Master thesis

What can we learn from the woman on top?

The life-history approach to the analysis of leader self-efficacy development in exceptional female leader – the case of Xerox's CEO Ursula Burns.

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Abstract

The following thesis utilizes the qualitative, life-history approach in order to analyze and understand the life-span process of leader self-efficacy development on the example of high-profile business leader – Xerox's CEO Ursula Burns. The problem of practice addressed by the study is the fact that, despite the increased spending on leadership development programs for women and introduction of diversity programs and anti-discriminatory policies at the workplaces, the number of women at top leadership position has hardly changed over the recent years. The theory of leader self –efficacy (perceiving oneself as a leader) offers a compelling and potent solution to such problem, as it addresses the fact that women do not see themselves as leaders. Thus, increasing leader-self efficacy in women should result in more women taking on the position of authority as it would equipped them with major internal factor of success – namely, the high leader self-efficacy. Additionally, women in general exhibit lower levels of leader self-efficacy than men, and it has been suggested by a large body of research that it might be caused by the different socialization process that men and women undergoes, thus the life-history approach allows this fact to be accounted for. The life-span analysis of leader self-efficacy development of Ursula Burns confirms the Bandura's self-efficacy model as Burns was exposed to all of the four efficacy information throughout her life (mastery experience, social modeling, verbal persuasion, positive psychological states). However, social modeling and verbal persuasion that she received from her mother since she was a child, seems to be the most influential source of personal efficacy, esteem, confidence and resilience that facilitated her leadership development. The analysis and discussion also revealed that women's development of leader self-efficacy may be inhibited by the lack of "psychological preparedness" that may stem from previous life experiences and influences that women was exposed to. Thus, in order to make leadership development programs more effective for women and to ensure that women will in fact increase their sense of leader self-efficacy it is first crucial to make sure that women possess adequate psychological capabilities (in a form of e.g. high self-esteem, adequate success attribution) to take advantage of such programs or other opportunities. Furthermore, the thesis contributes to the field of leader self-efficacy development for women by approaching the subject form novel, life-history perspective.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Setting the context – Women in leadership positions

There is little doubt, both in literature and practice that for the last decades, women have experienced the increase in the participation in paid labor force, earnings and in number of university and college enrollment (Carli & Eagly, 2011). In retrospect, in 1973 women made up only 39 % of paid labor force while in 2009 the statistics reached 47 % in the USA alone. In Europe, the statistics are even more positive – even though the employment rate is generally lower for women than for men, in 2014 women's labor force participation accounted for 59.6% (in comparison to 70% for men) and it has been on the rise for the previous 10 years (Eurostat, 2015). Furthermore, in Scandinavian countries the percentage is higher in comparison to European average, with women representing 70% of active labor market participants in Denmark alone (European Commission, 2013). Additionally, women's income has risen from 62 cents for every dollar that men earned in 1979 to 80 cents in 2009 (Carli & Eagly, 2011). A similar trend might be observed in the increased number of female students in post baccalaureate programs which rose by 42 % between 1988 and 2012, compared with 28% increase among male students which accounts for women constituting more than half of college graduates in the USA (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Similarly, in the European Union, women accounted for 54.3 % of all tertiary students (Eurostat, 2013).

Despite the undeniable gains in the economic and educational situation, women are still far from reaching parity with men. The problem is especially visible in the underrepresentation of women in high- level leadership positions. The alarming fact is that the percentage of female executives in negatively correlated with the increasing organizational rank (Helfa, Harris & Wolfson, 2006). According to Catalyst, as for 2016 only 4 % of CEOs and 25% of executive-level positions at S&P 500 companies are held by women (Catalyst, 2016). This clear inequality is not only harmful for aspiring female leaders – as they are exposed to few role models – but is also potentially hindering for the business itself as modern research consistently shows that having female leaders might positively affect the reputation and the bottom line of a company's finances (Women on Boards, 2011). In fact, the report states, companies with more women on their boards were found to outperform their

rivals with a 42% higher return in sales, 66% higher return on invested capital and 53% higher return on equity (Women on Boards, 2011). Even though companies have substantially increased the efforts to create equal opportunities for women in forms of leadership development spending , diversity programs and prohibition of any sex discrimination (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2013) the problem of inequality persists and the progress in reaching parity is believed to slow down in recent years (Carter & Silvia, 2010). Thus, according to Sturm (2001), the task of closing the gender gap in senior-level positions is more complex and elusive than barely eliminating deliberate forms of sex discrimination. As recent research in organizational studies suggests, barriers for women's advancement are no longer caused by the purposeful actions to exclude women but they continue because of the "second-generation" gender bias that "*arises from cultural beliefs, about gender as well as workplace structure, practices, patterns of interactions that inadvertently favor man*" (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2013). In addition to the external barriers, women also have to face a number of internal barriers which reciprocally act on the individual female and her environment (Reis, 2002) by forming a self-restricting culture among them e.g. in the form of lower self-confidence, lower motivation to lead and creating debilitating self-concept that halts their own advancement in leadership (Coward, 2010; Reis, 2002). As asserted by Fassinger (2002), low self-efficacy perception is the most harmful aspect of distorted self-concept that negatively affects career choices and leadership advancement for women. Thus, many researchers believe that enhancing leader self-efficacy beliefs is a powerful tool to foster women's ascent to leadership positions (Sloma-Williams, 2009) and may equip them with proper mindset to deal with external barriers more effectively (Fassinger, 2002).

1.2. The importance of self – efficacy beliefs for being a leader

The overwhelming number of past research has shown that one of the crucial characteristics of being a successful leader is possessing a high level of leader self-efficacy beliefs (Hannah, Avolio & Luthans, 2008). Albert Bandura, the academic precursor of the concept defines self–efficacy as *"people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated level of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives"* (Bandura, 1994). In relation to leadership, self-efficacy influences a number of characteristics traditionally connected to leadership such as: goal orientation, persistence, the amount of exercised effort and how well leaders

deal with obstacles and disappointments (Maurer, 2001). Furthermore, self-efficacy is a psychological instrument that fosters a self-enhancing way of thinking that helps an individual to cope with stress, which also affects general wellbeing and the decision they make at the important decision points (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Additionally, as studies shows, leader self-efficacy is associated with favorable work unit and the perceived effectiveness of the leader (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

As stated in Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of leadership behavior and is also directly correlated with the kind of career path one chooses. Thus, given the importance and relevance of self-efficacy in leadership, it should be alarming that women continuously experience a lower level of self-efficacy beliefs than their male counterparts (Bandura, 1997). Some research suggests that gender differences in self-efficacy might be connected to the upbringing of girls that are highly influenced by the societal expectations about roles, personal characteristic and proper behavior assigned to each sex (Hackket, 1995). Generally, because leadership behavior is commonly associated with males, the impact of societal pressure might be potentially significant in leader self-efficacy development (Megargee, Bogart & Anderson, 1966). Moreover, because self-efficacy is not a constant belief but a perception of ones capabilities it is very important how one interprets the events and their own leader capabilities (Rosenthal, 1995). As McCormick (2002), showed in his study, women tend to attribute their success to external sources e.g. to luck or help of others whereas men attribute their success to their own abilities. In essence, the process of the leader self-efficacy development in women differs from the process that men undergo and it is important to look at the problem globally as the reasons why women perceive themselves as less-efficacious might be found not merely by examining their leadership experiences and aptitudes but also by analyzing the personal experiences and events that might have had influenced an individual throughout the life-span.

Despite broadly acknowledged barriers to women in leadership positions– both internal and external, there exist inspiring examples of women who were able to overcome numerous, seemingly insurmountable obstacles in their ascent to leadership. One can argue that such individuals are merely exceptions to the rule that only prove the rule, but still, there is a great potential in learning from the life and experiences of such women in order to discover the fundamental processes and patterns of leadership development and their sources of self-efficacy (Shout, 2005).

1.3. Case Study – Ursula Burns

Ursula Burns might be considered an example of such an exception to the rule. Since 2009, Burns has been serving as the CEO and chairman of one of the S&P 500 companies – Xerox; the international document management and business services enterprise (Xerox, 2015). Forbes magazine named Burns one the most powerful women in business a number of times after she made a splash by becoming the first ever African-American women to run S&P 500 company and led Xerox's transition from an unprofitable paper-based solutions provider to a service based, financially viable enterprise (Forbes, 2016). Additionally, Burns' leadership extends beyond Xerox as she has been serving on the boards of other companies and organizations such as American Express, Exxon Mobile Corporation and National Academy Foundation. On top of that, in 2010, President of the US Barrack Obama appointed Burns vice chair of the export council (Ursula Burns, 2016a).

However, given Burns's background, one could hardly assume that she would rise to be one of the most prominent female business leaders in the world. Burns, born in 1958 in New York was one of the three children raised by a single mother. During childhood, Burns and her family were living in the projects in a very dangerous part of New York where they had to fight numerous adversities – poverty, social inequalities and dangers of everyday life. As Burns herself admits, people pointed out to her that she had three obstacles in her life: "I *was black. I was a girl. And I was poor."* (Chicago Tribute, 2014). Despite those facts, Burns's mother was able to send Burns to a private catholic high-school and insisted on her children pursuing higher education. Later on, with the help from an equal chances opportunity program, Ursula was admitted to the engineering degree at New York Polytechnic and graduated in 1980. In the same year, she started her carrier at Xerox as a summer intern. Burns accepted the offer from Xerox to join the program that paid for her graduate studies and offer full time position after school was over (Ursula Burns, 2016a). In 1981, Burns graduated with a master degree from Columbia University and joined the company as an engineer. During the first years of her carrier, Burns was mainly focused on engineering; however, she later on started to be more involved in business and social aspects of work. By 1990, Burns was holding different positions in planning and product development along with being an executive assistant to then-president of marketing (Ursula Burns, 2016b). Later on in her carrier, Burns tightened her relationship to the top management level of the company by becoming an

executive assistant to then-CEO. Between 1990 and 2000 Burns rotated as the head of several departments, gaining more experience in working in international settings and learning about various aspects of business. During the early 2000s Xerox corporation was undergoing turmoil and financial problems which almost ended with Burns leaving the company, however, CEO Mulcahy convinced Burns to stay and in 2002 she became the first president of Business Group Operations. Finally, in 2009, Burns assumed the CEO position and later on was appointed the chairman of Xerox Corporation (2016b).

Burns's life-story and her leadership journey are interesting for the main two reasons – first of all, throughout her life, she had to face seemingly severe adversities and barriers. In common understanding, those obstacles should have prevented Burns from ascending to the position of authority, however, that was not the case and Burns exhibited a strong sense of self-efficacy and confidence. Secondly, Burns's lifelong carrier and leadership journey took place within one company which would give the clarity and better understanding of her story, the influences and environment that had affected her leadership development.

1.4. Problem Formulation

As mentioned earlier, aspiring female leaders are facing a number of external and internal barriers in their leadership development. Fassinger (2002) noted that the self-concept issues in form of low self-confidence and underestimation of women's talent and abilities are detrimental to their career success. She also asserts (Fassinger, 2002) that low self-efficacy perception is a major distortion of female self-concept that women have to combat if they want to persist and achieve success in leadership or other male-dominated fields.   In the context of leadership development, exhibiting low levels of self-efficacy should be alarming as the overwhelming number of past research has shown that one of the most crucial characteristics of being a successful leader is exhibiting a high level of leader self-efficacy beliefs (Hannah, Avolio & Luthans, 2008). As stated in Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of leadership behavior and is also directly correlated with the kind of career path on chooses. Thus, it's not surprising that leader self-efficacy enhancement was incorporated as a tool in leadership development programs as a very effective technique to equip individuals with skills and beliefs that would favorably influence their progression in leadership

(McCormick, 2002). The importance of leader self-efficacy development might be especially valid for addressing gender leadership gap because as noticed by Ely et al. (2011), standard leadership development programs seem not to work for women as they do not address the issue of seeing oneself and being perceived by others as a leader. Moreover, such programs usually do not account for the early-life experiences of socialization and sex-typing that have an impact on the later carrier choices and leadership journey (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Given the central role of self-efficacy beliefs in becoming a leader, there has been surprisingly little published in the matter of developing efficacy beliefs in women (Mellor, 2006), and there is a need for greater theory building in the field of leader self-efficacy development for women (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

One of the promising ways for contribution to the field of leader self-efficacy development in women is the biographical, life- history approach. As asserted by Walter (2013), biographical analysis can be utilize to explore different aspects of leadership, especially for understanding leader efficacy and achievement, thus it can contribute and enrich the field of leader self-efficacy development. Life-history approach may serve a learning tool that enables the researcher to learn about leader self-efficacy development form the lives of exemplary leaders – their early life experiences, external influences and personal attitudes that shaped their leadership development. The life story approach is in line with Bandura's notion that the development of self-efficacy is a complex process that spans over the life of an individual (1997) and its accomplished by evaluation of the information from four main sources: mastery experiences – pursuing and succeeding in a specific task; vicarious experiences – acquiring efficacy by social modeling of others; verbal persuasion – verbal encouragement and praise received from others; psychological and physiological – feeling positive and empowering emotions. Furthermore, the process is embedded in what Bandura calls triadic reciprocal determinism – the interplay between environmental, individual and behavioral factor that influence and determine an individual's life outcomes.

The overarching objective of this thesis is to contribute to the field of leader-self efficacy development by applying the biographical analysis of the life story of Ursula Burns to discover the process she went through in order to establish strong sense of leader self-efficacy and understand the external influences that assisted her in the process. The case of Ursula Burns is especially interesting as her life's events and experiences offer fertile ground to understand how and why, despite the circumstances, she rose to be one of the world's most prominent business leader.

Discovered knowledge has a potential to inform and extend leader self-efficacy development model as well as contribute to the usability of biographical methods in leadership development studies. Moreover, such an analysis can be an *"indispensable tool in analyzing the shaping influences in leadership" and* contribute to better development and training of leaders (Shoup, 2005).

In order to achieve the thesis' objective the following research question will be pursued:

How have specific events, external influences and personal characteristics embedded in the life-history of Ursula Burns influenced and shaped her leader self-efficacy development?
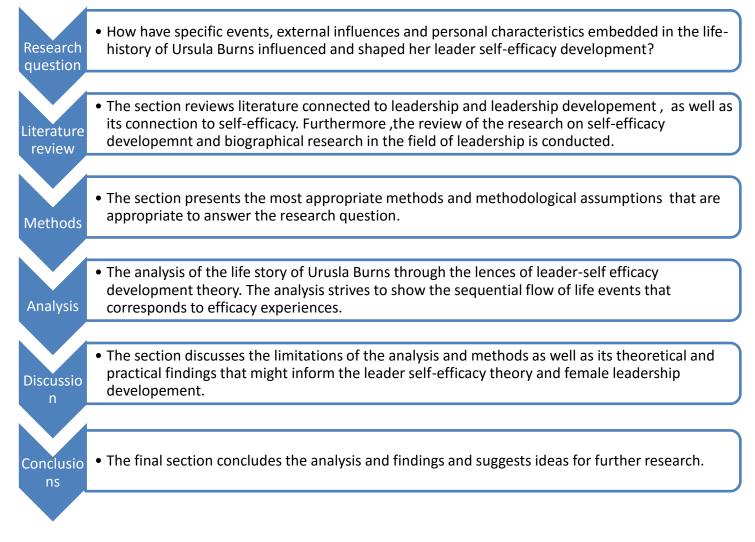
In order to answer the proposed research question, one critical assumption must be made, namely that in fact, Ursula Burns has strong leader self-efficacy beliefs about herself. Due to understandable factors, it cannot be directly measured by sending Burns an efficacy scale questionnaire, but given Burns' own statement about herself it is fair to assume that she does in fact possess a strong sense of leader self-efficacy.

1.5. Theoretical overview

The theoretical structure of the thesis is heavily rooted in the work of Bandura's social-cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory which allows the researcher to examine the reciprocity of environment, behavior and personal agency in the leader self-efficacy creation over the life span. The self-efficacy model, which describes the self-efficacy development process through the evaluation of four efficacy sources (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and mental/physiological states), will be the main theory through which the life events and experiences will be analyzed in order to establish the understanding of how the leader self-efficacy might have been developed in Ursula Burns. Moreover, in order to accomplish a more accurate picture of the influences of external circumstances that played the part in the process, the elements of triadic reciprocal determinism will be utilized – namely the shaping influences that environment and personal agency might have on the life course of Burns and her leader self-efficacy development. In analysis, the life-history approach is not treated as a strong

theoretical underpinning but rather as an overall form of the analysis – its structure, the sequential flow of life events and the gateway to the life-span, global understanding of the leader self-efficacy shaping forces during the life of an individual.

1.6. Structure overview

The following graph presents an overall structure of the thesis with a brief description of the purpose of each part:

Research question
- How have specific events, external influences and personal characteristics embedded in the life-history of Ursula Burns influenced and shaped her leader self-efficacy development?

Literature review
- The section reviews literature connected to leadership and leadership developement , as well as its connection to self-efficacy. Furthermore ,the review of the research on self-efficacy developemnt and biographical research in the field of leadership is conducted.

Methods
- The section presents the most appropriate methods and methodological assumptions that are appropriate to answer the research question.

Analysis
- The analysis of the life story of Urusla Burns through the lences of leader-self efficacy development theory. The analysis strives to show the sequential flow of life events that corresponds to efficacy experiences.

Discussion
- The section discusses the limitations of the analysis and methods as well as its theoretical and practical findings that might inform the leader self-efficacy theory and female leadership developement.

Conclusions
- The final section concludes the analysis and findings and suggests ideas for further research.

Graph.1. Structure overview

Chapter 2 - Theory review

2.1. Leadership and Leadership development

Before the comprehensive literature review of current research and trends in leadership development field and the aspect of leader self-efficacy development, it is necessary to define the leadership itself. As articulated by Day and Harrison (2007), leadership studies *"lack of a single, concrete, and widely accepted view of the term leadership".* The definition of the term seems to change depending on the perspective through which one looks on leadership and it cannot be defined simply because it has been evolving over time. Day and Harrison (2007) propose two main categories of leadership definitions: the traditional, individual perspective that describes a single individual in charge of a team; and a more collective and shared form of leadership where people set direction and create alignment as the result of collective agreement.

The evolving understanding and rich research in the field of leadership has contributed to vast typology and kinds of leadership. One of the most traditional views of leadership –*The Great Man theory* which represents trait theories of leadership, and sees a leader as an exceptional man with special traits and qualities that are inborn (Bolden et al., 2011). This view is very static and limiting with its applications to leadership development as it does not include the possibility of actually acquiring leadership qualities over time. Other theories which gained recognition are *contingency theories of leadership*, which assume that a leader can tailor his/her behavior to the specific context by analyzing individual leader characteristics and situations (Bolden et al., 2011). Another set of leadership theories – *leadership behavior theories* focus on the way a leader can increase the performance of employees. As proposed by literature, such leadership can take a form of autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire leadership (Storey, 2010). Previously presented leadership models tend to portrait a leader as an instrumental rationalist, who pragmatically weighs up a particular situation against the options and adapts his/her behavior accordingly. In order to add emphasis to emotional and human aspects of leadership, the *transformational* and *charismatic* leadership theories were proposed. These approaches emphasize a leader's ability to empower and motivate

followers as well as to add a moral aspect of being a leader and they are the most effective during the time of change and uncertainty (Bolden et al. 2011).

In his theoretically rich article – *Leadership: Current theories, research and future directions*, Avolio and colleagues (2009) describe more recent developments in leadership research such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, shared leadership, e-leadership, spiritual leadership etc.. It is not a purpose of this review to present all the currents developments, but the types worthy of mention, especially in the context of this thesis, which deals with more genuine and psychological aspects of leadership (in a form of leadership-enhancing leader self-efficacy) are: authentic leadership and cognitive aspects of leadership. The authentic leadership theory might be seen as a natural progression of transformation leadership theory. Some researchers argue that some of the transformational leaders were not necessarily authentic or genuine, thus, in order to address this problem of practice, the authentic theory was proposed (Avolio et al., 2009). The concept of authentic leadership was introduced in 2003 by Luthans and Avolio as a result of the integration of the work from both positive organizational behavior field and the life-span leadership development work. The authentic leadership does not have one agreed upon definition; but it might be conceptualized as a process that combines both positive psychological capacities and organizational context which result in greater self-awareness and positive behaviors that facilitate positive self-development in leaders as well as followers (Avolio et al., 2009).

Another relevant leadership type described by Avolio et al. (2009) is the integrative model of cognition and leadership. The model was inspired by the growing need and research in the fields of self-theory, meta-cognition and implicit leadership theory (Avolio et al., 2009). One example of such leadership is Prototypical Leadership which is based on the work of social identity formation and states that *"followers may be more drawn to leaders who are exemplars of groups they belong to or want to join"* (Avolio et al., 2009). More recent research on the topic focuses on how implicit theories and prototypes affect the perception of the leaders and followers and how authentic leadership development correlates to cognitive studies.

After the very brief review of leadership definitions, I will now turn to the review of the leadership development literature. In recent years, leadership development literature has been growing which can be measured by the steep increase in conceptual and empirical research published in business, management and psychology journals likewise (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Besides, a number of well-

acclaimed books have been written on the subject of leadership development such as *The Center of Creative Leadership Handbook* (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010) or *Integrated Approach to Leader* Development (Day et al., 2009).

In his widely cited article on leadership development, Day (2011) has divided the theoretical perspectives on leadership development into the leader development and leadership development. In his view (Day, 2011), leader development is a more traditional approach that is focused on building an individual's capabilities and includes enhancing leader self-management capabilities (e.g. self-awareness and ability to learn), social capabilities (e.g. relationship building and communication skills) and work facilitation capabilities such as strategic thinking and management skills. As opposed to leader development, leadership development is rather seen as the development of social structures and processes and it is related to the notion of teambuilding and organization development. Day and Harrison (2007) have proposed the model of leadership development that incorporates organizational levels as well as levels of individual development. The rationale behind the model states that as leaders move up through the corporate hierarchy, there is a need to adjust one's identity from individual to more relational and collective in order to engage across corporate's boundaries and establish a collective leadership identity (Day & Harrison, 2007).

On the practical level, standard leadership development programs focuses on a number of well-researched and empirically tested methods. Leadership programs are believed to work best when numerous methods are implied at the same time. The most popular best-practices used as a leadership developments tools are (Day & Halpin, 2001): 360-degree feedback; coaching, job assignment, mentoring.

Other types of methods used in leadership development programs are utilization of networks, self-reflection, action learning and outdoor challenges (Day and Halpin, 2001). Generally these best-practices aim at either enhancing practical leadership skills or developing deeper self-knowledge and self-reflection and they are rooted in two types of research on leadership development. The practical, skill development methods are the outcomes of experimental learning theories (DeRue & Myers, 2014).

In a nutshell, experimental learning theories see leadership development as a positive outcome after completing a novel, challenging task that requires managing change across a company's boundaries and different groups of people (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). The other line of research has identified the number of desired outcomes of leadership development in form of increased self-knowledge, skills, motivation and abilities (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

However, despite undeniable popularity of leadership studies and research, leadership practice is experiencing a certain crisis (DeRue & Myers, 2014). Past research has shown that there are not enough potential leaders in the career pipeline as demand overruns supply and general trust in leaders has alarmingly declined (DeRue & Myers, 2014). In an attempt to explain the potential source of the crisis, DeRue and Myers (2014) suggest that majority of published research on leadership development is narrowed to the individual leader's knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) as developing these aspects is the primary focus of human resource department; additionally, researchers have linked a leader's knowledge, skills and abilities to the leader's effectiveness. However, as argued by DeRue and Myers (2014)*, "it is possible that individuals are developing the KSAs necessary for effective leadership, but are choosing not to take on leadership roles because they do not see themselves as leaders".* Thus, there seems to be a great potential for closing the leadership gap and extend the leadership literature in seeing leadership development not merely as the development of KSA but also as the development of individual's self-concept and identity, motivation to lead and mental models of leadership (2014). Furthermore, the traditional approach to leadership development might be inadequate especially for addressing the gender gap in leadership as women typically do not ascent to leadership positions as they do not see themselves as leaders (Snook et al., 2014)

The recent developments in the leadership literature offer a potential solution for the problem of practice expressed before. Emerging perspectives on leadership development deliberately links leadership and identity, calling the attention to the gap between "doing" and "being" a leader (Snook, Ibarra & Ramo, 2010). As explained by Ibarra et al. (2014), identity is a construct derived from attaching meaning to oneself by self and others. Those identities are based on social identities as well as personal and character traits and might be defined as *"culmination of an individual's values, experiences, and self-perceptions"* (Day & Harrison, 2007). The underlying theoretical assumptions about identity development are rooted in the work of Erikson (1959), Loevinger (1976) and Kegan (1982) which in general, posit that individual identity develops in the course of challenging context and the integration of experiences with the self which leads to the self-conceptualization (Day & Harrison, 2007). In the work environment, professional identities emerge through social interaction and are not a static construct, but they evolve under the influence of time, meaningful feedback and experiences *"that allow people to gain insight about their central and enduring preferences, talents and values"* (Snook, Ibarra &

Ramo, 2010). It is also crucial to notice that professional identities are not merely a construct derived from the past or negotiated through social interaction, but they also hold the possibilities of future selves – dreams, aspirations and fears associated with who one would like to become (Snook, Ibarra & Ramo, 2010). Additionally, identity is a multidimensional construct as an individual possesses and exhibit different types of identify depending on the social context (Day & Harrison, 2007). In the same vein, leader identity is a sub-identity and it relates to the way a leader thinks of himself/herself as a leader. Leader identity is a very important component of successful leadership as it gives a sense of understanding; it defines the major objectives as well as personal strength and limitation (Day & Harrison, 2007).

Leader identity development might be seen and understood through different paradigms which imply slight differences in the definition as well as the processes of identity development and change. In their comprehensive literature review on the subject matter, Ibarra and colleagues (2014) present three different paradigms and theoretical lenses and their effect on leader identity development. In the view of *Identity Theory* and structural interactionists, leadership is seen as a social role and is acquired by the role an individual takes on or is ascribed by others. The social role is the "hat" that a person wears according to the situation and it represents socially defined expectations about a particular kind of behavior appropriate for the role. The degree of the influence the role has on a person is dependent on the strength of the role's internalization. According to this perspective, leadership identity development might be understood by the examination of socialization processes and motivational factors that led individuals to assume leadership roles. New roles are acquired by *"identifying with role models, experimenting with provisional identities, and evaluating experiments against internal standards and external feedback"(Ibarra et al. ,2014).* Secondly, *Social Identity Theory* sees leadership as social categorization. As opposed to previous definition, leadership is not defined through the social role but through the social categories and group-level processes. In the same vein, successful leadership is seen as the potential of the leader to induce followers to be perceived as a leader. In essence, leader identity is defined by the social group that a leader belongs to and when activated, it results in a so-called depersonalization – classification of people now as individuals but rather as in-group/out-group members. It has been argued that this very process promotes the emergence of prototypical leaders who embody the values and identity of the group and produce collective norms of behavior, positive attitudes among the in-group, cooperation, empathy and mutual influence (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). Lastly, *Social*

Constructionism perceive*s* leadership as identity work and describes leadership as being claimed or granted in a given social interaction, thus leadership is partially defined by the social perceptions of the individual. The process of leader identity development entails a set of relational and social processes through which individual starts to see himself/herself and is perceived by other as a leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). The development is facilitated by the positive spirals of being granted leadership roles which results in increased confidence and motivation to assume more leadership roles in the future (Ibarra et al., 2014).

Leader identity development as a tool for leadership emergence and development is not only helpful in addressing the leadership crisis, but it might be also handy in dealing with lower representation of women in the position of authority. According to Ibarra et al. (2014) women's situation in leadership might be considerably improved by fostering identity change so that women will perceive themselves as leaders.

Closely connected to leader identity development is the notion of self-efficacy development as a tool to enhance leadership emergence. Self-efficacy is an influential aspect of self-concept and identity and as claimed by Bandura (1997) is the most pervasive and important mechanism of human agency, influencing goal orientation, motivation and persistence. There is little surprise that leadership development research has started to show interest of the usability of self-efficacy as a tool for leadership development (Hannah et al. 2008; McCormick et al., 2002; Gist, 1987; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011; Hoyt, 2005; Paglis & Green, 2002; Hackett & Betz, 1981; Hackett, 1995). In the view of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), efficacy is created through four distinct efficacy mechanisms – master experiences, social modeling, verbal persuasion and emotional and physiological states. Before in-depth review of the concept, I will first review the research on self-efficacy and its connection to female leaders and leader self-efficacy development.

2.2. Leadership, self-efficacy and women

The multidisciplinary nature of academic inquiry in the field of leadership studies has enabled the research to drift towards the concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy theory, introduced and developed by Bandura (1997) - one of the most prominent psychologist of the 20th century, states that self-efficacy is the "beliefs in one's

abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands" (Wood & Bandura, 1989) and it has gained a recognition as the most prominent ingredient of the effective and successful leadership (McCormick, Tanguma & Lopez-Forment, 2002). Hannah et al. (2008) calls for distinguishing between leadership self-efficacy and leader efficacy. In her view, leadership efficacy occurs on the group level, whereas leader self-efficacy is developed on the individual level and is needed for leadership development (Hannah et al., 2008). Following this reasoning, this thesis focuses on leader self-efficacy development in women which will enable the understanding of the leader efficacy development on the micro-level of an individual. Machida and Schaubroeck (2011) offer a definition of leader self-efficacy as individual's confidence, abilities, knowledge and skills needed to successfully lead others. They also point out that potentially; a lot of factors contribute to leader development such as the motivation to lead, learning orientation, individual identity development and readiness; however self-efficacy is critical and very powerful component in leader development (Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). That is not surprising; given that numerous studies consistently point out the evident leveraging effect of self-efficacy on leader development and effectiveness (McCormick, Tanguma & Lopez-Forment, 2002).

A broad body of research has proven that effective leaders are individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy that fosters leader's engagement, flexibility and adaptability across challenging tasks associated with holding a leadership position (Hannah et al., 2008). Leader self-efficacy has been proven to positively affect the rating of leader potential, motivation to lead, attempts to take on leadership roles, organizational commitment (Paglis & Green, 2002) as well as overall organizational performance (Wood and Bandura, 1989). Some scholars suggest that what have been always considered as effective leadership might as well be described as efficacious leadership (McCormick, Tanguma & Lopez-Forment, 2002). The statement is also supported by the strong relation of leader self-efficacy to the Big Five trait theory (Hendricks & Payne, 2007) and a positive correlation of self-efficacy with the notion of self-esteem, confidence and internal locus of control (Paglis, 1999) which has also been proven to greatly affect leadership. According to research conducted by McCormick et al. (2002), leader self-efficacy helps with distinguishing leaders and non-leaders. Furthermore, as pointed out by Chemers et al. (2000), leader self-efficacy contributes to team effectives, successful leadership and team performance.

Given the central role of leader-self efficacy in becoming and being a leader it should be alarming that women constantly exhibit lower levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). This fact, combined with the awareness that women hold significantly lower number of positions of power implies the questions whether those two aspects are related to each other. In Bandura's view (1997) the efficacy information that a person is exposed to is affected by personal, social and situational factors with gender being the most influential of those factors. Potentially, cultural and gender roles that associate being a leader with masculine traits might prevent developing leader-self efficacy in women as they will engage only in behaviors that are socially perceived as gender-appropriate (Hackett, 1995). As argued by McCormick et al. (2002), if women do not engage in leadership positions they will not gain enough confidence for being a leader and will never engage in leadership activities despite their genuine capabilities. This implies that women's career advancement might be hampered by the lack of confidence – the internal psychological factor proven to play a pivotal role in professional development (Northouse, 2001) and self-debilitating self-concept in the form of e.g. low leader self-efficacy perceptions (Fassinger, 2002). Gist (1987) in his seminal work also suggests that equality in the workplace might be prevented by the individual's weak sense of self-efficacy that is not only an internal barrier to success but also hampers the ability to cope with external barriers to advancement. Hackett and Betz (1981) attempted to shed some light on the problem as well. In their view, women not only had lower level of efficacy but also did not pursue leadership careers as their individual capabilities, talents and interest were not fully utilized. According to the article, women faced those problems as a result of socialization which *"constricts their consideration of options to traditional roles and occupations"* (Hackett & Betz, 1981). They propose a model in which they describe possible inhibiting impacts that socialization has on the self-efficacy creation and they call for better understanding of mechanism which operate during the self-efficacy development in women.

As a matter of fact, self-efficacy construct was extensively researched during the past 25 years and more than 10,000 journal articles were published in the field of organizational studies and psychology (Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, & Rich, 2007). During the literature search on leader self-efficacy development in women, extensive research was found concerning leader self-efficacy development in women in academia – especially in STEM field (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000; Isaac et al., 2012; Kodama & Dugan, 2013). Other studies, which also addressed leader self-efficacy creation in women, utilized

college or university students as a sample (Hoyt, 2005; McCormick, 1999; McCormick et al., 2002). Although very informative, these lines of research do not explicitly connect to the problem of this thesis which is female leader self-efficacy development in business context. The studies that satisfy those requirements are rather scarce; however, the most relevant studies were identified in literature review in Gibbs (2015) and are presented below in the table:

Researcher	Study design	Sample	Findings
Powell (2011)	Qualitative, interpretivist study which used open ended interviews methods	14 female owners of SME	Formal and informal mentoring positively correlates with leadership self-efficacy; Self-efficacy perceptions grow as experience increase
Younger (2002)	Positivistic, qualitative study which used different kinds of efficacy scales and questionnaires. Data analysis conducted using statistical methods.	213 private and public women leaders	Self-efficacy strongly correlated with self-esteem, education. Strong connection between self-efficacy and transformational leadership
Garmon (2008)	Phenomenological study which used open ended interviews	20 executive female leaders of Credit Union	The most influential ways to increase leader self-efficacy were verbal persuasion and social modeling

Table 1. Research on leader self-efficacy in women

These researches shed some light on the specificity of leader self-efficacy development in women but in more general sense, females undergoing different processes in their leader self-efficacy creations as they are exposed to number of constraining internal and external factors that might implicitly or explicitly negatively affect the leader-self efficacy enhancement in women (Hackett & Betz, 1981). Thus,

in order to help females overcome the constraining sense of lower self-efficacy, which in itself is seen as the most debilitating internal factor (Fassinger, 2002), the following thesis's main objective is to deepen the understanding of leader self-efficacy development in women over the life-span in order to inform the theory about the nature of the process and suggest the possible ways of how the issue of enhancing leader self-efficacy might be addressed. The underlying, theoretical hypothesis of the undertaking is rooted in the work of Bandura (1997) who suggests that increased task self-efficacy will lead to the improved performance. In the light of the following thesis, improving leader self-efficacy in women should result in enhancing leader identity, higher motivation to lead, resilience, leadership-related goal selection and a greater number of leadership attempts that will help women in progression to the more senior leadership positions in the workplace.

2.3. Bandura's Self-efficacy theory

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as *""people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances".* The concept is deeply embedded in Bandura's social- cognitive theory, which describes triadic reciprocal determinism between behavior, cognitive and personal factors as well as environmental events. Those interacting determinants influence and affect one another in a reciprocal manner (Bandura, 1997). In this view of self and its relationship to the external world, internal personal factor (cognition, affective and biological events); behavior; and environment *"all operate as an interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally"* (1997). That however, does not mean that all of those three determinants have the equal strength; in fact, each determinant will vary in its influence across different activities and under different circumstances. Moreover, the reciprocal effect of the triadic system does not occur simultaneously as a holistic entity but it usually takes time for the determinant to exert its influence (1997). Human agency, of which self-efficacy is a strong example, is an intentional action that aims at reaching a certain goal. Even though human adaptation and change are rooted in a complex sociocultural structure and the external circumstances may influence individual's life course, individuals are influential contributors to what they do and become (1997). Moreover, human agency entails an ability to influence one's life and external circumstances by behaving differently from what the external forces dictate (1997). The ability to

produce desired results by individual actions is a powerful personal resource that shapes the individual life throughout the life cycle. Developmental analysis of self-efficacy posits that *"paths that lives take are shaped by the interplay of diverse influences in ever changing societies"* (1997). The theory does not consider the environmental as a fixed entity, but rather as a *"varied succession of life events in which individuals play a role in shaping the course of their personal development"*. Each individual is faced with different kinds of biological changes, normative social events or other unpredictable occurrences as an individual life is historically situated and socially constructed by the environment that presets specific threats, opportunities and constraints (1997). In a nutshell, people's success in any given environment depends on the ability to take advantage of the given opportunity or effectively manage the constrains; there is also an aspect of fortuity to the life course which may alter the development of one's life, however the overall influence of the fortuity is normally negotiated by the individual control. The developmental analysis of self-efficacy examine the efficacy development from early childhood, the familial influences, experiences of education and difficult transitions during the adolescence thus focusing attention on the importance of life-long cultivation of personal agency and the effects it has on the life of an individual (Bandura, 1997). In the similar fashion, the thesis objective is to analyze the life-long process of leader-self efficacy development as it might provide valid insights of why and how Ursula Burns was able to build strong leader self-efficacy and ascent to top-level leadership position.

The concept of self-efficacy is related to the notion of self-confidence and resilience; however Bandura explains the difference between the two. Self- confidence is defined as the firmness or the strength of belief without specifying the direction of the goal. In contrast, perception of self-efficacy implies that the goal has been set (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, as suggested by Gist and Mitchell (1992) self-confidence is a general belief whereas self-efficacy is a task specific and perceived ability to achieve the goal. Another important concept is the resilience, which is defined as the ability to bounce back and effectively deal with adversity and it highly correlates with self-efficacy (Shwarzer & Warner, 2013). However, as Bandura suggests, self-efficacy differs from resilience as self-efficacy might be present without the effect of stressors (Bandura, 1997).

According to Bandura (1997), people's perceived self-efficacy will determine the decisions and actions undertaken by individual as the human behavior is heavily motivated by cognitive self-influence, and levels of self-efficacy will determine

whether a person has self-enhancing or self-debilitating thoughts (Bandura, 1997). In the eye of the theory, self-efficacy is the strongest mechanism of self-influence and self-regulation that plays pivotal role in motivation and without it individuals would have little incentive to act on achieving their goals or amending undesired situations. Self – efficacy affects motivation and goal selection as well as impacts the amount of effort and time one invests in achieving the goal (Bandura, 1997). Generally, individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy are motivated, persistent, goal-directed, resilient, and clear thinkers under pressure (McCormick, Tanguma & Lopez-Forment, 2002).

According to Bandura (1997), self – efficacy is created by the four main sources of information: the mastery experience, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and psychological and emotional states.

The mastery experiences

Bandura (1997) describes the mastery experience as the acquisition and integration of the task-specific knowledge or the ability over time. It further posits that the mastery experiences are the strongest and the most influential source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The aftermath of mastery experiences influences the decision to perform a task, the amount of effort applied and the level persistence exerted in the process of achieving the goal (Bandura, 1997). As Bandura (1997) states: "[Mastery experiences are] the most authentic evidence of whether the individual is capable of successfully completing the task". However, it is also crucial to notice that mastery experiences will not affect different individuals in the same manner as people differ in their interpretative biases. A number of factors might affect the interpretation and the integration of mastery experiences as the self-efficacy source; for instance: the perceived difficulty of the task, how hard one works for it, how much help one received, the conditions under which one performs, one's emotional and psychical state at the time, one's rate of improvement over time and biases in how one monitors and recalls accomplishment (Bandura, 1997). According to Rosenthal (1995), women are especially inclined to exhibit such an interpretation bias as they are generally prone to attribute their success to the help of others and luck which disables the positive impact a mastery experience would normally have on a person. Additionally, because women possess generally lower levels of efficacy and confidence than men, they are more prone to withdraw themselves from completing a mastery experience.

The vicarious experiences

Vicarious experiences as the source of self-efficacy is "mediated through modeled attainments" (Bandura, 1997) and it occurs in the process of social modeling. The self- efficacy levels are affected through social comparison process when an individual compares himself/herself against other in the social context (Bandura, 1997). Vicarious experiences are considered to be the second strongest source of self-efficacy. Moreover, it was also debated that virtually anything might be learnt by using social modeling and vicarious experiences instead if direct experience (Bandura, 1986). In social modeling, the observer is influenced by the way the competent model deals with the demands by transmitting relevant knowledge and behaviors (Bandura, 1997). Namely, observing others while they succeed or fail helps in interpreting one's own ability to perform a given task. The level of influence the model has on the observer is mediated by the level of perceived similarity between the two (1997). In the context of leader self-efficacy development, women's vicarious experiences are limited as they are exposed to few role models (women in leadership positions) during their lifetimes, thus the process of social comparison is limited (Hackett & Betz, 1981). This should be especially alarming as the past research suggest that vicarious experiences might be the strongest efficacy information for woman's leader efficacy development (Garmon, 2008; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000)

Verbal persuasion

Verbal persuasion, also referred to as social persuasion is the third most influential source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Verbal persuasion is the process of conveying inspiration massages which promote motivation for success and foster the endurance necessary in completing the task without premature abandoning of the goal (Bandura, 1997). Social persuasion may strengthen an individual's self-belief in their capabilities in achieving the given task, however as marked by Bandura (1997): *"may be limited in its power to create enduring increases in perceived efficacy, but it can bolster self-change if the positive appraisal is within realistic bounds"* (Bandura, 1997). According to Wood and Bandura (1989), it is important that people receive realistic encouragement, as it is prerequisite to overcoming self—doubt and exerting more effort to become successful. Thus, receiving a praise and awareness that somebody believes in one's potential has the power to improve one's self-efficacy. The most common sources of verbal persuasion according to Bandura (1977) are verbal encouragement, mentoring, coaching and feedback monitoring. Similarly with the case of vicarious experiences, women may lack a person in their life to convey

verbally encourage them to take on leadership roles. Moreover, as Hackett and Betz (1981) suggest, the verbal massaging that a woman receives across her life span may actively discourage her from taking on the leadership role.

Psychological and emotional states

Lastly, Bandura's theory (1997) offers the fourth source of self-efficacy – the arousal of psychological and emotional states. In addition to vicarious experiences, Bandura argues, observing others might affect the emotional and psychological states of an observer which in effect leads to the greater sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Even though, the research found that arousal of psychological and emotional states is the weakest source of self-efficacy (Hagen et al., 1998), Bandura still distinguishes it as a separate source of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The positive psychological and emotional states can increase the perception of competences and abilities, however, as posited by Conger and Kanungo (1988), the aversive arousal caused by stress, anxiety, fear, depression and so forth have a negative effect on perceived self-efficacy. Moreover, Bandura argues (1997), the arousal states are the most effective when the receiver fully personalized the perspective of another.

Bandura's theory has gained broad academic recognition and a number of different contributors. In order to have a better overview of the process of self-efficacy creation on an individual level, it should be beneficial to add to this review the informing work of Gist and Mitchell (1992) who in their model "Self-efficacy – performance relationship" described both some additional efficacy cues that affect efficacy information as well as assessment processes that an individual undergoes in their self-efficacy orchestration.

Assessment processes

According to Gist's model (1992), the first type of efficacy assessment is the analysis of task requirements. In the process of task assessment, the presumptions of what it takes to perform at a certain level are formed. The importance of the task assessment is especially important if the performed task is novel or it was only observed – for example by utilizing social modeling process (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). On the other hand, if the task was already performed by an individual in the past, the assessment will be derived from the person's interpretation of the causes of past performance levels.

The second and most typical assessment in the efficacy judgments is the attribution analysis of experience (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The attribution process is the evaluation of why a particular level of performance occurred. Fiske and Taylor (1991) propose fallowing definition of attribution theory: ""*Attribution theory* deals with

how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events. It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgment". One of the most prominent scholars in attribution theory, Heider (1958) offers the general distinction of how people find the causality of events. In his view people may hold internal attribution, which assigns the cause of behavior to some internal factors e. g. personality, skills or knowledge. On the other hand, people who hold external attribution, view the causes of the behavior as external and outside of the control of the person (Heider, 1958). Additionally, Weiner (1985) proposed that attribution may be further categorized as stable/non-stable and controllable/uncontrollable. The internal or external attributions in self-efficacy judgments (i.e. effort, ability, luck, task difficulty) are well recognized determinants of self-efficacy (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The difference between attributions and self-efficacy judgments arises from the fact that attributions are made based on the causes of past behavior, whereas self-efficacy refers to future capabilities (Silver et al., 1991). However, as argued by Gist and Mitchel (1992), attributions derived from past experiences are useful in judging future performance.

Personal experiences are the strongest source of information for attribution analysis, the causes gained through social modeling or persuasion might also affect the interpretation. Those two antecedents are a necessary but not sufficient source for forming self-efficacy belief, thus the third aspect – the assessment personal/situation constrains must be considered. In this process, an individual must consider personal factors such as the level of anxiety, depression, desire or available effort as well as a situation factor like distraction and competing demands that could influence future performance (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

These three assessment processes provide interpretative data which is used in an estimation of orchestration capacity, namely individual's judgment of her/his self-efficacy. The perceived self-efficacy will in turn affect the behavioral choices such as effort, goal level and persistence, thus affecting the performance (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The last ingredient of the model is the feedback. As demonstrated by Bandura and Cervone (1986) feedback can strongly influence self-efficacy, especially when its provided by the credible, trustworthy and prestigious person (Bandura, 1977). As briefly described in the previous section, the assessment process that woman undergo in her efficacy orchestration differs from the one of a man. The main differences stems for the differences in attributional assessment which is disadvantageous for women (women do not fully gain self-efficacy after successful completion of the task as they tend to ascribe their success to luck and help or other

and not to their abilities) (Rosenthal, 1995). Additionally, women also experience lower levels of self-esteem and confidence than may exaggerate the perception of personal constrains during the assessment process. Overall, the differences in assessment process between men and women may explain why women seem not to build strong sense of efficacy (even when exposed to the same kind of efficacy information).

Efficacy cues

Gist and Mitchell (1992) did not directly include the efficacy cues in their model but they have provided an informing overview of the external and internal causes that influences self-efficacy. The importance of the examination of internal and external causes affecting self-efficacy is best expressed by Bandura (1986) who claims that each of the four efficacy experiences (mastery experience, social modeling, verbal persuasion, emotional/physiological arousal) are very complex and each of those experiences comprises of external and internal information that affect self- efficacy. Additionally, the external and internal cues that men and women experience may differ from each other. The affect that efficacy cues have on self-efficacy is best explained by Gist and Mitchel (1992), and the idea that: "External factors appear to affect self-efficacy indirectly through their influence on internal variables, such as motivation, ability, performance strategies, and so on". Gist and Mitchell (1992) uses taxonomy taken from attribution theory in order to classify different types of efficacy cues. In their view, efficacy cues might be external or internal; easily changed e.g. mood, whereas other can be resistant to change e.g. group interdependence. Finally, efficacy cues might be under the personal control e.g. effort, while others may be solely under the control of organization e.g. financial resources.

External cues

According to Gist and Mitchell (1992), the first external cue that affects self-efficacy is the nature of a task itself and its evaluation by an individual. Although a task might be potentially evaluated from numerous perspectives, individuals might analyze aspects such as the degree of interdependence or the amount of available resources to perform the task (Bandura, 1988). Generally, as argued in Cervone (1985), self-efficacy is enhanced when a person focuses on doable parts of the task as opposed to formidable components. Another external cue proposed by Gist and Mitchell (1992) is a task's complexity. The complexity of the tasks is comprised of the number of component parts involved in completing the task, uncertainty and sequence of steps needed to accomplish the task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Previous research proven that self-efficacy might be manipulated by changing the possible attainments of the task.

Self-efficacy perceptions might also be affected by the task's environment. The amount of distractions, risk or danger in the setting – both physical and psychological; influence self-efficacy as they might increase anxiety, thoughts of failure and other manifestations of stress. Another external cue is watching others and it tightly relates to the efficacy information derived from vicarious experiences that is based on the premise that individuals judge their own abilities in comparison to others (Bandura, 1988). Modeling is especially important when the information on how to correctly perform the given task is not acquired by the past performance. Additionally, task familiarity and observation provide the amount of ability and motivation required by the task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Lastly, external verbal persuasion including feedback and instructions about abilities can influence self-efficacy (1992).

Internal cues

Information from vicarious and personal experiences are directly accessible to the person, but in order to make effective use of those, individual needs to possess adequate estimate of ability and suitable performance strategies (Bandura, 1988). Performance strategies may include behavioral strategies such as feedback seeking; analytical strategies e.g. streamlining tasks to facilitate cognitive processing; and psychological strategies e.g. resilience, coping with boredom (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Self-efficacy might be determined by the person by the process of judging whether his/her strategies are adequate inferior or superior for desired performance as well as the beliefs whether those abilities and strategies are fixed or changeable (Wood & Bandura, 1989).

Another internal cue that impacts self-efficacy judgment is the person's arousal when confronted with task. Despite external cues that might affect arousal in a positive or negative manner, Gist and Mitchell (1992) also suggests that arousal might be greatly influenced by the psychical condition e.g. the debilitating physical effects of stress. Secondly, personality factors might affect arousal, performance and self-efficacy (for example type A personalities generally experience more arousal than type B personalities). Moreover, research has also shown that individuals with low self-esteem suffer from anxiety and other inhibiting self-attention focus that hampers task performance. Lastly, arousal might be directly affected by the mood, which can be affected by both task related and task unrelated events (Russell & McAuley, 1986). A study conducted by Kavanagh and Bower (1985) showed that a positive mood resulted in higher self-efficacy whereas a negative mood was correlated with a lower sense of self-efficacy. Men and women may differ in the kinds of internal efficacy

cues; one of the previously describe example is the fact that women exhibit lower levels of self-esteem which negatively impact the mood and result in depressed self-efficacy.

2.4. Biographical approach in leadership studies

Biographical studies of leadership were one of the earliest methods in the field of leadership; however, during the course of the 20th century, more rigorist research approaches in social sciences have emerged. As a result, leadership studies have also adapted more positivistic, scientific approach in their academic pursuits (Walter, 2013). As asserted by Bryman (2011), leadership research has been largely dominated by the single mode of data collection – the self-completion/self-administrated questionnaire. Recent academic papers on leadership has in fact employed a wider set of methods, but there is still an urgent need to use more diversity when it comes to theoretical positions as well as research methods in the field of leadership (Bryman, 2011). In the line with above methodological call, this research employs more qualitative perspective that will enrich the leadership literature with the utilization of biographical/life-story approach in order to unravel the development of leader self-efficacy.

Biographical research is a field of study that aims at understanding the changing experiences and outlooks on individuals in their daily lives (Roberts, 2002). The scope of the field is indeed broad and it is captured by Denzin (1998):

"A family of terms combines to shape the biographical method...method, life, self, experience, epiphany, case, autobiography, ethnography, auto-ethnography, biography, ethnography story, discourse, narrative, narrator, fiction, history, personal history, oral history, case history, case study, writing presence, differences, life history, life story, self-story and personal experience story"

The inclusive definition of biographical research also implies involvement of a wide range of data collection methods and analytical approaches. However, the theme that seals and makes the field more coherent is the researcher's interest in people's real experiences, appreciation of process and change over time along with the comprehension of the self with its representations (Jones et al., 2011). In the study of leadership, biographical accounts of leaders contain objective indicators of psychological, contextual and performance variables (Ligon et al., 2008) It allows the

research to unravel and understand the less salient attributes of leadership that might be otherwise very hard to observe through the traditional leadership studies (2008). As asserted by Shoup (2005), biographical data can be not only a tool for analyzing the shaping influences in leadership, but it also allows the researcher to gain longitude perspective on the principles of development. In this vein, leadership development is understood as the longitudinal emergence of leadership. Better understanding of such life-span process has a potential to inform and extent the leadership development programs offer by different organizations.

A considerable number of past research has utilized the biographical approach in the study of leadership in general. The rich, historical overview of the field is provided by Walter (2013) in which he dated the biographical research back to Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans (c. ad 98–120) and posits that it was one of the earliest discussions on leadership. In the course of 20th century, development of social science had strongly affected the appreciation of life histories in the study of leadership. Prominent psychologists of a time such as Erikson and Freud had liked the outstanding leadership to the early life experiences (Ligon et al., 2008), thus allowing the description of life stories to be a mode of undersigning of events that have occurred in an individual's life (2008). However, despite the considerable popularity of biographies, the biographical methods were not extensively used in the studies of leadership development (Jones et al. 2011) and there is a great untapped potential in such studies as they may shed more light on the forming experiences and events that shaped the leadership journey of an individual (Shoup, 2005). Shamir's studies (2005a; 2005b) are rare examples of the applied biographical methods in the study of leadership development. His research's focus is directed to the role of life-stories as a means for leader identity development. He argues (Shamir et al., 2005a) that life-stories are people's identities because "life-story represents an internal model of "who I was, who I am (and why), and who I might become". Furthermore, by construction the life-stories, leaders explain and justify their current self which include the motivations and leadership aspirations (Shamir et al., 2005). In his other research, Shamir et al. (2005b) has identified that leader's life stories might be categorized into four groups. After analyzing life-stories and personal accounts of prominent leaders, he argued (Shamir et al., 2005b) that leadership development might take place as the a) natural process, b) development out of struggle and hardship c) development as finding a cause and d) leadership development as a

learning process. The overarching goal of the studies was to show that the mere life events do not by themselves generate development, but rather the combination of the events, an individual's responses and the way individuals make meaning out of their life experiences (2005b).

Another example of biographical methods utilized in leadership development studies might be found in the work of Ligon et al. (2008). Ligon et al. (2008) used life-narrative approach in order to examine lives of the sample of 120 outstanding leaders. Life-narrative approach was argued to consist of three distinct possibilities in researching the leadership development (Ligon et al. 2008):

1. Life narratives are linked to the developmental events and such a summarization is used as an explanatory tool which allows people to maintain personal identity.
2. Life narratives are constructed by life events which provide life lessons that influence future goals selection, causes, actions and present context for the leader.
3. Life narrative is also a mechanism through which people are able to communicate their subjective understanding of their life and relevance to the current situation.

The coding of developmental events followed by statistical analysis of the data yields evidence that particular leadership type and leadership orientation are linked to the specific types of developmental events. In their view (Ligon et al., 2008), leadership types may be divided into a)charismatic – leading with great vision of the future , b)ideological – leading with great idea and values and c)pragmatic – leading by problem-solving. Furthermore, leadership orientation might be a) socialized – where identification and solution of problems are based in the collective interest of the group or b) personalized - where leaders are motivated solely by their personal dominance. Although the research suffers from standard limitation connected to biographical methods it does show that experiences encountered during the leaders' life span do seem *to shape the pathway a leader pursues towards outstanding leadership"* (Ligon et al. 2008), thus future research should pay attention to the developmental experiences and the way leaders make sense of those very events.

Another study conducted by Ligon et al. (2012), examines the lives of John F. Kennedy, Mohandas Ghandi and Rupert Murdoch as the leaders that impacted broad set of institutions and social structures. The main two objectives of this study were to firstly understand the unique developmental experiences, styles and leader's performance contributions. Secondly, to enrich and inform the usability of

historiometric approach as the method for understanding leadership development process. The historiometric approach is the method of converting biographical qualitative data into quantitative data in order to conduct statistical analysis. The research conclude that historiometric methods have a great potential for testing relationship between biographical data and leadership development in more empirical/scientific manner (Ligon et al. 2012).

These are some of the very recent and distinct methods of using biographical approach in the study of leadership development. However, as mentioned previously, biographical methods were used numerous times in the past in order to analyze the leadership and themes connected to it. Some of the more distant examples of such a research is a seminal work of Burns (1978) who developed the transformational and transactional model of leadership based on the biographical data of various world-class leaders. He believed that biographical data might be used as a powerful tool to comprehend the shaping influences on leadership, however, he also asserted that more leaders should be analyzed this way in order for the better generalization of the outcomes. Another example of this line of research is the book published back in 1962 (Goertzel & Goertzel, 1962) - *Cradles of Eminence: Childhoods of More Than 700 Famous Men and Women*. Authors had studied and showed the importance of life events in shaping the leadership behaviors thus building the bases of biographical studies in the field of leadership.

Shoup (1995) in his book *A collective Biography of World-class Leaders* has synthesized existing knowledge in the field and developed his own model for understanding the shaping influences of leaders' life histories on leadership development. His primary objective was to provide a roadmap for the development of more exemplary leaders in the future. He reviewed the life histories of 12 exemplary leaders and investigated themes in their life experiences that facilitated their emergence as the exemplary or competent leaders. Subsequently, by using narrative analysis, Shoup (2005) was able to identify themes that emerged as a common thread between the studied subjects. Those influential themes were: involved parents, a happy childhood, formal and informal education, prodigious patrons, critics and adversaries, sequence of successes, and favorable fate. The most important aspects for leadership development seemed to be the prodigious patrons or other supportive individuals. Albeit important, one crucial limitation must be observed according to this study and it relation to the thesis i.e. the subjects of the book are all men so cross- gender generalization is arguable.

Chapter 3 – Methods

3.1. Ontology

The objective of this particular study is, through the application of life-history approach, better understand and uncover the lifespan process of leader self-efficacy development in the exceptional female leader. Such an understanding has the potential to shed more light into the problem of gender leadership gap and hopefully offer some solutions in how this gap might be alleviated. In order to reach the thesis' objective in an academically proper manner, it is first crucial to present the ontological, epistemological and methodological basis of the research.

The research paradigm is an underlying theoretical construct that represents "basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990). It is the construct through which a researcher examines a particular problem (Crotty, 1998) and it informs social inquiry about the researcher's questions and the appropriate type of methods for the particular investigation (1998). This thesis follows the social constructivism paradigm; the next paragraph addresses the question of why and how the social constructivism paradigm relates to this study.

Social constructivism, often called interpretivism (Creswell, 2013), is utilized in a qualitative research to explore and analyze the unique experiences of individuals by focusing on micro-level sense-making of a research participants in order to elicit the truth about the phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). It assumes that the truth is enclosed in personal belief system held in a particular situation and knowledge is created by the participants in the situation (Crotty, 2003). According to social constructivism theory, individuals' objective is to comprehend the world in which they live and work by developing subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Because those meanings are varied and multiple, a researcher needs to look for the complexity of views and not merely for the few ideas of categories. The overarching goal of the research is *to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation"* (2013). Oftentimes, the meaning prescribed by the individuals is socially or historically negotiated through interactions with others or cultural and social norms that operate in life on the individual (Creswell, 2013), thus special attention must be given to the interpretation of historical and social context in the course of study.

The objective of this thesis is to unravel the process of leader self-efficacy development in a particular individual by using biographical methods. The social constructivism paradigm is appropriate for such an inquiry for two main reasons. Firstly, it allows for the thorough examination of the individual experiences as well as external context that might have played the role in the leader self-efficacy creation. Moreover, leader self-efficacy is inherently a subjective perception that a person holds about her/his capabilities, thus understanding the personal meanings is crucial for the study on self-efficacy. Secondly, because social constructivism calls for the analysis and interpretation of historical contexts and events that might have shaped individual sense-making in the past, the use of biographical methods is justified. Furthermore, the nature of biographical approach *"is found in challenging spaces and can question dominant ideologies, it also transgresses overly rigid academic boundaries"* (Merill & West, 2009,), thus allowing the application of such methods in innovative ways. Past research in a leader's self-efficacy also suggest the applicability of life histories in the study of leader's self-efficacy. Work of Hackett et al. (1981), although theoretical, aimed at showing the influences of socialization forces on women's self-efficacy development throughout their life-span. Such studies might provide deeper knowledge specifically about self-efficacy creation but as argued by Shoup (2005), biographical studies might provide better longitude and contextual perspective on the leader's development. Biographical methods give a researcher a possibility to understand and elicit meanings from historical circumstances which is of a great value not only for the analysis of external cues for self-efficacy creation but also for allowing more timely perspective of the process.

One crucial assertion must be made in relation to social constructivism paradigm, namely the epistemological core of the paradigm states that reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched (Creswell, 2013). Thus, in terms of practice, the researcher must recognize that her own background might influence the interpretation of data and inadvertently allows for certain flows which stem from her own personal, cultural and historical experiences. In the same vein, researcher is aware of the subjectivity bias that might occur during the research process and made sense of her own past experiences and future aspirations that might have shaped her own self-efficacy and leadership development. However, because the researcher and the study subject differ greatly in terms of their age, nationality, education, race, culture and work history, there is an opportunity that the interpretative bias is greatly reduced.

3.2. Epistemology

As posited by Yin (1988), research design is a blueprint and action plan that allows the research to answer its research questions with viable and solid conclusion. Furthermore, by creating a network or steps, research design helps the researcher to avoid the situation when the initial research question is not properly answered (1988). This particular study applies life history approach in order to examine and analyze the process of leader self-efficacy development in the selected case study of an exemplary female business leader.

Life-history approach is deeply embedded in qualitative research design. Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain deep understanding of the meaning people create about their life experiences (Merriam, 2002). Moreover, it does not constrain the research to predetermined ways of analysis, thus allowing for more complex and comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research also adheres to the social constructivism paradigm, as it assumes that reality is not a purely objective construct, but it is rather created through personal interactions and perception (Merriam, 1998). Another interesting characteristic of qualitative design is the focus it has on understanding the process of phenomena and individual experiences rather than the end results of events (1998). The importance of the process is vital to this particular study, as the main objective is to analyze the timely process of leader self-efficacy development. As mentioned earlier, life history method will be utilized in order to "gain access" to the past process that has resulted in leader self-efficacy development. Life history method represents an individual's entire life span with personal experiences found in life's episodes, private situations or broader context (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, life history approach is an example of qualitative, narrative research design which is understood *"as a spoken or written text given an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected"* (Czarniawska, 2004) and is best "for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single individual "(Creswell, 2013), thus represent the most appropriate approach and research design for this particular study.

3.3. Case selection – Ursula Burns

The thesis' main objective is to analyze and uncover, through the life history of a female leader, the process of leader self-efficacy development across the life-span.

According to Stake (2000), case study is not a methodology per se but rather it represents a choice of what is to be studied. He also identifies three different kinds of case studies – intrinsic, instrumental and collective (Stake, 2000). The case selected for the following research is a life history of Xerox CEO – Ursula Burns. In regards to Stake's typology, Ursula's Burns case is both an intrinsic as well as instrumental case. Intrinsic case is undertaken because of the personal interest of the researcher, who seeks to better understand the particular case (2000). The personal interest of the researcher played a role in the case selection, as the writer of this thesis has been generally passionate about biographies and life-stories of exemplary leaders and the way such leaders were able to ascent to leadership positions. Ursula Burns' life history is particularly interesting as in the course of her life, she had to face a set of severe adversities. Burns was born in 1958 in New York and was raised by the single mother in the very poor part of New York City. Despite growing up in poverty, dangerous environment and general social inequalities of that time, Burns was able to build self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy and graduate with engineering degree which opened her doors to the carrier at Xerox. It took Burns almost 30 years at Xerox to, from being a summer intern in 1980 became a first ever African-American women CEO of one of the S&P 500 companies. Such a history is unusual and writer of the thesis finds it inspiring and worth understanding in the deeper manner.

Furthermore, Ursula Burns' case is also an instrumental one. Instrumental case study is undertaken in order *"to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization"* (Stake, 2000). The main issue of this study is to understand and expand the knowledge of leader self-efficacy development in women and case serve as a supportive role in the process. Ursula Burns was able to acquire a strong sense of leader self-efficacy despite all odds that she had to face during her personal as well as professional life. As Burns herself expressed it: *"I was a poor black woman in a poor black family — you would think there was no way in the world that there would be options available to me"* (Int.1). In today business world, women also face a lot of barriers and obstacles in their leadership journey, moreover women undergo socialization and sex-typing in the course of their lives which might prevent them from building a strong sense of leader self-efficacy. Even though Ursula Burns' example is extreme – in a sense that usual woman does not need to face such severe odds in her lifetime; there is a great potential in learning how Burns was able to overcome her adversities and build strong self-efficacy. Burns' extreme circumstances might be seen as magnified and more visible versions of the different

set of obstacles a common woman face, thus the generalization may be made about strategies for developing strong leader self-efficacy.

3.4. Data sources and data collection

Data collected for this research is a secondary type of data. Secondary data, unlike primary data, entails the use of pre-existing data and is used for the research that differs in its purpose from the original work (Szabo & Strang, 1997). For the purpose of this study, collection of secondary data was essential as the researcher did not have direct access to the study participant what would allow for the primary data collection.

The secondary data collected for this study has four forms – the pre-existing written interviews with Ursula Burns which accounted for her life history and leadership journey, two video interviews connected to her life experiences and carrier development throughout her life, the articles about Ursula Burns with elements of interviews and the description of her life-history and one blog post written by Burns herself describing her ascent to leadership position. Even though the secondary data did not specifically deal with the matter of leader self-efficacy development, the rich descriptions of her life experiences and her personal attitudes encompassed in the collected data served as a fertile ground to draw apparent and valid connection to the process of leader self-efficacy development.

The Internet was the main source of data collection as none existing biography or interviews was identified in print. In the process of data collection the researcher used internet search engine – Google as well as YouTube search as a tool to find video interviews with Ursula Burns. Sourcing of data was of crucial importance in order to keep the high standards of reliability and validity, thus data was sourced only from well-established and recognized internet sources. The data collected and original sourcing along with the reference applicable to this thesis is briefly described below:

Interviews:

- *"Leading the way: Ursula Burns"* – interview conducted in 2012 and published in London Business School review. (Int.1)
- *"Xerox's Ursula Burns on her carrier path and changing company strategy"* – published and conducted in 2013 in Bloomberg. (Int.2)

- *"How Xerox became a leader in diversity – and why that's good for business"* – interview published in 2014 in PBS (Public Broadcasting Service). (Int.3)
- *"The personality of Xerox is not gender-based, but is one that enables women"* – interview published 2013 in Business Today. (Int.4)
- *"If you don't transform, you are stuck"* – interview published in 2012 in NPR (National Public Radio). (Int.5)

Online articles:

- *"Xerox's CEO career advice: listen to your mom"* – article with elements of interview published in 2016 in Fortune Magazine. (O.A.1)
- *"Xerox chief wants to see gender gap narrowed"* – article published in 2015 in The National. (O.A.2)
- *"What Ursula Burns' rise to power can teach us about mentorship"* – published in 2015 by Fast Company. (O.A.3)
- *"Fresh copy: How Ursula Burns reinvented Xerox"* – published in 2011 in Fast Company. (O.A.4)
- *"A historic succession at Xerox"* – published in 2009 in Bloomberg. (O.A.5)

Video interviews:

- *"Are leaders born or made?"* – an interview conducted with Burns by Columbia Business School's professor Modupe Akinola and published on YouTube in 2012. (V.I.1)
- *"Distinguished speaker series: Ursula Burns"* – interview conducted by the dean Bill Boulding from Duke Business School and published in 2015 on YouTube. (V.I.2)

Other:

- *"Lean in stories: Ursula Burns on defining who you are"* – blog post written by Burns in 2014 as a contribution to Lean In Organization (O.1)
- *"Ursula Burns: Restructuring American Icon at Xerox."* – a book chapter published in Junctures in Women's leadership: Business in 2016. (O.2)

3.5. Research method

Mixed methods were used for the data analysis – the narrative method as well as form of thematic content analysis. Firstly, the narrative method is a natural choice for the life-history approach of this study. The narrative method begins with *"the*

experiences as expressed in lived stories of individuals" (Creswell, 2013). The implementation of the narrative methods implies the focus on the single individual, gathering data about his/her life experiences and *"chronologically ordering the meaning of those experiences"* (2013). Given the fact that this thesis main focus is to analyze the events and experiences of Ursula Burns that affected her leader-self efficacy development during different stages of her life, the narrative method is appropriate as it provides the analysis with the structure and allows for the re-storying of the data into a framework that makes sense.

Secondly, the study utilizes content analysis method as it is well-established, academically recognized mode of secondary textual analysis and it allows the researcher to investigate the phenomena in its own context (Krippendorf, 2013). Content analysis is often described as methodology, process or a technique (Gibbs, 2015), that enable the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As the empirically grounded theory, it is a research technique which is used to produce replicable and valid inferences about social reality by understanding emerging patterns and themes (2005). Hsien and Shannon (2005) distinguish between three kinds of content analysis. Firstly, *the conventional content* analysis which is used to describe certain phenomena when literature and previous research is limited. Secondly, *the directed content analysis* should be used when existing theory and research exist but it might be extended. The existing theory might help not only to direct the research question but also to determine coding themes and relationships between them. Lastly, *the summative content analysis* is conducted in order to understand the contextual usage of words and not to elicit meaning from the words.

According to this line of typology, this thesis follows directed content analysis as the data will be mainly analyzed and grounded in the pre-existing framework of Bandura's self-efficacy model supplemented with models connected to social-cognitive theory such as triadic-reciprocal determinism model (used in order to achieve better context understanding). The self-efficacy framework will serve as a tool to derive codes themes as well as provide predictions about the relationship amongst them. Directed content analysis is more structured in the approach than conventional methods and it starts with identifying key concept ad variables (using existing theory) as coding categories (Hsien & Shannon, 2005). Subsequently, operational definitions of categories are operationalized using theory (2005). Such a

process is more deductive in nature, and it has been described as deductive category application (Marying, 2000). Deductive thinking asserts that the emerged themes and categories are checked against the data (Creswell, 2013). However, in order to allow for more complex reasoning and possibility to shape the themes (and thus extending the theory) the researcher will use inductive-deductive logic.

3.6. Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data by consolidating, reducing and interpretation of gathered data (Merriam, 2009). As described previously, two complimentary methods were used in this particular study. The process of data analysis started with the narrative method that fostered the overall, chronological comprehension of data. As suggested by Denzin (1989), after initial familiarization with the data, the researcher starts the biographical analysis by identifying an objective set of experiences in the subject's life. The set of experiences then formed a sketch representing the subject's life course stages and experiences connected to each stage. The main life stages identified in the life of Ursula Burns are – the childhood, the period of education and the years of carrier at Xerox. Later in the process, as suggested by Denzin (1989), the researcher should conduct an interview with the subject and ask the study participant to elaborate and theorize about a particular experience or life stage. For the obvious reasons this stage of the analysis was not fulfilled in this study, but it was compensated by the use of content analysis that assisted in analyzing the experiences connected to leader self-efficacy development. The content analysis helped with identifying and interpreting the experiences directly connected to the process of self-efficacy development as the codes used for analyzing the data were based on the very model of efficacy development. During the last two stages of analysis, the researcher organizes patters and meanings from different categories in order to finally reconstruct the individual biography with the emphasis given to 1)the process of the individual's life, 2) the theories that relate to life experiences, 3) the unique and general features of the life (Creswell, 2013)

Along with the narrative analysis, the content analysis was used in order to elicit the relation between the subject's life experiences and Badura's theories of self-efficacy development. The content analysis is a widely used method in qualitative studies and it allows for the interpretation of data from all the sources used in the study – interviews, articles, transcripts from video interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the content analysis process should follow six steps: 1) familiarizing with the data, 2) generating codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes and 6) producing the report. I will now briefly turn to describing the process applied in this particular study. Familiarizing with the data was already done during the narrative content analysis and it was conducted by carefully reading gathered data in order to gain the global understanding of the Ursula Burns's life history and formative experiences she had encountered. The second phase of codes generation was theory-based and it primarily used codes associated with Bandura's self-efficacy model (please see appendix A for the codes associated with the theory). The researcher had to also use more open-ended forms of coding to facilitate the interpretation as the secondary data's original purpose was not connected to this thesis' research question. Besides using codes associated specifically with four sources of efficacy (vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, mastery experiences and mental/physiological states) the analysis also used codes associated with Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism in order to gain better understanding of the contextual and historical forces that were shaping Ursula Burns life (e.g. environment) (Please see appendix B for the codes). Another two phases of the analysis – searching for themes and reviewing of themes were also theory driven. The coded fragments of data were grouped into themes that corresponded to both Bandura's efficacy model and triadic reciprocal determinism. The researcher grouped the data manually with the help of simple table and ascribed to relevant code which pertain to certain efficacy information. The final step of the data analysis entailed the write-up of analysis that includes the rich descriptions of findings in a way that offers deeper meaning and theoretical merits of the analysis.

3.7. Validity and reliability of the study

In order to ensure the trustworthiness and quality of findings in a qualitative study as well as generalizability of findings, the researcher must apply specific strategies to increase both the validity as well as reliability of the study (Creswell, 2013). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), validity of qualitative study represents "credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data" and it might be ensured by applying strategies such as: established research methods, triangulation, peer debriefing, thick description of the phenomena and reflective journaling. In this particular study the careful usage of an established research

method was used as described in the previous section. The triangulation was the main strategy applied in order to ensure the validity of the results. The purpose of triangulation is to "make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (Creswell, 2013) and fully understand the human experience, behavior or situation from different perspectives (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The following study employs two types of triangulation – the triangulation of methods and theory triangulation. The methods triangulation entailed the use of narrative as well as content analysis for the data interpretation. The purpose of combining those two methods was twofold: firstly, to structure the data in the biographical, chronological manner and secondly, the content analysis was utilized to unfold the specific individual experiences that connected to the leader self-efficacy development. The theory triangulation entailed combining Bandura's self-efficacy theories with related theories (such as triadic reciprocal determinism, and developmental analysis of self-efficacy) in order to accomplish more complex and full picture of the external and internal forces that affected the leader-self efficacy development over the Ursula Burns's life span.

Moreover, during the research process a sort of peer debriefing was utilized – the supervisor of the thesis reviewed parts of the thesis and provided feedback and comments. The writer of the thesis also strived to always use the rich description of the phenomena to convey the actual situations and contexts of the studied subject.

The reliability of the qualitative research is also referred to as dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and it is defined as the *"assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation"* (Gibbs, 2015). Because this study used only secondary data for the analysis, the reliability was mainly ensured by using well-established and trustworthy sources of data and well-defined and well-established methods for data analysis.

Chapter 4 – Analysis

"The biggest differentiator is not how you are born, it's how you're influenced throughout your life."

Ursula Burns

4.1. Prologue

After reviewing the literature and establishing valid and reliable methods, the project will now present the data analysis. The analysis's overarching objective is to unravel and understand the process of leader self-efficacy development over the lifespan of Xerox CEO – Ursula Burns. The life story of Ursula Burns is examined in order to understand how the specific events, experiences, circumstances and personal factors impacted the development of Burns's sense of leader self-efficacy.

In order to successfully reach the analysis objectives and answer the research question, the analysis is divided into three themes. The themes were identified as a consequence of the application of narrative methods and they pertain to the most distinctive stages in the life of Ursula Burns. Those three themes/periods are:

1) Childhood and growing up

2) Higher education; and

3) Burn's life-long carrier at Xerox.

In terms of leader self-efficacy development, in each of those periods Burns was potentially exposed to all or some of the self-efficacy information (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, persuasion and physical/mental states) as well as external events and internal cues characteristic to each period that might have had impact on her leader self-efficacy development and subsequently - future leadership carrier. Thus, in order to maintain the clarity and sequential flow of the life-story approach, the analysis will be also organized by those three themes.

Before turning to in-depth life-story analysis, the timeline of Ursula Burns's life is presented in order to establish a sense of clarity and reasoning behind the structure of the analysis.

Ursula Burns's life story timeline:

Date	Main event
1958	Born to a single mother and started living in the New York's ghetto
~1965 – 1976	Attending private and catholic private school
1976-1980	Attending Polytechnic Institute of New York
1980	Graduation with BSc in Mechanical Engineering
1980	Summer internship at Xerox
1981	Graduation from Columbia University with Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering. Joining Xerox Corporation full time.
1981-1991	Holding various positions in planning and product development
1988	Married Xerox co-worker Lloyd F. Bean
1991	Becoming executive assistant to the chairman
1992-2000	Rotating as a head of several departments
1997	Corporate Vice President
2000	Senior Vice President of Corporate Strategic Services
2001-2002	President of Document System Solution Group
2002	First president of Business Group Operations
2002-2009	Working closely with CEO – Anne Mulcahy
2009	Becoming Xerox CEO
2010	Becoming chairwoman of Xerox

Table.2. Ursula Burns's timeline (Source: adapted from Reference for business)

4.2. Childhood and growing up

The first important life-stage, during which Ursula Burns started to develop her sense of self-efficacy, was the years of her early childhood and growing up. A vast number of researches indicate the importance of early life experiences on the development of a child's sense of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and their impact on the leadership emergence in the later life. According to Avolio, Rotundo and Walumbwa (2009), 30% of leadership behavior in adults is dependent on genetic factors; however, over 70% of leadership style and emergences into leadership role "is attributed to non-shared environmental influences such as individuals being exposed to different role models and early opportunities for leadership development" (Avolio, Rotundo & Walumbwa, 2009). This finding is generally in line with Bandura's theory of reciprocal influences of environment, behavior and personal characteristics on the life of the individual (Bandura, 1997).

During a child's development, external environment and circumstances play a central role in the development process as a newborn arrives without any sense of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Thus the self and the personality of a child must be socially constructed through interactions with the environment (1997). Furthermore, in the self-efficacy development process, the external environment is one of the external cues of efficacy that, according to Gist and Mitchel (1992), indirectly influence an individual's motivation, ability and performance.

Burns was born in 1958 in a very dangerous part of New York. It is also important to address the wider context of the environment she was born into – during that time; the African-American community was generally impoverished and unserved. However, the racial divide in America started to subside due to the active work of social equality movements and the introduction of policies which e.g. forbade racial segregation in public schools (History, 2009). Even though Burns does not directly address those facts, it is important to understand those social dynamics that underpin the external environment in which Burns was growing up. Burn describes her early childhood environment as follows:

"I was raised in an environment…one that would be impossible to actually rise up out of to success. We were really poor, my mother single parent - it was 3 of us and her. And she had zero money we lived in the really bad neighborhood, bad place – physically unsafe, visually unappealing." (V.2)

Furthermore, Burns describes her neighborhood as *"the rough and tumble public housing projects on the Lower East Side of Manhattan" (O.1).* Besides the tough place Burns was born into, she also recalls the fact of being an African-American and seeming obstacles that this fact entailed. The following quotes depict the external messages Burns was receiving about being African - American:

"Many people told me I had three strikes against me: I was black. I was a girl. And I was poor. " (O.1).

 Additionally Burns recalls:

"I was a poor black woman in a poor black family — you would think there was no way in the world that there would be options available to me" (Int.1).

The rough environment and community that Burns were growing up might have had potential negative influence on Burns perception of herself – her self-confidence, efficacy and career choice, however as she admits:

"[…] *the reality is, despite that, I had very few limitations when I was growing up"* (Int.1).

The lack of the perceived limitation shows that Burns was exposing a sense of resilience and self- efficacy very early in life – the characteristics that helped her to "organize, create and manage the environment that affects the development pathways" (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), external environments can take three different forms: they might be a) imposed, b) selected or c) created. Even though people have no control over the external sociocultural environment, they do have control over how they construe it and react to it. Namely, they can choose to see it as an obstacle, opportunity or neutral circumstances (1997). However, as mentioned before, a young child is heavily dependent on the external factors in their self- development and one of the most influential origins of a personal sense of agency are the parental influences. Burns was raised by the single mother in the impoverished part of New York during the time when racial division and social inequality were high and potentially disabling. Anyways, Burns recall the encouragement and example she was receiving from her mother when she was a child:

"My mother told me very early in life — and my brother and sister as well — that where we were was not who we were. Where you live, she pointed out, has nothing to do with who you are. Who you are is about your character, it's about the amount of

energy you put into things, it's about how much control you take of your whole life. She really believed that you control your destiny" (Int.1).

In the same vein, Burns' mother also influenced her children by saying that:

"[...] there are a lot of things that can happen to you, but there are a whole bunch of things that you can happen to. So make sure that you happen to the right things." (O.A.1)

"She would always say (Burns' mother) that you have to leave the place — any place you are — a little bit better than you came in." (O.A.1)

These are some examples of positive verbal persuasion in the form of verbal encouragement that Burns and her siblings were exposed to. Verbal persuasion might be a powerful source of self-efficacy creation, especially when it's delivered by the respected and competent other as it promotes the motivation for success, endurance and positive change (Bandura, 1997). Even though verbal persuasion is not the strongest source of self-efficacy it might be especially important in the life of a young child as the research shows that in the early years, mother's influence over a child is greater than father's (Felson & Reed, 1986). Burns's mother promoted the creation of perceived self-efficacy in Burns by repeating her that she is the one who should take control over her life and she has a power to "happen to the right things". As Burns' recalls:

"Every single conversation I had with my mother in my life, was all around what I control [...] and the second thing is how are you behaving. "(V.2)

Moreover, Burns's mother also installed a strong sense of self, pride and esteem in Burns that might have potent effect on her future leader efficacy development. The sense of pride and esteem of who she was, as an African-American, is one of the examples which depict the strong sense of personal pride. In the light of self-efficacy development model, positive mental states and a high sense of self-esteem are examples of internal efficacy cues which facilitate the self-efficacy development (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).The following quote pertains to such internal cues:

"But there's nothing I can do, or wanted to do, about being a black female — I kind of like both of those things. So at the end of the day, the people who were around me had to do a little bit more adjusting than I did. ... And if you're faced with people who can't deal with it, there's not much I can do." (Int.5)

Besides the verbal persuasion Burns was exposed to during her childhood, her mother was also an example of efficacy and strong character herself. Burns states:

"My mother was amazing. I guess in our community, if you wanted to get by you had to work hard. So she cleaned offices. She did everything that you could imagine. We were really poor." (Int.2)

"(mother was) desperate," says Burns—to make sure that her three kids were well-educated. With savings from a child-care service that she ran out of their tenement apartment, she sent Ursula to Catholic school and then Polytechnic Institute of NYU and Columbia University." (O.A.1)

The personal example that Burns' mother was giving her in childhood might be viewed as a kind of vicarious source of self-efficacy development. Vicarious efficacy information is acquired through social modeling when the observer is influenced by the way the competent model deals with the demands by transmitting relevant knowledge and behavior (Bandura, 1997). Burns' mother was clearly exhibiting her own sense of self-efficacy and resilience by her hard work and commitment for the wellbeing of her children. In the light of efficacy development theory, the social modeling and "observational learning that actions produce effects plays a leading role in the initial development of a sense of action causation" (Bandura, 1997). In this fashion, from the early childhood Burns was aware that, if she was willing to work hard, she would be able to influence her life circumstances and achieve success in her endeavors. That also built a sense of resilience in Burns – a notion tightly correlated with self- efficacy – that is crucial for children from impoverished households in proactive shaping of their life course (Bandura, 1997). Moreover, as noted by Bandura (1997), the level of efficacy promoting influences in the home environment is the strongest explanation for the relationship between socio-economic status and a child's functioning; namely, possessing economic advantage in not sufficient to create cognitively stimulating home environments (1997). Accordingly, the example and encouragement Burns's mother was providing her children with was greater that the inhibiting external circumstances of poverty and social inequality.

Even though it is not possible to draw fully causal relationship between Burns's early life experiences and the development of leader self-efficacy specifically, some idea about the childhood's influences might explain why Burns excelled in the leadership role. As Burns herself admits, her mother was her greatest leadership mentor:

"My mother is probably the person I have learnt the most from, and she wouldn't be considered the leader but she was just an amazing woman – Very focused, extremely balanced and extremely clear." (V.1)

The strong sense of efficacy, confidence and resilience that Burns's mother instilled in her from the very young age served as the main building block for coping with disadvantageous socioeconomic situation and affecting her future life choices. As noted in the article by Bandura and colleagues (2001), parents' perceived efficacy affects the carrier trajectories and academic aspiration of their children. Thus, it is valid to state that Burns' early sources of self-efficacy mainly in the form of verbal persuasion and vicarious experiences delivered by her single mother had an effect on Burns' leadership development.

4.3 Education

Another important theme that emerges from Burns' life story is the influential period of high-school and higher education. The experiences during the years of education are generally known to be impactful on carrier choices and aspirations as the levels of self-efficacy govern the level of motivation, development of occupational interests and build a sense of resilience to daunting impediments (Betz & Hackett, 1995). Additionally, as asserted by Bandura (1997), the years of schooling is the most crucial formative period for individual life as the school setting serves as a place for cultivation and validation of cognitive capabilities as well as development of problem-solving skills. Consequently, the strong sense of efficacy in the academic setting has implication for aspiration for holding a leadership position in the future workplace.

In the Burns's household, there was always a strong emphasis given to the central role that education should play in the Burns's life.

"Keep in mind, that in my family, you had to go to college. There was no other option." (Int.1)

"My mother thought education was important; it didn't matter what I studied. She made it clear that I had to study something, and she made it clear I had to be good at it. It had to be something that you became passionate about and were good at." (Int.5)

Again, Burns's mother held a strong believe that education would be the only "way up and out" (O.1) for her children and she was striving hard to make an education possible for them.

"[Mother was] "desperate," says Burns—to make sure that her three kids were well-educated. With savings from a child-care service that she ran out of their tenement apartment, she sent Ursula to Catholic school and then Polytechnic Institute of NYU and Columbia University. (Int.1)

Ursula Burns was growing up in the atmosphere where she was constantly verbally encouraged to do well at school and continue with her education beyond the high school. Besides this verbal persuasion, Burns's mother was also an example of strong resilience and belief in her children academic and carrier abilities. That, according to the theory, might have had a crucial impact on the academic and carrier path that Burns decided to follow. Given the harsh socioeconomic status of Buns family, one should not be surprised that Burns academic achievements and aspiration would be limited. That however was not a case with Burns. As expressed by Bandura and colleagues (1996), the academic development of children is entirely mediated through the parental academic aspiration and children's prosocial behavior and not merely an impact of socioeconomic status of the family. The importance of Burns' mother attitude and belief in Burns's academic abilities had a potentially tremendous impact on building her sense of self-efficacy and resilience.

"On a modest salary, Mom somehow managed to send me to good Catholic schools. Back then I was prepared for one of three career options: nun, teacher, or nurse." (O.1)

Burns attended a private catholic high-school; however, the external signals she was receiving about her future education and carrier options were not challenging or highly encouraging. However, at this point in life, Burns seemed to acquire enough confidence and efficacy to take control over her future academic pursuits, which is expressed by her in the following manner:

"In high school, one of the most important things that you do is to take the SAT exam for college admittance. Before that, you take a preliminary SAT called the PSAT. When I took the PSAT, the highest score I got was in maths. As a result, I decided (along with my guidance counsellor) that I would focus on maths. At that time, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, if you were a woman, there were three things that a Catholic school

thought you could do. The first was to be a nurse, the second was to be a teacher and the third was to be a nun. Of these three things, none fit my personality." (Int.1)

The decision of Burns to follow a carrier connected with mathematics was an outcome of mastery experience she had experienced after successfully completing the PSAT test. Moreover, Burns also exhibited strong self-efficacy and believed that she was able to shape the course of her life when she was deciding, despite the external social modeling, to become either teacher, nurse or a nun on the carrier to pursue.

"For me, the question was what career could I choose that paid the most money if I had that college degree. It seemed that the best choice for me was to become a chemical engineer. So, I said, "Okay, that's what I'll do." Even though I had taken only what amounts to an elementary chemistry class as well as a pre- calculus class, I applied to several colleges stating that I sought to become an engineer." (Int.1)

Burns placed her decision on the future career on the financial gains she would receive after completing her degree. That of course is understandable, given her harsh economic conditions when growing up. The interesting fact is, that she decided to study chemical engineering without proper knowledge or preparedness for it. It is yet another example of her strongly developed sense of self-efficacy and confidence that she would accomplish what she had set herself to. Moreover, Burns's mother continued to instill a sense of self efficacy in Burns and expressed a positive attitude about facing difficulties associated with financing the college.

"Although my mother had no money to pay for college, her assumption was that, if we got into college, we would figure it out". (Int.1)

Burns applied to several schools with intention to obtain an engineering degree.

"I applied to several colleges stating that I sought to become an engineer. Surprisingly, I was accepted at every school I applied to. I got in via what they call a 'higher education opportunity programme', which was for kids who have the potential to do college-level work but hadn't completed any of the precursor courses."(Int.1)

Burns played an active role in assuring her place in the engineering program, however in this particular case, the external factors had also played a significant enabling role. In triadic reciprocal determinism, as Bandura describes (1997), the life course is mediated through the personal, behavioral and environmental factors. People are not simply reactors to the external event that happens to them but there

are able to influence their behavior through cognitive processes and personal factors (e.g. self-beliefs, conceptions, self-perception). In Bandura's words, those very cognitive processes *"party determine, which external events will be observed, how they will be perceived, whether they have any lasting effects, what valence and efficacy they have, and how the information they convey will be organize for the future use"* (Bandura, 1978*).*

At the point in time when Burns had applied for her higher education program, the external environment served as an enabling factor in the form of the existence of the "higher education opportunity programme" for students like Burns. This fact should not be ignored, as without the existence of the program, Burns would have never graduated with an engineering degree and would have never started the career in Xerox. This sort of "luck" or "chance " is also described by Bandura (1997) who admits that sometimes this kind of lucky events can alter or shape the course of one's life. Burns herself admits that fact as well, however she also asserts that a person needs to be well prospered to take advantage of "luck" and there is no substitute for hard work, which shows her strong personal agentic beliefs. Burns attitude proofs the notion of triadic reciprocal determinism in a sense that, the mere existence of the opportunity program was not enough for ensuring her success in pursuit of her higher education – it was her beliefs and actions taken to turn such "external event" for her opportunity.

"I was able to take an advantage of the fact that I was lucky. And I mean lucky in a broadest way – I was lucky I had a great mother, I was lucky I had a great company. But I wasn't obviously only lucky. I was working hard for it. " (V.1)

Burns started her education at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute in the chemical engineering class, and as she admits, the beginning of university was harsh and challenging – both academically and personally.

"Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute offered me a spot in the freshman class and I panicked—a classic case of being careful what you wish for. I didn't have the right preparation. The school was in a different borough of New York City that seemed foreign and distant. I feared the students would surely be smarter than me […]. I was an oddity in a sea of predominantly white males. I doubted myself big time. I started out in chemical engineering, which I hated, and switched to mechanical engineering, which I loved. And, ever so slowly, I regained my footing." (O.1)

Burns was dealing with doubts about her abilities and experienced the feeling of not belonging in her environment. Generally, women who pursue men-dominated fields – like engineering- often experience feelings of imposture and doubts, which stop them from fully realizing their potential in the field (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). However, despite the difficulties, Burns exercised a strong sense of resilience and efficacy in the times of adversity and was able to continue and excel in her studies.

"It would have been so simple to let go of my dreams and set out on a more predictable journey. However, the courage and confidence that my mother and Cathedral High School had given me enabled me to lean in. It wasn't easy. I had a lot of catch-up courses to master." (O.1)

In the fragment above, Burns attribute her sense of confidence and resilience to the influences of her mother and experiences of high-school period. This allowed Burns to persevere in her studies and graduate with very good results.

"I enjoyed college and did well. When I was almost finished with my degree, a lot of different companies came on campus to talk with us. One was the Xerox Corporation, and it wanted me to continue in school, get my master's degree and then come work for them."(Int.1)

The completion of engineering degree opened Burns the door to start carrier at Xerox Corporation. The quote above also suggests that Burns was approached by a Xerox representative with an offer and start working for them – it might be also interpreted as another chance meeting that Burns was well prepared to take an advantage of. As a result she entered the Xerox Company as a summer intern.

"I liked what I heard, so I spent a summer as an intern at Xerox. Those whom I worked for liked me, and Xerox put me in a programme that paid for me to go to graduate school at Columbia. The rest, as they say, is history." (Int.1)

Burns started to establish her career in Xerox early on, she was also able to develop herself academically and professionally by taking advantage from the program launched by Xerox which had paid for Burns's graduate programme in mechanical engineering at Columbia University. There is another example how personal agency and environmental circumstances reciprocally influence the life and carrier path of Burns. Burns was successfully able to take advantage of the fact that Xerox had strong focus on hiring women and minorities during 80s. In fact, Xerox was one of the first companies that introduced equal hiring policies back in the 60s. First, Xerox

strived to increase the hiring of African- Americana and Hispanic minorities, and later on – during 80s (around the time when Burns herself was recruited and hired) Xerox introduced fully-fledged Balanced Workforce Strategy which goal was to achieve equitable representation of women and minorities throughout the organization at all time. Additionally, to accommodate to the needs of the influx of women, Xerox also introduced "flex times" arrangements to help women balance their work and family obligations (Diversity at Xerox, 2008). Given the fact that Burns was approached by Xerox during the career fair at school might have been a direct result of Xerox new hiring strategy as she seemed to be a perfect candidate. Those speculations, however not without merit, do not change the fact that Burns was already well-prepared to advantage of the opportunities that working at Xerox had to offer.

4.4. Carrier at Xerox

After completing graduate degree in mechanical engineering in 1981, Ursula Burns joined the Xerox corporation full time and started her journey through the corporate levels, which resulted in her becoming the CEO of the company in 2009. According to Bandura (1997), the perceived self-efficacy at the workplace is a major predictive factor of the level of success an individual will accomplish during the professional carrier. Choosing the carrier path is of crucial importance as it determines which of the person's potentialities will be cultivated and which ones will be dismissed. Carrier development, pursuits and reaching leadership position is heavily mediated by the beliefs of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997). As asserted by Betz and Hackett (1981), the range of carrier options is wider for strongly efficacious person. At the time when Ursula Burns joined the company, she already exhibited a strong sense of perceived self-efficacy in being an engineer. Actually, when she first started to work at Xerox's engineering lab she admitted that:

"When I joined the company I actually said: yeah I can actually run this place one day" (V.1)

In the interview, Burns said it in a rather humoristic manner; however, it shows her attitude about her perceived unlimited opportunities at Xerox. Burns started to build her carrier at Xerox with confidence in her abilities, herself and an attitude of a hard-worker.

"I did expect to be successful, though. My mother raised us to think that if we worked hard, and if we put our end of the bargain in, it would work out OK for us." (O.A.3)

"I knew that I was smart and I thought that I was different enough to make a difference. And what I wanted to do after coming off approach and saying "I can run this place", what I wanted to do was just to do good job […] I was really good and precise engineer and I just wanted to become known for that." (V.1)

Even though Burns might have had a personal advantage at a workplace – in the form of self-efficacy instilled and developed during the earlier parts of her life, it is also crucial to analyze the impact of the company itself on the Burns' leadership path and the development of her leader self-efficacy beliefs. As indicated by research, the enhancement of occupational self-efficacy requires both the individual as well as social remedies (Bandura, 1997). It might be concluded that Burns' individual beliefs should be favorable in her leadership development, however, the external reality and institutional barriers to career aspiration also play crucial role in one's carrier options. At the workplace, the institutional barriers might take number of forms e.g.: unfair policies, biases towards minorities and gender, discriminatory culture. By the same token, institutional and social structures might be enabling factors in one's professional development. Such institutional and social structures might be seen as environmental factors that, through the triadic reciprocal determinism, influence person's behavior and personal agency as they affect recipient's self-conceptions and actions in a way that may maintain (or alter) environmental expectations (biases) about individual (Bandura, 1978).

In the 1980s when Burns started her carrier in Xerox, the company was committed to the dissemination of diversity program. Around that time, affinity networks started springing up at Xerox. As Burns herself admits, the diversity programs introduced at Xerox had an immense impact on her carrier at the company.

"I am where I am not only because I worked hard and was smart, but because I had opportunities first created by a group of African American men who understood they had to broaden their scope even to include women, in particular African American women. It helped me by having a support structure." (Int.3)

"First, Xerox is all about opportunities; and the company was focused on diversity long before other companies were." (Int.1)

Besides diversity programs, which can be considered as a powerful enabling tool for the carrier development - especially for the African-American woman like Burns, Xerox corporate culture was another environmental factor that might have strongly influenced Burns's ascent to leadership. As stated by Gist and Mitchell (1992), external efficacy cues, such as working environment, influence the development of self – efficacy by altering internal states e.g. motivation, level of stress, anxiety. Thus, working in a friendly and stimulating environment should be considered advantageous for the development of leader self-efficacy throughout Burns' carrier. As mentioned by Burns, the corporate culture at Xerox was friendly, open to individual differences and stimulating.

"I had a great company, it allowed me to kind a settle in to grown up Ursula in a way that I didn't have to shed everything. I didn't have to transform myself to a white male [...] So I was actually able just to be me, and that was the most amazing thing. And I got opportunity after opportunity after opportunity […]." (V.1)

"Xerox was not interested in bringing you in and changing you into something else. They didn't want me to be like all the other engineers in the company. When Xerox interviewed me, I was urban, black and a woman. As such, I had a certain approach to things and a certain way of speaking and Xerox was very interested in that." (Int.1)

Another important aspect of culture at Xerox was the importance the company put on the opportunities and training of their employees. In the light of self-efficacy theory, Xerox created a platform for their employees to gain mastery experiences in their fields in the form of trainings and opportunities for growth given to Xerox's employees. Ursula Burns used those opportunities for her own carrier development.

 "First, Xerox is all about opportunities; […] When you come to work at Xerox, there's time devoted to training. Obviously, a lot of it is technical training about xerography. There's also training about how to work in a team. But what they're most interested in is your raw talent and in your individuality […] At Xerox, the question is whether (given the opportunity) you can actually make good. Can you put the hard work needed to become a success story?" (Int.1)

*"*When I first entered the company, they just thought I was smart and said, "You go do some stuff." And they kept giving me things to do." (Int.2)

Inside of the Xerox's culture, Burns was working in a lab for about 5 years until somebody from the company asked her whether she wanted to educate herself about different aspects of the work – namely the social and business side.

"After I worked in an engineering lab for five years, someone stopped me in the hall and said, you know, you've been here for a long time. Don't you think you would be interested in understanding what we really do as a company? I said that I thought I knew what we did. We do experiments. He said, "No. There are customers and businesses and pricing, and there're a whole bunch of people all over the United States and all over the world who work for this company." (Int.1)

The above described event, seemingly not significant, had shifted the Burns's focus to more social and business aspects of the company. That was yet another example of chance or so-called luck that altered Burns's development in the company. However, it is worth noting that Burns was eager and ready to take on those new challenges. The new experiences gained by accepting the opportunities served as a mastery experiences in new fields of work that in turn, produced more and more opportunities for further development.

"Although I stayed in engineering, I began to run some small engineering teams. Then, I was asked to work on a team doing pricing on one of the solutions that I was developing. I knew nothing about pricing, but I was assigned to work at pricing an accessory for one of the machines. I had to start thinking about new questions, such as "How do you place a value on this particular part of a customer solution and how do you price it so people could and would buy it?" Going through that exercise was the first major opening I had to the business side, and it was really intriguing. I obviously did that reasonably well because, from then on, I was asked to do more and more business-type things" (Int.1)

Burns new experiences and accomplishments built her perceived efficacy in new aspects of work – she not only gained the experiences in commercial aspects but also in being a team leader. Further challenges were more demanding and equipped Burns with international experiences and perspectives. As posited by self-efficacy theory, mastery experiences are the most powerful sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Thus, the carrier path that Burns was following was heavily mediated by the successes and learning experiences gained from them which allowed Burns to take on larger and more demanding projects.

"Then, I was pulled back into engineering to run an even bigger challenge, a very large programme; and I spent quite a bit of time going back and forth to Japan and other countries. By the time I was in my seventh or eighth year at Xerox, I had travelled to just about every continent in the world. "(Int.1)

During the first years of Burns carrier at Xerox, Burns also exhibited a considerable amount of resilience as she was faced with certain obstacles.

"And of course there was discrimination. The question that they asked was, "Did I ever feel it?" And not at work, I didn't. There were not a lot of women, and there were hardly any black women, but the biggest push that I got at work was my age. It was that I was too young to have this kind of responsibility." (Int.2)

Even though Burns never felt racial discrimination at work which is correlated with the Xerox culture, she did experience obstacles caused by her young age. The unconscious doubt of the leadership abilities of young professional women is one of the many biases that hamper women's progression in leadership positions (Reis, 2002). Another obstacle, the lack of female role models at the workplace is also mentioned by Burns, but that particular example of social modeling (or lack of it) had not as much of an impact on her as her age. Burns, however, was able to persevere and overcome this problem – the characteristic that strongly efficacious and resilient person poses.

Subsequent, carrier changing event took place during the panel meeting with the senior executive of the company. In 1989, Burns was attending an employee gathering around work-life topics. When somebody from the audience asked the Wayland Hick – then president of marketing and customer operations whether, in his opinion, the diversity initiative lowers hiring standards, Hick answered the question very politely and as Burns described in "in a nonchalant way" (O.A.3).

Burns raised her hand and reacted quite aggressively to the question following her mother advice that *"if you have a chance to speak, you should speak. If you have an opinion, you should make it be known."(O.A.4).* Burns voiced her opinion in a fashion that showed her confidence and grabbed the attention:

"Why give the question the dignity of a response?" (O.A.3).

As Burns recall that it was a moment when she and Hick started to build a close working relationship.

"The day after the meeting, he called me into his office. I remember calling my husband-he wasn't my husband then-and he said, […] So anyway, I went to see Hicks. And we got into a really good relationship based on differences. He's from the Midwest, white, male, very conservative family. And he's Republican. I'm a Democrat. He asked me to be his executive assistant. That was a risky job, because I was an engineer at the time. Going to work for Wayland, I was not required to be an engineer at all, actually." (Int.2)

Accepting the position and working closely with president of marketing was a great carrier stretch for Burns. It was not only an opportunity to gain even more mastery experiences but most of all, Hick was Burns' first mentor from the highest rank of the company. Hick saw the leadership potential of Burns and he was mentoring her in leadership skills (O.A.3). In the traditional view, mentoring is an interpersonal relationship which is developmentally oriented between a more experienced individual and the protégé (Chopin et al., 2013). Classic theoretical conceptualization of the term focused on two main roles of mentoring – the carrier development and psychological support (2013).The carrier development part pertains to novel tasks exposure and coaching whereas psychological support encompasses a relational aspect. As the study suggests, mentoring relationship does not only foster the learning of job specific tasks but also assists in increasing the social effectiveness skills of the protégé which is of special importance especially if a person was technically excellent but was lacking in interpersonal and influence skills (2013). In the case of Ursula Burns, the newly established mentoring relationship with Hick might have been of great importance especially when it comes to assisting her in developing the soft skills set as she was known, and considered herself as a technically oriented engineer. The development of the soft skills e.g. the communication skills was a lesson that Ursula Burns gained by establishing the mentoring relationships.

"[On mentoring] it helped me a lot. To help me to understand how to deliver messages that people could hear; the messages versus the way I was saying the message. That's an art-form that I am still working on. But I got a lot of help on it, because I was significantly worst at it when I was younger than I am today." (V.2)

"Mentors have helped me a lot on that, how I speak. Not the pace or diction but the gentleness or the harshness of the way you speak. "(V.2)

In the light of self-efficacy theory, mentoring might potentially serve as efficacy information in twofold manner. Firstly, when a protégé spends considerable time

with his/her mentor – observing how the mentor copes with his tasks and challenges, the protégé can learn from observing (social modeling) as the protégé can imagine himself or herself succeeding in a similar situation. Secondly, the mentor can also provide the protégé with social persuasion which builds self-efficacy by the virtue of encouragement and praise (Chopin et al., 2013). While working closely with Hick, Burns was exposed to observing and learning how the senior-level executive copes with his work demands, how to operate in the international setting as well as how to handle the political and soft aspects of being a business leader.

"It was amazing. And we would fly to Europe-this is another thing I learned from him. And I do this today. If we're on the road for a week, we're working every single minute that you can be awake. You land. You go to the airport, take a quick wash-up. You start working. Because when you're in these places-this is something that has to be reminded continuously as the CEO today. [...]Even to this day, I minimize how much impact presence has. Right? Because I take myself for fairly normal. But when you go someplace, it actually validates for them their importance and their belonging in the company."(Int.2)

Inevitably, Burns learnt a great deal of leadership related skills while working with Hick. Her development was noticed of then-CEO Paul Allaire who, in 1991, offered Burns to work as his executive assistant.

"I felt I was beyond that kind of role. I asked why I should do it. He paused a little while, then said, "Because I'm the CEO, and I asked you to do it." It was one of my first lessons in not getting too big for your britches, not assuming that you know all the answers. When the CEO of a company asks you to do something, you should be honored. So, I ended up taking the job and staying in it for two years." (Int.1)

Burns admits that, even though in the beginning she felt like becoming an executive assistant was degrading to her carrier; however, as she found out it was also a humbling experience which might have changed her learning focus by realizing that there is plenty of new skills and knowledge that she is yet to acquire. As stated by Burns, working as an executive assistant was a unique experience that gave her a chance to build another strong mentoring relationship as well as to be exposed to new mastery experiences in her leadership development.

"It was a phenomenal job, an amazing experience! Basically, what I did was travel with the CEO and learn what was required to operate a huge corporate enterprise.

Some of the work was being the person who is the most accessible for him when nobody else was around. For example, when you're in the car o you're stuck at the airport or trying to go through a speech, it's just this intimacy with someone who would normally be speaking to the CFO or whoever, but they are not there, and you are. The assignment taught me that there was a lot more to business than just engineering or just pricing and forecasting. There was all this political stuff that CEOs and business leaders are involved in. I also discovered that the level of stress involved in leading was significantly higher than I thought it was, and that the level of control was significantly lower. "(Int.1)

Burns had a chance not only to increase her soft skills connected with the position of authority, but also by observing Allaire, Burns realized that she would be also able to become a CEO of the company one day. In Burns leadership journey, that event was of a great significance and shows how social modeling can increase the leader self-efficacy in a person.

"Anyway, it was a great job and it taught me a lot because of Paul' personality. The other men I had worked for had a more hard-driving, aggressive approach to business, a more 'military' approach. Paul was exactly the opposite. He liked the ballet, and he would leave work early sometimes and go to the ballet with his wife. It taught me that you could actually have a life and be a business success. It gave me hope. Paul showed me that you could actually fit into a company and still do things outside the company that you like."(Int.1)

Furthermore, working with Paul Allaire had given Burns two of her most challenging mastery experiences in her journey of building leader self-efficacy. According to self-efficacy theory, mastery experiences are the strongest efficacy information source (McCormick, 2002). Succeeding in a challenging task that requires leadership skills and competency tends to increase the expectations in relation to leadership behavior (Hackett & Bentz, 1981). The following quotes describe the mastery experiences Burns underwent:

"After I'd been working with Paul for a couple of years, Xerox went through a big organizational redesign. Paul placed me on the team in charge of that, a team composed of the top 20 people in the company — and me — primarily so I could give him direct feedback on what was happening." (Int.1)

"Literally from engineer to learning a little bit about business to becoming executive assistant to now being the vice president and general manager of office color —

which had no products — and fax. I remember that I felt like I had arrived in the world. Paul gave me the position and then added, "Break even or close it down." It was the best possible job for me at the time because I had never run an integrated business in my life. I had never had the responsibility to deliver a P&L or to work directly with a sales team or to work directly with manufacturing and connect all the things in the rest of the supply chain." (Int.1)

During the 1990s Burns gained vast leadership experience in working across different departments of the company. The mastery experiences at her work as well as verbal persuasion and social modeling she had received from her mentors had a potentially great effect on her leader self-efficacy. Eventually, in 1997 Burns was appointed as the corporate vice president - yet another opportunity to gain senior level experiences and develop Burns's leadership path. However, external events and changes that were taking place at Xerox in the late 1990's would have prevented Burns from further leadership development. At the time, Xerox was facing severe Japanese competition as well as changes imposed by the digital world which resulted in a declining demand for paper-based solutions – solutions that Xerox was famous for. In 1999, Xerox appointed a new CEO, G. Richard Thomas who lasted only 13 months while Xerox continued losing market value and was heavily in debt. The following quotes present recollection of those times by Burns:

"We had lost complete faith in the leadership of the company," she says. "We didn't have any cash and few prospects for making any." (A.O.3)

The company's crisis made Burns want to leave the company and in 2000 she already received a better paying job at another corporation.

"It was not because of more money. […] It was just – what's going on here? What is this place?" (O.2)

However, in 2000, Xerox appointed a new CEO – Anne Mulcahy who tried to convince Burns to stay and appointed Burns as the vice president of strategic services. Even though Burns had already accepted another job offer she changed her mind and stayed at Xerox.

"I have been to almost every country in the world…I have more than I ever imagined, and it all came from the partnership between me and this company. So what do you say when times are tough? "Thank you very much, I will see you later?". That's not what my mother thought me" (O.2)

The fact that Burns did not give up in the face of adversities facing Xerox and accepted the position to be a part of the leadership team proves the importance of having mentors as well as personal resilience. Then-CEO Mulcahy managed to persuade Burns to stay and continue on her leadership journey within the company; without this sponsorship, Burns would have left and would never have reached her CEO potential. Besides that, Burns also showed a great sense of personal resilience, and eventually, she did not give up her Xerox's carrier even at the time of turmoil. Resilience is defined as successfully coping with stressors and demanding situation as well as the ability to bounce back and resist adversity. Self-efficacy and resilience are closely connected concepts; however, the main difference between the two is that for the reliance to occur there need to be stressors, while a person can show self-efficacy even in the absence of adversity. However, being a strongly self-efficacious person may trigger and foster the sense of resilience when needed. In the case of Ursula Burns, that seems to be case when she decided to persevere in leadership positon during the very challenging and unstable times in Xerox's history. Burns' personal agency and resilience also demonstrates the dynamics of triadic reciprocal determinism. At times, when people find themselves in harsh environments and they lack personal agency in such situations, the external situation may exercise such powerful constrain on the person that it become an over-riding determinant in life's outcome (Bandura, 1978). If not for Burns decision to persevere and encouragement she received from her co-workers she would have quitted her career at Xerox and never reach her CEO potential.

Mulcahy and Burns formed a close professional partnership which was intended to transform Xerox into a service-oriented, profit generating enterprise.

"Well, Anne and I met and she told me that what she wanted me to do was find a way to save a couple of billion dollars in my portion of the business. She wanted me to stay and to run manufacturing and take on more of the supply chain and the internal workings of the company. It was another great experience, even though under very bad circumstances. "(Int.1)

Burns had an opportunity to foster her leader self-efficacy development and resilience during the tough times in Xerox's history. As Burns recalls, the amount of responsibility and leadership freedom she had at that time assisted her in the leadership development and prepared her for taking another step in her carrier development.

"Basically, all I had to do was tell her when I was stuck with a problem or I had a dilemma. Otherwise, I could go off and do my thing. It was a great way for me to take the next step in my development, which was to learn how to integrate things such as the near term and the long term. How to keep superiors informed about really important things that they wouldn't even know to ask you about. " (Int.1)

Besides the mastery experiences that strengthened Burns's self − efficacy and equipped her with nuances of leadership skills, Mulcahy and Burns also established a close mentoring relationship through which Burns was to learn about being a CEO through social modeling and verbal persuasion. Burns was able to observe and learn other soft skills connected with leadership.

"Anne spoke to me also and explained that I would get the position but that I had a couple of years of learning to do and that she was not leaving for a while. It was perfect. Under her guidance, I learned an enormous amount of what it would take [to become a CEO]." (Int.1)

"Anne was great. Her strength was in aligning people, bringing them together to work toward a common goal. Her emotional intelligence is off the charts." (Int.1)

Finally, in 2009, Burns replaced Mulcahy and became the CEO of the company. Burns journey to become a CEO, all the events and experiences that went through shaped Burns's carrier path and allowed her to finally take the highest position at Xerox. Burns herself sums up her leadership journey in a way that gives credit to both the external influences and her personal accomplishments, which also shows Burns' internal locus of control – the characteristic of highly efficacious people.

"I'm in this job because I believe I earned it through hard work and high performance. Did I get some opportunities early in my career because of my race and gender? Probably...I went to work for a company that was openly seeking to diversify its workforce. So, I imagine race and gender got the hiring guys' attention. And then the rest was really up to me." (O.A.5)

However, becoming a CEO was in no sense the end of her leadership journey. After 2009, Burns' leadership extended beyond Xerox Corporation and she started to serve on the boards of different companies (e.g. American Express) as well as community organizations. Burns was also appointed by the president Barack Obama to serve on the economic advisory council.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1. Discussion of main findings:

The problem of practice tackled by this thesis is the fact that despite the general interest in the female leadership development programs and other practices ensuring gender equality at the workplace, the number of women at top leadership positions is still much lower than the number of men. As asserted by scholars such as Ibarra and colleagues (2014), standard leadership programs seem not to work for women as they do not address the issue of "being perceived and seeing oneself as a leader". Such assertion also relates to the fact that women, in general, also exhibit self-debilitating beliefs about themselves and possess a distorted self-concept that may halt their progression in leadership (Fassinger, 2002). This very thesis has focused on the life-history approach to leader self-efficacy development, which has a great potential to help women elevate their success in leadership by altering a very important aspect of leader identity and self- concept – namely, the belief and perception a woman has about her leader self-efficacy. The importance of understanding the life-span development seems very much relevant to female leadership development, as generally women undergo different socialization than men and the outcome of such socialization might result in lacking proper "psychological capabilities" in form of e.g. internal locus of control, high self-esteem and confidence.

The following findings are discussed in the light of previous research on the topic and possible implications for practice of leadership development are presented. As in the case of the analysis, the findings are also structured around three themes: childhood, years of education and carrier at Xerox.

Childhood
Finding 1: Familial influences in the form of verbal persuasion and social modeling had the strongest impact on the Burns's perceived self-efficacy.

Burns's mother was the first source of self-efficacy information which had a great impact on her throughout her life and her leadership journey. This finding is also in line with other research in self-efficacy development and leadership development. For example, Shoup (1995) has also found that possessing prodigious patrons or

other supportive individuals was the most influential aspect of individual leadership development. Furthermore, as shown by Zeldin and Pajares (2000), women that achieved the success in the male-dominated fields had gained their self-efficacy beliefs mainly from social modeling and verbal persuasion expressed by significant others. As argued by the authors (2000), in order to establish and enhance the self-efficacy beliefs, it is critical for a woman that *"others have confidence in them and express this confidence to them, so that women developed the confidence in themselves and developed the resilience to the obstacles they were sure to encounter"*. Besides, as previously noted familial influences are in general the most important in a child's life – they may impact the future carrier choices, self-efficacy and also helps the child to overcome the difficulties embedded in the external environment (Bandura, 1997). Burns's mother was positively influencing Burns' sense of self-efficacy by verbally encouraging her daughter to take control over her life by both verbally expressing the confidence and aspirations she had for her daughter as well as being a model of working mother that worked hard to provide her children with a better life. However, not every girl has a chance to experience such a strong and impactful significant other and use such a relation to build the strong sense of efficacy. As argued by Hackett and Betz (1981), in the course of socialization process, from the young age girls lack the verbal encouragement towards ambitious pursuits in male-dominated fields (like leadership or science) greatly limits their later carrier choices. Similar dynamics occurs when it comes to vicarious experiences – girls simply lack the exposure to female role models representing diverse range of career options. As a result, girls are more inclined to pursue more traditional occupations and fail to establish self-efficacy for the non-traditional roles like leadership (Hackett & Betz, 1981). If reverse logic is used, the case of Ursula Burns provides the support for Hackett's et al. (1981) thesis as verbal encouragement and modeling she received from her mother did result in the pursuit of a non-traditional academic (engineering) and career path.

Leadership development practitioners should take this fact under the consideration as the lack of self-efficacy beliefs in women may be rooted in particular childhood experiences; more specifically, in the lack of a significant other who would express the belief and act as a role model during the development of a young girl. Thus, in order to address this issue of adverse childhood experiences, it should be beneficial to include some kind of counseling (or coaching) that would enable an aspiring female leader to become aware of the problem and help her with overcoming her childhood-rooted hampering beliefs about her leadership potential. Coaching

practices are focused around development of *'the capabilities of high-potential performers"* (Coutu & Kaufmann, 2009). Although practices of coaching do not typically include therapeutic aspects (i.e. focusing on the past and treating psychological dysfunctions) (2009), assisting women with understanding and mitigating their past life experiences and their impact on women's leadership aspirations may yield great results both for aspiring female leaders and coaches themselves (as they would increase their effectives and level of service).

Finding 2: Strong sense of self-esteem is an important personal aspect of building a strong sense of self-efficacy.

Ursula Burns has shown a very high sense of self-esteem and confidence throughout her life which can be found in her admitting of liking who she is, and loving her race e.g. *" I love the fact that I am a black women. I think it's good."* (V.2). In the self-efficacy theory, the positive arousal resulting from the feelings of high self-esteem facilitates the task performance and positive judgment of one' abilities (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In the case of Burns, it is valid to say that her strong sense of self-esteem had started in her early childhood and as was the case with the finding 1, Burns's mother had played a significant role in developing the feeling of self-worth in Burns. The importance of women's level of self-esteem and its effect on self-efficacy development may be especially important to address as women consistently exhibit lower levels of self-esteem in comparison to men (Fassinger, 2002). Depressed levels of self- esteem result in a number of negative outcomes such as depression, not taking a risk in carrier and pessimism (McLeod, 2012). The sources of low self-esteem are potentially numerous e.g. disapproving or uninvolved parents; traumas; bullying; lack of parental support; religious beliefs; society and media (Lachmann, 2013). Despite the source of low self-esteem, increasing the sense of self-worth should positively impact the self-efficacy development as the life story of Burns proves. Thus, as it is in the finding 1, in order to enhance the leader self-efficacy in women it should be beneficial to incorporate tools for increasing self-esteem beliefs in women.

<u>*Education*</u>

Finding 3: Significant others have strong impact on the levels of academic self-efficacy.

Finding 1 and finding 3 are strongly related with each other as Burns's mother was again the most influential significant other that verbally encouraged Burns to do well

at school and continue her education at the higher level. As shown by the research, academic development of children is mediated through parental aspirations for their children thus they indirectly influence their career choices (Bandura et al., 1996).

It may be concluded that the achievements and decisions Burns undertook in regards to her education were deeply based on the previously established strong sense of efficacy and confidence that was already discussed in the previous section. As Burns herself admitted, the thing that helped her go through the college was the previously established confidence in herself. It would also be invalid to draw causal relationship between Burns's academic achievement and the development of her leader self-efficacy. However, even though causal relationship cannot be established, the case of Burns shows that her academic achievement granted her an internship and later a job at Xerox what started her ascent to leadership. It may be speculated that because of Burns' academic choices – studying engineering, which was the male-dominated field, she developed an occupational interest and resilience that influenced her later leadership choices. According to Bandura's research on the impact of academic achievement on the career trajectories, a child's perceived academic, social, and regulatory efficacy (e.g. resilience) "influence the types of occupational activities for which they judge themselves to be efficacious" (Bandura et al., 2001). Moreover, the occupational efficacy is determined by the academic efficacy (2001), thus if a girl is not challenged at school in way that builds her efficacy to deal with complex and demanding tasks, she would not be able to pursue challenging career options (such as leadership). As result of not possessing adequate academic and occupational efficacy, young woman will be more inclined to follow traditional career path (2001). In essence, this research explains how Burns' academic choices and challenges might have impacted her future leadership development.

Career at Xerox

Finding 4: Organizational culture and environment had an impact on developing Burns's leader self-efficacy.

When Burns started her carrier at Xerox, the company had already introduced special diversity programs and was embracing the culture of equal opportunities for the workers. As Burns herself admits, she took a great advantage of those facts in her leadership development journey. As stated by Bandura (1997), external environment might serve as an enabling factor for one's development of self-efficacy. Besides,

work environment is one of the external efficacy cues that that impacts the development of self-efficacy by altering the internal states of e.g. stress levels and motivation (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). This particular finding is very relevant to today's business world as companies have been increasing their spending introducing leadership programs for women and establishing equal opportunities culture at workplaces. However, as the research shows, those practices brought little improvement for the number of women at leadership positions (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, Lane, 2014). One of the possible explanations of these counterintuitive results might be the fact that women are not "psychologically prepared" to take advantage of such programs and they often do not identify *"some of the deepest, 'below the surface' thoughts, feelings, assumptions, and beliefs"*(2014). As the case of Ursula Burns shows us, from the early childhood she possessed a strong sense of self-efficacy, confidence and belief in herself which might have subsequently led to her taking an advantage of the culture of opportunities and diversity at Xerox. Thus, it is necessary but not sufficient for a company or leadership program to establish diversity programs and encourage equal opportunity culture without addressing the "psychological preparedness" of the woman to take advantage of such opportunities.

Finding 5: Being exposed to challenging leadership tasks influenced Burns's leader self-efficacy development.

Not surprisingly, almost from the very beginning of her carrier, Burns was exposed to numerous tasks and challenges that facilitated the development of her leadership skills and further establish her leader self-efficacy development. In the light of self-efficacy theory, those challenging tasks are seen as the mastery experiences which are reckoned to be the strongest efficacy information (Bandura, 1997). However, it is also important to point out that merely completing the mastery experience does not necessarily result in increased perception of self-efficacy. The crucial component for successful establishment of the sense of leader self-efficacy is the proper judgment and interpretation of how and why a person completed the task (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), people differ in their interpretation bias as it might depend on their emotional state, task difficulty, the amount of help received etc. Previous studies on the subject matter showed that women's interpretation bias stems mostly from the improper attributions of their successes (Rosenthal, 1995). As

stated by Rosenthal (1995) : *"Evidence from psychological laboratories suggests that women show a comparative tendency to "explain away" their success and take more personal responsibility for failure".* Further, the gender difference in attribution of one's success is evident as men tend to attribute their success to their own abilities while women tend to attribute their success to the luck or help of others (Rosenthal, 1995). Moreover, as described by Gist and Mitchell (1992), the process of attributional assessment is an important part of developing a sense of self-efficacy. Given the manner in which Burns described her successes e.g. "But I wasn't obviously only lucky. I was working hard for it" (V.1) or "I knew that I was smart" (V.1); it can be concluded that Burns interpreted her success in a way that gave credit to her own work and abilities. In order to ensure that exposing women to the new and challenging mastery experiences will result in increased leader self-efficacy, it is first crucial to ensure that a woman's attributional assessment is going to support it as well. Gist and Mitchell (1992) suggest that if the attributions are inaccurate, the person can undergo re-attribution process that would foster the development of self-efficacy. Such a process may take form of the adoption of new beliefs *"by the provision of accurate information about the causes of performance, as well as information about the specific tasks that the employee is doing well or poorly"* (1992).

Finding 6: Mentoring and sponsorship had a great impact on developing Burns' leader self-efficacy.

Throughout her carrier at Xerox, Burns has built strong mentorship and sponsorship relationships with the top-management members of the company. According to self-efficacy development theory, mentors are most likely to influence the development of leader self-efficacy through the vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion of the protégée (Chopin, 2013). Moreover, mentoring and sponsorship are well researched and practiced methods for leadership- development and they serve as the platform for support as well as sharing of the lessons learnt and mistakes to be avoided (Day & Halpin, 2001). However, as the research suggests, women continuously lack the access to mentors, roles models and sponsorship as the men may *"want to maintain their dominance by excluding women from the informal interactions of mentoring and networking"* (Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Consequently, if women had more mentors it could be easier for them to be socialized in both formal and informal manner which would lead to more opportunities for career advantages (2008). The importance of

building a mentoring relationship may be especially applicable for women's leader efficacy development, as women are more prone to rely on the significant relationships on which foundation they would ground their behavior and self-perceptions (Pajares & Zeldin, 2000).

 Another finding:

It is important to note one more finding of the study which is relevant to the study itself but cannot be applied in the controlled manner for the leadership development – namely, the role of luck and fortuity in one's life. The life-history of Ursula Burns shows that she was exposed to a number of "chance events" and as Burns herself admits when asked about the ascent to the leadership position:
"So how I did it? I was able to take an advantage of the fact that I was lucky. And I mean lucky in a broadest way – I was lucky I had a great mother, I was lucky I had a great company. But I wasn't obviously only lucky. I was working hard for it." (V.1.).
Bandura (1997), also describes the role of fortuity that might shape the trajectory of one's life, however, as asserted both by Bandura and Burns herself, when faced with "chance events", an individual may exercise the agency over it by being well prepared and ready to take an advantage of the opportunity that presents itself.

5.2. Limitations

Before concluding the following study, it is crucial to first describe the limitations of the project in order to examine and identify potential weaknesses of the research (Creswell, 2013). In this particular study, few limitations were identified that pertain both to the methods of data collection and analysis as well as the design used in the research process. The main limitation stems from the fact that the research used only secondary data for the analysis. Firstly, the interviews conducted with Ursula Burns were not originally conducted to elicit information about the leader self-efficacy development that she experienced in the course of her life, thus limiting Burns's answers about leader self-efficacy experiences. Secondly, the researcher did not conduct the interviews herself but they were drawn from the pre-existing sources, thus limiting the researcher's ability to access the specific information connected to leader self-efficacy development. Moreover, the answers that Ursula Burns gave during the interviews may be based on the self-reported perceptions. The expectation of the researcher is that the interviews are truthful and honest, however,

given the fact that Ursula Burns gave the interviews after becoming a CEO might entail expressing or exaggerating positive aspects of the company as well as engaging herself in conscious re-storying of her life history and experiences.

Those limitations were to some extent mitigated by the use of proper research design and methods of analysis, which allowed the researcher to elicit experiences, connected to the leader self-efficacy and describe the personal experiences of the research subject. However, as far as duplicability of the research is concerned, the qualitative research design may pose problems. The constructivist type of qualitative research makes the researcher interpret the realities of the study participant through her own lens. Thus, even though another researcher may use the same data set and methods of analysis, the results might not be the same. Other limitations are connected with the methods used – the research may suffer from coder- bias (which was tempered by following the steps described in data analysis section) along with other personal biases that might have affected the results. One of such personal bias might be the fact that both the researcher and research's subject are women. Sharing the same sex might have caused the interpretation to be too subjective (as the researcher might have reflected her own experiences connected to her gender and life-experiences in connection to leadership development and aspirations).

Another limitation stems from the fact that no prior research was identified which would deliberately address the life-history approach to the leader self-efficacy development in women. This limitation was addressed by using the theory triangulation.

Chapter 6 - Conclusions

6.1.   Conclusions

The thesis utilized the life-history approach in order to better understand and uncover the process of leader self-efficacy development of an exceptional female leader – Ursula Burns. The need for the life-history approach was important as it facilitated the understanding of certain life events, influences and personal attitudes that have positively impacted the development of strong leader self-efficacy in Ursula Burns. On the theory level, the research enriches the studies of leader self-efficacy development by extending the analysis by applying a more global, life-span approach to understand the leader self-efficacy development in women. Such approach had proven to be a valid and important source of new theory building and practice of leadership development, as in the case of Ursula Burns, her life experiences seemed to heavily influenced her sense of self-efficacy, confidence and esteem that fostered her career and leadership development.   The findings elicited after the analysis suggests that leader self-efficacy is indeed developed through the interpretation of the main four efficacy sources: mastery experience, social modeling, verbal persuasion and internal/physical states as Ursula Burns has been exposed to all of the traditional efficacy information throughout her life through different set of experiences, events and influences during her life. However, the application of those four sources alone seems not to be sufficient for building leader self-efficacy in women as women must be first "psychologically prepared" to take advantage of such efficacy information. For example, if a woman lacks healthy and adequate self-esteem (which could be an outcome of negative parental or peer influences during childhood), she would be more prone to stress and anxiety would serve as negative internal cues for efficacy development. Furthermore, lack of self-esteem and confidence would stop women from taking advantage of leadership opportunities and other available mastery experiences. Similarly, believing in inadequate causes of their success, women would inhibit the opportunity to develop elf-efficacy after successful completion of mastery experience. Such lack of "psychological preparedness" may potentially explain why women generally show lower levels of leader self-efficacy and it root causes might be to a great extent traced back to the earlier life experiences. Thus, in order to make leadership development programs

more fit for women' needs, such programs should address the internal barriers for leadership that may stem from diverse sets of life experiences.

6.2. Further research

Further research is needed in the area of leader self-efficacy development for women. This very thesis approached the subject from the life-history, life-long perspective of leader self-efficacy development but because the research used only secondary data, more empirical research would greatly benefit the theory building in the area. In order to reach more generalizability and accuracy of findings a phenomenological study could be pursued which would gather the primary data from the group of women business leaders – the primary data would include both the psychological scales (e.g. self-efficacy scale; general-self-esteem scale) and in-depth interviews regarding life history and events and other influences that might have impacted the leader self-efficacy perception in women. The importance of using the real-life business leaders in the research of leader self-efficacy is crucial as great majority of research in the field is conducted on university students. Findings from studies which use students as their population may not be applicable for the leader self-efficacy development in the business context.

Another empirical as well as theoretical research would be beneficial in order to test the findings in the real-life settings e.g. during the leadership development programs. Such empirical research would test the effects of e.g. the effects of re-attribution process on the increase of perceived leader self-efficacy in women.

Generally, following the call of self-efficacy researchers such as Hannah et al (2000), Betz and Hackett (1981), and Gist and Mitchell (1992) there is a great need for further theory building in the field of leader self-efficacy, especially in regards to women. This very thesis aimed at contributing to the leader self-efficacy field of study by using the life-history approach of leader self-efficacy development. However, further research using different approaches might also contribute and expend the field of leader-self efficacy development.

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Appendix A – Codes associated with Bandura's self-efficacy model

The codes associated with Bandura's self-efficacy model were adapted from the book *Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of organization change.* Bandura, 1997, p.195.

Source of self-efficacy	Definitions and expansions	Key words (codes)
Mastery experiences	Successful performance of task	Repeated performance success; self-motivated persistence; goal setting; coping skills; participant modeling; sustained commitment; scholarly achievement; perseverance; professional achievement; self-instructed performance
Vicarious experiences	Raising beliefs by observing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort; possess the capabilities to master comparable activities to succeed	Self-modeling; peer modeling; family and peer success; representation; similarity; networking; social modeling; mentoring; social comparison; social influences; symbolic modeling
Verbal Persuasions	More likely to exert greater effort and to become successful when receiving realistic encouragement than if distressed with selfdoubts	Suggestion; exhortation; encouragement; praise; push; promote; support; move forward; influence
Physiological States	Certain level of emotional stimulation can create an energizing feeling that can contribute to strong performances	Pride, anxiety, fear, exhilaration, relaxation; biofeedback; stress; symbolic desensitization; symbolic exposure

Appendix B – Codes associated with triadic reciprocal determinism

Element of the model	Definition	Associated codes
Personal factors	Person agency through which a person may influence its behavior and environment. Those factors include cognitive, affective and biological events.	Beliefs, attitude, perception, confidence, thinking, strong, inspired, motivated, encouraged (plus antonyms)
Behavior	Range of actions undertaken by the individuals in conjunctions to themselves and environment	Doing, action, inclination, conduct
Environment	Physical and social setting in which people live or in which something happens or develops	Social setting, surrounding, context, circumstances, situation, external influence, external events