Because of female excellence in many fields, men describe us as aggressive, especially when men do not want hard work and achievement.

I mean by *aggressive* that the female leader persists to achieve her goals. She is very accurate in her work and does not leave anything to chance. She is always aspiring for more achievements. She does not accept failure. It can also be said that *aggressive* means that the woman is insolent, and that is what some people think. However, it means in my

perspective that I am serious in my work and in dealing with employees. However, I am always ready to help those clever employees who work hard for the interest of the work. In contrast, strict measures are applied toward those employees who are lazy or negligent at work after I have taken all suitable means to reform them.

Hardships endured. Ruba argued that some Kuwaiti females experienced difficult challenges developing their status. However, she hadn't faced the same situation, and she hadn't felt any gender discrimination in terms of her treatment. In her case, hardships were just part of the work routine, which wasn't related to the gender issue, that delayed her promotion for a while.

I can confirm that for a woman to be assigned to higher positions, there are some difficulties. In my case, I was not confronted with major obstacles through my career. At the same time, I can say that something like an obstacle got in the way of my promotion from the position of a supervisor to a director. The laws were the reason for this. I can confirm that my direct supervisor was not that good a man. He continued in his position while I had all the responsibilities, and I moved to a higher position than is normal with my promotion. Noteworthy is that I did not see any difference in treatment by my fellow employees, especially men; just because I'm a woman (I have never seen a difference in treatment).

During her work as a manager in a bank, Ruba struggled with the general manager who came from a Western culture and had no knowledge of how to deal with the organization's culture. In fact, his understanding of the Kuwaiti culture and its traditions was extremely limited, and this limitation also influenced his effectiveness within their organization. Although Ruba respected her boss's perspective, she didn't accept it. She tried to adjust and find a compromise between his suggestions, the organization's culture, and customers' expectations.

I had a different experience with a male manager when I was working in the bank. He was a Western manager and he was appointed as a general manager of the bank. First of all, he had no knowledge at all of the Kuwait community, and he did not know how to deal with customers in the Kuwait community. Moreover, he was totally ignorant of Kuwait culture in general. Among the basics of dealing with customers is to let them feel at ease by treating them intimately so they are encouraged to deal with the institution on a continuous basis. For example, when a customer comes to us, we might present him a cup of tea or another beverage while he is

waiting for his work to be finished in the institution. The general manager did not believe in such basics. He used to just let customers take their work and leave... We, as managers of various administrations, respected the opinion of our general manager on this issue. We respected the idea that we should not waste time by presenting a cup of tea or coffee to the customer because doing this makes the customer spend a longer period of time with the employee. We created a balance between the manager's opinion and our respect for our Kuwaiti culture, which encourages showing hospitality to our guest, by presenting him or her with a cup of Arabic coffee, which is a very small cup of coffee that does not take 2 minutes to drink.

In addition to the manager's misunderstanding of the culture, Ruba opposed him when he wanted to terminate some employment contracts without announcement or rational reasons. She didn't agree with his strategy, which affected the organization's culture, other managers' approaches, and the employees' services. She argued that she could terminate employees' contracts if they didn't meet the organization's expectations and if she gave them enough time to find alternative jobs. She was concerned about Kuwaiti employees who were terminated from their jobs without any consideration of their rights as citizens to find stable work that would ensure they could financially support their families.

Among the subjects that aroused so many controversies and arguments between the general manager and me is that he wanted to reduce the number of employees, to reduce the expenses in order to prove himself as a good leader. Therefore, he decreased the number of employees from 100 employees to 60 employees, without any review of the role or the function of each employee in the institution; and that was within a very short period. To achieve this, he selected some employees from all departments so he would have the determined number. He terminated their contracts on a random basis and without any prior notification... It was my opinion at the time that I could end the services of any foreign employee for the organization's benefits and I could do this immediately because he or she still had another chance in his or her country. But in ending the duty of a Kuwaiti citizen, I would take time, in order not to demolish a whole family... That period was the worst of any throughout my career between me and any general manager.

Focus Area 2: Impact of Culture on Professional Experiences in Leadership

My analysis of the impact of Ruba's professional cultural experiences on her leadership identified five categories in her story: balancing professional and family life, work experiences, applying life experiences to professional life, leadership style, and lessons learned and wisdom shared. Ruba talked little of her educational background, and so her brief comments on that topic are reflected within the section about her educational environment.

Balancing professional and family life. Ruba had responsibilities as a wife and a mother, but these responsibilities didn't take her away from practicing her job. In fact, she was also happy to become a grandmother, as in the famous quote "nobody could be loved more than children except grandchildren." She was more a practical than a talkative person, which explained why she preferred having privacy in her personal life. Based on my conversations with Ruba and the limited personal information she shared, her view that privacy was to be respected was clear.

Ruba balanced her life by giving her family at least the same attention as she gave her work. So, to her, success in her life included her social life on the one hand and her professional life on the other. She believed that the term *success* should encompass the entire life without exceptions.

Paying attention to work encourages me to pay more attention to my family, husband, and children. All these matters have taught me how to take and give and at the same time to achieve a balanced life. Although I'm now a grandmother, I work hard, with persistence. There is no obstacle that prevents me from achieving success in work and life.

Ruba kept responsibilities toward family as her priority. During her early career, she decided to stay with her children rather than hold leadership positions. Her responsibility as a mother took precedence over her agenda as a leader.

I started work at the age of 21. I really tried hard to understand my work at that time; I had training in all the areas. I had learned the basics of everything correctly, just not how to perform the actual duties. However, I had another task to do, more than my work, which was raising my children

and giving them due care, to be a good example for them. Therefore, I set aside my work, the leadership position and the practical experience, to take care of my children and their upbringing. I didn't want my children to be brought up only by the housemaid or nanny. In spite of the importance of the job and the introduced facilities to continue my work [in other words, the benefits they offered, such as reduced work hours so I could spend more time with my children], I preferred to stay at home and raise my children because I did not want to be successful in my career away from my children. I was always with them in events during their elementary. I was responsible for driving them to school and their studies.

Work experiences. Ruba's work experiences totaled approximately 23 years.

During that time, she occupied different positions in different organizations, including banks, which dealt with business. She was in leadership positions for approximately 10 years, in the private sector and in semi-governmental organizations.

One of Ruba's management jobs was that of training manager. This job focused on developing the organization's human resources, to effectively contribute to improving employees' capabilities and in this way to increase the organization's profits.

As part of her work experiences, Ruba mentioned that she couldn't work if she didn't feel comfortable within the organization. She indicated that when she changed or moved to another position, doing so wasn't a tough decision because she was concerned about having a healthy work atmosphere that motivated her to do meaningful work.

I work only for the sake of my work and nothing else. I work to prove my capabilities and for the sake of my job. So if I didn't feel comfortable with the organization's environment, or the work's procedure wasn't convenient for me, I would make my decision to quit. For instance, one of the previous jobs that I occupied was in a bank.... There were many reasons that led me to leave my work. I kept thinking of this issue for a year. I waited some time, hoping that matters would improve. However, unfortunately, the situation became even worse because a new manager who did not know much about administrative matters was appointed ... he did not have a comprehensive vision about the organization's structure.... I decided to withdraw to protect myself from being a part of the administrative decline. As a leader, I witnessed so much evidence of the peculiarities of the job, in which I didn't want to participate.

Ruba concluded that all her professional experiences in different organizations and occupations were successful experiences for her and her co-workers. She clarified that her jobs had been worthwhile, and, considering her accomplishments, that all the different organizations had greatly benefited from her experiences and achievements.

Throughout my work experiences in different organizations, I can say that I have succeeded in the professional field in managing and developing institutions. My career success was significant for all people through meetings, conferences, and achieving the objectives of the institution. I can say that I have therefore been successful on the professional level.

Applying life experiences to professional life. Everybody has some purpose that he or she pursues through work. Ruba mentioned that she worked to prove her abilities as a qualified female worker. She also motivated others by showing her co-workers how she worked seriously and diligently for the organization's development.

As for me, I do not work for the purpose of showing employees and other people that I work. However, I work for the sake of the work. The results of my work demonstrate my performance. It is worth mentioning that I work as an example for all the employees at work. I maintain the privacy of work. As long as my position requires honesty from me, I should have honesty, clarity, and transparency that qualify me to do the work.

Ruba claimed that female leaders were more objective in the respect that they weren't influenced by personal beliefs or feelings that caused them to alter their decisions on that basis. Therefore, their evaluations of employees were based on the employees' efforts and results that improved the work, met their manager's expectations, and accomplished the organization's aims.

What distinguishes me, like many female leaders, is that we are objective in our evaluation of employees. Our relationships inside the work environment should be work based... The only criterion that distinguishes one employee from another is the excellence of that employee and his or her achievement at work. Our criteria of evaluation are based on the employees' performance, without any compliments. In addition, I headed the administration through my realistic experience. The public concept of the manager is that person who always gives orders to make the work progress. However, what distinguishes me from other managers is that I have a good long-range view of the situation.

Separating social relationships from professional issues was one of Ruba's considerations. Working within that idea of separatism enhanced her ability to be rational and logical under various circumstances. Having different opinions at work didn't have a negative effect on social relationships with her co-workers.

For me, my relationship with personnel doesn't affect my work. Also, my proposed arguments and different perspectives couldn't influence my relationship with others. Here I remember a certain situation, which is that, in the scope of work, one of my friends is always in disagreement with me, but our personal and family relations have been, till now, continuous. Till now, I have had a good relationship with her. Really, I have benefited from this professional and personal relationship. I learned to separate my professional life and my personal life. Now, I am the product of this professional and personal relationship. So of the important relationships that I try to maintain, my intention is that my relationships with the directors and the employees shall be good relationships.

Because she had self-confidence in her professional capabilities, Ruba didn't give up claiming her privileges and accepting appropriate appreciation and acknowledgement of her skills. So her persistent personality had a positive impact on her professional experiences as she employed forceful actions to achieve success and satisfaction.

I think also that the work circumstances and my transfer among different sectors such as the bank have contributed to consolidating my personal and leadership capabilities. I remember that in one of my previous positions at work, all the staff observed that I was so efficient and successful. However, this was not mentioned in the annual report. I went to the manager and told him what happened. He told me that his assessment for me was excellent. He gave me a copy of the assessment. However, I went to the chairman immediately, and he was sure that I deserved an excellent grade. I realized from this that the supervisory bodies have certain measurements for assessment. The higher administration couldn't approve granting me an excellent grade for administrative, technical, and financial reasons. Therefore, the chairman corrected the mistake through one of the officials.

Leadership style. Ruba stated that the term *leadership* wasn't influenced by gender as long as a person's qualifications were the criteria used to determine whether that person was to be appointed as a leader.

In my opinion, leadership is a matter that cannot be learned; it is an innate thing. The ability is built on natural talent. This is evident in the successful leader, whether it is a male or female—i.e., the manager should have the capacity to manage the company or the organization in the best way.

From Ruba's perspective as a leader, she had multiple components that she worked hard to obtain. She mentioned that loving people, especially employees, was one of the items on her priority list.

Most important is that leaders have a love of people and the country; a desire for personal development, a respect for everything they create, and not a wish just to exploit the effort of others.

Ruba maintained that taking actions based on smart decisions was part of the leader's responsibility. And these decisions shouldn't be affected by personal or emotional interests.

The manager should have the capacity to make decisions at all times. He or she needs to make judgments about employees in an objective way. He or she should not support anybody only for his nationality as Kuwaiti, or any other nationality; he should just evaluate the person's performance and work. For example, I was on the committee for deciding the promotion of some employees. My chairman asked me to promote an employee based on how quickly he worked and through the opinions of his co-workers, who had much praise for him, although I did not know him in person. I took this action based on the witness of his fellow employees, and their praise about him and his work. My role in this process was to ascertain that this employee deserved promotion and was efficient, someone who could conduct work in the best way. This has always been my way in work. It will remain this way.

Ruba had her own style as a leader. She was concerned about the client's convenience and maintaining the culture's traditions. So she tried to create a balance between the customer's needs, social customs, and the success of the business or organization.

Although I believe as a leader that one of my main duties is to execute the work of the customer, I also believe that hospitality is one of the main duties, as we have learned in our community. As for myself, I cannot ignore the rules of hospitality in the institution that is subject to my leadership. We all agree that customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal. Therefore, we should show hospitality to our customers and treat them

with good manners. This is a great responsibility and represents one of the most important of the many points of skill at work to maintain the progress and status of the institution.

Ruba as a leader was a decision maker who took full responsibility for the decisions she made and who worked hard to show ethical leadership.

I also have the capacity to bear the responsibility of my decisions, whether they are right or wrong. My work is only for the sake of the work. I do not work just to let others say that I work. I consider myself as an example for all the employees in respect to secrecy and honesty.

Regarding the influence of gender on leadership, Ruba claimed that there are inherent differences between men and women as leaders. In her own experience as a leader—in her interactions with colleagues, and in her behavior, decisions, philosophies, and accomplishments—it was a matter of choosing the proper management route to success, regardless of her gender. She chose to challenge other leaders' styles to endorse her view that the leader is responsible for great leadership, whether the leader is a man or a woman.

Motivating everyone to work as a team was part of Ruba's strategy. She preferred positive teamwork based on the following principles, which she strived for in her leadership role: First, team members work together for the same goal. Second, everybody on the team has a specific task to achieve. Third, team members encourage each other by providing positive feedback that improves their work. Fourth, efforts that are appreciated motivate the group.

Besides, I like positive teamwork, which improves positive situations and handles negative ones. This can be achieved by inquiring about the achievements of the personnel, and following up and achieving the principle of mutual benefit through our shared experiences.

Ruba clarified that female leadership has its own notable characteristics that distinguish it from male leadership. She explained by sharing her own professional

experiences with her staff that females are more encouraging of personnel, while male leaders seem more inclined to act as dictators who carry out their responsibilities with complete authority.

In my opinion, female leadership has many advantages over that of men. For example, in my organization; I assist the employees at all times in order for them to benefit from my experience. It's not just a matter of giving orders. I usually get involved with employees to gain the benefits and the practical knowledge through our interaction and consultation. In contrast, male leadership is dictatorial in the opinions expressed. For example, he just gives orders as a director, as if there is no other capacity for him, except giving orders.

Ruba cared about developing human resources, especially the junior employees. She arranged training programs that improved their proficiencies and increased their qualifications for their positions. Furthermore, she endeavored to keep her relationships with colleagues current even when they didn't work together anymore.

My leadership is also characterized by giving a lot of time to the new employees, in addition to training them in practical ways, so they will not be judged as ignorant. They should have this chance. This approach has had a great effect in maintaining the relationship between the employees and me. For example, I have had relationships with employees who worked with me in 2004 that have lasted until now; they keep calling me to maintain our relationship and their enthusiasm for the job. This reflects the strength of the relationship that was built at that time and has lasted till now. So I confirm that female leadership is often better than that of men.

Lessons learned and wisdom shared. Ruba believed that women had the same rights as men in terms of working and holding positions. Her philosophy was simply one of giving the right position to the right person, with no gender preference. In addition, she said that some men can't accept women as leaders, while others support professional qualifications over gender preferences.

Most often, I notice that a lot of people see that woman is an intruder at work, as if work is monopolized by man only. This is a wrong conception because work is a right for both men and women. Leadership is deserved for the fittest of them. Some people do not see a difference between male

and female leadership. They only want the fittest to occupy the position. This trend should be common and should spread. There are some men who oppose the equality of men and women, especially in leadership positions. However, I can say that experience and the ability to lead are the decision points in the end. This means that the one who has the ability to achieve objectives and achievements is the fittest for occupying the leadership positions, whether that person is a man or a woman.

Through Ruba's work experiences, her view was reinforced that leaders shouldn't make any kind of prejudgment just because they have power and decision-making authority. She argued that a leader should consider his or her colleagues' perspectives and recommendations because they might be right or at least might provide another view that the leader wouldn't otherwise recognize.

The general manager thought that he had sufficient experience that would enable him to manage the institution without negotiating with us as managers of different administrations. We are also managers who have sufficient experience that enables us to manage the job well. He or anybody else like him thinks wrongly that he works alone for the success of the job, and he showed this significantly for the board. He had a view of the institution that exceeded our view. Therefore, he didn't complete his work in the institution, and his services were terminated by the decision-makers; and we developed the institution by ourselves.

As part of Ruba's leadership style, personnel had a fair chance to improve their communication skills and social interactions during meetings and group work. So, as noted earlier, providing training courses to prepare the new employees for their jobs was one of her commitments toward developing the human resources.

I give my personnel full opportunity to participate with the other employees' opinions and actions to ensure the success of the work. I believe that involving personnel in the decision-making process is an important component of creative and innovative work. Doing this gives work a tension-free atmosphere and allows personnel to give their opinions freely. If someone can't do a specific task, he just tells me, to ensure the quality of the work...

Taking responsibility is one of my most important characteristics as a female leader. I am proud to be a leader teaching Kuwaiti young employees and helping them to understand the importance of their job. Furthermore, I sometimes used to offer much advice and guidance in order to transfer my experience to the employees who might hold leading positions in the future, in order to increase the efficiency of those employees at all times... I also have prepared some training programs for all the branches so that they can learn about methods of leadership because

they might hold any position at any time, and with this training they can manage their position effectively.

Because Ruba cared about her staff, she didn't hesitate to provide assistance to them. So she not only motivated them to join training courses, but she also shared with them her professional experiences whenever she attended conferences and conventions.

I always seek to encourage new employees to attend the specialized training courses and to benefit from the training in their field of work. In addition, if I attend a conference or a synopsis, I present the papers and the studies that have been discussed in these conferences and synopses, so they can benefit from them.

Focus Area 3: The Interactions Between Culture, Gender, and Leadership

My analysis of Ruba's story in this third area of focus—how her leadership was influenced by cultural experiences—included the subtopics of cultural changes, influences, and interactions with other aspects; new life experiences; and advice to others.

Cultural influences, interactions, and changes. Over time, according to Ruba, as women prove their abilities as leaders, men should be aware of women's development and accept the competition. With the cultural changes, females have entered jobs that were male dominated, and they have worked hard to prove their capabilities to share the same professions with men. Therefore, males should update their skills to reach the levels to which females have advanced.

...Competition with men becomes very fierce. Competition now appears normally between men. A man nowadays should prove that he is capable to have a job or a leadership position. The appearance of women in leadership roles makes that big difference between now and previous times. Therefore, men look at the success of women as a fast train passing by. In that sense, women's success reveals men's weakness. The success of a woman nowadays indicates the degree of her strength, especially when she attains certain kinds of achievements.

Within Ruba's vision, it can be said that women's status has developed as a result of how men have tried to equal or exceed them to ensure their own qualifications, and

because of women's patience and persistence. Ruba based her perspective on how culture has changed in the respect that people increasingly accept and trust women to hold higher positions.

In our community, it is very important for a woman to prove her capabilities and her efficiency to reach a leadership position. It is also necessary for the man to prove his capabilities. However, the woman should exert more effort to prove her capabilities at each stage to reach a stable superior position. Many Kuwaiti women have occupied leadership positions because of their scientific and academic capabilities.

Ruba considered that male and female leaders are different because of cultural influences. She declared that males act differently than females do during meetings. For example, females sometimes participate positively during meetings, while males seem to be quiet. She always was well prepared in advance for meetings by reviewing the agenda and discussion that related to proposals. Once again, her perspective came from the work environment that she had experienced.

...the effect of culture is apparent on the male and female leader. The effect becomes mostly significant during meetings and training courses because such things show the difference between the culture of the male and female leader. For instance, when I attend meetings, I do not act like a statue. Instead, I am always ready for what shall be discussed. So, I prepare everything that shall be discussed at that meeting. I respect others' views... I don't say that men don't do the same thing...For example, at the level of work, there are those who work with me at the same position, or higher than it, or lower, and we have good relations. At a meeting of the committee, I don't care about the position of the person who is discussing a certain matter because we are all members and equals. We are all at that place to achieve the objectives set at that committee. We all work as a one team.

Ruba also emphasized that, for support and agreement, some committee members probably lobbied to persuade each other of their intentions. For the most part, men represented this group, and they had advance discussions about a meeting's agenda in an effort to get their projects and suggestions approved. However, Ruba differed with others in how to be self-reliant by accepting the right projects that were most likely to increase the organization's accomplishments.

...there are some people in these meetings who have different opinions. In other words, they agree on certain projects for the interest of certain groups or because of certain relationships. The other groups should also respect their opinions or suggestions, even if they are not useful... As for me, to approve a project, I should be convinced by the project or the seriousness of the suggested subject [and not just because of personal interests or benefits from affiliation]. I do not consider this an obstacle.

As another example of gender differences in the area of cultural influences on leaders, Ruba experienced that Kuwaiti males also have more social and professional relationships that help them to build a dynamic network for developing their status and for sharing their interests. She mentioned how the Dewaneya plays an important role to strengthened males' relationships, which facilitates them in their business.

Concerning personal relationships, I believe that men have the strongest relationships with others. This is because of their long-term interaction with each other, and because of the Dewaneya. For instance, once a youth came to me and he was accompanied by the chairman, in order to make me interested in this youth. But I refused to be influenced by an intermediary and said that I have the right to evaluate the young man frankly and according to the needs of the job. Even though I gave this youth all the chances to be successful and to identify his job skills, he was not successful in any test, even the easiest. He thought that he would be admitted at work under any conditions. I did not do this because his limited capacities would not permit him to achieve anything or even to understand the nature of the work. At that time I did not look at the practical experience; at first I considered his personal capacities that could assist him, with intensive training, in getting the practical experience. This is what makes me distinctive as a leader compared to other leaders.

Ruba asserted that culture also has an impact on gender in terms of a person's attitude toward keeping a job or deciding to leave it. The difference has to do with financial support for family versus proving professional capabilities. Overall, the Kuwaiti culture has its influences that keep women's professional role unique.

When I left my position, it was just to maintain my professional reputation. I did not hesitate in leaving my work, as would be the case with some men. Men usually hesitate in deciding to leave their job because of the financial obligation that should be maintained for their

family and children. I did not hesitate in leaving my work because I'm not responsible for the costs of my family; work is just a personal matter.

In addition to these various cultural influences that Ruba presented, she talked about some issues that affect the culture and adjust and change its features over time. One of these issues has been the recent development of female leadership in Kuwait. Ruba verified that being a female leader had kept her under the spotlight as a supporter who encouraged and motivated the youth she supervised to take the appropriate steps toward their goal of becoming leaders, as well.

I think the development of female leadership has had an influence in our culture. I can see that through my good relations with the employees who have been under my control. I was their example in many things. For example, the manager of a company who worked with me told me that a group of employees should attend a specialized course. She told me that I was the subject of the discussion between male and female employees in that company because I provided them with services in the field of work development and personal relations.

Ruba believed that men have a fair chance to hold leadership positions even when they aren't qualified. However, she thought this opportunity isn't equal in women's case. So she worked hard in different fields to gain various experiences that allowed her to then help others because she was so selfless. In contrast, she noted that men are in a hurry to change and develop the organization's culture and the employees' thoughts to support their views.

Noteworthy also is that it is rare to see inefficient women in top management positions in the private sector, but we can see inefficient men in such positions in the private sector. In brief, I conduct my work in an efficient way. I'm not satisfied with just doing my duties, and I give myself enough time during work to assure it will be right and efficient. I have the capacity to do the different jobs of many employees in my field of work. I have noticed that men have no patience or zeal to do this.

New life experiences. Leaders should improve their skills and strengthen their weaknesses to enhance their character for the best. So Ruba searched for her

disadvantages that limited her in her job, and she focused on changing those limitations to increase her opportunities and skills as a good leader.

I think the leader's character sometimes influences his or her job. For me, there are some things that affect my thinking and not my work. For example, I was impatient and got upset too easily. This was in the past. However, the condition is totally different now because I'm more calm than before; I'm more patient than in the past.

Within her professional and life experiences, Ruba worked through her skills to develop them in the way that satisfied her. So she expanded her experiences within various aspects that improved her approach as a hard worker and accountable leader. She also enhanced her personality by being more patient in processing tasks and dealing with people.

Moreover, I have communicated with many people through whom I gained experience and insight. I have also gained patience in dealing with others and in facing different situations. In addition, I learned to work hard to produce an accurate piece of work. My long track record of experience has gained me self-confidence in dealing with others.

With the variety of knowledge Ruba gained during her different occupations, her social communication skills increased as she met diverse people in various locations and at multiple job levels. At the same time, others considered her a positive person to interact with for the sake of their also gaining new, positive experiences.

...work in all the previous and current sectors has given me social relationships that connect me with male and female employees who greet me in different places with pleasure because they consider me a positive personality who has affected their professional and social life. Some of them make me feel that I'm their example of contributions and achievement.

Advice to others. From Ruba's perspective, gender should have no influence on leadership. In other words, the qualified person, regardless of gender, should hold

leadership positions. She maintained that achievements and success are the components that create a good leader in the appropriate position.

For me, I believe in the concept of the best management for the best person because I do not see one's gender as determining the best leader. The leader should be that kind of person who is successful in his or her work, and who has many consecutive achievements and advancements to be an example for the rest of the employees in the institution. This makes the institution, because of its multiple recognitions, an attractive element for all the employees of different specialties.

Ruba realized how culture also had had some negative effect on her job, especially the part that related to some people holding positions for which they weren't qualified, and their not truly being committed to their work or the organization. However, she overcame these issues and dealt with the different situations to the benefit of both employees and the organization. Therefore, she designed her own leadership style that respected culture on the one hand and managed her professional responsibilities on the other.

I think that our culture as Kuwaitis affects the relationship with the personnel. This matter affects me greatly because there are some negative examples, such as persons occupying positions without the necessary efficiency or qualifications. No commitment to work schedules is also among the negative behaviors that can rarely be seen under my administration. In addition, some staff form negative groups that are critical of the management or the company, and this is not seen in my administration because it is characterized by calmness and stability.

Ruba was concerned about developing appropriate criteria for choosing leaders, including sufficient time to make the decision. She stated that the right person should be in the right place, which meant no considerations should be involved other than the individual's qualifications when one is appointing leaders.

When the matter comes to choosing a leader, I think that we will need more time to think and decide ... he or she should have certain qualities that give him or her the capacity to be successful. We should not make an

ignorant choice, but we should have time to choose the suitable person for the position, whether it is governmental or private work.

Ruba recommended that leaders should have defined abilities that help them within their jobs. She specified how her communication skills and social relations with colleagues had helped her to interact and work properly.

The leader should have some special skills that enable him or her to be successful. As for me, one of the most important skills as a female leader is integration with the other personnel. During work, I become full of enthusiasm for work only. I involve myself and integrate my body's cells with the work to make it accurate.

Ruba also believed in education as an important qualification for good leaders. Her personal dream didn't stop at having a bachelor's degree—she had a master's in business administration (MBA), although her work experiences and professional reputation alone qualified her to hold senior positions. Her philosophy was to combine higher education and professional experiences because she believed that theoretical knowledge needs practical application for success.

As an example, Ruba managed training courses that engaged both senior and junior employees as part of her job. She believed that these workshops and courses had various benefits, primarily to improve the skills and abilities of the organization's human resources so the employees could make significant achievements. So she tried to convince employees to attend and participate in those courses, and she facilitated the removal of any barrier that might prevent their attendance.

...when I was appointed as a manager of the Training Administration in that organization, a manager who held that post for more than 20 years asked me, "Why do you want to work in that organization?" And he also asked, "Why do you want to remove our dust? We don't want any training after that long time." However, after a reasonable period of time, he came to thank me for my efforts in presenting training courses and new experiences in the interest of work and the development of the employees. For example, one of the employees told me that he refused to attend one of

the training courses because he could not balance the time between the course and his work. I worked with him to arrange matters and organize his time to attend the course without affecting the time designed for his work because, in the end, he would benefit from that important course in his field of work and on the personal level. Therefore, the male and female employees who worked with me in different sectors discussed matters with their colleagues through my management and dealings.

Conclusion and Reflection

Generally, Ruba had effective leadership characteristics that led her to hold higher-level positions in different organizations. She was an effective leader in terms of her life experiences and professional achievements. In addition, within her conversations, she seemed to be spontaneous and confident when she expressed her perspective. Also, she had a convincing character that kept her distinguished presence when she started her arguments. In fact, she generally had the personal and professional attributes for which she served as a model for the organization's personnel and for future leaders.

The highlights that distinguish Ruba's leadership are three. First was her statement about the procedure of appointing leaders, which was the right position for the right person, regardless of gender. She believed that a person's qualifications and life experiences, regardless of gender, are the top priorities that stakeholders should be concerned about when it comes to their appointing a leader. Second was her definition of feminine aggressive leaders. She was obviously motivated to clarify her perspective about aggressive female leaders, and she was proud to be one of them. How she defined *aggressive* as the means by which females prove themselves as task-oriented leaders to reach their professional attainments was impressive. Third was her concern about the personnel who worked with her. She didn't spare any comment, advice, or experience that might help to improve colleagues' and workers' skills. She cared about assisting personnel with sufficient preparation to ensure their abilities to work properly and

achieve tasks. It was part of her personality to be generous in interactions, offering a lot of professional advice to others without expecting to receive anything in return from them.

Overall, I learned from Ruba how to be calm and patient even when I struggle with a tough situation. I felt like I had known her for a long time because of her spontaneity. Among her social contributions and activities, she was concerned about supporting emerging feminine issues that served Kuwaiti females in terms of proving and improving their status. She often supported and helped others as far as she could. Therefore, she warmly welcomed me to begin the interviews and was effectively involved in her participation. I enjoyed working with Ruba, and I appreciate her spirited interactions as a cooperative person who really worked silently and for the benefit of all.

Nadeyah, the Persistent Leader

Nadeyah presented her life story in a smooth way that kept her experiences and events in a chronological order. She expressed her personal and professional experiences in a clear and sequential way. For the purpose of analysis, I broke down Nadeyah's story into several categories that relate to the research sub-questions.

Demographics

The demographic information for this research participant is as follows:

- Age: 42
- Education: Bachelor's Degree in Business
- Work Experience: 28 years
- Leadership Positions: 16 years

Focus Area 1: Impact of Culture on Personal Experiences

The first area of focus in this analysis is how the culture influenced the leader's personal experiences. Based on Nadeyah's story, I identified four associated categories

for this focus area, which connect to the first research sub-question. These categories are early environment; role of father; formative personality and character; and hardships endured.

Early environment. Nadeyah seemed to be confident; she had care and love from her family. She also trusted herself because she got enough attention from her big family, including her grandmother and her uncles. In addition, she was the eldest sister, and this position added more attention and support for her from her immediate and extended family. Also, as an elder sister, she would act as an adult toward her siblings, and that increased the confidence she showed in her personality.

We are five sisters and one brother. He is the youngest. I was the first granddaughter of my mother's family, so my grandparents and uncles from my mother's side gave me appropriate care, love, and attention. This familial love and care were the most important elements of trust.

She described the environment in which she grew up, which included a surrounding atmosphere and spirit of family, unity, and understanding, as healthy. This healthy environment assisted her in developing her personality as a leader.

I grew up in a very healthy environment. The most important element that affects the leader anywhere is the environment in which he or she is raised. The leader's surroundings play an important role in forming his or her character.

Role of father. In general, Nadeyah's father had a great impact on her personality; she learned a lot from his life experiences. He taught her the basics of leadership. She learned communication skills while she had conversations with him on different topics. Furthermore, she had her own opinion that she could share with him, and he listened to her as a friend and as a potential business partner in the future.

As an open-minded person, he used to discuss economic, cultural, social, and personal matters with me. All these factors inspired me with a

political sense because my father encouraged me to give my opinion on any issue.

The relationship between father and daughter was an important issue that each of them kept in mind. Her father encouraged and supported her in different ways: socially, professionally, and financially.

Our relationship was so strong not only because my father affected my personality since I worked with him, but also because the mutual understanding between us encouraged me to discuss social and political matters. During that period, he would talk to me as if I was an adult. He used to tell me how to manage money and work.

Her father had an essential role in her life that helped her in her future. She, as well, felt that she was a mature adult like anyone else at that time. She could freely discuss tough topics and issues in ways that others might never expect from young girl.

Before he died, he told me about the bank operations related to the garage. This kind of information wasn't usually given to a girl at my age; I was 17 years old at that time.

She felt that she meant a lot to her father because he paid attention to enhance her personality and would give her a task in his work and in front of his co-workers. This experience built up her self-confidence and let her trust herself and also others' abilities. Furthermore, when she felt that her father was so proud of her, this kept her on the path of success and improving her life so that her father would be even more proud of her.

He was always proud of me in front of his friends and customers; he used to tell them that his 8- or 9-year-old daughter Nadeyah worked with him and that she would take over the affairs of the workshop after him. In this way, my father was preparing me to be a leader.

My father had partners—Lebanese, Armani, Iraqis, and Palestinians. I used to sit with those partners, talking to them about their families and their life. They talked to me as if they considered me an adult, although I was still in my childhood.

Nadeyah learned from her father how to build her future and how to be independent in her thinking and finances. She also learned to be knowledgeable of others'

cultures and lives while she observed how her father dealt with different traders and companies.

He opened his own garage when he was 15 years old. Vehicles in that time were English, American, and German. When he was 21, he spoke German and English as a result of his interaction with these companies in Kuwait. I learned a lot from his experience.

She grew up with the feeling that she would be a leader one day. She undoubtedly felt that her father was using scaffolding to instill the leadership characteristic within her and that he would see her as an effective leader.

I can say that my father raised me since my childhood to be a leader and be responsible for many jobs after his death.

Formative personality and character. Nadeyah's personality as a leader sometimes appeared even in childhood. She clarified that she had been practicing her leadership role since she was 6 years old. So she narrated a situation that occurred when she was in elementary school.

I remember a situation during my scholastic years in which a play would be performed and I was given the second role in it. The teacher saw me weeping and asked me why I wept. I answered that I wanted to be the heroin of the play. She replied that there was another heroin for the play and that I could not act her role. Besides, she assured me that my role was very good. However, I was not convinced. Fortunately, a few days before the play's performance, the heroin excused herself and said that she could not act the role. The teacher then asked me if I could act the heroin's role. I answered with assurance that I knew the role very well and could perform it. From this experience, I learned that persistence makes things happen.

With the healthy environment in which she developed during her childhood, with her immediate family of parents and siblings and her extended family of grandparents and uncles, and with her father's supportive role, Nadeyah developed advanced social skills early in terms of her communications with others. Nadeyah's family also played a

significant role that enhanced her ability to develop friendships to increase her network and gain more life experiences.

I think I was sociable and had many friendships, and my family encouraged me to make lots of friendships.

Ambition and aspiration were part of her personality; others' accomplishments encouraged and inspired her.

I had great aspirations. When I saw any successful person, I wished him further success. However, I also wished to achieve this success for myself.

Nadeyah's personality strongly desired peace and harmony, and that defined her character at the beginning of her marital life. She declared that she didn't feel like she could always be agreeable if she were in the same situation again. She seemed an ideal wife who complied with her husband's wishes in order to keep their life stable and settled.

I obeyed my husband's wishes without any argument, and my attitude at that time could be defined as an idealistic woman who was looking for peace even if my view was not accepted or wasn't like others' perspectives.

Nadeyah's sympathetic personality helped her to be socially acceptable. Because of her friendly face, smile, and helpful behaviors, her colleagues, co-workers, and even people who dealt with her because she was working in the tourist sector felt close enough to her to communicate freely. She was socially active, and that helped her to establish many friendships. Nadeyah demonstrated that the effective leader starts with his or her personality to reach others, and also that leadership requires social and relationship skills to interact appropriately with everybody.

I had a good relationship with my colleagues and teachers in the school. And when I saw an old woman, I would go near her; and when I saw people, I smiled to them and shook hands with them. This made me deal

socially and effectively with people. When I made any decision, I was thinking more and trying to make the right decision.

A part of Nadeyah's personality was her appearance. She cared about being formal in one respect, and yet feminine at the same time, which meant combining the two themes.

I had my own style. I always say that the professional woman who loves her work tries to succeed in everything—not only the work, but also her appearance. I have always been interested in my clothes and appearance in every way. So I have to dress formally and be aware of my feminine touches in order to be satisfied with myself.

Finally, an important part of Nadeyah's personality was honesty; both with herself and with her job responsibilities. She pointed out that honesty was one behavior that she kept in her mind throughout her life, and especially in her professional life. So when she found that she couldn't work anymore, she would quit and leave the position for someone else. This kind of self-honesty was what she sought because the benefits of improving organizations were more important to her than personal interests. In other words, leaders should search for how to serve their positions, not how their positions will serve them; and if they find that they can't provide any benefit to the position, then they should leave it. However, this decision, if they make it, should occur only after they have planned for and found another appropriate position in which they can better serve.

If I sat one day in my office and felt that I didn't want to work, I would then make the decision from inside that I would withdraw and leave the place for someone else. I always like change, in order to find a new place that suits me and suits my thoughts, and where I can give through it. However, there are many people who are afraid of change; they never initiate anything in their work. So before they get out, they should know first their way or next step; and also they have to plan for it to know whether or not the opportunity is available. And they shouldn't look at the destructive opinions that are said behind them.

Hardships endured. Nadeyah grew up with much of the family's responsibilities after her father's death. She took the essential role to lead her family since she was the elder sister, even though she was young—17 years old, and female in what was culturally a male's job.

As the elder daughter, I took over all the procedures related to the death of my father and the procedures related to his properties. I took the position of a man with responsibilities. Thank Allah; I bore all the burdens after the death of my father because the words of my father were guiding me all the time.

Dealing with the family's responsibilities was tough on her since she was young; however, the way that her father had raised her helped her to go through all the hardships and troubles she faced at that time.

After my father's death, my family and I experienced many hardships.

My father's work had been mainly male work, including garages and public and private warehouses. I took over all these properties and made agreements with the employees to maintain our rights and continue the work of my father, in spite of the fact that my siblings and I were all resuming our studies.

Love had the priority in her life even after her father's death and she had taken his job responsibilities. She was looking for a person instead of her father who would take care of her and would continue the role of director in her life.

I enjoyed my personal life very much. I experienced love in adolescence and managed to coordinate between my personal and professional life.

After the loss of my father, I was searching for an alternative man in my life, to share my life and to support me. So I got married during the university stage, at the age of 18.

She faced the dilemma of priorities at the beginning of her marriage, but she gave her marriage commitment another chance, to keep it stable. Her personality contributed to her remaining patient whenever she had family matters to deal with.

I was committed to being successful professionally during my marriage. During the first year of my marriage, I realized that I was mistaken in

expecting this combination to work; however, I decided to continue with my husband.

One phrase Nadeyah used to describe her personality was “being strong.” She faced difficulties when she had the tough responsibilities after her father’s death, and those hard experiences made her stronger. In a way, going through these challenges prepared her to bear the difficulties in her life and work. This strength also helped her to stand again after her divorce and continue her life normally.

The most important thing I want to talk about is the power—i.e., the greatest thing that made me strong and able to endure all the changes that have come to my life, especially when I separated from my husband and got divorced ... I was then very famous in the media, so I had to appear normal, and no one felt any change in my life... My thoughts were for the future, and I folded this page of my life.

Nadeyah, for example, was thinking about her life and how the changes in her personality would have a positive impact on her social and profession life. It took a while for her to think about how to face the facts and resolve the conflict between her marital life and her ambitions. It wasn’t easy for her to decide which aspect would come first and which she would sacrifice.

Since the Kuwait Liberation in 1991, things have changed because the women exhibited a positive role during that time. As for me, I made an important decision in my life, and my husband felt a great change in me as I became no longer able to bear the burden of work in which I couldn’t prove myself.

Focus Area 2: Impact of Culture on Professional Experiences in Leadership

The second area of focus in this analysis is How do female leaders’ culturally based professional experiences affect their approach to leadership? My analysis of the answer to this question as reflected through Nadeyah’s story identified six associated categories: educational environment; balancing professional and family life; work

experiences; applying life experiences to professional life, leadership style; and lessons learned and wisdom shared.

Educational environment. Nadeyah's scholastic life, probably through high school, also was strongly influenced by her father. He was her hero who motivated her to develop her current leader personality and character both personally and through education.

I can say that my father played an important role in my life. He always encouraged me and authorized me to be a leader because I was his elder daughter. I am very indebted to him because he created the roots of leadership in me during my personal and scholastic life.

Nadeyah completed her education by graduating from university with a specialization that served her experiences with her father's business and supported her planned future career. She enhanced her ambitions by applying her education appropriately in her desired career.

When I graduated from the College of Commerce accounting department in 1979, I was looking forward to a bright future, to working in the banking sector or companies.

Balancing professional and family life. Sometimes, dealing with a new lifestyle results in plenty of disputes and arguments unless partners have their own methods for calming down and settling into their life. Nadeyah wanted to keep her marital life stable and respect her husband's perspective, even though she had another, different perspective about her job. This attitude was not a weakness in her personality, but instead showed how she was looking for her husband's satisfaction with her.

At the beginning of my marital life, I faced reluctance from my husband and his relatives. It was customary at that period that a woman work in the field of education, at schools. So although I was qualified to be a leader, I executed the wishes of my husband and worked in teaching.

She claimed that females limited their jobs to specific fields because they cared about the male's perspective and how men viewed liberal females. She referred also to how males felt about females' success and accomplishments. Unfortunately, Nadeyah faced the same destiny as these women, working in the way that her husband chose for her to do.

I think man fears any woman who actively chooses to get involved in public work or public efforts, and an ambitious woman, because his view is that she is too bold. Therefore, teaching was the only way for Kuwait women. This view was changed at the end of the 1980s because there were many Kuwaiti females who led those institutions and companies at that time.

Nadeyah struggled with her new life as a wife and as a teacher. She put her dream to be a mother on hold until she adapted to her new life with her husband. Later, she gave her time and care to her son and daughter, and they were her life.

I remained 5 years without children. And then, I had a boy and a girl, to whom I devoted a lot of my time to raise them as I wanted.

To improve her life and business, Nadeyah realized that her personal balance was important to success. She tried to fit all the psychological and physical aspects together to create a clear vision for how to improve her life.

The personal balance has played a big role; I thank Allah that I had the personal balance that leads to everything being balanced. To reach this place, there should be everyday observation of the psychological and inner matters as a leader in order to achieve the concept of personal balance. The thing that annoys me nowadays is that I don't practice any kind of sports.

Even though she was working most of the time, her family responsibilities, especially her children, were important. Her success at work was not enough for her; her children's achievement mattered, as well.

I was able to prove my capabilities I had developed throughout my lifetime. I achieved success after success. At the same time, I took care of my children, who were successful in their studies.

Work experiences. Traditionally, Kuwaiti families encouraged their daughters to pursue teaching careers. Teaching was mostly a convenience profession that had many benefits in Kuwait: gender-segregated work environment, good income, vacations during the year that fit family vacation schedules, and morning work shifts. For all these reasons, teaching was the job that Nadeyah's husband and his family approved of. However, she couldn't see herself in teaching when she was shifting within multiple organizations to discover the career that met her aspirations. It seemed that her personality as a peacemaker wife and her professional ambitions were arguing and conflicting with each other. She wanted to follow her husband, his family, and the culture, but she also wanted to follow her desires for a bright professional future.

I worked in the teaching sector, and I tried to change my work every 2 to 3 years, working in different areas, to find what I was looking for.

Her dream was obvious and wide-ranging, and it was clear to her that teaching wasn't the way to reach it.

However, I did not find myself remaining in those fields. I proposed a plan to my family for me to be a Minister one day. This objective was still in my mind; and I sought to reach it because one of the most important characteristics of the successful leader is to identify his or her objectives and then attain them.

From the perspective of her objective, Nadeyah was able to work in other fields that matched her active character. She was looking for a job that had no specific routine or timeline to accomplish the work's goals. Her personality allowed her to volunteer during Iraqi's occupation in 1990. She started to change her life by discovering her abilities and skills that she couldn't use in teaching.

From the first day of the occupation, I volunteered in the Kuwait Embassy in some female work, and I recruited to help Kuwaiti people oppose the Iraqi occupation. We formed a female committee to interact with the crises. These circumstances qualified us to work in any field and under any circumstances. I felt that we developed the power of our personality and skills, and we had the ability to initiate, organize, plan, and work for long times during each mission to achieve its goals.

While she interacted with Kuwaiti citizens outside the home and arranged many issues to help them, Nadeyah considered another tough experience. She sought the adventure of moving to a new home and helping people who really needed to be helped during the Iraqi invasion. This experience alone showed how she was thinking differently and looking for a variety of tasks.

I decided to go with my children to Kuwait three months after the invasion, and I volunteered in some work related to the opposition. It was really a period of suffering for many young men, women, and children of all ages... I enjoyed many experiences because I volunteered to do any work in spite of its difficulty.

As a part of the process of accomplishing her goal, she had the challenge of experiencing the volunteer work and the chance to enhance her character as a future leader.

I consider myself lucky to have witnessed this event because it added to my experience and developed the characteristics of being a good leader. In addition, I benefited a lot from the information and experiences during this stage because I joined many volunteering societies and a civil society in Kuwait in all the fields that were available to me.

In an uncommon position for females at that time, Nadeyah entered the world of the media and dealt with her new job by encouraging other females to work in this area and in this way alter the traditional job roles in the media field. She continued to work hard, and she influenced her staff as a female manager who proved her capabilities to be effective in this position.

In 1993, I joined a tourism company as Marketing and Public Relations Manager, and my working there was not customary. The decision to work in the tourism field while the politics and the culture were blocking female positions was very difficult at that time. In addition, it was unusual work because there was much communication through the mass media. However, I participated in building the community, and I was working day and night, moving from place to place, even at home.

The tourism division was developed as a part of the Ministry in 2002. Nadeyah was appointed to handle this association as an Assistant Undersecretary after it was established. She started to manage it from the beginning by selecting the location, staff, and budget. She tried her best to build up the tourism sector in Kuwait to attract tourists, as well.

In 2002, I joined the tourism division in a Ministry, as an Assistant Undersecretary, and it was a new sector. I was the first employee in it and I formed the rest of the staff after that.

Nadeyah considered herself a lucky person because she had various opportunities to work in different organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. These experiences provided benefits that she had always looked for; for example, interacting with people, friendships, public relationships, social standing, and a good reputation. She was able to visit all possible organizations that related to the tourism sector, and she showed that she could deal with them. This experience enhanced her understanding of her job and what she might add or modify to improve things. Also, it kept her under the spotlight as an outstanding female leader who had a dynamic and thoughtful personality.

I joined a tourism branch of a Ministry, and then I worked in the private sector. So my professional experience is around 28 years in governmental and private sectors. The important thing in these jobs is that I was and still am communicating with people inside the school, whether the employees, teachers, or students. As an administrative manager of the general relationships, there was an atmosphere of communication. In my new role as an Undersecretary, in the Tourism Affairs, I was supposed to visit all the State institutions and every tourist authority because they were supposed to have roles in the Kuwaiti tourism business. The atmosphere

was new to me in all these places I worked, whether in the teaching field, the government sector, or the private sector.

Applying life experiences to professional life. Communication skills and the ability to deal with different types of people are considered a vital foundation in developing leadership characteristics. Once Nadeyah realized this, she worked hard to build up her own network of relationships. By exchanging experiences with others, she would enhance her own experiences for developing her leadership style and dealing with different circumstances.

Having a job in which she mostly communicated with others kept Nadeyah aware of how to deal with all types of people and gave her the opportunity to enhance her life and professional experiences.

The nature of my work in the tourism company necessitates dealing with people, and this requires a fluent person who is careful about every word most of the time.

Nadeyah was concerned about respecting manners and maintaining a high reputation all through her social and professional life. These attributes were essential for everyone to be successful. In addition, she was proud of being an Arabic and Kuwaiti female in terms of the importance of their respective traditions and cultures. These themes gave her a greater feeling of responsibility during her work for communicating effectively with workers, and in her life when she dealt with people in a variety of different situations.

At the same time, our reputation and manners were at the top of our general goals. That is because any simple break in the Arabic woman's reputation affects these things through her dealing with men and the other aspects as a public personage. All these things have been accomplished by my efforts because I put it in my mind as an Arabic Kuwaiti woman.

Nadeyah discussed how her manners were established and how these manners stayed with her during her whole life. She believed that manners were important to protect organizations, people, and society. She gave an example of one of the manners that leaders should have, which was honesty.

There are many elements of manners. It starts from home, so everyone has to protect himself or herself with manners because it's the first motivation of any person. So, first the home and the family; all of us have the manners seed. The relationship between employees inside the workplace should be based on manners. I came from home, education, and media. These three things form people inside the society. If these manners disappeared from someone, he or she might cheat and neglect in work and life... Honesty is the most important characteristic for the leader. If there are no manners, people will never have comfort in life. There are some other values such as seriousness about work and honesty. All of them are elements that form manners. Thanks to Allah all these values are inside me and also that I developed them.

Leadership style. Human resources in the organization was the central concept for Nadeyah as a leader. She was concerned about developing her communication, social, and professional skills to manage her work and employees.

Reaching leadership positions requires a continuous development of a person's capabilities and skills because one of the main characteristics of a leader is to coordinate between the employees in the institution or the company for the sake of the work.

Another issue that she focused on was to be a good model in front of the staff. This trait could encourage them to work harder and also show her their skills. Furthermore, her modeling motivated them to prove themselves to her, and to seriously make more effort to accomplish their job responsibilities.

To be a successful leader, I should be an example for my employees. Therefore, I am the last one to leave work, and I commit to the rules of the job. I see that leadership is a group of personal traits in addition to some traits acquired through experience in the field in general.

As a leader, Nadeyah intervened in a timely manner for decision-making under advisement. She also organized tasks and was always in charge for appropriate supervision whenever she was needed.

A leader has to be a good ideal for others, meaning that I have to control everything inside the workplace.

Helping others was part of Nadeyah's leadership style. She was willing to help her classmates and colleagues whenever they needed help. This trait strengthened her leadership attribute of helping her staff obtain the organization's objectives.

I found that I have some characteristics that have helped me to be a successful leader, such as helping others, so my colleagues have found me always ready for help at any time.

Nadeyah, as a leader, arranged her goals clearly so she could reach them. This arrangement facilitated her accomplishments because her vision for processing her objectives was clear.

The leader should have set objectives to be achieved. Persistence, planning, and hard work enable me to achieve my objectives. In addition, the personality of the leader plays an important role in achieving objectives.

Nadeyah maintained that a leader is considered a leader wherever he or she is. In other words, the leader has a mission whether he or she has work within an organization, or at home, or anywhere else. Nadeyah began her leadership responsibilities at home when her father died. So she claimed that she had had the personality of a leader since she was 17 years old. And her experience as a leader for her family and the experiences that she gained from her father facilitated her responsibilities later when she was holding senior positions in other organizations.

... leaders should be aware in every situation they face. When I became a leader at home as a big sister, and when I became a leader at work, I felt I had the special character of a leader.

One of Nadeyah's leadership techniques was sharing information with others by speaking, writing, and leaning toward them. In other words, she had developed the communicative ability to take the first step toward co-workers and other workers. She mentioned a meeting like a Dewaneya in reference to the cultural definition of social gatherings of Kuwaiti people.

Leaders shouldn't stay in their office and the employees come to you, but you have to move to them and observe their work. I have a place like a Dewaneya, or the salon, where I meet with them when there is any problem. I always sit in this corner in order to make a friendly atmosphere. It's important to have communication between the leader and the staff, even sometimes during work. Glory to God! I have worked in jobs in which work doesn't finish at the end of the normal work time.

Nadeyah practiced her leadership talents with her staff in different situations. She was very helpful and supported her staff whenever they needed advice. Once an employee had a better chance in another organization, and she encouraged him to move and have the opportunity to improve his position in the other location.

I remember one day someone had been employed in our company, and his work was perfect. He applied with his papers to another company with a salary three times the salary he had in my company, in addition to the prestige. Within myself I hoped that he would stay. But it was better for him to go, so I supported him to go and join the other company.

However, she had another situation with employees who seemed not serious at work. In this situation, she tried to help them search for another appropriate job that suited their requirements.

The same thing happens with those who don't work well. I was dealing with them in a way that made them feel that they weren't suitable for this work, so they willingly resigned. And then I advised them to search for the appropriate opportunity for work for them, and helped them get that work. This is my way. I helped many people to resign peacefully from work and without any problems, and to this time they are my friends, brothers, and sisters.

Nadeyah considered herself to be persistent. Her persistence helped her and the Tourism Affairs group to prove how this sector was important for Kuwait and didn't depend on petroleum for profits. She began to work, and the staff was increased to plan the tourism project of the Ministry. Persistence meant to her that no matter what the circumstances were, she and her team were able to work properly.

Persistence is one of the most important characteristics of a leader. As I said when I worked in the governmental sector, I found a deadly routine [meaning boring and tedious]. There were some individuals who put up obstacles in order to delay work... I remember when I occupied the position as an Assistant Undersecretary in a tourism division of the Ministry ...many people bet that I wouldn't do anything because tourism was a neglected idea in the Kuwaiti society ... tourism isn't one of our priorities because we are a rich state that has billions from the extracting of petroleum... At the beginning of my work in the Ministry; they gave us just a one-room office for me. They promised to provide us with another suitable location. I started with 2 employees ... then 20 more employees ... and there were just 14 chairs... We were all in one office, and we were sitting and stopping in turns. This was the beginning. From the first day, we began working... In that period, Kuwait was supposed to launch tourist projects.

She claimed that leaders were acting arrogant, behaving as important persons who nobody could contact easily. And with arrogant leaders, employees didn't have a chance to improve their professional capabilities. In contrast, she considered herself as modest with the staff who needed to ask questions or had concerns about their work. Here, as a modest leader, for example, she taught young employees how to manage and follow meetings by allowing them to attend meetings as observers. This training step for those who might be appointed to hold higher positions enhanced their skills for handling meetings appropriately.

So usually I let young employees attend meetings to enhance their experiences ... in order to become familiar with meetings because there are many officials who stay in their job for 5 or 6 years and they still don't know how to manage meetings or deal with them, or how to follow them. So ... young employees found me taking them with me to the interviews.

Nadeyah claimed that leaders should be part of society—in other words, to be involved via the media. They should positively maintain this involvement by being socially active in different events. Therefore, she often joined all kinds of celebrations that could support her interests. It seemed that she enjoyed her social and professional contribution by balancing her self-satisfaction with others' satisfaction.

Successful leadership depends on participation in the society, so leaders should have an important role in the society and the civil institutions, the private and public ceremonies. Therefore the media has become a very important thing. So leaders have to deal with all the media, not deal with one channel and leave the others. That is because if they deal with just one channel and neglect the others, those who are neglected might search for leaders' negative characteristics and show them in ways that affect the leaders' reputation. So I didn't want to close the door, and if it is closed today, it will be opened the next day for anyone. The open-door policy is the better administrative policy.

She felt responsible for transferring her professional and life experiences to others, especially the junior employees. This was part of her job as a leader—to also prepare employees for higher positions, such as leaders.

I have to transfer [the benefit of] my experiences to the young people and those who have less experience, through visiting them and directing them. It is worth noting that the junior employees aspire to occupy higher positions. From this perspective, I have tried hard to develop those personnel to be leaders one day at one of the institutions or companies.

She even transferred to her workers the knowledge she gained attending professional or training courses. She was altruistic toward them and their professional improvements.

When I was taking a course or training program, I made two or three copies and distributed them to the staff in order to develop their performance.

It was important to Nadeyah to establish relationships with her staff. This kind of communication increased social and communication skills between her and them in terms

of developing a comfortable work environment for everyone. In addition, this friendship would expand, and they would get together outside the organization and share or celebrate occasions after work hours or during weekends.

Usually, I develop friendships with the employees to make the workplace a tension-free place. Therefore, when my ex-employees see me, they welcome me heartily because of the feelings of mutual respect since we worked together as one team.

However, because she was serious at work, this kind of relationship or friendship between Nadeyah and her staff didn't mean that mistakes could be ignored.

But I am always serious in my work. When I make new friends, this doesn't mean that I disregard their mistakes. Everyone has positive and negative aspects in his or her character.

As a leader, Nadeyah stated that critical thinking in special situations was important to deal effectively with employees. For example, she struggled with how to pay for their overtime work without processing a budget for her employees. So she thought about another method of available payment that would encourage her team to work overtime on their jobs during the tourism project. She came up with the idea of sharing with them the benefit of attending international events offered by the tourism division and also having the opportunity to meet international experts. This critical thinking allowed her to proceed with her project and motivate her team, and at the same time stay within the organization's budget.

...in the Ministry of Information, there wasn't a budget for the overtime work. We had a strategic study process, and we invited an international company and experts from abroad. They came to work from 8:30 A.M. or 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., while in the Kuwaiti government the official work hours were until 2 P.M. So there was overtime that reached 3 or 4 hours... To persuade them, the project was 2 years, so we distributed it in stages. The first stage was considered the most important stage, and it was the first 6 months. So I told them that if they stayed with those experts for these 6 months, they would surely gain more information and great experience. Secondly, we had a lot of courses, displays, and external conferences that

related to our areas of specialization and job responsibilities... I was putting the employees in those activities instead of the overtime payment, which was worthless ... in this way, I managed to cover many weak aspects of the overtime issue.

Lessons learned and wisdom shared. As a leader, Nadeyah focused on the interaction between herself and her position. She believed that it was essential to first comprehend basic leadership techniques so she could then direct the organization using her own unique approach.

No doubt, any leader should be fully acquainted with business administration because that is very useful for the success and development of work. When a person occupies a leadership position, he or she thinks of two things: The first thing is to maintain his or her position, and the second is to consider his or her impact on that position.

Leaders, like other people, have their personal feelings about gender issues, and Nadeyah said that some people consider females as emotional persons whenever they deal with different situations. She was definitely dealing with her emotions from the perspective that these emotions didn't control her decisions or influence her reactions. However, she also expressed her feelings when she communicated nicely and gently with her staff. These expressions of emotion could bridge the distance between her and the other personnel and allow both to understand the other to make their tasks and assignments at work easier.

Every successful leader or supervisor has to control his or her personal emotions in order to succeed in work at all levels. So how to treat these matters every day: Even saying "Good morning" with a friendly voice every day has a great effect on people. Also, when I praise one of the employees, like saying, "You seem pretty today," "you have a nice hair," and so on, these phrases have a positive effect.

However, dealing with various feelings and emotions didn't mean that she would ignore obvious errors at work because she sought to accomplish her tasks perfectly.

I dealt with the people I worked with this way although I have never overlooked mistakes... Work must be perfect; I am obliged with my work time, and to finish all my work in the best way.

However, I didn't over-react if one of them made a mistake and I tried to help him or her to fix it; and sometimes I kept myself responsible in front of our superiors. At the end, we worked as a team, and everyone had a role to do, and everybody's role was important to accomplish our assignment.

I have to endure mistakes even if others made them. A leader also has to support those employees because this reinforces my value and position, that I undertook the responsibility and never throw it onto others, because we have to work as a team. The spiritual aspect I'm always talking about is the family atmosphere we work in. Thus, when there is a certain problem inside the workplace, I discuss it with the employees and try to find solutions to work with them. But the most important thing is to give everyone a role, and to make them feel that everyone is important in his or her position. So the leader has to be the center of the work without telling them that.

She claimed that some employees had tough experiences with leaders in terms of the leaders not understanding the employees' circumstances at work. Those leaders didn't communicate with their employees or weren't even aware of their needs.

Some employees say that certain managers are not good leaders and they never consider the employees' conditions. Those leaders don't see themselves as wrong, but unfortunately the wrongness is inside them.

Nadeyah recognized that calling others by their names would ease their interactions and that others would feel more comfortable communicating with her as a result.

I discovered that the closer you get to someone, the more you gain his or her love. And the more you call them with their names, the more you break the ice with them. When I was under someone's authority, and I had leaders, I got closer to them in this way.

Nadeyah argued that female leadership doesn't mean that the female leader will be aggressive or feminine-free at work. However, one can experience poor examples in which those things might be true; but those examples should not be generalized to all female leadership because there are also many outstanding female leaders.

We should refute those who allege that the female leader is strong and denies her femaleness to be successful and that she makes matters difficult for those working with her (that is, she makes them bear more than they can afford to bear). Although there are a few examples of poor female leaders, there are many good examples of female leadership.

Success by Nadeyah's definition was teamwork, and she couldn't credit any accomplishment to herself but instead gave credit to her staff and the spirit of sharing ideas and efforts.

I do not ascribe success to myself only, but to the good teamwork of those who have been with me. From this perspective, I can say that success is participation.

Focus Area 3: The Interactions Between Culture, Gender, and Leadership

The third area focused on how the culture influenced Nadeyah's life experiences, and what she gained from these experiences. According to Nadeyah's story, I developed three categories that matched this focus area. These categories are cultural changes, interactions, and influences; new experiences; and advice to others.

Cultural influences, interactions, and changes. Culture is one of the components of leadership characteristics that generally might be changed. Nadeyah spoke about cultural shifts for females that occurred in the 1980s. Through a cultural lens, Nadeyah saw some issues that related to men's perspectives in terms of the development of female positions. She claimed that as a result of the cultural changes that had occurred and were occurring, females had more chances to occupy male-based jobs, and she was one of those females who entered unusual positions.

I think man fears any woman who actively chooses to get involved in public work or public efforts, and especially an ambitious woman, because his view is that she is too bold. Therefore, teaching was the only way for Kuwait women. This view was changed at the end of the 1980s because there were many Kuwaitis who led those institutions and companies at that time.

One of the cultural changes in Kuwait is that the doors have opened for a female to hold jobs that she couldn't apply for in the past. Nadeyah came out of that bottleneck. She developed her professional status and broke into the male professional world.

She delicately tried to change others' perspectives and modify their thinking about females, and she kept in her mind that her mission should be dealt with.

Working in the media in The Ministry of Information was prohibited for women. Many limitations were put in the way of the ambitious woman. First, I faced a kind of attack, and some annoying words were said to me, such as "Nadeyah, we don't have women who appear on television or the press."

A woman at that time was not allowed to appear in the mass media. This trend had a great effect on Kuwait women at that time. Therefore, the dominant culture of the community began to change positively, and men began to thank me for my work and efforts as a woman.

However, she tried to go through the change process step by step, and she kept in her mind that those changes could be altered slowly in a way that the culture and the people would accept them in stages. In other words, changes wouldn't be that easy to make in a hurry or at once. But, over time, the issue of women leaders would become more acceptable and people could agree with that reality.

So I didn't appear in the press or the television at the beginning; however, within my job responsibilities, I communicated with all people everywhere, and they were friendly and chatted with me whenever we had an activity or show. Nowadays, the staff of the Department of Public Relations are women.

Recently, Kuwaiti females have developed their status and proved themselves as successful leaders in both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Nadeyah stated that female leaders' accomplishments have not negatively influenced their families. From her perspective, women are able to balance their families' needs with a career.

In Kuwait, women have achieved concrete success, whether in the private or the public sectors. Since women aspire to prove themselves, they do their best in leadership positions without affecting their family life. This is evidence that the successful woman wants to increase her efficiency and her skills in a positive way... I would like to say that if there is a desire to succeed, then persistence is the way to success.

New experiences. Nadeyah always looked for ways to improve her professional experiences, so she observed her senior leaders and tried to learn from their experiences.

Some of the things that I learned are how to manage employees and develop a feeling of loyalty for work. I also learned to select the employees who are suitable for their positions.

In her leadership positions, Nadeyah had many employees who worked with her. So dealing with a large group of staff that included different types of employees was tough, but she tried her best to be an effective leader by using her social skills and leadership techniques to address this complexity.

In the tourism company, one thousand employees were working with me in all levels... I like to talk frankly with everyone. Also we have to work with everyone according to his or her responsibility, especially when the institution is big.

As one of the benefits of her positions, Nadeyah was able to deal with all the social categories of people, such as all ages, social classes, types of thinking, and cultural perspectives. As noted earlier, her gentleness and kindness expanded her experiences and contributed to her success as a leader. At the same time, her broad experiences in different positions encouraged her to retain her personality and act the way that she always had because she had achieved most of her objectives by following that approach.

In my work, naturally I have dealt with all the social categories, whether Bedouins or, in cities, men or women; boys and girls and children; or persons from the ruling family or from the public. I thank Allah of all mankind that I have dealt with all kinds of people; it's a blessing from Allah. I have dealt with every category in the society, even the handicapped people. I put two things into my mind. The first is that my face keeps smiling beside the strong character, so no one can dare to deal

with me wrongly. I have been used to giving to the utmost degree. I don't have the inner problems that prevent me from dealing with these various groups. Therefore I try to solve every problem in time. People from various categories have loved me. This is the blessing that Allah gave to me; it's the "people's love." When any one of them sees me, they say, "We saw you on the television, and we picked up your pictures and keep them." So thanks to Allah that I have had this amount of love inside people's hearts. When I love someone, I love him or her as a person, not for anything else.

As a new cultural experience, Nadeyah was able to observe and work with the contractors who built her new house. This occupation was and still is considered just for men because of its hardships and the struggles with construction work and workers. Because of these hardships, even men generally use contractors or construction companies to manage the whole process of building a house, to reduce their personal responsibilities for the job. For Nadeyah, the new home project was a challenge to demonstrate that she could do all the tough jobs and missions, and prove that there was no difference between genders, but instead just a difference between individuals' determination and strength.

Acting a different role for the woman in Kuwait, I'm building a new house; supervising and following up with the construction workers, because I want to feel that I'm always achieving something in my life in order to feel success. So I used my time in a good way, and recently I feel that I'm continuing my social life; therefore, I wear the current styles and travel many places. Thanks to Allah I have had a historic and great experience.

Advice to others. Nadeyah considered that the good leader should know how to contact all employees, and she understood how to accomplish such interactions for discussing and accomplishing tasks.

When I was a supervisor and became responsible for a lot of employees, I noticed that these included many kinds of people. I met various characters, and I had to learn how to deal with all this variety of people.

Sometimes, she encountered people who seemed difficult to deal with. In this situation, Nadeyah had her own technique that enabled her to ease the situation and minimize troubles.

..there are people who like problems. When I dealt with this kind of people, and I had to deal with them, I was always searching for the special and positive things inside them in order to open the door for a conversation between them and me.

Conclusion and Reflection

Nadeyah had a great charisma that really engaged others to follow her. Her life was filled with challenges that she overcame, which reflected her persistent character. She had been patient and strong since she was young, and she didn't give up when she encountered tough circumstances. In other words, she found a way through challenges that others might find impossible to overcome. Simply, the terms *no* or *can't* weren't on her agenda.

Nadeyah's life contained many notable events and situations, but I remember three of them in particular. First was her good fortune to experience multiple jobs, including volunteer work. Her diverse professional life was a motivating model for youth. Second, she was a wonderful member of her family and a kind-hearted mother for her son and daughter. Third, her ongoing relationship with colleagues enhanced her social skills; she actively motivated others to communicate with her to establish new relationships.

Nadeyah was an interesting individual who certainly had positive energy to motivate me as an interviewer and researcher to interact with her and listen to her. She was kind, and I wish I hadn't had to finish the three interviews with her. She had a great personality, and I truly can call her the persistent Nadeyah. She struggled with her family's circumstances and grew up quickly to be responsible after their loss of her

father. Overall, she deserved to hold a high position, and I wish she could have won in the 2006 election.

Sama, the Distinctive Leader

When she narrated her story, Sama had her own flavor. She enjoyed telling her life experiences as a daughter, a wife, and a mother. Besides, she was positively a great presenter when she clarified her outstanding perspective regarding her professional experiences. Simply, she offered a different perspective from other females that I interviewed, and that difference made her a unique participant.

Demographics

The demographic information for Sama is as follows:

- Age: 48
- Education: Bachelor's Degree in Economics
- Work Experience: 27 years
- Leadership Positions: 20 years

Focus Area 1: Impact of Culture on Personal Experiences

I analyzed the impact of Sama's personal cultural experiences on her leadership within associated subcategories. Her story grouped naturally into the categories of early environment; role of father, family environment including family of origin (big family) and immediate family (small family), formative personality and character, and hardships endured.

Early environment. Sama was different from other girls who always liked dolls. She liked to play with boys, and doing that required that she play with the same toys they used, such as guns and cars.

I can remember from my childhood that my sister used to buy dolls when we were young and I used to buy guns, to fight with my cousins. I also used to play with boys in the neighborhood. When we moved to another

house, in the Mansoria area, it wasn't ready with all the facilities such as electricity. So I used to play outside with my neighbors, and they were mostly boys.

These experiences enhanced the strengths in her personality: her discussion and argumentative skills with others, and her offers of encouragement.

Sama's childhood was strongly connected with her father. He played an essential role in her life, especially her early life, and later her social, personal, and professional life. She clarified this role as the complete support that she and her siblings obtained from him. Based on Sama's descriptions, her father had a positive impact on her personality and taught her how to be confident in her life. In addition, he motivated her in her education and leisure activities. It can be said that her father was the kind of person everybody wishes to have as a father.

My father was very supportive. He brought us up, my siblings and me, to be independent. My father taught us to be responsible for our choices, and this gave us self-confidence, which is rare in the current generation. He paid attention to us on a daily basis, and this is very important. He was understanding with us and let us enjoy our life. But when it came to educational principles, he was very serious.

Role of father. As a supporter, Sama's father tried his best to create a proper environment in which she could achieve her education with perfection. On the one hand, he respected culture and traditions that didn't allow females to stay late at university; and on the other hand, he wanted his daughter to be well-educated there. So he facilitated transportation for her and drove her home whenever she finished her classes. This environment and her father's support encouraged her to study hard so her father would be proud of her; she didn't want to disappoint him at the same time he was giving her all the time and encouragement she needed.

Our society at that time was not that accepting of girls returning home late from the university—at 8 P.M. or 9 P.M.... I cannot forget the support of

my father on those days that he accompanied me to the university and waited for me till I finished my sessions and lab research. I think things like these were a great support for me.

Sama clarified why her father was so supportive of her during his life. She stated that he wanted to provide a fair chance for her as a female to formulate her personality, attain a higher education, and have the similar life experiences and equal work experiences that men have always had in our society.

I seldom can find people who have such support. He supported me like this because he believed that I had to have a fair choice in my education and future career. When I accomplished anything, I used to tell my father (may Allah have mercy on him) because he was open-minded and democratic. I considered all his support as a great responsibility and a burden on my shoulders. So I wanted to prove myself to pay back his support.

Sometimes people dream of being in a specific profession one day; and sometimes others' experiences are appropriate to change people's destiny and dreams. In addition, when people change their life destination, such a change might be for the better. In our culture, we believe that Allah chose the best for us; and even when we have begun in a different direction, we return to our destiny. Sama dreamed of being a lawyer, and her dream was changed (I think for the best) when her father convinced her to study economics as part of a business administration education. Her father had a vision at that time that this profession would be appropriate for her and would enable her to attain a bright future.

I was very much interested in being a lawyer. Although my mother was against my wish, my father discussed this issue with me and what was best for my future. He guided me in the economic aspects. He decided with me my career major, not by imposing his opinion on me, but by convincing me. He planned the best for my future by guiding me to the economics and financial field even though he was working in the informational sector.

Family environment. Sama described the family as a human body, and the parents as the backbone of this body because the backbone is the main part and the whole body depends on it. She stated that her parents wanted a perfect life for their sons and daughters by providing them with a healthy environment inside and outside the home, which included friends and education.

If the backbone is healthy, the whole body will be healthy. My mother was the leader at home, and my father was the support and source of the essential foundation. But he gave her this role because of their love.

Sama clarified that her mother was strict with her and her siblings because it is the nature of the mother's heart, and she explained how her mother tried her best to protect them. Sama's mother was considered a conservative person, and this was healthy in the family because her father was open-minded. Therefore, the family was naturally balanced. Because Sama's mother cared about her daughter's friends, she asked about their families and their attitudes to be sure that Sama was surrounded by a healthy environment. However, Sama at that time didn't feel comfortable because this kind of restrictions limited her freedom and her privacy. But later, she recognized that what her mother did was right to build a healthy family.

One of the things that I can't forget is before we could visit a friend, she asked us who her father was, who her mother was, and when would I come home from her place. She had to make sure that she knew our friend's mother and her family well... We were very upset, my sisters and I. Why did she interfere? But now we recognize that what she did was the right thing, and this is what I practice with my children now. I do not allow them to make friendships until I know the background of their friend's family and their mother because I believe that the mother is the backbone of the family.

As noted, education was an important issue in Sama's family. She mentioned that all her family members—parents, uncles, grandfather—were educated and were considered liberal in their views.

... I can say that all my family is educated and open-minded, my grandfather, as well. Therefore, I am so happy to be part of this family. We regularly meet as a family, with uncles and aunts, boys and girls, and go to the cinema, the park. I have a good relationship with my cousins, some of whom are older than me.

As she commented, Sama had good relationships with her cousins, especially the males. Even though they did not go to the same school, they were together after school and during weekends. So she enjoyed her time with them, with her father's supervision. From the cultural perspective, girls of a certain age, particularly teenagers, did not commonly play or go places in public with boys. However, Sama had a different situation in that her father permitted this kind of friendship. So she grew up interacting with her male cousins and other male colleagues.

During school days, my male cousins and I were separated because I was in a government school that followed gender-segregated education. However, on the weekends, we made journeys together in which my father took us all to enjoy our time. So there was no gender segregation in our life. We are used to this type of life because it was normal for us. So we are not afraid of dealing with the other sex.

Sama's husband had shown his support of her lifestyle since their marriage. His perspective as a liberal person was exactly like what she had experienced from her father. Therefore, her husband sustained her father's role as a motivational sponsor.

I feel happy that my husband is open-minded, and he has continued the support of my father. He represents for me a husband, brother, and father.

Sama, just like any other mother, cared about her children and tried her best to be with them whenever she had time.

Overall, I give due care to my children, and I have the ability to coordinate between my studies, my children, and my job. If my children want my help, I stand beside them.

Regarding her family responsibilities, Sama planned to support her children in terms of being a beneficial, positive, and effective citizen. This task came from her responsibilities as a mother and her professional duties as a good citizen.

In the society, I have a responsibility to guide my children, to train them to be useful for the society.

Formative personality and character. Sama's personality was formed essentially at home. Her parents taught her how to be a leader, directly and indirectly. In terms of leadership qualities, her parents were observable models that she could learn from to shape her personality.

...my father was a good leader and he supported my mother to be a good leader as well. I think the success of the woman is because of the man's support, and I believe in this. Again, woman can't succeed without a man.

As part of her personality, Sama had preferred male friends to females ever since she was young. From the cultural perspective, in terms of the conservative traditions in Kuwait, this view wasn't normal or acceptable.

Most of my university male friends are still my friends, and we share different positions in different sectors. We meet from time to time.

Sama refined her personality at work because she understood her responsibilities in the new position. She felt that she acted tough, confident, and aggressive in how she dealt with difficult assignments and circumstances. She also meant that she wasn't that easy to argue with and wasn't easily influenced by others who might assume that, as a female, she would be weak or easygoing at work.

I feel like I'm tough, aggressive, and not an easy person to deal with in business. But now it's different. The personnel are totally different: They are motivated, accepting pressure on them. So I tell them, "Go home and relax on the weekend; don't stay late." But, thanks to Allah, they now have confidence in me and appreciate and trust me. And I have supported them, and throughout almost 9 months we have done a great job in our work.

From the time Sama began her work experiences, she liked his manager's personality and kept him in her mind as a model or ideal whose leadership characteristics she wanted to have.

As a work support, I think of the manager who trained me in the job to be a leader, and the atmosphere of the organization. Yes, everything. It is the atmosphere and the manager of the job. He made me attracted to his charisma. He had charisma, and I was a young graduate, and in the Arab world we like to have a leader. So once I had the opportunity to choose a charismatic leader, I didn't miss it because he would be the model and I wanted to follow him.

From her life experiences, Sama had developed the ability to communicate with different types of employees and customers. As a leader, one of her job responsibilities related to people, so she tried to distinguish others' personalities to figure out the appropriate way to deal with them. This technique was important to her because she worked in the bank sector, and the customers were the main people she interacted with.

The most difficult part of management is to deal with people, different types of personalities, and understand their conditions, their characters. This is the toughest thing. I was forced to deal with the messengers, the chief executive of the banks or the companies, and the seniors of the government. I had to tailor-make my personality with each one of them. And this is the success of the good leader who knows how to deal with all this number of personalities.

Hardships endured. Sama struggled with her husband's family. Because they were a conservative family, they didn't accept that their daughter-in-law worked in a private-sector bank, and that her co-workers were mostly men. However, her husband faced the issue with his family together with Sama; he convinced them as her supporter that she deserved to have her chance in the job she chose. And as a serious and professional worker, she proved that her job was important to her and that her relationship with her male colleagues was related to business.

When I got married, my husband, thank Allah, cared for me. He came from a very conservative family. I remember that in the first years of my marriage, for his family, it was difficult having somebody who was really heavily exposed to work in the financial sector because up to 90 percent of my business was with men. It wasn't easy for them to accept it. But he agreed with me and supported me and my work when it came to his family. And now I have proved that I deserved this, and he is proud of me to be a member of his family. This is essential.

Sama and her friendship with men brought troubles and misunderstanding from others, even her children. Her 10-year-old daughter was shocked and wondered about her mother's male colleagues, although Sama and her husband simply accepted the situation. Even with the cultural changes, her daughter couldn't imagine that there were friendships between girls and boys defined as normal but not sexual friendships.

Dealing with men is not an easy issue that everyone can accept, even my children. I can remember that one day my husband and I, my daughter, and my son were sitting, and I was talking on the mobile. And after I finished, my daughter said, "I wish one day I can hear you talking to a lady on the mobile; all whom you are talking to are men." Then she turned to her father and said, "I wonder, how do you accept my mother talking to that many men?" I was shocked, as if she wasn't my daughter. So we laughed, and she said, "This is serious." My husband said, "All your mother's friends are my friends, and your mother is talking in business. And believe me, a man to talk with as a friend is much better than a woman. It is better than getting a headache from ladies' gossip and chatting."

She said, "Will you accept me having a boy friend?"

"Yes, why not, if you could do the same as your mother is doing, respecting herself, being very sharp in dealing with people. I'll be very proud of you even to introduce your boy friend to me." She was shocked.

For Sama, as a wife and mother, to work in a job that kept her away from her family for a long time was considered a difficult and uncomfortable condition. In addition, attending meetings outside the home or staying at work until late at night were issues that Sama struggled with. These same issues are what most female workers struggle with and feel guilty about unless they can figure out a solution, as Sama did.

I had to stay at work 11 hours a day. So not every man would approve of this. I was willing to quit because I thought that this was unfair to my family to spend this long time away from them. However, my husband insisted that I should continue. He told me, "It is your career; it is your life," and that I had to prove myself. During my career at the bank, I used to travel and be at work late. Because of having many economic problems in Kuwait, I used to work until late at night, and especially in Ramadan, the Holy month, sometimes till one o'clock or 4 o'clock in the morning. We sometimes used to work for 24 hours. Therefore, without the support of my husband, I couldn't have done this.

Sama told about her struggles with the limited time she had available between work and family. While she was working in her office, her husband was taking care of their children, and he helped them with homework.

Even now, a few days ago, because of the financial crisis, and I had been working very hard at night with all the tensions and pressures, I came home late. And I was honestly exhausted; I couldn't even talk or think about anything. So I agreed with my husband on these days for him to take the responsibility of doing the homework and checking the children. And he agreed and understood the situation. He said, "Fine, don't worry; you have your rest and I'll handle the children's homework." Yes, it's always... it's a combination. I believe that when the family sees that I deserve this trust and this support, things will work much smoother, thanks to Allah.

One hardship Sama had was during her bank job. As a part of her leadership responsibilities, she thought about developing a strategy for the bank of adding an investment sector to improve the bank's services and meet the clients' needs. However, the administration didn't accept her suggestion.

I can say that at the end of my experience in the bank, my objective that I wanted to achieve was to develop the area of investment banking, but the top management did not believe in investment banking. So I didn't have the chance to continue. And what I understand now and they recognized later is that it's essential and progressive to adopt that philosophy for this organization.

To change the organization's culture, Sama faced some situations because the management and employees used to follow a specific routine. It is hard to change a

system or people's thinking so quickly; however, Sama patiently continued her strategy of transformation.

Currently, it is too early to talk about my organization in terms of evaluation. When I think about the culture of the organization, I feel happy and sad because I did not want it to be this way. I did not want the loyalty of employees to a person; it should be to an organization. I want to leave behind me a solid base. I think I have been capable of building a style of management. It has been very, very effective. Changing a culture, and especially the culture of an organization, is very important. However, it is a very difficult task, and people refuse change because they do not know whether it will be good or bad until they recognize it is for their benefit.

Sama stated that females were struggling with working in some fields and positions in which females are still forbidden to work. She explained that even though females are capable of achieving these positions and being accepted in different fields, males control the situation and they sometimes don't offer the opportunity to females.

...there are still areas in Kuwait that are forbidden areas for women, such as judges in court. I think there are some differences between men and women here in Kuwait. There are certain areas that are not allowed for women, not because of women's lesser capabilities but because of the fact that men are putting hurdles in women's way.

Focus Area 2: Impact of Culture on Professional Experiences in Leadership

My analysis of the impact of professional cultural experiences on leadership in Sama's story identified six associated categories: educational environment, balancing professional and family life, work experiences, applying life experiences to professional life, leadership style, and lessons learned and wisdom shared.

Educational environment. Sama's parents followed her educational progress and kept her on target. They cared about her education and supervised her to help her choose the proper field.

My father was a great support to me because he followed my progress at school, and he helped me in identifying what was best for me in my educational life. Even when I wanted to go to the university and wanted to

decide which career to major in, he supported me with his opinion and suggestions.

Sama studied at Kuwait University, College of Commerce, and her specialization was in economics. She earned her bachelor's degree in 1981. During that time, Kuwait University was the only university in Kuwait, and it wasn't yet gender segregated.

The importance of education surrounded Sama since her mother was a teacher. As a teacher, her mother also taught Sama and her siblings values and ethics that would help them become educated and improve their lives.

My mother worked in the educational sector, at the Ministry of Education. She was the manager of a nursery school for a long time. She worked as a teacher until I was the age of 15. She taught us a lot of principles. She influenced how we have been able to be promoted.

Sama believed in coeducational settings because she had grown up with her male cousins and had experienced Kuwait University before it became a gender-segregated institution. She clarified that coeducational settings with the family's supervision and following good religious beliefs would resolve any concerns families might have.

In my opinion, I don't believe in gender-segregated education, but I heavily believe in very close follow-up and watching our children. We have to build the religious aspect inside them from the beginning.

Balancing professional and family life. Sama's life was organized around and her time was divided between school and family. During the weekdays, her priority was on studying and getting to bed early; while on weekends, she enjoyed her time with her family either at home or outside. Managing time, as simple as that was in her early life, helped develop her leadership character because leaders should have a balance between their personal and professional lives. When Sama had this balance, she gave everything the appropriate time that it deserved.

Work experiences. The first job that Sama held was in the semi-governmental organization. She was lucky, and others envied her because they wished they had the opportunity to work there for the benefits and prestige.

After I graduated from Kuwait University, I worked in a semi-governmental organization. At that time, it was very lucky for someone to work in this organization because of its benefits and prestige. I remember I was there for 9 months in the economic department. I was very dedicated to my work there.

However, this work wasn't her dream. And she had the good fortune to move to another job, which was in a bank; and she was appointed to higher positions.

Although I felt lucky to work in this organization, I felt it was not the place for me. One day, I had been visiting one of my friends in the bank, and during the visit she told me that the manager wanted to interview me. Honestly, I did not imagine that I would work in the financial sector. The last thing I was thinking of was working in a bank. HR, human resources, called me. At that time I was searching for a job. What could I do? I just accepted to work in the bank. I think this was my destiny.

Among her experiences over time, Sama was appointed to hold higher positions in the bank sector. So when she occupied the Chief General Manager position, she was qualified enough to be knowledgeable of most all the organization's processes and be ready for every task that needed to be accomplished.

When I started my career in the bank sector, as I mentioned before, I started very sincerely as a trainee until I reached the position of the Acting Chief General Manager of the bank sector. During all those years, my 27 years in the bank sector, I was ready to work on everything, just for the sake of understanding and knowing all the tiny individual processes of the organization.

Applying life experiences to professional life. Sama had the benefits of the communication skills and social relationships that she had developed throughout her life to help her with her professional life. As a leader in business, these proficiencies were very important in expanding her organization's dealings.

In my opinion, the main element to being a successful leader is that I have good communication skills, which I believe are very important in our industry. Secondly, I have good connections and relationships with people, so I have built very strong social networking and communications. Third, credibility. I think that these elements are so important before we reach the technical side. Therefore, I think that, besides experience, a leader should have those three things: the credibility, connections, and good communication skills. Once he or she has those three elements and complements them with technical experience, then they form a proper mix for a successful leader.

Sometimes, leaders showed favoritism toward any one of their staff, so those persons were appointed to higher positions although they lacked the necessary qualifications. Sama pointed out that she didn't receive any compliment or promotion as preferential treatment. She worked hard to obtain positions she deserved based on her proficiencies.

Favoritism does not give a person experience, and he or she does not stay long. I worked without favoritism because it was not easy to work in the banking sector in Kuwait. I worked with different cultures, know-how, and knowledge. I worked with five chairmen. No one of them was related to another in residence. I have faced two ownership changes. I have been accounted for based on my skills, capabilities, and experience, and I did not depend on any favoritism.

Leadership style. As a leader, Sama was looking for new learning experiences that increased her recognition at work. So she paid attention to developing her professional skills and understanding different procedures in multiple aspects of the job.

Regularly, when I want to learn something new, I need to understand it by practice. Those who believe that it is sufficient to sit with somebody for a week to learn are not right; because I must practice it myself in order to learn. So I did everything required from me in the filing department, to learn everything. Also, when my supervisor told me to send this paper to a department, I went to that department to learn about it and its manager. Doing this taught me how to communicate and to identify personalities and who was who. And this helped me later when I started a senior position. I understood who could influence getting the work finished quickly because I had had a relationship with them since I was a junior employee.

Sama clarified that Kuwaiti females deserved to hold higher positions because their mothers were responsible for taking care of their families while their husbands were travelling for business. So the Kuwaiti females capable of such professional jobs regarded their experience as managers in the home as valuable.

...the women in Kuwait were leaders in their homes, in the absence of their brother or father or husband. So it is not surprising that the woman is a leader in her job, since she has proved that she is a leader in her home, which represents her kingdom. Leadership is not a matter of job attendance. The woman is the greatest leader at home. Well, I think Kuwaiti women proved themselves a long time ago; leadership is not a new thing for Kuwaiti women. A long time ago, women were capable of being teachers at a time when the concept of schools was not accepted. Kuwaiti women traveled to several countries and proved themselves as successful students. At the time of diving for pearls and pearl fishing in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti women were leaders in their house. The man was outside the house. The woman held the responsibility of managing the house financially and socially. She also took due care of raising her children during the absence of the brother, father, husband, or son. Those leaders who were at home have created the present leaders who are at work today.

Sama recommended finding the right leader for the right position as a way to build a solid foundation in any organization. In addition, identifying clear objectives for the organization facilitated the workers' mission to accomplish those objectives.

Initially, to build a strong foundation for the organization, we should choose the right leader for the right job. This is, I think, the most important thing for any organization to establish. Once an organization has a clear policy, view, and clear procedures, then each individual will know his or her role exactly. The strong and efficient leader also helps to secure the automatic operation of the other elements of the organization.

Sama defined leadership as a matter of managing people to work together to accomplish tasks. She expressed her spirit of motherhood toward her team just to form a peaceful atmosphere for creativity. In addition, she believed that the team should support each other, and the leaders should sustain this support to enhance the team members'

confidence. At the same time, since the group work was challenging for her and the team, she was very keen on selecting qualified team members to accomplish the required tasks.

Actually, my view regarding leadership is having the skill of managing people or creating a model for the team to follow. This is the main thing—to manage the team and make this team dedicated to a specific goal. So since I started at the senior level, I have treated my team like my children and built a relationship with them because the leader should understand his or her team. The first thing the leader should do is choose the right team, then bridge the gap between them and communicate with each other. The leader has to give them confidence in their capability to maximize their loyalty to the organization, which is very essential; and he or she should open different channels of discussion with them about social problems and the like. Thank Allah, the team I work with has a good reputation.

Sama stated that the leader should help the organization's employees to satisfy and achieve their objectives by assigning a clear vision and strategy. All of that is important for developing the organization's status because no one succeeds alone. Sama always believed in the spirit of teamwork and collaborating to achieve the group's goals.

I believe the responsibilities of a leader are having a clear vision, and then setting defined goals and strategies for the team, and then helping them to achieve the goals. In addition, leaders should have an action plan to achieve these goals to reach the ultimate target. Furthermore, leaders should educate and coach their team to be able to achieve these goals because, for example, I cannot achieve goals without the support of my team; and this support will come by them believing me, believing my vision, and working hard to achieve all the targets and the objectives that we agree on.

Sama noted that the successful leader should have specific characteristics to positively influence the team. However, those characteristics often aren't available in the current environment, and their absence in turn results in an ineffective team spirit at work.

I think that in order for the leader to influence the team, he or she should have the trust, loyalty, and confidence of that team; and this can happen only if the team members

can interact well with the leader. Unfortunately, people nowadays start to lose credibility and confidence in their leaders, and this is very crucial. The creativity of the leader is necessary to build this confidence and trust in his or her team in order to be able to direct them however he or she wants.

Sama emphasized that her position as a leader should be related to understanding others' personalities, so she could know how to work or deal with them. This principle helped her interact with and influence others as she had planned. And it was a smart idea that assured her success when she met new people.

...leaders have to know the personality of the persons they deal with in order to succeed in what they want. For example, last week I wanted to go and meet somebody, a senior person in the government, who I needed something from. It took me 2 days to understand and check the personality of this person. I have to know, what does he like, how is his personality? I have to tailor-make my personality to reach him, to know how to approach him. I have to understand this person, how to talk with him, what things I should tell him about, and what things I shouldn't tell him. Everyone has his or her own way through which to approach a person. For example, a person can communicate with everybody, but not be able to influence them, to leave his or her effect. So he or she has to know their weaknesses and strengths in order to approach them. It is a talent that Allah gives to some certain people. Thus, people may meet many different people, but they aren't influenced by any of them. In contrast, they may meet someone just once in all their life and yet he or she has great influence on others.

Sama's leadership style focused on opening the communication channels between all departments. She worked hard to develop this increased interaction between all the organization's departments. That way, everybody worked for the entire organization and not only for his or her department, to assure they were accomplishing the major objectives that depended on group work. In other words, for successfully developing any organization, all departments must be involved in following the organization's main strategy.

When I first came to this organization, it was suffering from miscommunication among the team. The company was split up into two different companies—the thing that I hated, because we should work in one team. So all the heads of the departments were separated and isolated from each other, not even talking with each other. Everybody was managing his department in total isolation. Now I've seen shared spirits inspiring everybody. There is now transparency among everybody. Success in one department is the success of the other departments. I feel very satisfied when I see things happening that fast.

Based upon her experiences, Sama claimed that gender doesn't influence leadership, so there are no differences between male and female leaders. She explained that a leader, whether male or female, should be qualified to be a leader; this means that any person who has a leader's skills can be a successful leader.

From my perspective, I do not see a difference between male and female in terms of leadership. The leader is a leader, regardless of the sex. In other words, I can say that there is no differentiation between a male and a female in the private sector, but it is just a matter of how capable he or she is. From my experience, it all depends on the person's qualifications, skills, and efforts. However, the culture of our community imposes certain conditions on the woman to work harder in order to prove herself.

From Sama's perspective, a creative leader should comprehend all the organization's structure and employees' capabilities to develop the organizational culture and to efficiently achieve its objective.

A creative leader could be defined in the way that he or she has to understand the organizational structure, the nature of the people in this organization, the culture of the organization. He or she has to adapt himself or herself within this organization and come up with all the ideas and tools for how to change.

Sama formulated an objective that the leader should build the organization up. This objective came from her responsibilities toward her organization and society. She was concerned about training her staff professionally to be effective people in their jobs and in society. Therefore, she looked to improve junior employees so they could hold higher leadership positions in the future.

...it's my role to create a new generation of future leaders for the organization and the society.

Sama believed that her success was the result of group support from her family and teamwork in her profession. Her parents, husband, children, leaders at work, and co-workers supported her.

From my experience, I always believe that success is the result of the efforts from more than one person. For a person to succeed in his or her life, he or she should have the support. For me, I have had all the support from my direct family—from my father, from my mother, from my husband. On top of that, I had the support from my bosses in the organization, and then this helped me to attain seniority. When I attained seniority, I got the success from my team.

I think that both men and women depend on each other. The success is a matter of two partners. The woman supports the man in her different relationships with him. She can support him as a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, and a girlfriend. A man can also have the support of individuals in his organization. Those individuals are a mixture of men and women. Therefore, no one can succeed individually without the support of the other partner. This means that there should be someone backing the other person to succeed. So I believe that success can't be achieved individually. It is a matter of different parties exerting their efforts.

Lessons learned and wisdom shared. Sama found that parents could supervise and raise their children with principles and self-confidence so they would grow up with experiences that enhanced their personalities to be prepared for the future.

...if you brought up the girl perfectly, gave her the self-confidence, watched her, gave her the trust, I think this would build a very strong person who would stand in the future against any problem.

Sama trusted male friends with her secrets, and it seemed they trusted her, as well.

It is human nature that both genders, male and female, complement the other.

Honestly, all my friends were males, and it was normal to talk to them because each boy friend was a friend that I could trust; I could depend on him, tell him my secrets, and ask him for help—not the boy friend we are talking about today. So this is the relationship; it's not a sexual relationship.

Sama stated that, in the private sector, gender doesn't have such an impact on the employee's promotion if the employee meets the qualifications and has the abilities to achieve the mission successfully. In other words, there are no differences between male and female employees when either one deserves to be promoted.

During my work in the bank, I realized that the management of the bank treated males and females equally, and I can say that it all depended on the employees' capabilities and their influence on their manager.

One lesson Sama learned was that all tasks were important. Sama had different experiences with her managers from the time she started her first job. The influence of the leader motivated her, whether her manager was male or female. In other words, managers didn't have issues with her in terms of gender. Even when she was a junior employee, she considered herself as a qualified professional and didn't want to work at a lower level than she was capable of, even though she just graduated from university. And she didn't accept that she must work on any task just because she was a junior employee. However, she realized later that she should learn to do any task, to enhance her experiences and so she could acknowledge her skills with all kinds of work. In addition, she recognized that building a leader's personality required her to be a fighter and a challenger to successfully move on to a senior position. So Sama appreciated her female leader who provided her with the chance to reach her objective as a successful leader.

I was supported by my leaders within my different jobs and until I started to be in middle management. My boss recommended me to attend a course; it was a credit course and it was the first course dedicated to my job in the management institution. Then, I graduated from that course, and I was motivated. And when I went to work in the morning, my manager had to stop to tell me about my role. She told me that my task was to handle the maintenance and organization of all the files. "At this time, you have to finish them all."

I went back. I was really upset. I wondered, "How come, a university graduate with high scores has to finish all the files?" I was wondering. "I completed a full-time course, which was 4 months and its education was a

test for everything; and now, after all that, my role will be checking or maintaining files?!” I was very upset. I said, “This is my job?! No way.”

I returned home. My father asked me what was wrong. I told him angrily that my boss told me to classify and check files. Was that fair? After all this study and success, to assign me to this job!

He said to me, “This is what your boss wants you to do. How come you left your job?”

I asked him, wondering, “What do you want me to do?”

He said, “Go to your job; this is your task and challenge, and you have to prove yourself.”

It was a blow to me. However, I kept thinking about the matter, and I decided to go to the filing room. I went to it the next day at 7:30 in the morning, and I finished the task. Later, I told my female manager that I had accomplished this task. Really, I am grateful for my manager, who built the right foundation in me... I took this task with good faith, not with bad faith that the manager did not want me or that she wanted to oblige me to leave the work. I considered this a lesson, a hard lesson. And I recognized from this incident that I am resistant and a fighter. If I like my job, I work hard for it and always I accept a challenge. And these are important things to build a strong personality if someone wants to be a leader in a senior position.

Focus Area 3: The Interactions Between Culture, Gender, and Leadership

In the third area of focus, What new cultural experiences are female leaders gaining from their positions?, my analysis as reflected through Sama’s story identified three related categories: cultural changes, influences, and interactions with other aspects; new life experiences; and advice to others.

Cultural influences, interactions, and changes. Her family’s support demonstrated the delicate balance between respecting culture and Sama’s success on a professional path. Sama confirmed that men play the major role of support in women’s accomplishments. During her life, she had been supported by her father and then by her husband. However, this kind of support didn’t mean she was dependent on them. By support she meant care, love, counseling, protection, guidance, and psychological interaction. She explained that support was an influence of the Kuwaiti culture.

In our culture a woman can't be successful without the support of a man—mainly the father, or husband, or brother. From my personal experience, the first man who supported me was my father. He continued the support until I got married. This is a key issue for women to succeed.

Sama and her family were somewhat different than others in terms of culture.

However, her mother's perspective also was somehow different from the rest of the family, and that's why her mother had arguments with the others. So her father facilitated Sama's life and allowed her to live the way she wanted within the context of the culture. As part of the culture, young females couldn't travel alone or with their colleagues. However, her father wanted Sama to have all the experiences and be proud of herself as an honor student. That's why he tried to achieve a balance between her needs and the culture's views. So he traveled with her and her colleagues and let her enjoy her time.

I remember that when I succeeded in the first year of the university I was included in the honor list, and the university arranged a trip for us... I went to my mother and told her. It was a shock for her. She told me, "No way!" ... I was very disappointed in my mother's response because she knew the mothers of most of my friends in the group. My father supported me at that time. He asked me, "How many days would you spend on that trip?"

I replied, "About 13 or 15 days." He suggested he would make the trip with us. The group was 21 girls and their 6 brothers who were with them. In this way, my father was encouraging me and giving me incentives. He supported me, and said that my mother was sincere because she cared for us. This was in 1977. We [those who went on the trip] still remember the experience and talk about it when we get together.

As in other cultures, the Kuwaiti culture has gone through some phases during which it could be changed over time. One of those changes was the relationship between classmates in the university and how the society accepted coeducational settings. When Sama studied in Kuwait University, College of Commerce, she and her classmates understood and respected the educational atmosphere and established a mixed group. They were friends, helping each other study on campus. This relationship was and still is

not typically accepted in Kuwaiti culture, even though for some families this arrangement seems normal. And, over time, some traditions and practices have changed as a result of different factors, such as people's perspectives regarding the culture, religion, and their philosophies.

When I joined the university, it wasn't gender segregated yet. My male cousins were together with me, and I had many male friends that I introduced to my father. During university, we frequently became mixed groups. We used to gather in ceremonies; and this is very rare here: to find ceremonies where there is so much mix [of men and women]. It was a little bit strange that we still remember that we were the only college in Kuwait that had male and female students together inside and outside classes... For me it was normal ... and by the time we created a group of boys and girls, it was not normal at the university. It was a very healthy atmosphere, which we miss today. They don't have it. For example, sometimes we had to stay late in the library, and boys were sitting guarding us until we reached our cars, to be sure that we left safely. They seemed to be as our brothers. They were caring for us. There weren't any unhealthy relationships. No one of them looked at us as in a sexual relationship, and it was really a very healthy atmosphere.

As a typical Kuwaiti, Sama's mother did not accept the situation of having mixed groups of friends. Her mother and many other Kuwaitis still didn't agree about having boy friends either in or outside the university. However, Sama and her friends were different from what others might have thought. They were friends, as brothers and sisters, and Sama thought this fact might convince her mother so she could finally accept it. Besides, Sama had this group with the rest of her family's agreement, and that kept the situation normal.

Dealing with a mixed group in college was not acceptable to my mother, and she created many problems because of this. She believed that it should not be allowed for a girl to have male friends.

Her father was a major support in helping Sama balance the cultural norms with her professional goals. Sama was working in the bank sector, work that she could do later

in the day. Because this late schedule wasn't culturally acceptable, her father helped her to conquer the challenges and kept her safe.

I was working late hours in the afternoon, and having a tough time. He was the one who was taking me to work in the morning and getting me back from work (because when I was late, my mother was not accepting me coming late with the driver). Sometimes I remember that my father sat outside the bank in the car just waiting for me, just to satisfy my mother, so that when I worked late at night, it was OK; my father was with me. So I was very lucky to have such a father with all this support. He believed that I should have a fair chance to reach the career I wanted to achieve in the future.

Another professional experience related to Sama's balancing cultural norms with her professional goals. Under her parents' care and protection, Sama didn't travel to attend courses without her mother's approval, which she wouldn't have if she traveled alone. But as noted before, her father's support and her mother's care were aspects that motivated Sama to work hard and prove herself as a good daughter and as a qualified employee.

...when I needed to travel abroad for a course in those days. Again, I'll be honest; there was a resistance from my mother about how I would travel alone. So my father traveled with me. I went twice to the courses, and my father was with me. All this was very important for me because it put more responsibility on me to work harder and harder to prove that I deserved all of this. So it was important that when I got all this support, I had to prove myself, not to put him down. And always remember that is what my father told us: "Never ever tell lies, so you are safe. Even if you have mistakes, admit it, tell the truth; then you will be saved from telling lies. Truth is the safest for you."

New generations have different needs and dreams that they believe in. During Sama's interactions with her children, they had their own reflections and perspectives toward situations. And what Sama experienced from her children's reactions wasn't as she expected. Maybe she had expected that they would be more motivated or interested in terms of others' accomplishments.

Besides, I have tried to be a friend to my children, to understand their needs and let them trust me to be near them in all situations. However, their lives and attitudes are different. For example, when I was reading a newspaper, I read an article about a young boy, around 13 years old. He graduated from medical school and started his career as a surgeon. He also started to manage and develop medical procedures. I discussed this article with my children, and I told them how this boy was brilliant and a genius to be a surgeon at this age. So my daughter told me, “So what? This is a boring matter.”

Changes among the generations and their attitudes concerned Sama in terms of their responsibilities toward themselves and their society. She clarified that youth today get everything easily without effort. However, in contrast, she had studied hard in university to deserve a car when she graduated, while other students drove luxury cars whenever they asked. This situation, for example, demonstrates how people change their philosophies, manners, and the values that have a direct impact on culture.

From my experience, I don't think that the new generation is prepared to shoulder the responsibility because its members always expect everything to come easily. However, leadership requires great effort to be put forth. In order to be a leader, I have to do a lot of things. Prosperity in Kuwait makes everything available for the new generations. If they want the newest model of cars, they have it. I remember that although my father had the ability to buy me a car during my university years, he wanted to make me feel that I should work hard to have it. I got my car only when I graduated from the university. Now, the new generation does not feel the value of what they have since they have everything easily.

Sama argued that parents were responsible for these changes in the new generations; she claimed that parents spoil their children by easily providing all they need or want. So youth grow up and everything is available for them without their effort. These circumstances cannot develop personalities that prioritize responsibilities toward their future and society. Besides, parents often don't encourage and motivate their children, so they aren't challenged to hold responsibilities.

Parents now do not give their children incentives to achieve excellence in their studies. Even when students are graduated from the university and do

not find their chosen jobs, they are paid too much by their parents while they are sitting at home. I think this is bad social behavior because it spoils our young people. We are not challenging our youth to go ahead and overcome challenges themselves. Students now just wait for their graduation to have a convenient job. We did not have things this way. Now, the new employees want to have secretaries and act as managers when they graduate from the university. They want to be in an enclosed office and have their work hours be limited from 7.00 A.M. to 1:30 or 2:00 P.M. They do not want to work late. They are finding the easy way, which is not the right way to create a strong foundation. Never depend on others.

Sama clarified that employees are not working hard because of the changes in the culture. She added that not only Kuwaiti culture, but also cultures all over the world have changed for the worse, and that enthusiasm at work has lessened.

I don't see that some of the new employees show a hard effort now because culture has changed. It has changed greatly. It's not only our culture; it's the whole globe. Even in the other cultures, in the United States, in Europe, I believe that they are suffering a lot. Looking to the previous time, I don't want to go far, but during the fifties, the sixties, the society was totally different from now. The social relations, the families' relations, even in the West it was not like now. I think the whole globe has changed. But I think it has changed to the worse socially.

Sama illuminated how Kuwaiti culture was and still is influenced by other cultures.

Actually, the Kuwaiti community is an open society that is exposed to different cultures from different backgrounds. Early in history, Kuwait was exposed to different cultures from Africa and Asia, and it's still exposed to different cultures. So it is a mix of different cultures.

Sama mentioned how the location of Kuwait has affected its culture and the people's perspectives, since they travel for trade and continuously communicate with others. This reality kept the older generations, especially Kuwaiti males, more sophisticated.

I think that the Kuwait location and the passing cultures created an attitude that could be recognized in our fathers and grandfathers. The present generation doesn't have the same opportunity because attitudes change.

Therefore, I think that our fathers and grandfathers are more civilized and cultured than the present generation.

Since May 2005, Kuwaiti females have been able to hold higher positions as Ministers in governmental organizations. However, they have previously held and managed other high positions in such organizations in the private sector. Sama stated that even though females' status in Kuwait has made progress, there are still some positions that they cannot attain. She was optimistic that change occurs in stages and one day the entire dream for professional equality between females and males will become a reality.

Recently, Kuwaiti women have become capable of or have penetrated certain positions that were blocked off for men, such as to be a Minister or head of a university. However, I believe that there are certain positions that are still blocked, such as a judge. We still in Kuwait don't have any females as a judge, and I don't see it coming in the near future. This is because of some political pressures from certain political groups. Or it's because of some religious pressures of certain religious groups, and again, because of the politics. I think it is mainly political influence rather than males. I think they are using the religion in order to serve their interests. Unfortunately, all the leading positions in the State are held by men. And if the woman doesn't have party support, she will not reach it alone. So the control is much more for men in politics, and women are still in the beginning. Therefore, I think that everything will be changed shortly. Once the political rights are given to women and to the female electors, we will see more and more women coming to the senior positions in the government. In the end, it's all politics that are playing games in the State.

Kuwaiti females hold the challenge to prove their abilities as leaders. They have been creative in different fields, and they have held several higher positions that demonstrate their success. So these achievements demonstrate the changes in the culture and how people have been influenced to accept these changes that reflect the evolution of women's professional progress.

I believe that challenge gives people the opportunity to be more creative. So the challenging atmosphere in our community has pushed women to be creative in their work in the financial sector, or educational sector, and in all sectors where we can see women have reached to a certain level of leadership. Now we can see women have reached the position of

Ministers, Undersecretaries, and heads of departments. They have the chance.

Sama mentioned that female leadership had an influence on the Kuwaiti culture, as well. She said that youth frequently asked her about her professional life in terms of gaining experiences through challenges. She clarified that this was a result of having females who influenced others' perspectives by proving their capabilities to succeed.

I think the development of females' status has an impact on the Kuwaiti culture. For instance, when I see the new generations of girls in my family, they always come and ask me about my experience. I'm inspiring them in their career. So I'm so proud to be the example for them. In the society, when I've been met outside by the university students, they come and try to ask me questions and meet me. It's important to motivate and direct the new generation about how we have achieved this. This is something that gives me self-satisfaction. At least I have done something useful in my life, and I have set an example for others to follow.

New life experiences. Sama considered every day as a new experience to be gained because she believed that no one knew everything. So she learned different things about social, professional, and character issues from her various experiences. From her social experiences, she developed her communication skills with people as employees and customers.

In regard to gaining new experiences, I believe that every day there is a new thing to be learned. As long as I am exposed to other people or organizations, I have always to learn. Since I have joined this organization, I have learned a lot of things every day. Every day I learn and discover new things, whether technical steps or personal steps. There is no one who knows everything. In life, a person contacts people, clients, and organizations. Every day he or she knows new rules, persons, and information. It's an ongoing process.

In terms of her professional and technical opportunities, Sama had been concerned about improving her abilities with the balance sheet as part of her financial skills, in order to meet the organization's expectations in that area.

So from the technical side, I have been very much involved in the accounting side of, for example, the bank, how the balance sheets are structured. I'm now always tackling all the daily base of the financial controller, reviewing the balance sheet, every single item in the balance sheet, and what the structure of it is.

The matter is that I hated accounting, and my husband is an accountant. Even in the university, it was one of the subjects that I didn't like. But now I'm enjoying it. My concern is the balance sheet and what the new rules of accounting rates are, and the updated rules. It's something really very interesting. This is what I know—what is the indication of business in the balance sheet? Before, my concern was how to do business and increase the profits, but now I'm on the other side. This is for the technical aspect.

Furthermore, gaining new relationships, being exposed to different types of business, these are things I wasn't exposed to it before. Before, I was in the side of lending money in the banking sector, but now I'm in the investment sector, where I have to go and explain to the investors and collect money. So it's a totally different experience. But I'm enjoying it, thanks to Allah.

From the character perspective, Sama tried to discover her weaknesses and negative characteristics, so she could work to improve in those areas and continue to do so to keep developing her leader personality to be as effective as she could be.

Leaders should continuously improve their technical and educational skills. There are certain things in my character that need to be improved. For example, I am very shy in certain situations, and I do not want to be exposed to the media. However, I think I should change this attitude, and I'm trying to change it. I think there is a room for improvement for me. That's why I'm thinking of taking courses and workshops

As a new experience, Sama used to work on certain strategies that she believed would help her to achieve her goals. However, when she was appointed to hold another management position within an organization, employees already had their system for achieving its objectives. To work efficiently, Sama as a leader believed she should either follow the organization's culture or work from within to change it to the way she believed would be more effective.

If he or she wants to change the culture and the structure of the organization, it will depend on him or her coming up with different tools

and actions to adopt. Because I believe that it's the toughest thing to come up with these things and change an existing culture in the organization; that is true in the organization or even among the people or the community around the leader.

I believe in the way I'm trying to influence myself and my team, to let the older team members on the executive team around me feel that everyone around them is very important to me, and that I cannot work without them. So if leaders have to come up with... how to explain it... For example, when I came here, to the new company that I'm joining now, it was totally different from how I'm used to doing business, how I believe in business; it was totally different. I can almost say it is technically better than here... just to make the people understand how I'm doing my business, and they have to believe in my approach, and recognize it. It is how to influence people to understand the leader's way, process, culture, and to believe in it so they will adopt it and it will be successful. Otherwise, it is useless. Even if the leader came and tried to influence them by force, people who don't believe in it will cause him or her to fail. The leader has to let them understand it, and he or she has to explain to them, believe in it; and then they will help him or her to influence and achieve success.

As a part of her new experiences, Sama became close to her immediate supervisor, and she recognized what he thought of her personality and perspective through her communications with him. At the same time, she didn't feel separate anymore; she felt that she was part of the organization and so she adapted within the new work environment.

As a leader, I think I have made some changes since I have held my current position. When I joined the current organization, I was really feeling very lonely because it was a new organization and new place. I didn't know anyone here. Because I was new, and I came from a different culture, I didn't know anyone. Even my direct boss—I didn't know him. But I feel now I'm so close to him, and he understands my way, and I can understand him. I don't want to appreciate myself, but I was reading what was in the head of my previous boss even before he said anything. I have almost reached this stage with my new boss. Sometimes when he requests something, I understand him directly. Now I think I'm a part of this organization.

Advice to others. Sama confirmed that going through real experiences in the actual field of work enhanced people's capabilities, even as their academic studies

developed their foundations for doing the work. So personal involvement and learning through new experiences frequently results in the scaffolding of employees' academic training with their professional skills and abilities, which in turn often leads to their being promoted to senior positions.

I believe real-life experience is the best educational process, and it's more effective and useful than only going through the academic study. Yes, the academic study is essential, to build a solid base, but the real-life experience is more effective to develop the person's skills. I've tried very hard to be very close with my seniors in order to grab as much as possible of their experience and knowledge.

Sama understood that the leader who works in collaboration *with* the team, not *in front* of them, is more successful in reaching work objectives. So, based on her professional experiences, she sometimes wasn't so sure about other leaders' motivations toward their management accomplishments and employees' progress and improvements.

...the lack of confidence among some leaders within their job environment will lead them to act in a way that doesn't help them move ahead. Such leaders possibly interrupt others' performance, say, to waste time in obligating the employees to do tasks or deal with proposals in certain ways. Those leaders try to create problems for the other members just to delay their progress, just to be in the lead, ahead of them; in other words, some leaders always keep themselves ahead of others without admitting others' success. This is normal in human nature.

Sama encouraged Kuwaiti females that they would obtain advanced positions with all the rights they deserved. She observed that the development of Kuwaiti females' status requires patience and time for success and accomplishment.

...in a short time, I think women will get it, get the right position and improve their status, although there is a lack of experience in the Ministry position. In a very short time, when women in Kuwait held this position, they achieved success in this field. I think the woman's success comes from herself, her capabilities, and her personality, her experience, in addition to the support of the direct bosses or the family. It's a combination from many aspects to achieve the success, but definitely she should have the base to be successful. Sometimes she has the support and all the other components for success, but she doesn't have the character or

the abilities for success. So she has to believe in her abilities and to have the faith in addition to being provided the appropriate conditions.

From Sama's perspective, Kuwaiti females haven't won elections because of the lack of management. They haven't been able to organize their efforts and collaborate with males by joining political groups. She believed that females are capable of going through advanced levels in politics. So once they decide to get men's support, they will succeed because this is the missing part.

I don't believe that women don't succeed because of women. I think women have mismanaged their case, their political case. We have a good example: Dr. Aseel Alawadi. She was alive with men. She was a part of their group, so she had her first political life even when she wasn't known socially as a politician. I believe she had a very good chance. I think she took the correct way, not to be against men but to be a part of their group. As a start up, until they prove their case, women have to do that. It is something new for us; we aren't used to it. They should have the chance, and to speed up the process. If they need another 10 years to reach that point, they can speed it up and get it faster. So a woman has to cross the way, using her intelligence, her wisdom, through men. This is my own view. But once they step the first step, no one can stop them. Honestly, because I see that Kuwaiti women are well educated, very aggressive, self-confident, well spoken. If they believe in something, they will fight to attain it to the last moment. And we have a lot of successful examples in our society. Overall, if we give women the chance and opportunities, they will prove their capabilities.

According to Sama, to prove themselves, Kuwaiti females need to work hard and show others their abilities; written materials or public speaking are not enough to demonstrate their accomplishments. She added, as discussed previously, that social contacts and communication skills are important for women to improve their experiences and status.

I think that talking or writing in the newspaper and magazines will not do as much as proving women's capabilities practically. For example, in the financial sector, woman did not talk, but at the same time she has proved that she is capable. So I think that, in the end, she has to prove. Thank Allah, I have been given a fair chance, and I was very serious about proving myself. I have been treated fairly, and I got the chance. From my

perspective, women shouldn't be only technically good. They have to complement this technical experience with communications and social contacts. So if a woman is equal with a man on the technical side, she has to complement this with a wide base of communications skills and social relationships and contacts.

During the last interview with Sama, she had a recommendation for researchers since she was interested in my research focus. She showed through her own example how important it is to discuss female leadership and develop women's status through further studies because these issues haven't been well presented to the world. She believed that the media has an obligation to research the issue and present positive arguments to continue with women's professional progress.

Generally, discussing the female status socially, politically, financially, and so on specifically in Kuwait and the world in general is an important issue. It is really a very interesting subject; I believe that it deserves to be explored. I believe that no one has given this type of study the proper attention. Still, we as Kuwaiti people are not known to the other world in terms of what our culture is and what our capabilities are. They are taking only a side that is, I think, unfair. I think we do have capability; we do have people who really can set examples and do have a very useful story to talk about. But our media is not doing their job properly.

Conclusion and Reflection

Sama was noticeably different from the other females I interviewed. She was different in her perspectives regarding relationships with males and cultural influences. She was confident when she argued and discussed issues. Her communication skills were distinctive; she had developed techniques that improved her relationships with people—children, youth, adults, or seniors. In addition, she was rational and realistic while she was talking about leaders' characteristics, leadership vision, and Kuwaiti females' status.

From Sama's contributions I identified three key points that emphasize her life and character. First was the major role of males in her life. She considered her father, her husband, and her friends a valuable part of the environment she grew up with that

ensured her safety, support, confidence, and security. Second was her concern about learning all possible tasks and communicating with colleagues to enhance her life experiences as a leader. Her vision about practicing tasks and involving herself as part of the mission of her job was scaffolding her professional developments that enthused her with self-fulfillment. The third key was her concern about creating a new generation that has grown up in a healthy environment. So she cared about how to increase the motivation of young people and offer them encouragement toward gaining personal and professional experiences as a preparation for attaining greater self-confidence and deeper self-awareness.

I am honored to know Sama, and I appreciate the time she committed to participating in the research, even with her busy schedule. She had an attractive personality that I noticed with her staff communications and with me. She motivated me as a researcher to work on an valuable topic, and she positively influenced me as a distinctive female leader. I learned from her to be strongly confident when it comes to arguing in support of one's beliefs and perspective.

Componential Analysis

Use of the narrative approach and the categorical-content perspective as the analysis method in this research has established the life stories of the participants who shared their personal and professional experiences, and has enabled us to better understand the sequence of these experiences (Creswell, 2005). Within the componential analysis, I combined the individual participants' analyses to compile a cross-case analysis for all participants. This process enabled me to assemble the entire analysis into a matrix (Table 1) that contains categories related to each research question. The cross-case

analysis verifies the rich detail of the experiences the participant's stories illustrate (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The componential analysis, in turn, demonstrates the relationships, similarities, and differences among the participants' life experiences and perspectives in terms of their leadership within the context of the influences of culture. Thus, this combination illustrates common themes that some or most participants likely experienced. In addition, it provides distinctive themes related to one or more participants' experiences.

Table 1
Cross-Case Analysis

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Demographics/ Attributes | Age = 42 Bachelor's in Business Work = 28 Leadership = 16 | Age = 48 Bachelor's in Economics Work = 27 Leadership = 20 | Age = 50 MBA Work = 23 Leadership = 10 | Age = 60 Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations Work = 35 Leadership = 6 | Age = 62 Master's in Economics and Public Finance Work = 42 Leadership = 24 |
| Impact of Culture on Personal Experiences | | | | | |
| Early Environment | -Confident; had care and love from family. -Eldest sister = got attention + support. -Healthy environment. | -Played with boys (guns and cars). -Strongly connected with father. | -Healthy environment (grew up with a respectful attitude). | No Comments | -Big family (13 children); she was the 12 th . |
| Role of Parents | -Father had great impact on life, leadership, personality, communication skills, proficient conversations. -Father supported socially, professionally, financially. -Father was proud of her. -Learned to be independent in thinking; finances; knowledgeable of others' cultures and lives. | -Supportive father in education, life, work. -Changed her study interests for the better because of her father's vision for her future career. | -Mother influenced her behavior: communicated courteously and used polite words. -Manners helped with being effective communicator in social and professional life. | No Comments | -Father was leader; strong personality, wisdom, control, balanced treatment for boys and girls, education, discussion and family decisions. -Father understood her educational goals. -Mother socially active, had special skills, communication with relatives, individual treatment. |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Family Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Healthy environment. -Developed social communication skills with parents and siblings, grandparents, and uncles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Healthy environment inside and outside home, friends, and education. -Liberal father. -Conservative and protective mother. -Educated family. -Close to cousins. -Liberal and supportive husband. -Supported her children. | No Comments | No Comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supportive siblings. -Supportive husband in education achievement. |
| Formative Personality and Character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Leadership personality as appeared in childhood. -Looking for peace in marital life. -Ideal wife. -Thinking-of-change personality. -Sympathetic personality; socially acceptable; friendly face; smile; helpful behaviors. -Cared about appearance: formal; respectful; feminine. -Honesty with herself and job responsibilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parents developed her leadership personality. -Male friendship. -Tough. -Confident. -Aggressive. -Argumentative. -Liked her manager's charisma. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Leader personality depended on developed character; developed as grew up or the individual's genetic material that naturally developed. -Kuwaiti woman not self-centered in her work. -Patient (female leaders are more patient than males). -Worked silently (behind media). -Supported Kuwaiti females with possible help. -Women are aggressive (seriously prove themselves professionally). Aggressive in men's | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acted consistently with actual character (no fake reaction, same personality in private and public life). -Modest and self-effacing (no attention by having security guards); acted simply to positively influence others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Self-confident, communication skills, discussion, decision-making. -Friendly and wisely balanced social and professional relationships with employees. -Obstacles during completing education outside home, but not discouraged. -Males supported during thesis. |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| | | | view = behaving in angry and violent way. | | |
| Hardships Endured | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Family responsibilities at the death of father (she was 17 years old). -Sought love to replace her father's. -Dilemma of priorities at the beginning of marriage. -Was strong during difficulties. -Conflict between marital life and ambitions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Spouse's family conflict (role of women). -Confusion of other gender friendships. -Family and work balance. -Refused her suggestion to add investment sector in bank. -Organization's culture changes. -Female and gender-role jobs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Kuwaiti females faced obstacles in job. -No gender issues. -Work conflict with manager (issues of cultural differences). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Influence of gender and leadership (struggled with male colleagues) just enhanced ambitions to prove abilities. -Obstacles of being a first female Minister (public and Parliament's members). -No female leader in Shi'a minority was proposed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Difficulty completing education in medicine (father's refusal). -Work issues as part of negotiator's team. |
| Impact of Culture on Professional Experiences in Leadership | | | | | |
| Educational Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Until high school strongly influenced by father: motivated her to develop her current leader personality through education. -Bachelor's in business to work in her father's career. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parent's supervision. -Mother was teacher. -Believed in coeducational settings. | No Comments | No Comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Father's view: boys and girls studied until certain level (boys through community college, girls through high school). -Study abroad for bachelor's. -Advanced studies in economics and political science. -Master's in economics. |
| Balancing Professional and Family Experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Balanced job ambition and husband's satisfaction (limited jobs for females). -Delayed maternity until | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organized life/time (school and weekend). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Responsibility as mother took precedence over agenda as a leader during early career. -Responsibilities as | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organized time (social, private, and professional life); busy with work, cared about family, being housewife. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Married and new family with transferred values. |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| | <p>stable life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Balanced psychological and physical aspects to improve personality. -Successful means children and job achievement. | | <p>wife, mother, grandmother, job.</p> | | |
| Work Experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher in different organizations (female's convenience profession). -Volunteer during Iraqi occupation (inside and outside). -Marketing and Public Relations Manager. -Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for its tourism division. -Own business. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Semi-governmental organization. -Bank (Chief General Manager). -Company (Chief Executive Officer). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Different positions in different organizations (bank and business). -Leadership positions (10 years in private sector and semi-governmental organizations). -Training manager. -Healthy work atmosphere for motivation (no work without feeling comfortable). -Successful professional experiences (herself and co-workers). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Faculty member in Kuwait University (political science). -Department head (two times). -Minister in three different ministries. -New procedure for female registration to vote in elections (processed). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher. -Headmistress. -Ministry employee and supervisor. -Ministry Assistant Undersecretary. -Ministry Undersecretary. -Own business: financial counselor. |
| Applying Life Experiences to Professional Life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication skills and ability to deal with different types of people = good leader. -Network of relationships and exchanging experiences. -Respected manners (from home) and kept a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Good/skilled communicator. -No favoritism for promotion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Worked to prove her abilities as a qualified female worker and motivated others. -Female leaders were more objective. -Separated social relationships/ professional issues. | No Comments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Combined life experiences from big, small families and colleagues. -Morality, respect, cooperation and trust from Islam enhanced people's behaviors to develop social and professional life. |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| | high reputation. | | -Self-confidence in professional capabilities; accepted appropriate appreciation and acknowledgement. | | |
| Leadership Style | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developed human resources; communication; social and professional skills. -Good model (motivated and encouraged). -Decision-making under advisement. -Supervision. - Gender didn't influence leadership. -Helpful and supported staff. -Serious and persistent. -Modest with staff. -Socially active in media. -Created unique approach in leadership. -Helped classmates and staff. -Transferred professional and life experiences to junior employees. -Transferred knowledge from attending professional or training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Learned professional skills. -Comprehended work process. -Right leader = solid foundation. -Leadership = managing people to work together. -Leader + clear vision and strategy = objective accomplished + employees' satisfaction. -Successful leader = positive characteristics. -Understood others' personalities. -Opened communication channels within departments. -No gender influences in leadership. -Creative leader = comprehends organization's structure + employee's capability. -Trained staff professionally. -Success = group effort | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Leadership not influenced by gender as long as a person has qualifications. -Loving people, employees, country important for success. -Smart decisions/ decision-maker. -Own style as a leader (concerned about the customer's convenience and maintaining the culture's traditions. -Motivated workers for teamwork. -Female leaders: notable, encouraging sharing, male leaders: dictators, authority. -Developing human resources; arranging training programs; enhancing relationships with colleagues. -Improve personnel's communication skills and social interactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No differences between males' or females' leadership. -Democratic style (share ideas and opinions within team atmosphere); didn't agree with a dictatorship or the autocratic style (reduced team interactions). -Females were leaders at home; decision-maker; tough tasks; qualified for job responsibilities. -Leadership style defined by leaders; created approach to improve organization. -Leader = task and actual field, not talk or fancy office. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Transferred work approach to Ministry of Planning (all departments involved to achieve yearly plan). -Implemented home approach at work (decentralization). -Leadership = art/behaviors, morals, qualifications and human resources development. -Leadership = engineering/ quality and quantity arrangement. -Leadership = creating a balance between efforts and achievements (regardless of workers' number). -Power decisively for the employees (not authoritarian leader). -Respected rules; protected personnel's rights (inequality between productive and inactive). -Decision-maker, public |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| | <p>courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Established relationships with staff but serious at work. -Used critical thinking. | <p>(work + family).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Kuwaiti females are qualified leaders (mother = leader). | <p>during meetings and group work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Helping and assisting workers. | | <p>preceded private affairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved staff's professional skills and experiences (training center). -Work management based on respect, discussions, connections with colleagues, manners. |
| Lessons Learned | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Female leadership considered emotional but not controlling situation (emotions bridged the distance between people). -Calling others by their names = feel comfortable and positive communication. -Female leadership doesn't mean aggressive or feminine-free at work. -Success = teamwork. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Supervision and principles to raise children with self-confident personality. -Confidence with male friends (gender balance). -Boss supportive and all tasks were important (no gender role). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Equal rights to hold positions (right position for right person). -No prejudice because of power and decision-making authority. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Kuwaiti females are proud and more confident. -Females are negatively influenced by culture and gender role; there shouldn't be differences regarding gender. -Coalition needs to be organized to support females. -No doubt about Kuwaiti female leaders; challenged and proved her abilities (KU president 9 years). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -No proper ministry evaluation due to short time in Cabinet. -Kuwaiti females had patience and capabilities. |
| The Interactions Between Culture, Gender, and Leadership | | | | | |
| Culture Changes/ Influences/ Interactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Kuwaiti culture has changed (impact of other cultures; media, globalization). -Females' status developed; chances to occupy male-based positions, higher positions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Within cultural influence, support of men lead to success of women. -Friendship with colleagues, travel, study group (father's supervision to respect culture). -Her mother and other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -As females prove capabilities, males should accept competition. -Females' status development depended on males' view about equal rights. -Culture influenced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Different roots had impact on views regarding female leadership. -Religion influenced culture; traditional group opposed female leadership; specific jobs for females. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More women serving in leadership positions; supervision's appreciation for negotiation team. -Male-dominated jobs; first woman entered budget and finance sectors. -Gender has influenced jobs; males control. |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Keep trying to change others' perspectives about female leadership (patience needed). -Female leaders' accomplishments did not negatively influence their families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mothers were typical Kuwaiti (no mixed groups). -New generation with different needs and views. -Juniors = less effort at work and life. -Parents' responsibility toward changing children's perspectives. -Kuwaiti culture influenced by other cultures. -Location had impact on culture (different generation with different attitudes). -Progress in females' status but gender role has had an impact on the job. -Challenges enhance females to prove abilities. - Her father's support regarding cultural barrier (late work, study abroad). -Young females curious about her experiences (females influenced culture). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender and leadership (reaction during meetings). -Males had more social relationships; sharing interests; network; Dewaneya. -Culture influenced gender (males remained in jobs more than females). -Motivated young females to be leaders. -Males had more chances for leadership even when not qualified; females should work hard to prove qualifications. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Liberal coalitions supported female as candidate. -Men's agenda: females as mothers and housewives with salary and benefits; easier for men to control. -Supported men (each gender encourages and motivates the other). -Culture, political, social aspects and ethical norms affected by religion and civilization; so some people's perceptions have modified from accepting female leadership to denying it, others have adapted to changes. -Cultural aspects influenced gender preferences in professional positions: males held higher positions; specific females' jobs. -Society was traditionally male-dominated; people do not accept female leadership easily. -More females hold higher positions in governmental and non- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attending professional courses regardless of gender; females with relatives. -No gender roles influenced relationship with male colleagues or professors. -Neither culture nor religion negatively influenced females from holding leadership positions in different sectors. -Some people modified perspectives to accept female leadership. -People have adjusted philosophies to adapt to social and financial changes. -Respected culture, Islamic and Arabic identity; educate children with morals to change for better. |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | <p>governmental organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Proposal for offering jobs without gender preference (accepted by Cabinet). -Males have different views about female leadership (blocked and delayed progress, supported and encouraged). | |
| New Experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved her professional experiences by learning from seniors. -Used social skills and leadership techniques to address different types of employees. -Dealt with all social categories: ages; social classes; types of thinking; cultural perspectives. -Supervised contractors who built her new house. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Every day is new experience (social, professional). -Communication skills with employees and clients. -Technical abilities and financial skills (balance sheet). -Discovered weaknesses and negative characteristics to be improved. -Changed organization's culture to achieve objectives. -Relationship with her leader; adapted within organization's atmosphere. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved skills; discovered weaknesses for development. -Social communication skills; met diverse people in various locations and at multiple job levels. -Positive person to interact with; gaining new positive experiences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More social, political experiences with Ministry position. -Communication with groups and coalitions. -Good example for other females; encouraged and supported. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developed teamwork, relationships with all staff levels (horizontal or vertical level). -Active member of negotiations, arguments and discussions teams. -Learned a lot from supervisors and managers (attended meetings and discussions). -Professional experiences from educational work as a teacher and then a headmistress; implemented economics and financial theories to actual field. -Professional experiences related to the planning sectors. -Knowledge from reviewing studies and other |

| Participants Dimensions | Nadeyah | Sama | Ruba | Mariam | Dana |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|--|
| | | | | | countries' plans, strategies. -Learned and improved skills required for jobs (techniques and principles of meetings, discussions, presentations). |
| Advice to Others | -Good leader should know how to contact all employees; understand how to accomplish such interactions for discussing and accomplishing tasks. -By using her own technique, she could deal with complicated personality. | -Real experiences enhance people's capabilities. -Leader collaborates with team. -Encouraged females to hold further positions and develop needed patience. -Female candidates need males' support and management to win election. -Social contacts and communication skills are important to improve females' status. -More discussions about female leadership development are needed to be well presented. | -Gender should have no influence on leadership (qualifications). -Deal with different situations; respecting culture; manage organization to be calm and stable. -Develop appropriate criteria for appointing leaders. -Improve abilities (social and communication skills). -Combine higher education with professional experiences (theoretical knowledge needs practical application for success). | -Critical thinking before decision making. -Optimistic about female status. -Nothing stops females from progress. | -Enhance morals, values, home education and mother's principles for good generation. |

Research Question Findings

To answer the central question, How do Kuwaiti female leaders experience the impact of culture on their leadership?, I started by answering the three sub-questions that supportively expand upon the attributes that the central question addresses.

The first sub question was How do female leaders' culturally based personal experiences influence their leadership? Based on the data analysis, some Kuwaiti female leaders seemed to suggest that the healthy early environments in which they grew up provided a solid foundation on which to build their leadership personality. Their families raised them with principles and respectful attitudes that improved their relationships and communications with others. In addition, the support of their families, especially their parents, significantly enhanced their self-confidence, which in turn empowered their social and professional abilities within the context of their leadership responsibilities. They also described the manners and morals that they carried over into their leadership roles to respect the rules and protect others' rights. Furthermore, they transferred to their leadership style their approach from home that dealt with positive conversations, independent thinking, and lively discussions.

Within the female leaders' statements was evidence that their private lives with their husbands and children strongly affected their leadership approach. For example, some of the participants had the support and understanding from their spouses to pursue their ambitions to complete their education and work in job situations that were male dominated. In addition, some of the participants' fathers and husbands were open-minded in how they facilitated resolution of the life and work issues that the women faced.

In relation to personality, these females demonstrated strength, assertiveness, and confidence in dealing with their job responsibilities. They pointed out that they were

capable of working beside males and deserved to be in competitive situations with them. However, they also spoke of being friendly and helpful with colleagues and other personnel, which suggests a collaborative aspect to their personalities.

Most of the females were modest in noting that their private and public personalities were consistent. Thus, their leadership personality had grown and developed within them since childhood. Moreover, they wisely balanced their social and professional relationships with employees in the respect that they were honest with them about task accomplishments and let no personal interests influence their assessments. They seemed to be altruistic regarding assisting their staff, offering guidance, and transferring personal and professional experiences to help them succeed. They also were typically more patient than their male counterparts within their job responsibilities and the objective attainment of their goals. This patience developed from their roles as housewives and mothers, which they had practiced as they managed their family responsibilities.

Hardships sometimes have a deterrent effect on people's lives. However, these Kuwaiti female leaders most of the time challenged their obstacles and faced their destiny to reach their goals. Their difficulties and barriers frequently were varied because their lives, professions, and circumstances were different; but all of them did their best to conquer these troubles efficiently. Each female also dealt with her dilemmas in a significant way that advanced the current situation to meet her ambitions. In relation to obstacles from family, such as completing higher education or working in professions that are not usual for a female to occupy, some of the participants experienced challenges that pertained to their education and others that had to do with their choice of occupations.

Overall, these Kuwaiti female leaders productively created their own approaches that respected their culture, challenged their circumstances, and broadened their personal experiences to enable them to meet their objectives of improving their status in their various professions and positions.

The second research sub-question was: How do female leaders' culturally based professional experiences influence their approach to leadership? The Kuwaiti female leaders shared their professional experiences from their various jobs. Six themes evolved out of the data in response to this question. The six themes are educational environment, balancing professional and family experiences, work experiences, applying life experiences to professional life, leadership style, and lessons learned and wisdom shared. I briefly discuss each theme below.

Educational Environment

The participants were concerned about their education and improving their knowledge and wisdom, for both their personal lives and their professional development. Thus, their comments demonstrate educational interest as a common theme. For most of the female leaders I interviewed, their families, parents, husbands, and siblings encouraged them to complete their education and reach a higher level of educational accomplishment.

One woman, Nadeyah, chose the specialization that related to her father's career, to work in the same business that she had experienced since she was a young girl. Her father had been very supportive when she was in school and had motivated her to complete her education. Also, she learned from his life and professional experiences how to communicate effectively with consumers and workers, and to deal with different business situations.

Another female leader, Dana, had the support of her parents and siblings and was motivated to study abroad during the 1960s. With her ambition and the understanding of her family, she achieved her educational objectives. Then later, her husband's role enabled her to deal with all the difficulties she faced so she could focus on her higher education abroad, as well.

Another female leader's (Sama's) family supported her during her education. Her father judiciously recommended a profession that offered a better future for her. So she followed his advice and became one of the notable successful business women in Kuwait. All of the participants had the opportunity to continue their education. For example, one of them (Ruba) had an MBA and another (Mariam) had a Ph.D. Thus, these Kuwaiti female leaders attempted to improve their educational status as a basis for the accomplishments they sought.

Balancing Professional and Family Experiences

These women, in their roles as leaders, received more responsibilities, which also required more effort, over time. At the same time, they had their private life and family responsibilities that they chose to handle. Thus, they usually attempted to organize their lives to provide a balanced agenda that met all their responsibilities.

As these women supervised personnel within their organizations, some of them gained their families' support, such as that of their parents and husbands, to assist with managing their private lives. For example, Sama's father strongly supported her through school, university, and her earlier job by trying to ease any troubles that she might face to let her concentrate on her interests. Likewise, when she married, her husband was supportive as well, and he took care of their children while she was busy at work. Sama

honored and respected the role of the males in her life and worked hard in appreciation of their support.

In contrast, Ruba experienced another situation related to balancing professional and family time. When it came to her priorities, her children were first even when she was a leader. She preferred to stay at home and take care of them, and then resume her job later. Her decision was obviously correct because when her private life was stable and safe, she could be creative at work. And even though Mariam held a higher position than some of the others, and had more responsibilities that required her to attend formal meetings in the Cabinet and Parliament, she organized her schedule to perform her tasks as a wife and mother.

Work Experiences

Relative to the theme of work experience, these Kuwaiti female leaders improved their status by being appointed to vital positions. They typically sought positions that met their desires and ambitions on the one hand, and proved their capabilities to manage essential organizations on the other hand. Thus, they held higher positions in different fields within governmental and non-governmental organizations. They were toiling in professions that were previously male dominated, and they accepted the competition with males. Furthermore, they were looking for challenging jobs in which the opposition might doubt their achievements. So they occupied primarily positions that they dreamed about with titles such as Manager; Assistant Undersecretary; Undersecretary; Minister; Chief Executive Officer; and the company's founder. All these occupations enhanced their professional experiences, increased their self-confidence, verified their abilities, and motivated them to reach higher positions.

Applying Life Experiences to Professional Life

These Kuwaiti females applied their life experiences and the valuable skills that they had gained from their life within their professions to improve their relationships with colleagues and personnel, to develop their meeting management techniques, to retain their good reputation, and in general to share their experiences with others. Furthermore, most of these female leaders felt supported by males, whether their colleagues or those in senior positions. Their experiences with males were generally beneficial; the men provided their help to ease the women's missions to become leaders, and to support them in their leadership positions. For the most part, the males also appreciated these females' endeavors and advocated for them to develop their skills and their chosen occupations.

Leadership Style

Regarding the leadership style that each of these Kuwaiti women pursued, most clarified that each leader has an individual approach that works best with a particular organization's structure; most interacted positively with other personnel, and most sustained and accomplished their goals. Moreover, these female leaders often were helpful, supported their staff and met their needs, and empowered relationships that increased the development of teamwork. At the same time, they were modest and friendly with personnel and colleagues in a way that created a healthy environment. They also transferred their professional experiences, which they had gained during their attendance at formal courses and conferences, to benefit their staff.

These leaders treated their staff differently than was often customary in that they dealt individually with the various personalities and abilities. These women regularly followed a democratic leadership style and shared ideas with their staff to motivate them for productive performance. They verified that leadership means being concerned about

managing personnel to work together as a team and sharing their perspectives as leaders regarding how to best accomplish tasks. Moreover, these leaders offered their clear visions and strategies that facilitated the objective to be accomplished and thus enhanced their employees' job satisfaction. In contrast, they described male leaders as more likely to be dictators who use their authority and power to carry out their responsibilities.

Moreover, these female leaders demonstrated that they were more patient than men in dealing with tasks and personnel, and that patience was part of their nature and was cultivated in their activities as females, wives, and mothers. Because they practiced their leadership approach at home as decision makers, handling tough tasks, they also were qualified to complete challenging tasks and hold high-level, supervisory professional positions.

Lessons Learned and Wisdom Shared

Based on their life and professional experiences, these Kuwaiti female leaders indicated that some lessons they had learned and wisdom they might share with others as advice was beneficial. Some people consider female leadership as an emotional style that might influence the situation and the decision-maker inappropriately. However, these female leaders clarified that emotions aren't necessarily a weak point that is a disadvantage of women's leadership style, but instead represent a strength that can be used to bridge the distance between leaders and workers. Some of the female leaders preferred to call the personnel they worked with by their names to create a comfortable atmosphere that increased the staff's motivation.

The female leaders were concerned about persons' equal rights to hold positions; in other words, they supported the principle of the right position for the right person, regardless of gender. Generally, these Kuwaiti female leaders demonstrated that in their

experience gender didn't influence leadership as long as the leader had the required qualifications for the job. To say it differently, leaders were appointed based on their capabilities, regardless of gender preference.

The majority of these female leaders recommended that women be socially active through the media, while a minority preferred to work silently in a more task-oriented approach. As part of their leadership responsibilities, these women leaders followed the rules of work that protected the personnel's rights and distinguished the productive from the inactive workers. Therefore, they valued their hard workers and appreciated employees' efforts to increase their self-motivation.

In general, these 5 Kuwaiti female leaders resolved the difficulties they confronted regarding the evolution and development of their official status as female leaders. Over time, they exploited the opportunities they had as fully as possible, and they challenged obstacles to their professional growth. Even though the cultural aspects and many people's perspectives of what was right for women reflected a more traditional, customary life, these females maintained their ambitions and increased their accomplishments day by day. They attained their educational objectives and implemented the knowledge they gained in their real lives, to enhance a greater confidence within and achieve incomparable leadership skills. They each chose a distinctive management approach that efficiently met the organization's style, and they dealt effectively with their life experiences. Overall, the Kuwaiti female leadership represented by these women has interacted with the aspects of culture to outweigh its influence and reward them for their past, present, and future efforts.

In relation to the third sub-question, What new cultural experiences are female leaders gaining from their positions?, these Kuwaiti female leaders shared their

perspectives about three major themes that related to the impact of culture on their personal experiences, which in turn had an impact on their leadership. The first theme pertains to cultural influences, interactions, and changes that involved female leadership in general and Kuwaitis in particular. The second theme is that of gaining new experiences. And finally, the third theme focuses on women leaders sharing what they have learned with others, especially other females, so they too can benefit from this knowledge.

Cultural Influences, Interactions, and Changes

Some participants stated that the Kuwaiti culture has changed because of the impact of other cultures. They clarified that media globalization has had its influence on the culture's norms and people's perceptions. In addition, Kuwait's different ethnic roots have also affected Kuwaitis' views regarding female leadership. The participants affirmed that religion also has had its influence on the culture's values and the customs that people practice. The female leaders explained that some religious groups were more conservative and retained their traditions and beliefs that oppose the development of women's status professionally.

The women declared that some males have had their own agenda to enhance males' control in society, which has kept females from holding positions as managers and leaders. Also, not only males who have retained their customs, but also some females and especially the elders, still hold more traditional perspectives about various issues such as female leadership and women's social interactions with males. Other Kuwaiti males, such as those in the liberal coalitions, have supported and encouraged females to improve their status and develop their leadership positions.

Some participants suggested that bringing about cultural changes and shifts in people's perspectives wasn't easy, and that these processes needed more time for females' leadership status to develop. These participants suggested that patience and wisdom were the main keys they had used to reach their goals because society was traditionally male dominated, and many people couldn't easily accept female leadership. Overall, the female leaders explained that, like other societies, Kuwait had diverse views regarding different cultural issues, and this diversity resulted in both progress and regression when it came to issues associated with female leadership. So within the realm of cultural influences, some Kuwaitis have modified their perspectives to concur with the growth of female leadership, adjusting their philosophies to be consistent with the social movement. However, other Kuwaitis have been influenced by culture in the opposite direction, in that their perspectives have reverted from what they formerly believed in. In other words, they previously had been simply agreeing with or by some means passively accepting the growing female status, but they now have altered this view to one of either rejection or detachment.

Moreover, the Kuwaiti females who participated in this research mentioned that, in terms of cultural interactions, the cultural aspects of Kuwait have negatively influenced female leadership in terms of the gender-role. They explained that society has been mostly male dominated regarding jobs. So, over time, some families have encouraged their daughters to pursue a specific career such as teaching for its benefits, while males have controlled most essential jobs. However, some Kuwaiti females have attempted to emerge in various jobs and to hold various superior positions in both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In the context of these changes, some of the female participants believed that people should continue to respect the culture and religious principles to keep the Islamic and Arabic identity that distinguishes the Kuwaiti society from others. The Kuwaiti people must transfer these principles throughout the generations to continue practicing the basic cultural and religious doctrines.

Furthermore, the study participants argued that Kuwaiti males have had more social relationships and a broader social network generally because they attend the *Dewaneya*, in which they have shared interests. So their chances to be appointed for senior positions have been higher than females' chances; and that has been one cultural influence that has decreased the advancement of female leadership. The women emphasized that females have often had to work harder to prove their qualifications to be appointed as seniors in organizations. So some participants recommended that qualifications and professional experiences should create the privilege that enables a person to qualify and hold a position regardless of gender, personal preferences, coalitions, intellectual orientations, or the influence of religious groups.

In contrast, in the realm of cultural interactions, the progression of women in female leadership positions in Kuwait has positively influenced the confidence of other females—and even males—regarding women's capabilities and their right to share crucial positions that were previously controlled by males. The participants frequently motivated other females to maintain the efforts that advanced their social and political status. They encouraged the personnel they supervised, especially females, to participate in professional meetings and attend professional courses; these leaders also tried to facilitate circumstances that might keep female workers from participating in such

activities. In addition, they emphasized that female leaders' accomplishments did not negatively influence their families' needs or social contributions.

Generally, Kuwaiti females have recently managed top positions in governmental and non-governmental organizations, even though they have struggled with opposition groups who disagree with the progress of female leadership. Such social and political arguments have in fact encouraged Kuwaiti females to confront the obstacles they experience and have enhanced their motivation to prove their abilities.

New Experiences

A second common theme that developed in the comments of these female leaders was that of gaining new experiences. They generally improved their personal, social, and professional experiences for both their individual and their organizations' benefits. They considered that learning new skills and practicing their aptitudes were vital components of their life experiences. One of them (Sama) stated that every day seemed to be a new experience in which she acknowledged her new abilities. Some of the female leaders observed that even other senior members of their organizations learned from their leadership styles and benefited from their charisma during meetings and discussions. This was particularly true if the leaders were focused on designing their own styles that fit with their personalities and the other personnel within the organization.

In addition, these female leaders evaluated themselves; they attempted to discover their weaknesses and negative characteristics, and then they worked hard to improve in these areas. For example, because meetings were a critical part of their job requirements, some of the women improved their meeting skills, focusing on the techniques and principles for effective discussions, negotiations, arguments, and presentations. At the

same time, they strengthened their advantages in the personal and professional segments of their lives to benefit their development as leaders.

Moreover, these female leaders benefited not only from their coursework, but also from the exchange of experiences with their colleagues and personnel. Through their interactions with others, these women gained new, constructive experiences and enhanced their relationships with other leaders to create a dynamic atmosphere within their organizations. Simultaneously, the female leaders were concerned about increasing their communication skills and social connections with other employees and with consumers. They demonstrated that they could develop harmony and teamwork, which led to collaborative efforts and increased motivation during work to accomplish the organization's objectives. These skills helped them deal with diverse people within the organization's horizontal and vertical positions.

In general, these Kuwaiti female leaders were concerned about expanding their life experiences for their personal and professional benefit. And they regularly learned from their daily situations to validate their advantages and transform their disadvantages.

Advice to Others

Finally, as the third theme that this third sub-question revealed, the Kuwaiti female leaders who participated in this research desired to transfer their life experiences for others' benefit in general, and for females in particular. So they offered advice and recommendations for both subordinate personnel and leaders. For junior personnel, these female leaders were usually concerned about how to motivate youth both personally and professionally. Moreover, the women attempted to perform as good examples and models for junior employees. As leaders, they encouraged their staff by working together as a team, making collaborative efforts, and optimistically enhancing the team spirit to attain

their goals. Also, these female leaders believed they should identify others' abilities to support their advantage and help them develop other skills when needed. So these leaders often managed specialized courses and workshops that served their personnel's needs because they believed that real experiences enhanced the employees' capabilities as well as the organization's profits. Because they had gained advanced social and communication skills from their interactions, these female leaders were able to deal with various personalities, even the complicated characters; and they practiced their own personal style and techniques to treat everyone as individuals.

In support of their objectives, these women recommended that other leaders should also communicate positively with their colleagues and other administrators, and recognize how to deal with the different types of employees. They also advised other leaders to think critically before making decisions because, as leaders, biased or quick judgments might negatively influence the organization's strategy or workers' jobs. In addition, they believed that leaders should manage their organizations and acknowledge how to deal with different situations calmly and steadily.

These female leaders recommended that people in general respect the cultural norms and remain moral because society's growth started with individuals who embodied the education and principles they had learned in their homes. All these values have an impact on people's lives and situations, both personal events and professional experiences.

Regarding females' professional status, these women leaders were optimistic toward developing that status and were committed to remaining patient until they reached their goals; nothing would block or decrease their determination. They motivated other females to prove their capabilities to be appointed to higher positions. From a political

view, they encouraged other women to represent themselves as candidates, and they recommended men's support during the elections. In addition, they believed social contacts and communication skills are important to improve the status of females.

The female leaders in this study believed that theoretical knowledge needs practical application for success, so they recommended that other leaders should combine higher education with professional experiences to manage their organizations. They also suggested the development of criteria for appointing leaders that ensure those appointments reflect the individuals' qualifications and capabilities to hold vital positions within the organization and no gender preference.

Overall, the Kuwaiti culture has had an impact on female life and has influenced the issues that relate to women's jobs as leaders. These influences and changes enhanced these 5 females' experiences in terms of their leadership, and empowered them to meet the challenges as they occurred and to pursue their individual goals based on their unique personalities. The various interactions within Kuwaiti culture and the different directions within the culture over time have influenced people's perceptions toward female leadership. However, these female leaders conquered most of the negative influences that might have thwarted their advancement. They emphasized their ambitions and objectives to validate their essential social and political role in society. In addition, they often developed their abilities and gained new experiences to confidently improve their status.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to answer the central question of this research, How do Kuwaiti female leaders experience the impact of culture on their leadership?, culture had its influence on different aspects of the women's leadership; and simultaneously, certain elements in the women's experiences had an impact on the culture.

The female leaders who participated in this study concluded that their home environment and their families' morals and support positively influenced their social skills and personal experiences, which subsequently were factors that helped develop their leadership style. They shared how their characters and personalities enhanced their communication and connections with colleagues and seniors in their organizations. The participants highlighted through their stories that female leaders are friendly, patient, and helpful with personnel and consumers. In addition, these female leaders were primarily concerned with obtaining a higher education to develop the knowledge and skills that would improve their leadership. Moreover, they designed their own leadership styles that balanced their respect for the culture, their capabilities, and their wish to satisfy the people to whom they were responsible. At the same time, they faced challenges and continued their professional journey with a commitment to reaching their objectives.

The progress of female leadership in Kuwait has had a cultural influence on the people's perceptions and beliefs about the role of women. In summary, these Kuwaiti female leaders shared their stories in such a way to suggest that there is a reciprocal interaction between culture, gender, and leadership.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter contains five major sections. The first section offers an overview of the study, which includes the purpose statement, research questions, and a review of methodology. The second section discusses how the findings of this research and the results derived from responses to the research questions are linked to the literature in chapter 2. The third section incorporates conclusions about the findings and the significance of these findings. The fourth section provides limitations and delimitations of the study. The last section offers recommendations and implications for further studies that might contribute to the current understanding of leadership and particularly female leadership.

Overview of the Study

This research examined how Kuwaiti female leaders perceived the cultural influences on their personal and professional experiences in leadership positions. To attain this aim, I interviewed 5 Kuwaiti female leaders who shared their perceptions regarding the interactions between culture, gender, and their leadership style within their responsibilities in governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The current study focused on a central question, which is How do Kuwaiti female leaders experience the impact of culture on their leadership?, and three sub-research questions that uncovered the essential phenomenon of the study. These sub-questions are:

- How do female leaders' culturally based personal experiences influence their leadership?

- How do female leaders' culturally based professional experiences affect their approach to leadership?
- What new cultural experiences have female leaders gained from their positions?

I selected a qualitative design to accomplish the research purpose and to collect the central phenomena that the research results demonstrate. A narrative inquiry approach provided a way to reveal these perspectives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and to enable participants to answer the research questions in depth (Creswell, 2005). In addition, the narrative approach let me evaluate the participants' information, different perspectives, and life experiences that related to cultural influences and interactions (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

The narrative approach involved compiling stories that demonstrated participants' experiences and events in their lives in a sequential arrangement. Thus, these narrations of personal and professional experiences offered enriching data and helped me to uncover the answers to the research questions. To meet the research requirements, I interviewed the 5 Kuwaiti female leaders. Each participant provided rich and effective data about her life story (Lieblich et al., 1998). Total interviews for all participants numbered 15, with 3 interviews for each participant. Each interview lasted from 60 minutes to 90 minutes. I used a tape recorder for the interviews, and I hired a transcriber to convert the data into transcripts. Most of the participants preferred to be interviewed in Arabic, so I also hired a translator, who translated all transcripts to English.

The analysis process began after each initial interview to prepare for the second and third interviews. I organized the data and events by coding major themes to create five stories that represented each participant's experiences and perceptions. From these

stories, I managed the common themes and categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that related to each research question. Then I used the categorical-content perspective (Lieblich et al., 1998) to analyze the stories by classifying each story's themes and demonstrating the different experiences that participants addressed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Discussion

The findings and interpretations presented in chapter 4 helped me to develop the major themes within the participants' stories. Then I organized this information into common themes related to the research objectives so I could discover and discuss the similarities with and differences from the literature review presented in chapter 2. The following discussion highlights these similarities and differences.

Leadership and Leading

The data presented shows that these Kuwaiti female leaders understood their respective organizations' objectives and knew how they planned to reach these objectives. For example, one participant mentioned that "my concept was always to look at all the elements of work as interactive elements that do their job to achieve a certain objective through commitment and seriousness at work." Another female leader said, "I mean by *aggressive* that the female leader persists to achieve her goals." In addition, one female leader said, "No doubt, the leader should have set objectives to be achieved. Persistence, planning, and hard work enable me to achieve those objectives." These statements by the participants appear similar to Yukle's definition (1991) of leadership, which says that one of the leader's tasks is to determine the organization's goals and motivate the staff to achieve these objectives.

Some of the Kuwaiti female leaders believed that a good leader should have a clear vision as part of her leadership responsibilities: “I also have a good administrative vision and give others the benefit of my experience”; “I believe the responsibilities of a leader are having a clear vision”; and “a leader cannot be a leader without a proper, clear vision and a target.” These women explained that, within their vision as leaders, they structured the organization’s strategies and objectives and worked with the staff to accomplish these objectives. The work of Donald, Dale, and Sonya (2006) supports this finding; they mentioned that the leadership concept in the 1980s was related to the “vision” and responsibility of leaders. Williams (2005) also found that female leaders who participated in the study considered themselves at higher levels in areas of learning, vision, ethics, and integrity.

The 5 participants had different views about how to develop leadership characteristics in people. Most of the Kuwaiti female leaders who participated in this study believed that formation of their leadership abilities was established in childhood, and their families played a great role in improving their skills by supporting open discussions, communications, and decision-making opportunities. They believed that leadership characteristics develop and improve by observing and learning. This view aligns with Rhode (2003), who indicated that effective leadership is partially learned by observing and interacting with others, since the correlation between leadership and learning was strong in her studies. Although one participant agreed with that view, she also mentioned that some leaders have the leadership gene from birth. Donald, Dale, and Sonya (2006) support this statement when they suggest that leaders are born, not made, as in the “Great Man” theory.

Based on the data, most of participants believed that they “show our capabilities,” had the “efficiency to reach a leadership position,” and were able to “prove my capabilities and to achieve the expectations of the Prince of the State.” One participant observed, “I can say that Kuwaiti woman has the capability for patience when facing problems and obstacles,” and another expressed her strength in “consolidating my personal and leadership capabilities.” The findings demonstrate that political participation exerted a positive influence on those female leaders in government organizations. In addition, these female leaders experienced a positive influence in their work since they had been given the franchise to vote, due to the new political power that they had gained. Moreover, the Kuwaiti females in this study reinforced Alsarraf’s (2008) findings that females should be aware of their capabilities, including their communication skills, and should improve their knowledge and leadership skills in order to enhance their status.

Personality and Character

The Kuwaiti female leaders in the study had developed their leadership behaviors and attitudes within their families; they grew up practicing their social and communication skills, including actively participating in family discussions. They shared the ideal that respecting an organization’s rules demonstrated morals that leaders should model. These aspects improved their abilities as good leaders who were concerned about a relationship-oriented structure. For example, one participant, Ruba, appreciated that her mother had positively influenced her behavior by communicating courteously and politely. This behavior helped Ruba become an effective communicator in her social and professional life. These findings align with other research from different cultures (Adams & Yoder, 1985; Alsarraf, 2008; Bunderson, 2008; Donald, Dale, & Sonya, 2006; Handwick, 2008; Jurczak, 2006; Manning & Haddock, 1989; Ohm, 2006; and Yukle,

1991) that supports how important it is for leaders to create a healthy environment where personnel feel safe and respected. In addition, these Kuwaiti female leaders declared that leaders should have charisma, and some of them were likewise attracted to their leaders. This charisma effectively influences others to follow leaders and to interact positively with them. The research by Adams and Yoder (1985), in particular, supports this view. Based on the literature, good leaders inspire and motivate workers to accomplish tasks and achieve the organization's goals. Improving communication skills and positively interacting with personnel are part of the skills that leaders should be concerned about.

Self-confidence was an important part of the Kuwaiti female leaders' personalities. "My long track record of experience gained me self-confidence in dealing with others"; "Since my early childhood, I was very self-confident among my social group and classmates"; "My father taught us to be responsible for our choices, and this gave us self-confidence." Some studies reinforced this finding; in other studies, the issue was less definite. For example, Alsarraf (2008) suggested female leaders experienced self-confidence during meetings and while accomplishing tasks. However, another study (Eagly, 2007) indicated that personnel preferred female leaders to be more communal and kind with workers, while they expected male leaders to show more confidence. In the Eagly study, female leaders enhanced their relationships with others in order to assist and offer guidance to their staff.

That female leaders faced challenging obstacles is a topic of discussion in the literature. The Kuwaiti female leaders overcame obstacles to reach their goals for managing in high-level positions; they conquered various cultural barriers to prove their capabilities as leaders. For example, Dr. Mariam struggled with her colleagues, especially males, when she was appointed as a department head and when she was assigned as a

female Minister. Twombly's research (1998) supported this data, indicating that females accepted the challenge in occupying administrative positions in Costa Rica University. Spain (2006) also found that female leaders challenged the discrimination that they experienced regarding their gender, and they attempted to be challengers without letting those efforts limit their success.

Developing Leadership Style

The Kuwaiti female leaders created their own leadership styles that balanced their abilities and personalities with the culture, the organization's objectives, and the satisfaction of their personnel. For example, Ruba had her own style as a leader; she attempted to balance her job responsibilities and meet the customer's expectations and respect the culture's traditions in hospitality situations. Nadeyah also developed her unique style: "I had my own style... I always say that the professional woman who loves her work tries to succeed in everything—not only the work, but also her appearance." These findings align with those of Manning and Haddock (1989), who stated that each leadership example is individually characterized by the leader, in which the leader develops his or her own style that fits with and attains the organization's goals and results in satisfied workers.

In addition, these Kuwaiti female leaders recognized the power of their influence. They also acknowledged the importance of changing their organizations' cultures and strategies to meet management's expectations and desired goals. Sama, for example, attempted to change the routine that management and the employees usually followed:

...changing a culture, and especially the culture of an organization, is very important. However, it is a very difficult task, and people refuse change because they do not know whether it will be good or bad until they recognize it is for their benefit.

Likewise, as part of Ohm's (2006) leadership definition, leaders have influence by significantly changing the organization's culture. Ohm explained that leaders encourage followers and consumers to accomplish tasks and enhance the organization's achievements. Most participants in the current study provided some significant examples of how female leaders influence their followers and change the organization's culture. An example was when Ruba and her staff compromised with their manager's admonition about changing the organization's way of showing hospitality. Instead of not offering any coffee to guests, as the manager wanted, they reduced the quantity that they served to guests instead and offered the traditional Arabic coffee, which is served in a small cup.

The Kuwaiti female leaders benefitted from the communication styles they developed within their organizations. They usually preferred a relationship style with the personnel and their organizations. This finding is somewhat similar to that of Jurczak (2006), who found that female leaders usually preferred using their communication skills and a relationship style, even though in Jurczak's research more female leaders than males were task-oriented.

As mentioned in chapter 2, female leaders tended to choose a participative leadership style rather than a directive style, and they preferred to act participatively. They believed that working in a participative environment would enhance their achievements (Chapman, 1997; Richardson, 1999; and Skinner, 2006). This study had a similar outcome. The Kuwaiti female leaders tended to perform with a participative style of management in terms of encouraging personnel to accomplish tasks and meet the organization's objectives.

In the discussion about developing a leadership style, most of the Kuwaiti female leaders in this study indicated that they preferred relationship-oriented tasks and the

democratic style over the autocratic style within their job responsibilities. They clarified that the democratic style motivated workers to accomplish their missions perfectly because it enhanced the interactions within the group and reinforced teamwork. In addition, the democratic structure allowed followers to share their ideas and suggestions regarding how to process tasks and achieve their objectives; while leaders who practiced the autocratic structure reduced team interactions. These female leaders applied the democratic and high-relationship style and were concerned with the productivity of their personnel. Some previous research also supports this finding, suggesting that women leaders typically draw upon this style (Cellar et al., 2001; Eagly et al., 1992; Joyce, 2005; Jurczak, 2006; Smith, 2006; Van Engen, 2004; and Weiner, 2005). However, the findings of this study are contrary to the findings of Pfeffer (2008) and Thompson (2002), who found that female leaders who used the democratic style were rare.

Leadership Skills

In this research, the Kuwaiti female leaders were concerned about developing their skills in the areas of leadership, communication, critical thinking, creativity, goal achievement, staff motivation, decision making, and taking responsibility. They believed these skills are essential aspects of a leader's character. Previous studies also suggest that leaders have similar concerns around skill development (Beasley, 2005; Bunderson, 2008; Marotta, 2007; and Smith, 2006).

The results of this research are similar to those in the study by Beasley (2005), which suggested that leadership styles were influenced by differences in male and female communication styles, and that female leaders communicated emotionally and engaged others to achieve goals and make decisions. Some of these Kuwaiti female leaders perceived themselves as interacting effectively during meetings, successfully

communicating with colleagues, and arguing and negotiating with others to prove their perspectives. They also allowed for themselves to be convinced of others' views.

The Kuwaiti female leaders focused on teamwork, positively interacting with staff and colleagues to accomplish tasks. This finding aligns with those of Wood (1998), who added that males need to be taught to deal with team activity. In addition to teamwork, these Kuwaiti female leaders effectively managed their teams and worked toward achieving tasks by being good examples. They treated their teams as their children and developed relationships with them. In addition, the Kuwaiti female leaders cared about all employees and let everyone experience being valued by positively paying attention to team members' ideas. The Kuwaiti female leaders clarified goals for their teams and work. These findings support what Manning and Haddock (1989) affirmed—that leaders should treat team members equally, positively communicate with them, set a good example, and clarify goals clearly to collaborate in their efforts to accomplish their goals.

The data showed that some Kuwaiti female leaders offered advice to personnel and other leaders. For example, one participant, Mariam, explained that she advised others to study well any decision before they made it. Other participants, Ruba and Nadeyah, usually offered much advice and guidance, to transfer their experiences to the younger staff to prepare them for future positions or help them apply for another job. Atiyah (1992) supported this finding, noting that how leaders offer advice based on their own experiences is part of the influence of Arabic culture. Atiyah suggested that some managers in various Arab countries (e.g., Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan) preferred the consultative style, which was based on the Arab culture's characteristics and on Islamic religion. Thus, leaders who employed the consultative leadership style focused on how to benefit from their personnel's experience and also from transferring

their own knowledge in terms of consulting and advising. Another study (Spain, 2006) supported the female leadership style of assuming that part of their leadership responsibilities was as an advisor.

Relationship with Followers

The data in this study show that Kuwaiti female leaders considered themselves friendly and helpful in terms of their relationship with others. Some of the women developed good relationships with their staff, and they remained in communication with former staff members even after they left their positions and were not working together anymore. In addition, one participant mentioned that she usually called workers by their names as part of her commitment to building bridges and helping them feel more comfortable interacting and working well together: “I develop friendships with the employees to make the workplace a tension-free place.” Other studies support these findings (Hare et al., 1997), indicating that females scored higher in being more friendly, and personnel preferred their leaders to be more friendly. In addition, the finding in the current study that female leaders developed a relationship style with their subordinates concurs with other studies that examine female leadership (Chapman, 1975, Joyce, 2005; Scott & Brown, 2006).

Within the data, Kuwaiti female leaders demonstrated that their staff and colleagues were one of their priorities; they were concerned about having a positive influence on them and being a good example to both personnel and customers. For example, some of the women leaders performed as a good example for younger staff members and motivated them in social and professional situations. In addition, participants of this study indicated that some female leaders in Kuwait serve as models to encourage other females and even males to work hard to prove their leadership

capabilities. This influence is what Ohm (2006) associated with leadership—when leaders influence and empower followers and consumers. Ohm declared that effective leaders work more than talk and focus on how to encourage personnel to achieve the organization's objectives in practical ways.

Contrary to Wheatley's (1992) writings, the participants of this study sought to recognize personnel with rewards when appropriate and yet honored organizational guidelines when employees needed to be reprimanded. In this context, the leaders applied strict procedures to some employees to improve their abilities. These female leaders seldom employ this approach, and only when it is necessary.

This current study shows that Kuwaiti female leaders developed relationships with their personnel, and they were concerned and understood their staff's needs and situations, especially in terms of the social life and feminine components. Wood (1998) noted the same results, declaring that generally female leaders know more than male leaders do about their employees' families and personal lives.

Support

Most of the Kuwaiti females who participated in this study appreciated their family support—parents, siblings, and husbands. This support was an essential factor that enabled most of these female leaders to achieve their educational and professional objectives. One participant, Dana, was greatly supported by her entire family during her education and later by her husband to obtain her higher-education objectives and hold leadership positions. Another participant, Sama, experienced significant support from her father beginning in her childhood and continuing until she started her work. Then her husband was very supportive while she struggled with balancing her time and family responsibilities with her work duties. Some studies (Alsarraf, 2008; Twombly, 1998)

offered evidence to support this finding. These studies indicated that female leaders valued their families' support, which facilitated their life situations so they could complete their education and handle their work as leaders.

In regard to support outside of the family, this varied among the participants. Some of them received support from their colleagues and senior leaders. For example, Sama experienced a good relationship with her male colleagues at the university and at work. In addition, Mariam's colleagues supported her in the Cabinet, and the Prime Minister at that time strongly supported her. In Dana's experiences with male colleagues, she received significant support during her higher education and at work.

In contrast, a few of the participants experienced some difficulties from their male colleagues. Ruba, for example, mentioned her negative experience with a male manager with whom she struggled during her job at a bank. Mariam struggled with her colleagues when she was appointed as a department chair. This finding was similar with another study by Spain (2006), which found that females experienced internal barriers with their male colleagues, and that females were treated differently by their male colleagues.

Gender Influence on Leadership

In this study, some participants described themselves as aggressive leaders, but they defined *aggressive* differently than males typically define the term. The females pointed out that, in terms of aggressiveness, they were tough and self-confident; they had proven their capabilities and endured much to achieve their goals. However, males typically define *aggressive* as behaving in violent and angry ways toward others. The findings in the current research in some ways validate other research (Smith, 2006) and the stereotype that masculine leadership is characterized by aggression, while female leadership is characterized by assertiveness.

Based on the data, these Kuwaiti female leaders emphasized that the right person should be appointed to the right position, regardless of gender. Their view was that either male or female leaders can be effective team leaders. This result also is consistent with a previous study (Wood, 1998).

Cultural Influence on Leadership

According to the data from this study, female leaders practiced both the task-oriented style and the relationship-oriented style as leaders. One of the key findings of this study is that the Kuwaiti culture does influence female leadership. It is important to note, however, that some of the participants insisted that culture had no influence on their leadership style. Their perspectives reflected how they desired to minimize the barriers that they experienced as female leaders in a Middle Eastern culture. They were challenged to prove their capabilities and develop their status in a male-dominated society, and they needed to put forth much effort to accomplish their complicated mission. These Kuwaiti female leaders, in addition, tried to be more optimistic about their issues by highlighting the success of their journeys. They were determined to overcome the cultural obstacles and influence people's perceptions to support them socially, as well. The participants' perceptions are similar to Weiner's (2005) findings that suggest neither the American nor Mexican cultures had an influence on leadership style in those countries.

Results of the current study reflect that the female leaders considered Kuwait a male-dominated society, with males holding most higher leadership positions in the country. This finding supports the study by Kvaerner (1999), which concluded that female medical leaders in Oslo did not reach higher positions as easily as males.

Some of the Kuwaiti female leaders indicated that, within the context of cultural influence, their society has become more male dominated and masculine privilege controls access to higher positions. This finding aligns with Wiener (2005), who suggested that within cultures that value masculinity more highly, men dominate in relationships with women.

In terms of the religious influence on female leadership, Berkowitz (2004) discussed the disagreements within the political and religious coalitions regarding their views of advances in female leadership in Kuwait. In this study, participants made references to some debates or differences within the coalitions of Kuwait society regarding females being appointed to higher positions of leadership such as ministers. This disagreement relates to people's way of thinking, Islamic principles, and the culture's norms. In this context, one of the Kuwaiti female leaders, Mariam, was part of this debate since she broke the ground as the first female Minister in Kuwaiti history. She had struggled with religious groups, especially the conservatives, when she was appointed to be part of the government. This finding in some ways agreed with Rizzo's (2005) comments, that religious organizations limited females' participation in terms of limiting their ability to develop their leadership status.

The Dewaneya is seen as an effective mechanism within Kuwaiti culture that develops social and professional relationships that in turn enhance Kuwait's culture (Al-Naser, 2001). Some participants explained that Dewaneya was an effective way to gain access to leadership positions in the society. They explained that this is especially true for males who took advantage of Dewaneya. The Dewaneya is where similar interests are shared and networks are enlarged. For example, Ruba explained how males benefitted from Dewaneya; they shared their interests, discussed issues that related to their job

responsibilities, and made decisions based on this shared information. In contrast, females depended more on individual considerations to make their decisions. Nadeyah established Dewaneya within her organization, where she encouraged her staff to sit and relax while discussing their concerns in a comfortable corner of the workplace.

Conclusions and Significance of Findings

The research results suggest that there are interactions between the Kuwaiti culture, gender, and leadership. The study reflects various accumulated views and experiences about issues related to the cultural impact on gender and leadership.

Based on the participants' perspectives, the concepts and practices of Kuwaiti culture have influenced their female leadership in various ways during their personal and professional lives. Family environment had a positive impact on their female leadership. It empowered their social communications and supported the development of their personalities; it also provided a model for their performance as leaders. In addition, the traditions, customs, norms, and religions of the culture were commonly involved with developing the female leaders' personalities and character. At the same time, these female leaders influenced some aspects of the culture, including people's perspectives about the role of females as leaders. Thus, the development of female leadership within Kuwait has effectively influenced the perspectives of some people who have strengthened their beliefs in the importance of female leadership.

Additionally, these Kuwaiti female leaders developed their skills and abilities for better communication with both followers and customers. They also created their own leadership styles that respected the culture, fit with their own leaders' and subordinates' personalities, met the expectations of their organizations, and enhanced their

accomplishments. And they challenged the difficulties they encountered to improve their status and enhance their achievements.

The Kuwaiti females in this study increased their status by entering, for the most part, fields that weren't open for them previously. They held higher positions as educators, doctors, and ambassadors, and in the fields of politics, economics, and business (Alsuwayeh, 1985; Tetreault, 2001). They improved their education and took advantage of opportunities to access higher institutions to increase their involvement in different organizations (Al-khaldy, 2007; Meleis et al., 1979). In addition, their families and colleagues supported these females professionally and socially in ways that helped them to improve their skills and enhance their leadership capabilities. Moreover, the Kuwaiti female leaders tried their best to change men's negative perspectives toward their leadership. They challenged their destiny as females and attempted to rebuild their life for a bright future. Kawther Al-Joan, Seham Al-Rezouki, Dr. Rasha Al-Sabah, Dr. Fayza Al-kherafi, Dr. Masoma AlMubarak, Noreya Alsabeh, Dr. Modai Al-Hamoud, Sara Al-Duwaisan, Nabeela Alanjery, Wafa Aljasseem, and Sana Jumah are just a few examples of the Kuwaiti females who have led the way for others to continue their missions as heroes in the role of female leaders.

From the perspective of breaking new ground, some of these Kuwaiti females strongly believed that their progress was increasingly being recognized and appreciated, both locally and internationally. Their achievements motivated and instilled confidence in other females to develop their own leadership behaviors to be prepared for senior positions, particularly in governmental organizations.

In conclusion, there is an influence of Kuwaiti culture on females in leadership, and this influence has two different directions. The first direction is the influence of

culture on Kuwaiti female leadership. On one hand, the positive influence is the support that the Kuwaiti female leaders experience from their families, especially their male relatives such as fathers, brothers, and husbands. Also, the Kuwaiti female leaders are supported by their male colleagues because those males believe in equality of work opportunities between males and females in higher positions, and they also believe in the females' capabilities to hold such positions. On the other hand, there is a negative influence of the Kuwaiti culture on female leadership. The stereotype remains in place that women are fit for positions such as teaching but not for leadership positions in either governmental or nongovernmental organizations.

The other direction is the influence of the Kuwaiti females on the culture. These female leaders have influenced the Kuwaiti culture in different ways. First, they have positively influenced males' perspectives toward females as leaders. Some males now see Kuwaiti females as capable to hold higher positions in various fields. This development of female leadership in Kuwait has come with some cost. At times, female leaders experience a backlash against females in leadership from males and other females as well.

In summary, the findings of this study support previous studies that highlight the influence of culture on gender and leadership (Atiyah, 1992& Gibson, 1995). Different cultures have different influences on gender and leadership, as suggested by other studies. It is obvious that the Kuwaiti culture has an influence on female leadership in a distinctive way that is characterized by cultural aspects. Additional research could focus on issues related to the influence of culture on gender and leadership in either Middle East or international locations.

Delimitations and Limitations

As with other previous research, this current research had delimitations and limitations that narrowed the scope of the study (Roberts, 2004). Both terms, *delimitations* and *limitations*, indicate factors that affected the study; however, we can distinguish between them in reference to control. *Delimitations* are the factors that I as the researcher could control; *limitations* are the factors that I could not control (Mauch & Birch, 1993).

Delimitations

This research included some boundaries that delimited the findings and analysis. One delimitation was the location of the study. This research included only Kuwaiti females who had the privilege of being leaders in Kuwait. Focusing only on Kuwaiti female leaders was one of the research objectives, established for the purpose of contributing to the available cross-cultural research.

A second delimitation was the sample selection criteria I developed for this study. For example, the participants had to be in positions of leadership for at least 2 years.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study are related to sampling. Most of the prospective participants I contacted refused to participate because of the three interviews, and they suggested only one interview. Most of them claimed that three interviews would have too much of an impact on their job responsibilities.

The second limitation related to sampling was the timing of the project. Many potential participants already had planned to travel during the summer of 2008. Some prospective participants preferred to postpone their participation till the fall of 2008 because they weren't available during the data collection period. So I adjusted the

sampling techniques to be more convenient to these participants' availability. Two participants, who had planned their vacations but still wanted to be involved, traveled during the interviews while I processed their transcripts and prepared for the next interview. In addition, I adapted the sample for the convenience of the leaders so that their contact information included their email addresses or business phones. Other potential participants didn't reply until October 2008 because of their summer vacations, which were then followed by Ramadan (the Holy month). Therefore, they were not part of the study.

I restricted the findings of this study to the focused sample that included participants who were interested in participating; who would allow the sharing of their experiences; who agreed to be interviewed three times with a minimum of 1 hour per interview, who understood the research phenomenon, and who agreed to answer open and personal questions. In addition, participants in this study were curious about the reason behind developing the three interviews because this criterion necessitated more effort and time from both them and me. However, I clarified that this procedure was an essential part of research that followed the narrative inquiry methodology.

A final limitation is language. Most of the participants preferred to be interviewed in Arabic, with the interviews then translated to English. Thus, within the translation process, I was unable to translate some cultural terms and expressions accurately from Arabic to English.

Overall, the findings of this research are bound by the participants and cannot be generalized to the entire population of Kuwaiti females who have experienced leadership positions. In addition, the results of this research build upon an understanding of the

Kuwaiti cultural aspects that have influenced female leadership in governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Recommendations and Implications

The recommendations of this study are based on some suggestions that participants proposed for enhancing the achievements of female leaders. These recommendations would be presented to stakeholders, the administration of governmental and non-governmental organizations, social associations, and other leaders. The implications of this study suggest potential further research related to the current research phenomenon, to broaden the discussion.

Recommendations

The aspects of the study that relate to the Kuwaiti culture should be used as positive motivation for females to improve their status and recognize that nothing can limit their ambitions to increase their contributions within society. As they developed their leadership skills, most all participants struggled with difficulties and hardships, either from their families or their male colleagues; but these circumstances couldn't prevent them from accomplishing their objectives. Similarly, other qualified females in Kuwait need to receive substantial encouragement to develop their capabilities in leadership. They also should be motivated through offers and more opportunities to lead various organizations, especially governmental organizations.

Properly preparing junior employees to develop their abilities and improve their skills to hold leadership positions could be helpful. Most participants indicated that leaders should help making significant improvement in juniors' skills and abilities by motivating them to share thoughts, attend meetings, and benefit from professional courses. Leaders should encourage the new generations by sharing with them their own

strengths that might benefit the organization. It would be effective for leaders to understand junior employees' needs, ambitions, and way of thinking, and to encourage and motivate them by sharing their thoughts and ideas, and being supportive, especially during the initial period in their jobs. Also, opportunities to participate in national and international conferences that discuss leadership are, based on the current research, important for enhancing employees' experiences.

Based on the cultural norms of Kuwait, a major role for mothers is to raise their children appropriately with respect to morals and religious principles that will enable youth to fully develop their personalities as future leaders. Dana mentioned, "We realize that morality stems from the mother at home because the mother is a school. She prepares the members of the community. Therefore, if mothers are good and have good values, we will have a good generation in our community." Mothers also should naturally direct their energies toward scaffolding their children's experiences toward an intellectually stimulating future.

More acknowledgment should be focused on the organization's culture in terms of making collaborative efforts toward modifying the organizational structure and developing strategies that include female leadership for the benefit of the organization. Thus, leaders should first understand the existing organization's culture, and then evaluate and modify its strategic objectives in a way that enables the leaders to develop actions that will improve the organization's productivity and accomplish its objectives.

Implications for Further Studies

This study offers insights into the different perspectives of Kuwaiti males about the development of female leadership in Kuwait and the influence of females' leadership and accomplishments on the groups that are opposed to women as leaders. When

participants indicated that there are some males who supported them, others were opposed them, and a group who was accept the idea of having female leaders however within the culture changes this group modified their perspective to be against female leadership development. For example, the prospective research question could be, how do Kuwaiti males perceive female leadership benefit in The State of Kuwait? I suggest that future researchers might benefit from the personal and professional experiences that these Kuwaiti females gained from their work and leadership responsibilities. I also suggest that future researchers focus their efforts on issues relating to female leadership styles and the influence of culture in the context of recent developments in female leadership in Kuwait and the Middle East. So, the research question could be, how does the Middle East culture influence female leadership styles?

Future researchers also should focus on the similarities and differences between male and female leadership styles and leaders' behaviors in Arab countries, especially the Arabian Gulf and the State of Kuwait. I recommend that people learn more about female leadership styles and thus benefit from female leaders' experiences in these countries. Because this research provides results that point out the interactions of Kuwaiti culture with gender and leadership, future studies should focus on the phenomena of cross-cultural female leadership and the cultural influence on leaders' characteristics (Smith, 2006) in Arab countries.

Another point of research should focus on conceptualizing the Kuwaiti female's accomplishment in governmental and private sectors. At the same time, evaluation and judgments of female leadership experiences in higher positions should be postponed until further female contributions in the political, social, and economic arenas have been made.

Future research could be placed on the relationships between those in leadership positions and their followers, to consider the various backgrounds of followers, the influence of this relationship on the organization's environment, and to improve these relationships. In addition, research also should pay attention to the followers who have experienced multiple leadership styles and dealt with several different leaders' behaviors. This type of study will support and improve leadership behaviors and styles for both males and females.

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APPENDIX B

Model Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

TITLE OF STUDY: Female Leaders' Perspective: Influence of Culture on the Leadership Organizations in Kuwait

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sharon Anderson, Ph.D.

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Omaymah Al-Suwaihel

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are invited to participate in this research. Its focus is related to your career as a female leader, your perspective about culture's influences, your view about your leadership style, and that you can provide the actual status for Kuwaiti female leaders.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

Omaymah Al-Suwaihel is doing the study as part of her dissertation at Colorado State University, USA.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The focus of this study was to discover the influences of culture on female leaders in Kuwait through your stories. In addition, this study would offer you an opportunity to share your experiences, leadership styles, perspectives, journeys and/or challenges you

Page _ of _ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

have faced since women have held higher positions in government and non-government organizations there.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE, AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The interview will take place in Kuwait. As a participant, you can choose a location where you feel comfortable to react and answer the interview questions. You will be interviewed three times to meet the research methodology. Each interview's duration is expected to be between 60 minutes and 90 minutes, with a total of from 3 hours to 4 ½ hours for all interviews.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to answer questions, and an audio recorder will tape your responses. Your responses will be analyzed for the research purposes.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no specific reasons that exclude participants from volunteering. Each female leader can be interviewed under conditions including their choice of appropriate environments that they feel comfortable with.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation might increase your knowledge related to culture, positions, different perspectives, and factors that might influence their status.

Page _ of _ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?

There is no medical treatment or experiment method we might use during data collection. Your time is the main issue for participation. Participation in this research is totally voluntary.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. The researcher, the advisor, and the transcriber can have access to the data, and research interpretation would omit your information for confidentiality.

Your information will be combined with information from other women taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

This study is anonymous. It means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you share comes from you.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and these two things will be stored in different places under lock and key.

Page _ of _ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court [IF APPLICABLE: or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.].

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

To meet the research analysis criteria, you could be removed from the study if the three interviews will not be completed for lack of time, information, or to meet the research goals.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

A certificate will be offered to you after your participation is completed. The research results or a copy of the dissertation could be presented to you if you are interested or motivated to know more about the topic and study framework. If you prefer other compensation, please inform the researcher for that to be included instead of a certificate.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about

Page _ of _ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

the study, you can contact the investigator, Omaymah Al-Suwaihel, at mayomaq8@hotmail.com, or (970) 206-0866.

If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Meldrem, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

There is no additional information that relates to this study unless you are interested in knowing more about the research.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing _pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date _____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant Date _____

Signature of Research Staff

Page _ of _ Participant's initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

Invitation Letter to Participants

March, 29th, 2008

Colorado State University
School of Education
Educational Leadership – Ph.D.
(970) 491–1963

Dear _____,

I am a graduate student at Colorado State University in the School of Education. My dissertation focuses on female leaders' perspectives that are influenced by Kuwaiti culture in leadership organizations.

As part of my study, I would like to invite female leaders to share their perspectives, leadership styles, and knowledge in a series of interviews. These interviews will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for the participants.

I would appreciate your assistance in circulating this invitation in your organization to women who you believe meet the study criteria.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Student's Name

Omaymah Al-Suwaihel
3706 Rockaway St.
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and Graduate Program Faculty
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APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

- Interview Information
 1. Date
 2. Time
 3. Place
 4. Interviewer

- Participant's Background
 1. Name
 2. Age
 3. Education
 4. Years of work experience
 5. Title of position currently held
 6. Organization's name
 7. Organization's purpose
 8. Work responsibilities
 9. Length of time in current position
 10. Length of time in other leadership positions

- What Influences Females' Leadership?
 1. Within your experience, how do you define leadership and the good leader? What leadership approaches did leaders follow in your work environments? What was your perspective?
 2. What outline did you sketch when you became a leader?
 3. What do you think about the role of cultural influences on female leaders?
 4. How do you think the culture has influenced female leaders' decisions?
 5. Do you think culture is influenced by having female leaders?

- How Female Leaders Perceive Personal Experiences
 1. How do you describe yourself: open-minded, conservative, or moderate?
 2. What personal experiences have you had that might influence your job?
 3. What are the personal characteristics that you like in yourself?
 4. What do you think your personal character requires to be an effective leader?

5. Describe the different reactions of Kuwaiti citizens to having women as leaders.
 6. How do you convince critics to accept female leadership?
 7. Do you think the critics of female leaders can adapt to the new situation in Kuwait and adjust or overlook their current perspectives?
 8. What are the difficulties that block your ambition to become a leader?
- How Female Leaders Perceive Professional Experiences
 1. What is your vision of leadership?
 2. What professional experiences have you gained that might be useful in your current position?
 3. What skills do you have that might improve your leadership style?
 4. What skills and abilities do you need to be an effective leader?
 5. What is your plan to develop the skills and abilities that you need?
 6. What do you think is the appropriate approach when appointing a leader: to choose the leader because he/she has experience in leadership styles no matter what her/his specialization, or to choose the leader who has professional experiences within specific organizations that match the specialization of the position being filled?
 7. What new professional experiences do female leaders acquire? What do they gain from their positions as leaders?
 8. What are your work process, your objectives, and your aspirations as a leader? How do you deal with assignments to be achieved perfectly?
 9. What are your objectives as a leader?
 10. How can you deal with different types of employees?
 11. How can you deal with different types of consumers?
 12. Do you believe in working by specific routine or procedure?
 13. If you had the power to change one thing in your position or organization, what would you choose to change?