THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN LEADERS' GENDER FRAMES

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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN LEADERS’ GENDER FRAMES

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Master of Science in Education, University of Bridgeport, 1992
Bachelor of Arts in English, University of Bridgeport, 1991

A Dissertation
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THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN LEADERS’ GENDER FRAMES

Jean M. Evans Dávila, Ed.D.
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the social construction of female leadership identities from the perspectives of women serving at the highest level of positional authority within the hierarchy of their organizations across different professions. Specifically, the researcher explored the perceptions of five females through their self-reported lived experiences of the factors that have supported and challenged them in forging leadership identities consistent with their core values and beliefs. The five female participants were from these diverse professional contexts in the private and public sectors: (a) University President of a co-educational, four-year, higher education institution, (b) College President of a co-educational, two-year, higher education institution, (c) CEO of a hospital or healthcare organization, (d) Superintendent of a K-12 public school district, and (e) Chief of Police of a municipal law enforcement agency. This study differs from others that explore the intersection between gender and leadership because of this broadened sample that included a variety of professions. Purposeful and convenience sampling procedures were utilized, together with pre-defined selection criteria, to assist in identifying participants who had experienced the phenomena being studied. Data collection tools included semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document review protocols. Data were analyzed and resulted in two findings and four themes. Finding 1 emerged as follows: Participants described their leadership identities in terms of their successes or challenges in
enacting a communal orientation through which they build and maintain relationships that they perceive as critical to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling, move the organization or community forward, navigate difficult circumstances, evaluate their effectiveness as leaders, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others. Finding 2 developed as follows: Participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good that is linked to mission, purpose, and objectives.
Doctor of Education Dissertation

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN LEADERS’ GENDER FRAMES

Presented by

Jean M. Evans Dávila, Ed.D.
DEDICATION

“What we once enjoyed and deeply loved, we can never lose.

For all that we love deeply becomes a part of us.”

Helen Keller

This research is dedicated to the memory of Liz Evans, my loving mother, best friend, and guide throughout life. It is Mom, my true role model, who taught me through her example to be strong, caring, honest, and confident in reaching for the brass ring of leadership opportunities.

This doctoral study is the fulfillment of my mom’s dream deferred, and it is my gift to her. Throughout her formative years, my mom was a stellar student, blessed with intelligence and a determination to succeed. She aspired to attend college, but life became wrought with complexity as her mother became seriously ill and slowly was ravaged by cancer. As the eldest child of six, my mom lovingly devoted herself to mothering her siblings and becoming caregiver to her dying mom. My mom’s lifelong affinity for reading, her natural abilities as a writer and communicator, her love of humor, her wisdom, and her selfless care for those whom she loves so deeply are just a few of her many admirable traits that I strive to carry on in her honor.

I became the woman I am today because of all that my mother has taught me, which inspires my drive to emulate her. One of her most profound lessons has been to lead confidently with integrity and to disprove gender stereotypes of what it means to be female in the workplace. She viewed compassion and kindness for others as values and strengths of effective leadership.

You are forever in my heart, Mom, where you will continue to walk beside me in every step of my journey through life. Always, you remain my inspiration and my best friend. I am thankful you lived to see me reach the apex of my career in educational leadership. You are here in my heart as I begin this new path as Dr. Evans. This one is for you, Mom, with all my love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Wherever you have dreamed of going, I have camped there and left firewood for when you arrive.”

Hafiz

Conducting doctoral research is an experience analogous to traversing the peaks and valleys of unfamiliar territory. The firewood left behind by those who preceded my journey contributed to my growing sense of ease along the way. I offer my heartfelt thanks to those who have sustained my spirit during this adventure that proved abundant in challenges, successes, and opportunities to grow as a scholar, as a female leader, and as a person.

I am thankful to my father for always being there for me, with the patience to listen and the honesty to give me advice. Dad is my confidant, peanut gallery, and comic relief, all in one. He keeps me humble, and he tries his best to influence me to stop worrying about the small stuff. Mom chose well when she selected him to be the love of her life and the father to her children.

I am grateful for my brothers and my sister, and I am lucky to have been born into a family of natural leaders. Each of us embraces agency when the situation requires assertiveness or the ability to provide direction, and we value our communality by offering kindness and support at the same time. I wish to thank my brother John for keeping the home fires burning, which he does because of his love for family and our parents. He reminds me to work hard, enjoy life, stay focused, and value family as the heart of all that matters. Also, he has taught me that, although I never had my own children, I always will have the unconditional love and support of his children, John, Steven, and Lauren. My husband Mike, too, deserves thanks for resolving any tech glitches that arose during my research study. As a former writer and tech magazine editor, Mike often nudged me to dial back my perfectionism and forge ahead drafting.
I am grateful for Dr. Jeanette Moore and Anne Heath, my friends from Cohort 6. I am also appreciative of my friend David Jacob. They have been the constants in this journey of several years, despite our busy lives. They are reminders to support and sustain my friendships.

Dr. Catherine O’Callaghan has been my primary advisor and a blessing to me throughout this journey. She is committed and caring, and she is invested in me as her advisee and as a person. She has taught me the value of demonstrating excitement for a student’s writing and its impact on self-efficacy, which I have carried forward into my own work as an adjunct. I am thankful, as well, to Dr. Marcia Delcourt, for developing and coordinating the Ed.D. Program and for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee. Dr. Delcourt has been an outstanding resource and supporter of my success through every step of the way. Due to her time and efforts, I understand Statistics. Her dedication to students and to this program is as unparalleled as it is admirable and appreciated. Thank you to Dr. Marlene Zakierski, also a member of my committee, for agreeing to serve in this valuable role. Thank you to Dr. Patricia Cosentino and Dr. Frank LaBanca, graduates of Cohort 1 and instructors in the Ed.D. Program. By working with me in an independent study setting, they helped me return to my studies following the loss of my mother. I am appreciative, also, of Dr. William Glass, a former colleague and an ardent supporter of this program, for his generous gift of time and advice whenever I reach out to him.

I am grateful to the five study participants who shared their experiences, with candor and insight, to benefit other leaders and aspirants. Their pseudonyms—Isabel, Thea, Teresa, Liz, and Tamra—are derived from names of powerful queens who led in patriarchal times, with a special quality or accomplishment that I see reflected in each participant. In addition, I am indebted to Dr. Beth Humberd for granting me permission to use and adapt her interview protocols.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

During the post-World War II era from 1948 to 2016, women have made substantial gains in representation within the nation’s workforce, increasing from 32.7% to 56.8%, respectively (DeWolf, 2017). In the five decades spanning 1968 to 2016, the percentage of employed women with full-time jobs in the United States has held steady at 72% to 75% (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2017). Increasingly, women are making their way through the ranks to secure their place in middle-management positions and in the commencement processions of degree granting institutions of higher education (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In 2015, 17 million men and women held management positions in the workplace; however, a scant 39.2% of these leadership roles were occupied by females (U.S. DOL, 2016). With respect to opportunities at the uppermost tier of the leadership hierarchy, the following statistics indicate the percentage of women serving in these elite roles across a variety of professions represented in this study:

- 30.0% of Presidents in colleges or universities (American Council on Education [ACE], 2016);
- 23.0% of Superintendents in public school districts, as reported by respondents in a survey of membership with a 15% return rate (American Association of School Administrators [AASA], 2016);
- 21.6% of Police Chiefs in cities with 30,000 or more residents (U. S. Department of Justice [DOJ], 2015); and
- 0.0% of CEOs in Fortune 500 healthcare institutions or hospitals (Tecco, 2017).

The above cited statistics indicate that female professionals still have much territory to gain in both the private and the public sectors across a variety of fields in terms of their
attainment of positions with the highest level of authority and decision-making responsibilities. The percentage of women in elite executive positions indicates meager representation in the four types of organizations upon which this present study has focused: higher education institutions, healthcare corporations, public school districts, and law enforcement agencies. These statistics from a variety of workplaces can give cause to speculate on reasons that more women are not securing roles in the top echelon of leadership. If the supposition were to be raised that women are, perhaps, ill-prepared in terms of educational background to compete successfully for these top positions, an additional set of statistics can counter this argument. For example, as of 2016, women graduates held more than 50% of all doctoral degrees granted since 2006, more than 50% of all master’s degrees since 1991, more than 50% of all bachelor’s degrees since 1981, and more than 50% of all associate’s degrees since 1978 (ACE, 2016).

This study focused on the lived experiences of five female executives in the uppermost level of leadership within each type of organization noted above. The researcher’s objective was to understand the ways these women have crafted a leadership identity and how their professional identity accords with who they are as individuals and who they are within the workplace.

Rationale for Selecting the Topic

The rationale for this study was driven by data on the percentage of women with college degrees and the percentage of women serving in top-tier leadership positions, as cited above. Women outpace men in the attainment of advanced degrees, yet few attain leadership roles at the highest level of the management hierarchy in public and private sector organizations (ACE, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Tecco, 2017). When considered together, the statistics cited above on women’s educational level and their representation in elite leadership roles indicate that
females maintain meager representation in the positions that have been identified despite their prevalence among the ranks of college graduates. Research, such as Eagly and Karau’s 2002 study, indicates that although some women find success in securing high-level leadership roles, they are likely to encounter a double standard in how their leadership traits and behaviors are perceived by others in relation to male leaders who exhibit the same attributes. Eagly and Karau (2002) posited that social norms differ for women and men in terms of acceptable leadership traits and behavior. Ridgeway (2009) noted that organizational cultures tend to operate on gendered beliefs that preference males as leaders, wherein gender plays a key role in influencing perceptions regarding who is fit to lead. In this present study, the lessons learned regarding gender and leadership were anticipated to be as different as each of the five participants who had agreed to share their perspectives through this investigation. In addition, their journeys, as reported within the study, enabled the researcher to explore common themes of how each person has negotiated the sometimes-competing constructs of the personal self and the leadership self while having found success in making it work in a manner that did not sacrifice their own core values.

**Statement of the Problem**

Women account for the majority of graduates earning advanced degrees, and they are a growing membership in the American workforce (ACE, 2016). However, women have meager representation in top-tier leadership roles at the helm of organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2007). As society has acclimated to equating males with leaders, the attributes of competent leadership have aligned with the traits and behaviors stereotypically assigned to the male gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This study’s researcher explored how five female leaders from diverse
professions perceive the influences, barriers, and successes they have encountered in constructing an authentic leadership identity that is consistent with their own values and beliefs.

**Significance and Potential Benefits of the Research**

Irrespective of chosen professional fields, female readers of this research will gain understanding of the complexity in balancing the many aspects of the identity they bring to the workplace, with a focus on the specific roles of leader and gender. All human beings have a personal identity that is comprised of individual core beliefs or values and is difficult to separate from their work identity. To be professionally successful, people must attempt to reconcile their thoughts and behaviors with their organization’s climate and expectations (Carden & Callahan, 2007). There is complexity in forging an effective leadership identity that comes to bear through the varied and multiple systems within which the individual operates, systems involving their closest relationships and the environments they share with others in their lives. This construct evolves to include the most distant systems that involve their indirect influences from the environments in which those who are close to them function within their own institutional or organizational systems. Additionally, this extends to include systems at the most generalized level, which incorporate the larger realm of time and cultural or global values and beliefs (Egan et al., 2017). Furthermore, there are several competing influences that overlay each of these systems. These influences are dynamic and shift in terms of occupying a magnified presence in the leader’s life – influences, which among many others, might relate to the significance of the leader’s sense of purpose or calling to her work, who she believes herself to be as leader, how she believes others view her as leader, and the relationships she has inside and outside of the workplace (Egan et al., 2017). The field of discourse analysis provides additional insight into the ways in which female conversational style in the workplace might vary from the manner of
communication adopted by males (Tannen, 1995), which can have unintended implications in confirming negative gender stereotypes and perceptions with regard to who is fit to lead. Therefore, it is plausible to assert that this study can create awareness in present and aspiring female leaders about the many factors that can impede or facilitate their path to creating a viable leadership identity that enables them to accomplish their professional goals, thereby helping them to wrestle with the question of who they are and who they aim to be as leaders.

Study participants’ reflections offer a glimpse of personal insight to female readers with respect to their personal career paths and their individual ways of being, so others can understand how to construct a leadership identity that aligns with their own professional aspirations. Prior research has indicated that social expectations for women and men differ in terms of leadership behaviors, and females can experience negative evaluations that are influenced by these cultural norms of gender appropriate traits (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

For aspiring leaders, this study’s findings might help improve the future course they chart, in terms of how to conduct themselves purposefully by taking into consideration their interactions with others at work. Those who do not desire the pursuit toward a leadership pathway might gain from these findings a better understanding of their relationships with their supervisors or other stakeholders. Eagly’s (2007) research suggested that females must find a balance in enacting leadership behaviors that are authoritative, a trait perceived in males as a strength, while also being sensitive to needs of others, an attribute of the female stereotype which can be interpreted as weakness in leaders. According to Ridgeway (2009), “institutionalized cultural ‘rules,’ gender beliefs about differences and inequality, have a prescriptive edge that people enforce by sanctioning explicit violations” (p. 151). With this complexity in mind, males and females, can find in this study an opportunity to reflect on their own gendered selves in
relation to their work or leadership identities. Essentially, all people, male or female, supervisor or subordinate, bring to the workplace a multi-faceted and complex set of identities, including a gender role that they must learn to negotiate for an improved sense of belonging and success at work (Carden & Callahan, 2007).

**Definition of Terms**

To assist the reader in understanding with clarity the issues and theories related to this investigation, a list of essential terms and definitions is provided as follows:

1. *Agentic* is a descriptor for a set of traits stereotypically assigned to male leaders, examples of which include the following: assertive, controlling, dominant, and competitive (Weiner & Burton, 2016).

2. *Capacious Model* is a contemporary theory that explains “how individuals create and recreate their leadership identities over time and context” (Egan et al., 2017, p. 125). This model recognizes the presence of five systems that serve as contexts wherein different types of relationships exist that impact how the leader socially constructs an identity – the chronosystem, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem (Egan et al., 2017, p.127). In addition, the model focuses on the multiple dynamic influences in leadership identity construction, among which are explicated the following four domains that are most prominent for female leaders – *purpose, relationships, social identities, and self-identities* (Egan et al., 2017, p. 130). The terms related to these systems and influences will be individually addressed and defined in Chapters Two and Four, in appropriate contexts.

3. *Communal or Relational* traits are stereotypically feminized, including the following: nurturing, empathetic, supportive, and collaborative (Weiner & Burton, 2016).
4. *Conversational style* refers to specific *conversational strategies* and *rituals* that result in “systematic differences in communicative style,” often leading to frustration or misunderstanding in cross-cultural or cross-gender discourse (Tannen, 1994, p. 5). Specific strategies and rituals of importance to this study include the conversational presence of *challenging/rapport, directness/indirectness, softeners, input/consensus, credit-sharing, speaking less, and interruptions* (Tannen, 1995). Relevant terms will be defined in their appropriate contexts within Chapters Two and Four.

5. *Double-bind* is a situation resulting in negative consequences for a woman who operates outside the boundaries of her socially prescribed feminized role as she adopts the stereotypically male-associated behaviors that are required for success in her leadership role (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

6. *Executive* is a term that will be used synonymously with *leader* in this study, as the level of authority and responsibility for the professional roles of potential participants in this study is at the uppermost tier of leadership. This term is not confined to CEOs in business or commerce but extends to the vernacular across other work contexts.

7. *Frames* are “a shared way of categorizing and defining ‘who’ [the] self and [the] other are in the situation so that we can anticipate how each of us is likely to act and coordinate our actions accordingly” (Ridgeway, 2009, p. 147).

8. *Gender-Leadership Frames* (Humberd, 2014) is an extension of Gender Frames Theory (Ridgeway, 2009) that describes “the various ways in which women construct their gender in relation to their leadership and think about what it means to be a leader” (Humberd, 2014, p. 2).
9. Glass ceiling is a metaphor popularized in the mid-1980s. It represents the state of women being held back while “just below but in full view of the top” position they desire to attain as the apex of their career aspirations (Carli & Eagly, 2016, p. 516).

10. Glass cliff is a metaphor coined in 2005. This describes the situation of women “being preferentially placed in leadership roles that are associated with an increased risk of negative consequences. As a result, to the extent that they are achieving leadership roles, these may be more precarious than those occupied by men” (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, p. 83).

11. Labyrinth is a metaphor developed in 2007. In contrast to the earlier glass ceiling metaphor, the labyrinth describes with more hopefulness the difficulty women confront in navigating a path to top leadership roles. A labyrinth is composed of a myriad of alternate paths – some indirect, others more direct, and those leading to a false turn along the route – with leadership residing at the center of the model. Rather than presenting a fixed barrier of the glass ceiling, the labyrinth metaphor assures female leadership aspirants that with “persistence and effort. . . advancement is difficult but not impossible” to achieve in the path that leads to the highest-level leadership positions (Carli & Eagly, 2016, p. 517-18).

12. Role Congruency Theory is based on stereotypically gendered role assignments that meet societal expectations. These include the notion of females as homemakers or care-givers and males as earners or leaders. These roles have evolved in their assignment to genders based on conventional divisions of labor in the workplace and the home (Eagly, 2007).
13. *Social Identity Theory* (Goffman, 1959) pertains to the way in which we

“contextualize ourselves and others in an environment,” with regard to the various, and often competing, roles we fulfill – gender, age, religious association, professional position, and family membership (Carden & Callahan, 2007, p. 177).
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of literature is presented in five sections. The first section focuses on three metaphors, prevalent in popular and scholarly discourse, that refer to specific challenges faced by female executive-level leaders and aspirants. The second section presents a brief context of three theories representing a progression over time from a generalized to a gender-specific discussion of identity construction that proved useful to the researcher in comprehending with clarity the literature that was reviewed in the early stages of the study: Social Identity (Goffman, 1959), Gender Frames (Ridgeway, 2009), and Gender-Leadership Frames (Humberd, 2014). The third section describes in detail the two theoretical constructs that gained primacy as the investigation continued, due to their complexity and the more precise relationship they provided to emergent themes within the data collection: Role Congruency Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and the Capacious Model (Egan et al., 2017). The fourth section discusses Conversational Style (Tannen, 1994, 1995), which also emerged during the study as the researcher noted dialogic strategies and markers of gender in the transcribing and recording of field observations of the participants and their team members (Tannen, 1994, 1995). The fifth and final section of the chapter summarizes this review of literature.

Literature Review Search Process

The researcher accessed peer-reviewed studies and articles through a variety of databases available within Western Connecticut State University’s online library collections, examples of which included the following: Academic Search Premier, APA PsycArticles, Business Source Premier, EBSCO Combined Databases, and JSTOR. Additionally, the researcher utilized Google Scholar. Applying a variety of search terms, including but not limited to the following, the researcher selected for review those studies which were recent within 10 years or otherwise
seminal scholarship: (a) leadership and female gender, (b) leadership and gender bias or gender stereotypes, (c) female leaders and relational style or relational frame, (d) leader identity construction, (e) agentic and communal leadership orientations, (f) role ambiguity and female leaders, (g) gender norms and discourse, (h) discourse and leadership, (i) females leaders and conversation style, (j) double-bind and women leaders, and (j) female leadership development.

**Metaphors of Female Ascent to Leadership**

**Glass Ceiling.** The entry of the glass ceiling metaphor into the lexicon of popular culture was identified by Eagly and Carli (2007) as having first occurred in the mid-1980s. This term, now seemingly ubiquitous throughout popular, scholarly, and feminist discourse on gender and leadership, describes the condition of aspiring female leaders in arriving so close to a desired leadership role – near enough to see their desired goal from their immediate step below – yet confronting a seemingly impenetrable barrier of gender stereotypes that influences perceptions of their leadership competencies and obfuscates their career advancement. This metaphor was coined by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) in their cover article for a special supplement of the *Wall Street Journal* that explored the status of women in corporate work structures. The authors attributed the limitations that impacted females in their attainment of top leadership positions to gendered stereotypes, which influenced negative perceptions of the effectiveness of women’s leadership style and females’ general lack of fit in the corporate culture (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986).

**Glass Cliff.** In 2005, Ryan and Haslam extended the dialogue with the introduction of the glass cliff metaphor, which described the precarious nature of the high-level executive positions for which female leaders were selected once successful in breaking through the glass ceiling. The term first appeared in an archival study (Ryan & Haslam, 2005) of the performance
of Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) 100 Companies, both before and after the 2003 appointment of a new board member of either gender, a comparison of 17 companies having appointed females with 19 companies having appointed males. One finding of the study was that female appointments to high-level leadership roles tended to occur within companies that were beset with “problematic organizational circumstances” (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, p. 87), social and economic in nature, that created an uneven playing field for female leaders in comparison to their male counterparts as a result of higher risk of failure and a more stringent scrutiny of female performance.

**Labyrinth.** By 2007, Eagly and Carli had proposed an alternative metaphor of the labyrinth, instead recognizing women’s strides despite these once formidable barriers and acknowledging a continued need to work toward further advancement. The labyrinth was conceptualized to convey a more hopeful message to women who sought to serve in the uppermost echelon of management, which communicated that although female executive-level aspirants were still likely to encounter some difficulties in getting ahead, they could navigate, nonetheless, successfully through the inherent challenges in their leadership path, provided they maintained persistence and an awareness of the potential pitfalls (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Some of the issues that are accounted for through discussion of this metaphor include the paucity of female mentors or sponsors, the decision to delay career goals in favor of family responsibilities, and the experience of being an inside candidate who is passed over for promotion.

**Evolution of Identity Theories**

Extant literature demonstrates an evolving understanding of the complexities involved in the social construction of identity, within which each new researcher or theorist has built upon a pre-established foundation to demonstrate the importance of another area of consideration. The
discussion of these developing theories is presented in the following section, beginning from the earliest to the most recent theory that has relevance to the present investigation. Each theory is concisely described with the emphasis on how it has evolved in relation to the theory that preceded it and its relationship to elements of this present study.

Social Identity Theory. Goffman (1959) relied on his experience in theater performance as the extended metaphor when he put forth his theory of social identity development or public presentation of the self, sometimes referred to as Dramaturgy. According to Goffman (1959) identity is jointly constructed between a person, referred to as the actor, and the audience, those with whom she or he interacts, or society in general. This theory includes explication of the conscious effort the actor or performer tends to put forth to ensure that “impression management” is upheld, remaining on guard that the desired perception of his or her person, manner, and actions is conveyed appropriately to the audience (p. 113). Also, Goffman (1959) distinguishes between the performances, language use, and behaviors that are intended to be “frontstage” or open to public observation, and those are reserved for “backstage” among members of the performer’s inner circle or closest confidants (p. 128). According to Goffman (1959), the self we present to others in our everyday lives is a “socialized performance [which has been] molded and modified to fit the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented” (pp. 34-35).

Gender Frames Theory. With recognition afforded to Goffman’s (1959) contributions through his Social Identity Theory, Ridgeway’s (2009) Gender Frames Theory (GFT) asserted that gender is a “primary cultural frame” upon which humans rely to inform their interactions with others (p. 147). As such, gender frames are a contextualized amalgam of external, cultural beliefs and stereotypes that people have internalized, which influences their perceptions and
helps them quickly frame differences between themselves and others’ traits, behaviors, or status. Ridgeway (2009) stated that people rely on frames such as gender, race, or age to fulfill their need for an efficient and “shared way of categorizing and defining ‘who’ [the] self and [the] other are in the situation so that we can anticipate how each of us is likely to act and coordinate our actions accordingly” (p.147). These frames are a type of cognitive script that assists us in relating with someone. Ridgeway (2009) posited that gender is the primary frame that people draw upon almost immediately in their interactions with others; therefore, frames tend to negatively or positively intersect with how one views a person and his or her other roles, such as leader. Ridgeway (2009) asserted that “one of the most powerful ways that gender frames affect the gendered structure of society is through infusing gendered meanings into the institutional practices, procedures, and role identities through which various organizations operate” (p. 152).

Lyness and Heilman’s (2006) study of the evaluations of 489 male and female upper-level finance executives found that gender and position type affected performance ratings. Females in operations management roles, which were “likely to be perceived as more strongly male-gender typed” and associated with agentic leadership, received lower performance ratings in comparison to their male counterparts (p. 783). Females in staff management positions, roles which require greater communality, received higher performance ratings than males. In this present investigation, GFT was a valuable lens that led to the researcher’s greater understanding of some of the organizational biases and interpersonal challenges that were self-reported by the five female leaders who were study participants.

**Gender-Leadership Frames Theory.** Acknowledging a foundation in the theories of Goffman (1959) and Ridgeway (2009), as well as other contributors to the field of leader identity, Humberd (2014) introduced Gender-Leadership Frames Theory (GLFT) as a grounded
theory through her qualitative field study of 55 aspiring female leaders in the setting of a large-size global bank. While gender frames that are based on stereotypes were established by Ridgeway (2009) as having developed through external or societal influences, Humberd’s (2014) GLFT extended this work by also having considered the internal influences in order to “theorize the gender-leadership frame as an individual woman’s guiding orientation of who she is as a woman leader that organizes the perceptions and interpretations of her own experience” (Humberd, 2014, p. 26). GLFT (Humberd, 2014) accounted for the presence of a “local organizational context” that provides the leader with her unique experiences resulting from the relationships, interactions, and “situational dynamics” that she encounters in the workplace (p.29). Humberd (2014) argued that together these factors contribute to the development of an identity that is based on the following dimensions of women’s gender-leadership frames: “subjective certainty, identity aspirations, and their perceived credibility, efficacy, and authenticity” (p. 30). Because workplaces are dynamic contexts with constantly changing situational challenges, a female’s gender-leadership frame was described as shifting on a continuum in terms of the woman leader’s placement within one or more of these aforementioned dimensions at any time (Humberd, 2014).

More recently, researchers Zheng, Surgevil, and Kark (2018) conducted interviews with 64 female executives in the United States to explore the self-perceptions of tensions experienced in negotiating agentic and communal leadership attributes. Participants reported having learned to lead contextually and having presented themselves as agentic, communal, or a blend of both to accord with “the demands of a particular situation or target audience” (Kark et al., 2018, p. 640). This finding aligned with Humberd’s GLFT (2014), in which she had argued that external and internal factors influenced a construction of identity that is fluid according to the context in
which leadership is enacted. In addition, a fluid and situational adaptation in leadership behaviors is supported by Wood and Eagly’s (2012) Biosocial Origin Theory (BOT), which recognized agentic and communal traits as having been derived from the roles women and men tended to assume in society, reaching back historically to our earliest beginnings as a hunter-gatherer society, with changes in these attributes lagging behind the times despite the dynamic nature of society customs and mores. An example would be the progression from the recent past in which males were largely the sole gender that served as leaders of industry while women were relegated to caregiver or homemaker roles. These gender roles have shifted to the now subsequent dynamic of contemporary females having gained entrée to the executive suite in the workplace, as well. Therefore, both Wood and Eagly’s BOT (2012) and Humberd’s GLFT (2014) provided the researcher of this present study with insight on how the five participants chose to describe the challenges and advantages they perceived having faced in the construction of their own identities as women leaders. In addition, both the contextual fluidity of the enactment of leadership identity and society’s gendered role expectations of leaders, which are integral to Humberd’s GLFT (2014) and Wood and Eagly’s BOT (2012), formed a bridge to two theoretical constructs that gained importance in the present study: Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and Capacious Model (Egan et al., 2017). These two constructs are described in detail in the next sections due to their primacy as the theoretical foundation of this study.

**Situational Gender-Leadership Identity Theories**

**Role Congruity Theory.** Eagly and Karau’s (2002) explication of Role Congruency Theory (RCT) was integral to this study’s framework for understanding how participants perceived the behaviors and attributes that were self-reported to define their own leadership identity in terms of society’s gender stereotypes of appropriateness. A well-established body of
literature exists based in relational theory, which argues that the female gender role is societally perceived to be communal, typically characterized by kindness and empathy and focused on collaboration and relationship building (Buttner, 2001; Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hurst, Leberman & Edwards, 2018; Ridgeway, 2009). This is counter to leadership competencies that tend to be aligned with agentic qualities and are assigned most commonly to the male gender, such as assertiveness, decisiveness, competitiveness, and self-promotion (Buttner, 2001; Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hurst, et al. 2018; Ridgeway, 2009).

“Tension between the communal qualities that people prefer in women and the predominantly agentic qualities they expect in leaders produces cross-pressures on female leaders” (Eagly, 2007, p. 4). In attempting to manage the incongruence of these gendered role expectations, female leaders will “often experience disapproval for their more masculine behaviors, such as asserting clear-cut authority over others, as well as for their more feminine behaviors, such as being especially supportive of others” (Eagly, 2007, p. 4). Role congruency and gender stereotypes also influence the career goals or leadership aspirations families communicate to girls during their formative years and how these messages may result in women experiencing identity and role conflict issues relative to their fit in the workplace (Le Ber et al., 2017).

RCT and Research Relevant to this Study. A body of literature has developed over the decades, cresting at times and waning in other periods, regarding gendered expectations and the successes and challenges these and other socially framed stereotypes have presented in relation to female leadership (Carden & Callahan, 2007; Ridgeway, 2009). Traditional gender frames for females are communal or relational by nature (Ridgeway, 2009). Such stereotypes contribute to the perception of women as enacting leadership from a people-orientation, as nurturers and collaborators, traits that may be perceived as lacking in fit for the agentic or masculinized
attributes of a task-orientation that is commonly associated with top-level leadership (Buttner, 2001; Hurst et al., 2018). This contributes to a perceived bias that is documented across the findings of multiple studies that have reported women executives as having been viewed less capable in relation to their male peers (Eagly, 2007; Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008; Hurst et al., 2018; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Ritter & Yoder, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Weiner & Burton, 2016).

There is a proliferation of studies suggesting that leaders can experience the double-bind of being sanctioned for acting with agency, incongruent with females gender frames but congruent with expectations for leaders, yet also being similarly disadvantaged and encountering backlash when they act communally as is congruent with gendered expectations (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Paustian-Underdahl, Slattery Walker, & Woehr, (2014); Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Weiner & Burton, 2016). In contrast, there are studies that rebut these findings by reporting that, to varying degrees, there can be a distinct female advantage in exhibiting a relational leadership style that is gender role-congruent, with researchers asserting in discussion within the studies that this reflects a shift in the way in which effective management is enacted in current practice (Bongiorno, Bain, & David, 2014; Post, 2015; Zheng et al., 2018). The discussion which follows is based on several representative studies the researcher found relevant to data collection in this present study with regard to how RCT relates to females and their access to leadership positions, evaluations of their performance as leaders, and any possible advantages the female gender congruent trait of communality may or may not afford to women in executive roles.

RCT and Access to Leadership. Studies conducted by Ritter and Yoder (2004), Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006), and Rudman and Glick (2001) add to a complex view of the
theoretical construct of RCT that can raise important questions about how females are perceived
in terms of their competency to lead and whether they are likely to be selected for promotion or
hiring for executive leadership opportunities when competing against male candidates having
equal or lesser qualifications.

Ritter and Yoder’s (2004) study on gender differences and the emergence of leaders
found the selection of a task manager was mainly influenced by gender-typing of the leader and
the task. Roles, objects, and organizations become gender-typed by society based on who
traditionally is seen as being engaged or connected with a certain type of work or role, as well as
whether it requires a leadership orientation that is agentic or communal (Ritter & Yoder 2004).
Gender-typing, as it is referred to by Ritter and Yoder (2004), is largely synonymous with RCT.
Ritter and Yoder (2004) recruited 240 males and females in psychology courses at a midwestern
university in the United States. Using the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), participants
were rated to determine their level of agency, which was equated with the CPI trait identified as
social dominance. The participants were divided into same sex and mixed sex dyads, to explore
whether individuals with greater social dominance or agency emerged as leaders when the
required leadership task was classified as agentic (playing football), communal (planning a
wedding), or neutral (planting a garden). Each dyad consisted of one person of greater social
dominance and another who had scored two standard deviations below in the same trait.
Findings indicated that even when the females were rated higher in social dominance traits, the
males were more likely to be chosen as leader in 60% of all dyads when the task was neutral and
in 70% of all dyads (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Additionally, even in mixed sex dyads in which the
women were more agentic and the task was feminized, leadership was deferred, often by the
dominant female herself, to the less agentic male when the task was masculine or neutral in
gender-type (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). However, the agentic or dominant women were selected as leaders 90% of the time for tasks considered feminine. These findings appear to affirm that agentic women are “constrained by gendered expectations” regarding who is a good fit for leadership unless the task is considered congruent with their sex, meaning it is feminized (Ritter & Yoder, 2004, p. 191).

Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006) conducted a study in southern Spain, which involved 705 participants between the ages of 11 through 82, median age 36, to determine if gender congruency and female stereotypes influenced decision-making about leadership promotions for candidates in three different gender-typed industries. Participants were provided with a vignette of male and female leadership candidates and a description of a fictionalized company from one of three types of industries traditionally perceived as linked to gender, identified as follows by the study’s authors: auto-manufacturing (masculine), clothing manufacturing (feminine), or unspecified (neutral). Participants were asked to evaluate candidate suitability for the position based on the individual’s likelihood to succeed in the role, her or his perceived agentic and communal traits, reasons that could be attributed to the promotion decision, and predicted leadership style of the candidate (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Two instruments were used as the measure for traits and leadership style, respectively the Bem’s Sex Role Inventory and the Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire. Findings of the study suggested that overall female candidates were subjected to prejudice that would prevent them from being selected for promotion to masculine and feminine gender-typed industries (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). This was especially true when the female candidate’s proposed promotion involved an incongruent or masculinized industry; however, it was not the case when the female’s promotion was gender congruent with the type of industry
(Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Older male and female participants, as well as all female participants in general, demonstrated greater prejudice than males and younger male and female participants toward the female leadership candidates (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006). Due to the gender bias suggested in the study’s findings, the researchers’ discussion focused on difficulties females could experience in position-level advancement if the industry is incongruent with the candidate’s gender role. Therefore, Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra’s (2006) study proved useful for this present investigation, as it added insight pertaining to some of the self-reported issues the current participants raised during their interviews when discussing difficulties they faced in attaining promotions or being recognized as leaders before attaining their first executive-level positions.

Rudman and Glick (2001) replicated their earlier research (1999), once again in a lab-setting, with the aim of examining the presence of a gender-based negative impact or “backlash effect” (p. 743) in securing a leadership position, this time including an applicant with neutralized traits, not predominantly agentic or communal. The experiment involved 107 Rutgers University undergraduate participants who were provided with a computer lab manager job description that either emphasized communal (female) traits or agentic traits (male), which they utilized to evaluate male and female candidates (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Candidates were presented to participants for evaluation through videotaped interviews and writing prompts that were devised to project them as having traits that are stereotypically male (agentic) or neutral (androgynous). The agentic female candidates were perceived by participants as having greater competency than the androgynous females; however, they were disadvantaged in ratings of their likeability (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Agentic females were similarly perceived in comparison to agentic males (Rudman & Glick, 2001). This result was identified by the researchers as
indicative of the presence of a sanction or backlash effect targeted at these females due to the incongruency of their gender with agency, with participants viewing them as less communal or less socially proficient (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Regardless of the gender-typing of the job description, candidates who were gender typed as neutral did not experience the same disadvantage (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Therefore, Rudman and Glick (2001) also found that agency could be tempered with the right amount of communion as a moderator to mitigate the female stereotype of being deemed too soft or too nice for leadership (Rudman & Glick, 2001). The researchers did, however, note that the right balance would be situational and, therefore, difficult for candidates to determine when posturing for a position (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

These three studies when considered collectively, Rudman and Glick (2001), Ritter and Yoder (2004), and Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra (2006), are fitting examples of the complexity and dissonance found in the literature on gender bias and RCT as it relates to females competing for promotions or being chosen to lead. Firstly, Ritter and Yoder (2004) found that women who were more agentic emerged as leaders only for female gender congruent roles, such as planning a wedding, with the weaker males prevailing as leaders in the other task types. Secondly, Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra’s (2006) findings indicated an apparent contrast to this, having shown that females in general were disadvantaged for promotion in all three gender-typed industries in the study – masculine, feminine, and neutral – because of participant bias accorded with females being too communal and, therefore, ineffective as leaders. Thirdly, Rudman and Glick (2001) found that the females who were presented as communal were disadvantaged for a leadership position even when the job description was purposely written to be congruent with communality, a finding that adds an additional facet to the RCT dilemma confronted by females who aspire to lead. In this researcher’s present study, such findings
provided a degree of sense-making regarding several conflicting experiences that were self-reported by study participants in relation to their path to executive leadership positions. The section which follows next on the construct of RCT, relative to performance evaluations, considers the literature as it moved forward from the issues involved in accessing leadership positions to those challenges that can surface regarding the perception of one’s competence and effectiveness as an executive leader once a position has been attained.

**RCT and Performance Evaluations.** Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) conducted a study to determine if there were differences influenced by gender in the social and emotional intelligence competency levels of male and female leaders, as well as, if there was a relationship between these competencies and success. The sample consisted of 105 executive-level leaders, 30 females and 75 males, employed within a financial organization in the United States. The Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) was the instrument used to measure the leaders’ social and emotional intelligence levels, completed by 12 raters that included the leader, his or her manager, peers, direct reports, clients and unspecified others as contributors to the composite score of each executive (Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008). Successful performance was measured by the company’s annual performance assessment completed by the leader’s primary evaluator within the regularly prescribed functions of the supervisor’s job. No significant differences were found in the social and emotional competencies level of males and females, and the most successful leaders had rankings in this area that showed both genders were largely similar (Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008). In the study’s discussion, Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) proposed that the similarity in traits could have been attributed to females having learned to adapt to male congruent attributes and behaviors as the means to attaining their executive status. Among those male and female executives who ranked highest in social emotional competencies, the males
were considered more successful in their performance as leaders, which was in contrast to results for the females whose social emotional competencies scores were not associated with success (Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008). Even when women executives had the same level of social and emotional competencies as the men, these females had received lower annual performance evaluation ratings from their supervisors (Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008).

Lyness and Heilman (2006) reviewed archival performance evaluation data from a two-year period to determine whether there were relationships between gender, evaluation ratings, and promotions for 484 staff, 100 of whom were female and the remainder who were male. These persons served as upper- and middle-level managers and were employed within the United States offices of an international financial services corporation, which was the study’s setting. The managers’ positions were classified dichotomously as line or staff management (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). Line management is generally associated with males, involving operations and sales. Line positions tend to require closer interactions with CEOs and other senior staff in an advisory role for decision-making of a broad nature that impacts many areas of a corporation’s viability (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). Staff management positions are traditionally accorded to females, requiring a people-orientation, involving a limited locus of interaction with the highest-level of leadership and typically relegated to support functions such as human resources (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). The gender typing of these two types of management positions was important in the study’s theoretical foundation of RCT. The instrument that measured performance in this study was the authentic tool developed by the corporation, based on nine different dimensions for rating the employees (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). The researchers found that the performance ratings of female line managers were significantly lower than those of female staff managers, as well as being lower than the ratings of male staff managers and male
line managers (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). These findings align with RCT, as line positions are masculine in gender-typing and staff positions are female in gender typing; in addition, as noted in aforementioned studies, males generally are not sanctioned when serving in gender incongruent roles such as these staff positions. Lyness and Heilman’s (2006) research finding that gender alone did not significantly correlate with evaluation ratings of promotion data offers an important qualifier in the review of literature for this present study, which leads to a uniquely female conundrum about whether or not it is wise for aspiring female leaders to pursue masculine gender-typed positions to address gaps in their résumés in order to build the types of experiences required for the highest level of leadership, such as an operations management role, knowing that this might carry risk of negative assessment of performance that could influence career advancement (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

Considered together, Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) and Lyness and Heilman (2006) have contributed research that points to issues in evaluations of female leaders and raises important questions regarding the challenges that women continue to encounter even once they have succeeded in attaining a leadership role. The contrast in the extant literature examined in preparation for this investigation widened as additional research was perused. As a result, it became evident to this researcher that others have been in pursuit of answers to questions concerning whether or not there are circumstances or leadership traits that can be skillfully leveraged to the advantage of female leaders (Bongiorno et al., 2014; Vecchio, 2002; Zheng et al., 2018), as will be discussed in the following section.

**RCT and the Female Leadership Advantage.** Post (2015) conducted a study using an online survey to determine whether the communality of female leaders was advantageous in certain contexts when guiding teams. The study’s sample consisted of 82 teams from 29 major
firms in industry, 30% of which were guided by female leaders with an average of 11 members per team, with 93% of all team members responding to the online survey. Post (2015) based her hypotheses on RCT (Eagly & Karau, 2002) in identifying communal traits she anticipated finding in female leadership processes, such as team cohesiveness, cooperative learning, and participative communication. The study’s findings suggested that the female-led teams that had greater functional diversity, meaning differences among team member job functions and types of expertise, reported higher levels of cohesiveness than similar teams that were led by males (Post, 2015). Additionally, the female-led teams that were larger and more globally dispersed in location reported greater levels of cohesiveness, cooperative learning, and participative communication than similar teams that had male leaders (Post, 2015). In her discussion of the study’s findings, Post (2015) conjectured whether the communality of female leaders provides an advantage in jobs involving the coordination and guidance of the work of large, functionally diverse, and geographically dispersed teams.

Offering a contrasting perspective on the possible existence of a female leadership advantage, Vecchio (2002) wrote a literature review on gender differences and leadership, in which his conclusions in part related to and negated the existence of a female advantage in leadership. Vecchio (2002) cited that studies involving actual followers’ experiences with leaders are not only self-reported, thereby being perception biased, but also occur after long passages of time relative to participant experiences with leadership. In terms of studies that had occurred within lab-settings, Vecchio (2002) forwarded that gender advantages related to imaginary leaders involved limited information provided within brief vignettes, which will create a tendency for participants to be stricter in their evaluations under such circumstances. Vecchio
Zheng et al.’s (2018) study, discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to Humberd’s (2014) GLFT, also deserves further explication in this discussion of the potential female leadership advantage. Zheng et al.’s (2018) qualitative study was based on semi-structured interviews conducted by phone or in-person that involved a sample of 64 top-level female executives in the midwestern United States, with 51 organizations represented across a variety of industries. The researchers stated their intention was to “shed light on strategies that can help women leaders respond to dual demands of agency and communion” (Zheng et al., 2018, p. 635). Findings suggested that there was a female leadership advantage for those women who learned to blend agency with communion, which had allowed these leaders to emerge or become recognized for leadership opportunities, to be viewed as more effective in their roles, and to receive increased satisfaction ratings from their followers (Zheng et al., 2018).

Rosette and Tost (2010) engaged in two related studies that examined how context might influence the presence of a female advantage in leadership. These studies were situated within the uppermost tier of leadership, involving executives from the Vice-President to the CEO levels where there was gap in the existing literature, but at a time in which there was also a trend toward communality gaining higher regard as a preferred leadership-orientation for males and females within these uppermost tiers of the organizational hierarchy (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Study 1 focused on the level of agency and communality associated with female and male top-level leaders to determine if females are perceived more favorably (Rosette & Tost, 2010). This study involved 323 American undergraduate and graduate students, among whom there were 186 women, 130 men, and 7 persons of unspecified gender. Participants were asked to read an article
about a CEO and his or her company’s performance relative to an increase or decrease in company earnings (Rosette & Tost, 2010). There were 12 different versions of the article, with manipulations of the CEO’s gender, the company’s performance (defined by earnings), and the company’s effectiveness. Quotations appeared in some of the articles that directly attributed the company’s performance to the CEO’s effectiveness (Rosette & Tost, 2010). After having read the article, each participant evaluated the CEO on scale of 1 to 7 for agentic traits and performed a separate ranking on the same numeric scale for communal characteristics (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Among those CEOs ranked highest in agentic traits by participants, the agentic females were rated higher in evaluation of their success than the males when the articles credited them directly with increased success in company performance, and in such cases, the females were ranked both more agentic and more communal than the males (Rosette & Tost, 2010). This finding suggested to Rosette and Tost (2010) the presence of a female advantage in top-level leadership, which they surmised could be attributed to the expectation that females garner favorable results from their teams because of their communality. The companion experiment, Study 2 (Rosette & Tost, 2010), involved 106 American graduate and undergraduate students as participants, 35 males and 71 females with a median age of 22. The participants were asked to read a job description and the professional performance record of a leader, one who was at the uppermost level of the company hierarchy and the other at mid-level, for example, a vice-president and a division manager (Rosette & Tost, 2010). The performance record credited the individual in each case with the successful earnings profile of the company or the division. The same agentic and communal rating scales from Study 1 were utilized for Study 2. In addition, the candidates responded to a variety of close-ended questions capturing their perceptions about whether a double standard exists for one gender versus the other in terms of how hard one must
work to access a top-level management position, the barriers one is likely to encounter in doing so, and the competency level expected to acquire such a position, among other items (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Participants also were asked to rank each leader based on their perception of the leader’s overall effectiveness and their own expectation of whether the leader would operate from a communal or an agentic leadership orientation (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Compared to mid-level female managers, the top executive females were perceived as being more agentic; additionally, these females executives were viewed as having overcome more challenges in attaining their positions (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Males, on the other hand, were not perceived by participants to have experienced this double standard in career advancement (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Women top-level leaders were rated as more communal than equally presented males, yet more agentic than the female mid-level managers (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Female gender of top-level executives, already established as being more agentic in comparison to the male and female mid-level managers, also had a significant effect on the ratings for leadership effectiveness when the measure of company performance was increased earnings (Rosette & Tost, 2010). In the discussion of the study’s results, Rosette and Tost (2010) attributed this finding to participants’ “perceptions of feminized management tactics” (p. 231). Therefore, Rosette and Tost’s (2010) investigation appears to support the presence of a female leadership advantage at the uppermost levels of organizational hierarchies.

Bongiorno et al.’s (2014) set of companion studies presents a more nuanced perspective of the contrasting literature in academic research with respect to the possible existence of the female leadership advantage. These studies (Bongiorno et al., 2014) produced findings which suggested that when female leaders expressed their views with agency in style of speech, whether they were interacting with those who were their peers or of a higher rank, these agentic
women were viewed as more likeable in comparison to the equally presented males. Bongiorno et al. (2014) suggested that this, perhaps, was related to their perceived communality due to female gender stereotypes. This research lends itself to discussion of a female leadership advantage based on two related studies conducted by Bongiorno et al. (2014) that examined male and female leaders’ agency and communion level in relation to their influence and likeability. The first of these studies was an experiment with random assignment of 185 Australian university students, described as 47% female with a median age of 28.3 (Bongiorno et al., 2014). Participants were given one of two text versions of a speech on climate change, one assertive and the other tentative in voice (Bongiorno et al., 2014). The speech was attributed to a fictionalized non-partisan candidate for Senate, referred to by one of four different identities, indicated by two female and two male names (Bongiorno et al., 2014). The assertive version utilized italic font to convey an emphatic tone of some words, and it contained no markers of hesitancy or uncertainty in presentation of the candidate’s views (Bongiorno et al., 2014). The tentative version had no italicized or emphasized words, included “numerous hedges (e.g., ‘probably’, ‘you know’), qualifiers (e.g., ‘I think that’, ‘It seems to me’) and hesitations (e.g., ‘um’, and ‘ah’)” (Bongiorno et al., 2014, p. 222). Participants ranked the speeches based on how likeable the leader was, how influential the leader was in eliciting participant agreement with their perspective, and how agentic or communal the leader appeared to have been (Bongiorno et al., 2014). This study’s findings indicated that the female leaders associated with the agentic version of the speech were rated higher than females associated with the tentative speech in the domains of their likeability and their ability to influence others to adopt their views (Bongiorno et al., 2014). In contrast, there were no significant differences in likeability and influence among the males, regardless of whether they were linked with the agentic or the tentative speech.
In terms of between-gender comparisons, tentative males were more likeable than equally presented females, but there were no significant differences in likeability of assertive males and females (Bongiorno et al., 2014). Comparisons between the tentative males and females showed that participants rated the influence level of tentative males higher than that of the equally presented females (Bongiorno et al., 2014). Based on these results, Bongiorno et al. (2014) surmised that female leaders are expected to act with agency; therefore, when they portray non-agentic behaviors, they will be subjected to negative reaction by males and females.

The second of these paired studies conducted by Bongiorno et al. (2014) involved 66 Australian university students, 56% female with a median age of 20.4 years. Study 2 replicated the Study 1 results, but it utilized a student leader speech that pertained to a campus-related issue, rather than a senatorial candidate speech on a global concern (Bongiorno et al., 2014). However, the results in the Study 2 experiment extended the original findings with indications that agentic female student leaders were rated higher in likeability than the equally presented agentic males (Bongiorno et al., 2014). Although this study (Bongiorno et al., 2014) yielded positive results that indicated that the workplace may be moving towards greater acceptance of agentic women in leadership positions, the researchers expressed a caveat (Bongiorno et al., 2014). They cautioned that the findings indicated a subtle, but swift, bias against female leaders who spoke with tentativeness that was in conflict with the expectation that leadership, regardless of gender, is associated with an expectation to act with agency (Bongiorno et al., 2014). The same bias did not apply to similarly presented male leaders who demonstrated a tentative style of speech (Bongiorno et al., 2014).

**Summary of Research on RCT.** The studies which have been presented above provided a lens for this investigation with regard to understanding some blurred lines that emerged as
participants discussed their workplace identities, their self-reported experiences in competing for advancement in leadership roles, and the successes and the challenges they perceived themselves having encountered as they enacted their roles as women leaders. Societal expectations persist for females to conform to stereotypical gendered expectations that tend to align male gender and agency with leadership. When females attempt to enter high-level leadership positions, they are likely to be perceived as agentic, demonstrating traits that are less socially desirable for their gender which is prescribed to be communal. These females can be sanctioned for their perceived agency by being passed over as candidates for promotion or hiring, being subjected to negative appraisals of their performance once they are serving in a leadership role, and being frustrated in their own efforts as leaders to moderate their agency with communion. The next section of this chapter will introduce a complex model of identities construction, the Capacious Model (Egan et al., 2017). Unique to this theory’s design is that it allows for malleability in enacting leadership practices and behaviors, due to its inclusion of the dynamic impact of shifting contexts and influences the leader must navigate in her role.

**Capacious Model of Leadership Identities Construction**

The Capacious Model of Leadership Identities Construction (CMLIC), developed by Egan et al. (2017), offers a theoretical construct of leadership identity that has space and flexibility for the leader to moderate her practice and reliance on various, and sometimes competing, attributes and behaviors as different contexts and situations arise in the workplace. CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017) accounts for a multi-faceted and dynamic conception of leadership that posits the precept that an individual constructs multiple identities, from among which she or he can choose one to bring to the forefront at any particular point in time that it would have relevance and prove effective. This concept of a single individual constructing multiple
identities as leader challenges the less contemporary and more simplistic view of identity as a singularly fixed orientation or style that typifies or defines the leader (Egan et al., 2017). This model’s construal of a reality in which the leader’s actions and practices are situational, and therefore changeable, aligns with Humberd’s (2014) grounded theory of GLFT that recognized the contextual, as opposed to the fixed, nature of leadership identity. Whereas, Humberd (2014) drew upon Ridgeway’s (2009) and Goffman’s (1959) theories in considering identity construction within GLFT as situational, Egan et al. (2017) situated the contextuality of identities construction within five ecological systems that are integral to the theoretical construct of CMLIC. Egan et al. (2017) noted that the five systems incorporated in this theoretical model were first developed in 1992 by Bronfenbrenner, as the basis of his Ecological Theory of Child Development (ETCD), which described how contextual influences within these same five systems impacted child development and learning. Whereas ETCD placed the individual child at the center of the five systems or contexts, Egan et al.’s (2017) CMLIC places in this same centralized position the individual’s leadership identities instead, and CMLIC considers the systems from the disposition of the environments through which a mature person navigates rather than a developing child (Egan et al., 2017). In CMLIC, these systems extend their impact to the capacity for leaders to construct multiple identities upon which they can draw with fluidity at a given moment in time (Egan et al., 2017). Because Egan et al.’s CMLIC (2017) is a contemporary and complex model consisting of many elements having direct relationship to analyses of the data collected for this present study, this researcher has provided a detailed and extended description of each of its components in the section which follows.

Description of the Capacious Model. The Capacious Model (Egan et al., 2017) focuses on five systems or contexts and four key influences that act in concert with the systems.
Together these five systems and four influences drive a person’s construction of the multiple leadership identities that she can situationally project and rely upon in the enactment of her practice as leader. There is a permeability that exists between the five systems that allows the leader to be situated between one or more systems at any given time, a flexibility that accounts for the situational nature of this model. Alternately, the leader may remain centered or focused primarily within only one of these systems. This ability to move with fluidity is determined, also, by the dynamic nature of the four key influences that are acting upon the leader. In the next section, firstly, the five systems will be described, and secondly, the four key influences will be explained.

The Five Systems. The five systems of the model are labeled and described in their proximal order starting with the first system, surrounding the center where leadership identities is situated, and radiating outward to the fifth and most distant system in centrality.

1. The *microsystem* is the “immediate environment where relationships are face-to-face, such as family, schools, peer group, and neighborhood” (Egan et al., 2017, p. 128). It is the context, also, where the leaders engage in self-contemplation to gain personal perspective.

2. The *mesosystem* is the context which hosts “interaction between micro-environments, such as the connection between family, school, and work” (p. 128). The continuous linking, unlinking, and rearrangement of connections between these micro-environments impacts the leader’s “performance, motivation, and leadership identity” (p. 128).

3. The *exosystem* has indirect impact on the leader’s identity construction because his or her involvement in this system is incidental. One example of an element
contextualized in the exosystem is the impact of a spouse’s workplace on the leader. While having some role in the leader’s identity construction, it is “likely [to be] a subtle and less conscious” factor (p. 128).

4. The macrosystem is “the larger cultural context, including issues of social values, attitudes, ideologies, and expectation” (p. 128). Additionally, this system includes “larger organizations and institutions with their structures, explicit objectives, and members” (p. 128).

5. The chronosystem, depicted as the outermost wrapper of a cylinder encompassing the model in its entirety, “represents events occurring in the context of passing time relative to social, cultural, and historical conditions. . . . mass media . . . diverse traditions and norms” (pp. 128-129).

**The Four Key Influences.** In addition to the role of the five systems in the construction of leadership identities, the model is impacted by four influences operating upon the leader and the systems at any given point in time or situation. Egan et al. (2017) acknowledge that there are unlimited influences that can be identified as acting upon the leader, which makes the model applicable to the identities construction of many types of leaders of both genders. The four key influences described below have been identified by Egan et al. (2017) as those that are most significant to the identities construction of women leaders. These four influences are presented in no specific order because their prominence shifts in accordance with the varying circumstances encountered by the leader:

1. *Purpose and Calling:* This is defined as “an elevated sense of purpose [which] is a leadership influence that drives some leaders, particularly women, toward work that they perceive to be called to do for the greater good” (Egan et al., 2017, p. 130).
2. **Self-identity:** This influence provides the person with a sense of who she is or aspires to be, both as an individual and a leader.

3. **Social-identity:** This influence corresponds with “claimed memberships to social groups” that have larger value and meaning to the individual (p. 131). It involves identities such as gender, profession, age, socioeconomic level, and other designations. These claimed memberships contribute to the individual’s identity construction while also influencing how they are perceived by others.

4. **Relationships:** This influence “considers interpersonal skills, relational networking, relational support, and work-life enrichment” (p. 132).

**CMLIC: A Fit Between Comprehensive Construct and the Study.** As a recently published theory, Egan et al.’s (2017) CMLIC has contemporary relevance to the female in search of a realistic framework for constructing authentic and varied identities that she can leverage situationally to support her leadership practices. Its design conveys an inherent understanding that today’s workplace requires a leader to project identities, behaviors, and levels of focus that allow her to be many things to a diverse constituency within a dynamic environment. To accomplish this, the model provides a level of specificity that gives name, definition, and reason to the contextualized systems that allow the individual to focus on navigating the shifting dynamic of the key influences that impact leadership practice. According to Egan et al. (2017), CMLIC helps us apprehend a leadership profile that speaks to …who and where we are in relation to others, envisioning ourselves as leaders, and the perceptions of others about our leadership potential. . . . [This] yields the model’s conceptualization of leadership identities as the coalescence of multiple contexts and key
influences into a co-created, relational understanding of oneself as leader (Egan et al., 2017, p. 126).

Eagly (2007) and Humberd (2014) are examples of two female researchers whose work provides a logical bridge between the research and theory which preceded the conceptualization of CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017). Each of these researchers appears to have recognized early on that the nature of leadership identities construction is situational versus the popular view that leaders rely upon a consistent projection of one fixed style or approach that typifies their orientation and demeanor. This view accords with the situational fluidity offered through CMLIC’s (Egan et al., 2017) multiple systems and influences. Egan et al. (2017) differentiate their construct from prior leadership identity theories with the assertion that CMLIC is “pertinent not only to women, but conceptually and empirically applicable to the leadership identity of all individuals” (p. 126). It is an inclusive model in this regard. The following section will provide a literature-based discussion pertaining to the model’s interconnected and dynamic systems and influences which impact leadership identities construction.

In Eagly’s (2007) article in rebuttal to the argument that there is a female leadership advantage, the researcher recognized that there is a dynamic and situational response required of effective leaders, who must be keen observers and ready to shift modes of leadership in response to contextual priorities that arise. Eagly (2007) stated, “Leadership styles are not fixed behaviors but encompass a range of behaviors that have a particular meaning or that serve a particular function. Depending on the situation, leaders vary their behaviors within boundaries of their style” (p. 2). In addition, Eagly (2007) referred to situational theorists in her claim that leadership behaviors are bounded by context and, therefore, dependent upon prevailing values, organizational cultures, task types, and the team being led. These observations align with
CMLIC’s (Egan et al., 2017) five different systems that help frame a leader’s interactions with people from her own internal and related external contexts, personal or cultural mores and values, at a particular point in time or history. In addition, Eagly’s (2007) commentary also can be related to CMLIC’s (Egan et al., 2017) recognition that there are many influences which either will take precedence or recede in importance, as the leader enacts behaviors or practices based upon a multiplicity of leadership identities, as warranted by her good judgment and assessment of a given situation.

Humberd’s (2014) grounded theory of GLFT, developed as her doctoral dissertation research, also captured this perspective of leadership as a contextually or situationally varied prospect that requires competent responsiveness on the part of the leader. Humberd’s (2014) investigation was an inductive, grounded theory, qualitative study with data collected through semi-structured interviews, informal on-site observations, and archival records. In its initial stages, the study began with 55 female participants, having a median age 39.6, who were leadership aspirants within a global financial services organization and situated in offices that were located within the northeastern and midwestern United States and Canada. As the study progressed, Humberd (2014) added nine executive leaders and nine male developing leaders to the sample to diversify participant perspectives. The purpose of Humberd’s (2014) investigation was “to understand how women experience and understand themselves as women and how this shapes their development of a leader identity” (p. 32). Humberd’s (2014) grounded theory of GLFT, built upon Ridgeway’s (2009) Gender Frames, and made the case that gender leadership frames develop and are acted upon based on a leader’s interactions with others, her internal perceptions with regard to her leadership, and the contexts within which she is situated. Humberd’s (2014) grounded theory research of GLFT explored questions regarding “the relative
stability or variability of the frames that individual women adopt” as the researcher, in part, asked the question, “do women always adopt the same frame in the same situations, or do different frames guide different aspects of their experiences as developing leaders” (p. 29). Similar to Eagly’s (2007) perspective on the co-construction of identity and leader effectiveness, Humberd (2014) sought to justify the factors of contextuality, internal perceptions of self-identity, interactions with others, and situational flexibility. These components largely align with CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017), which later included in its stance that an individual continually engages in the process of creating and re-creating leadership identities across time and contexts. The section which immediately follows this discussion further defines the contexts and influences of CMLIC by highlighting their presence within the academic research that preceded Egan et al.’s (2017) theory of leadership identities.

**CMLIC Microsystem: Relevant Literature to this Study.** The microsystem (Egan et al., 2017), the closest environment in which the leader lives or functions or the place where in-person interactions and relationships exist, has been the focus for decades of extant literature on leadership and gender, albeit not referred to by this specific terminology. One such example includes studies highlighting the impact of mentors, or sponsors who function as positive role models for aspiring female leaders, proposed to be an important factor in priming qualified women in the leadership pipeline to serve in future executive roles (Hurst et al., 2018; Weiner & Burton, 2016). Within a leader’s microsystem, also, may reside the role of a parent, together with any requisite values, behaviors, or experiences that may have been imparted to the leader throughout her childhood and adolescence (Le Ber et al., 2017). These parental influences and relationships have a subsequent role in a leader’s identities construction, that will be referred to as illustrative of the presence of a microsystem within the literature, in this case being the focus
of a qualitative, grounded theory, ethnographic research investigation authored by an interdisciplinary team of researchers (Le Ber et al., 2017). The multi-disciplinary participant-researcher team included eight women of diverse ethnicity, ages 39-68, from New Zealand, Canada, United States, and South America (Le Ber et al., 2017). The on-going data collection at the time of the study’s publication included verbal and written narratives from which emerged the themes of voice, experiential learning, resiliency, and giftedness; all of which were grouped into one of two dimensions, with this one being referred to as leadership practices (Le Ber et al., 2017). In addition, the second dimension, entitled feedback, framed in the aggregate the themes that encompassed experiences aligned with or having diverged from the emergence of leadership through early childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. These dimensions and associated themes (Le Ber et al., 2017) can be construed as having arisen from the microsystem that is described in CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017), within which is couched the family relationships and the parental elements that impact the development of leadership identities.

**CMLIC Mesosystem: Relevant Literature to this Study.** The mesosystem of CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017) is the context in which the people and relationships existing at the microsystem level come together in interaction, forming connections, and sometimes creating tensions, that will influence leadership identities construction. One example is the conflict women may confront in attempting to negotiate the balance between their work and family lives, a joining of two microsystems that may result in an aspiring female leader’s decision to pause her career trajectory in order to raise her children, which could lead to collateral damage later on when she attempts to re-enter the workplace and continue on track in the pursuit of her former professional goals (Eagly, 2007). An additional example is the interplay between the micro relationships involving a leader’s internal reflection or self-confidence level as it interacts with
the degree of agency or communion with which she as leader engages in discourse with her team members at work (Bongiorno et al., 2014; Tannen, 1994, 1995). Similarly, the mesosystem is the context which hosts the resultant interaction between the microsystem elements of a workplace mentor’s feedback to an aspiring female leader and the self-confidence of the female mentee who is the recipient of the critique, a joining of two micro elements that can either negatively or positively impact the woman’s developing view of her identity as a leader (Weiner & Burton, 2016). Hurst et al.’s (2018) study can be interpreted as being illustrative of micro-level relationships within the mesosystem, given that it is based on the impact on the work-setting and personnel when conflicts exist between female supervisors and their subordinates of the same gender. These are just a few of the many types of interactions that can take place within the mesosystem as leadership identities are being constructed and deconstructed on a continuous basis, as Egan et al. (2017) have theorized through their presentation of CMLIC.

CMLIC Exosystem: Relevant Literature to this Study. Within the exosystem, is grouped all other settings and people that do not have a direct or in-person relationship with the leader; nonetheless, they do have a somewhat more subtle effect on leader identities construction through the incidental and limited interaction they share (Egan et al., 2017). The exosystem’s influence could be illustrated through the example of legislation which dictates the turnaround status designation of a school district and thereby influences the construal of the attributes that become framed as the expectations for competence in a successful turnaround school principal. Weiner and Burton’s (2016) study is based on this type of exosystem, absence of this specific term notwithstanding. The study was a qualitative investigation of nine participants, six females and three males, who were teacher leaders enrolled in a training program that was required in order for candidates to qualify to apply for principalships of turnaround status schools within a
northeastern state. This study’s researchers (Weiner & Burton, 2016) investigated how these educators enrolled in the training program understood school leadership and conceptualized their own role within it. The excerpts within the study’s report of the qualitative data refer to successful candidates in relation to their types of behaviors, physical attributes, and discourse style, among other features, all of which collectively favored agentic males within the study as being the conformers within the target model of the ideal turnaround school principal (Weiner & Burton, 2016). The study can be construed through the lens of CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017) as research that highlights an example of an exosystem, in which the external factors of legislation and training program outcomes influenced leaders in the construction of identity. By definition, this functions as an exosystem because the context confronting the leader is based on a relationship element that has been defined by a system, the turnaround school legislation, that is far removed from the control and personal context of the leader who is attempting to construct a workable identity, the training program candidate who seeks to embody the attributes of a successful turnaround principal.

**CMLIC Macrosystem: Relevant Literature to this Study.** The macrosystem of CMLIC can be viewed as relevant to seminal social identity theories, such as Ridgeway’s (2009) GFT which explained society’s prevailing stereotypes of the male and female construct. This claim can be supported because GFT (Ridgeway, 2009) presents a conceptual framework that embodies cultural ideologies about gender prescriptions that impact leaders’ perceptions and may have subsequent effects on decisions related to people of a particular gender. In addition, this qualifies as a macrosystem due to its remoteness in contextual distance from the leader who is at the center of the identity construction process (Egan et al., 2017), which corresponds, also, with GFT being a frame that is outside of leader’s locus of control in affecting societal change.
Studies that are reliant on theories such as GFT (Ridgeway 2009) or RCT (Eagly & Karau, 2002) can be viewed as somewhat descriptive of the functional context of Egan et al.’s (2017) explanation of the macrosystem as it operates within CMLIC. This would include the two studies previously discussed which related to the reporting of less favorable performance evaluation ratings of female leaders in comparison to equally presented males (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006; Ritter & Yoder, 2004). Similarly relevant to the macrosystem are the three studies discussed in relation to RCT, which involved a male advantage over females in relation to the selection or emergence of leaders and the assignment of gender-typed tasks (Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Another case illustrative of the macrosystem is Carden and Callahan’s (2007) qualitative study that explored the relationship between leadership training program participants’ work and non-work identities, with regard to how the leaders and the organization used strategies either aimed at reinforcing or changing these participants’ identities to align with its corporate culture. This macrosystem would be the influence of the corporate culture and the values it embodies. Carden and Callahan’s (2007) study included 15 participants in the sample, 8 females and 7 males of European-American ethnicity, between the ages of 24 to 34, who were enrolled in an 18-month leadership development program for aspirants within a large-size consulting firm in the United States. Data were collected from program trainees (the participants) in the form of monthly activity reports providing narrative reflections on their training experiences. The program leaders responded to the trainees’ reports in writing, which was the method utilized in attempting to align or modify any conflicts between the participants’ work and non-work identities with the organization’s climate and values, the latter being the macrosystem embedded within this study.
CMLIC Chronosystem: Relevant Literature to this Study. The chronosystem of CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017) can be viewed as relevant to Wood and Eagly’s BOT (2012), a theory that ascribes gender stereotyped roles to events occurring over historical periods of time that continue to influence prescriptive roles for men and women in contemporary society. Additional evidence of the chronosystem being addressed through the literature on gender and leadership is found in the previously cited investigations provided in the discussion of the debate concerning the possible existence of a female leadership advantage (Bongiorno et al., 2014; Post, 2015; Rosette & Tost, 2010; Vecchio, 2002; Zheng et al., 2018). Regardless of the findings of these studies, the inquiry is based on whether our chronosystem of cultural norms and traditions has evolved over time with regard to acceptance of women competing for high status executive positions, an idea that virtually was unheard of prior to the advent of feminism.

Summary of Research Relevant to CMLI. The discussion presented above with respect to CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017) is illustrative of the fact that the model is a comprehensive theory, albeit recently developed, concerning social construction of leadership identities. As a primary construct of the current investigation, this researcher has attempted to demonstrate that the presence of key elements of the model, specifically the five systems of CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017), can be discerned as present in literature which has predated the model. CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017) offers richness and depth, along with an inherent flexibility, that renders the model all-encompassing in explaining how a leader presents her identities as she enacts her leadership practices amidst competing elements of these systems and other contextual influences of varying magnitude. There is fluidity in that the leader can reside within one or more systems at any one moment in time. Furthermore, the model’s usefulness is compounded by the four key influences overlaying these systems, which Egan et al. (2017) have identified as those most pertinent to
female leadership identities construction: purpose or calling, social identities, self-identities, and relationships. In each of the studies cited in the preceding section, more than one of these influences is evident within the systems that have been highlighted as examples framing the discussion of CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017). The discussion will move next to a concept that emerged from the present study’s findings and required the researcher to gain knowledge in discourse features relative to gender.

**Conversational Style and Gender**

Tannen’s (1995) research described gendered associations attached to “conversational style,” “conversational strategies,” and “conversational rituals” in the workplace, which the author positioned within a theoretical foundation that included Goffman’s (1959) research on social identity (Tannen, 1995, p. 23). Tannen (1995) asserted that conversation consists of “ritualized interactions” through which “we learn to do things as the people we encounter do them, so the vast majority of our decisions about how to speak become automatic” (p.15), a concept that is reminiscent of Ridgeway’s (2009) GFT in its discussion of dialogue as an exchange that is predicated on our internal scripts.

Tannen (1995) identified speech patterns commonly typed as male or female and described how these stylistic features can contribute to impressions of a speaker’s “competence” or “confidence” (p. 39). According to Tannen (1995), some stereotypically female associated conversational styles, rituals, or strategies that can convey, sometimes mistakenly, a sense the speaker lacks competence or confidence may include, but are not limited to, the following examples: talking less or contributing fewer ideas in a group discussion, speaking with a hesitant or halting tone, making suggestions rather than giving directives, using the pronouns I or we, softening a critique, failing to project one’s voice, waiting one’s turn to speak, apologizing, using
metaphors that relate to domestic tasks (cooking, sewing, giving birth), using a high pitched tone of voice, and agreeing more. In contrast, the following features of conversation that convey the opposite impression and are stereotypically associated with the male gender may include these examples: raising volume of voice, interrupting, challenging others’ views, promoting oneself, speaking at length, demonstrating an authoritarian or assertive style, using direct speech, sparring verbally with others, and using metaphors that relate to sports’ competitions or the military (Tannen, 1995). Similar to Tannen’s (1995) description of the features of conversational style, Bongiorno et al.’s (2014) lab experiments that were referenced earlier in this chapter produced findings that suggested that female executives were expected to convey an impression consistent with the agency related to their high status position, and those who communicated in a more communal and tentative manner were sanctioned—although identically presented males were not—through the lower ratings received in leader’s competence, likeability, influence (Bongiorno et al., 2014).

**Summary of Chapter Two**

In this chapter, the researcher introduced metaphors that are prolific in their appearance in the academic journals and the popular press in exploring the unresolved issues surrounding gender-stereotyping and the low representation of females in the highest tiers of organizational leadership. After this preliminary entry into the subject of the study, the researcher led the reader through the salient elements of three theories that were most relevant to the study’s line of argument and theoretical foundations during the proposal and initial stages of the dissertation: Social Identity or Dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959), GFT (Ridgeway, 2009), and GLFT (Humberd, 2014). The chapter progressed to a discussion, also grounded in literature, of the two primary constructs at the forefront of data analysis throughout this investigation: RCT (Eagly & Karau,
2002) and CMLIC (Egan et al., 2017). These two main constructs were explained through a discussion of their most significant components, which was supported with the extant literature on leadership from the disciplines of business, psychology, and education, among other domains. The literature cited within this chapter was selected for its direct relationship to themes that emerged throughout the various coding stages of this present study’s data collection. Finally, this chapter concluded with a brief overview of conversational styles, strategies, and rituals as they contribute to the construction of gendered meaning and relate to the development of leader identities. The next chapter, which follows, will provide a description of the methodology that guided this research study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the social construction of female leadership identities from the perspectives of women executives at the uppermost hierarchy of organizations or institutions across different professions. Specifically, the researcher explored from the perceptions of five female executives at the uppermost tier of their organizations’ administrative hierarchy through their self-reported lived experiences of the factors that have supported and challenged them in forging leadership identities consistent with their core values and beliefs. This chapter is organized into the following sections: (a) research question, (b) description of the setting, sampling procedures, contexts, and participants, (c) description of the research design, (d) data collection tools, (e) data collection procedures and timeline, (f) description and justification of the data analyses, and (g) an ethics statement.

Research Question

A single research question was the focus of this investigation: How do female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs? In structure and purpose, this question met the criteria for qualitative research because it was “open-ended, evolving, and non-directional” (Creswell, 2013, p. 138). The question remained open and without a leading direction throughout the study, with the phrasing of the question having proved to be broad enough to remain in its original form as data were revealed and patterns emerged with new knowledge gained through the investigation. To support the goal of fully addressing the richness of this broad research question, the researcher adopted the strategy of segmenting the question into its four essential conceptual components: (a) self-perception of leadership identity, (b) supports in leadership identity construction, (c) challenges in leadership identity construction, and (d)
consistency of values and beliefs in leadership identity construction. These four conceptual components served as guideposts throughout the study to assist the researcher in ensuring the investigation maintained its focus.

**Description of Setting, Sampling Procedures, Contexts, and Participants**

**Setting**

The Northeast Region, as defined by the United States Census Bureau (2011), was the overall setting for this study. This region encompasses the following contiguous states in New England and the Middle Atlantic areas: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The size and the population of this region provided adequate opportunity to identify the cases for this study, each from a different type of organization, while also having been situated within the researcher’s reasonable travel proximity for convenient access throughout the investigation.

The researcher initially sought to identify one participant from each of six different types of professional environments, hereafter referred to as contexts, which were to be prioritized by geographic area and regional diversity as participant selection was finalized — higher education institution, hospital or healthcare organization, K-12 public school district, law enforcement agency, private corporation having a minimum of 200 employees, and municipal- or state-elected government office. Due to a lack of response from potential participants in two types of professional settings, the last two types were eliminated from the study. During final participant selection, which is detailed below in the section referring to participants, the researcher determined there were sufficient differences in the characteristics of the two-year technical college and the four-year university included in this study to warrant treating each as an individual type of professional environment or setting, thereby resulting in five specific research
settings within this investigation. Each of these five contexts are described in the paragraphs which follow. Ridgeway’s (2009) research findings on the social construction of identity indicated that gender and race/ethnicity are primary frames which individuals rely upon to guide their expectations in their interactions with others. Therefore, in this investigation, the researcher has included demographic statistics by gender, as well as racial/ethnic status, to describe the setting that served as the work environment of each female leader participant. The researcher has chosen to prioritize participants’ confidentiality over accessibility of highly specific sources whenever necessary to mitigate potential deductive disclosure of study participants’ identities. To accomplish this, the researcher adapted an existing protocol from the University College London’s (2020) Institute of Education Library to anonymize names of states, municipalities, or workplace settings that would otherwise appear in standard documentation of in-text citations or source references included in titles of reports, websites, statistical tables, and other materials produced by or about each of the cases included herein. This was accomplished by substituting the assigned case study number associated with the participant’s context and pairing that with a keyword descriptor of artifact type for clarity in distinguishing between multiple artifacts credited to the same author, organization, or agency. Brackets or parentheses were used to contain these elements in the manner most closely aligned with style conventions.

**Sampling Procedures**

Participants were selected using purposeful and convenience sampling procedures. Convenience sampling pertained to the commutable distance between the researcher’s residence in Connecticut and the nine northeastern states. Purposeful sampling procedures were used to establish the following pre-defined criteria that guided participant selection: (a) female gender, (b) field or organization, (c) professional role, and (d) experience level. Each of these four
criteria are defined below in detail. Once these criteria were met, effort was attempted to support a diversity of views among participants by having adjusted the sampling frame to include different races and ethnicities, professional fields, and states represented within the identified region whenever possible. Criteria setting for purposeful sampling was employed, an approach recommended by Creswell (2013) in phenomenologically oriented studies, such as this multiple-case study. These criteria ensured that all participants were likely to have experienced the phenomenon of the intersection of gender and leadership in the social construction of identity.

**Female gender.** The sampling criterion of female gender was defined as a biological classification of gender, rather than a self-elected gender identity. This limitation to gender was chosen to simplify classification of participant reported instances of challenges or biases encountered in response to their gender-leadership frames. If participants who self-identity as females had been included in this study, their reports of biases encountered may have been intertwined with multi-layered prejudices and inclusive of homophobia or deep-seated biases in opposition to those perceived as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, queer, transgendered, or others (LGBQT+) – all of which are worthy of study but would have been outside the focus of this specific investigation.

**Field or organization.** The sampling criterion of field or organization was defined by the varied workplace contexts that collectively comprised the five multiple-cases for inclusion in this study. Accordingly, the researcher selected female participants, with each individual having been assigned to the case as defined by the leader’s respective professional field or organization: (a) two-year college, co-educational to support the aim of gathering diverse perspectives, (b) four-year co-educational university, (c) hospital or healthcare organization, (d) K-12 public school district, and (e) municipal law enforcement agency.
**Professional role.** The sampling criterion of professional role required each participant to have served in an executive leadership position, at the uppermost tier of a conventional organization chart in which roles are arranged hierarchically to denote the level of supervisory oversight and area of responsibility. Professional titles of the potential participants having such positions were likely to include the following: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), University President, Chancellor or Superintendent of Schools, and Chief of Police. A trait in common among these upper-level leaders was their status as the public face of their respective organizations. Given the limited proportion of females within the predominantly male population comprising this tier of leadership in these organizations or fields, flexibility was required to widen the sample as it pertained to the criterion of professional role. This was achieved by extending the role criterion to include females in the nearest tier, typically meaning the pipeline position in the ascension path to the aforementioned professional titles, as a strategy to support the identification of at least five to seven cases in the study.

**Experience level.** The criterion of experience level for this purposeful sample was defined as a minimum of seven years in the leadership role. Experience was not confined to continuous years of service in one organization, as the researcher deemed collective years of experience—including that which a participant gained across contexts as she transitioned within and among organizations having unique cultures or in the closest level position in the executive leadership pipeline—was equally desirable in its contribution to an individual’s evolving construction of leadership identity. This rationale was based on gendered leadership as the focus of the study and evidenced by the identification of female executives as the participants. Several studies indicated gender as a social construct, subject to interpretations of socially acceptable behaviors that were based on the dynamics of the mores and attitudes of the time period in which
they occurred (Buttner, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Weiner & Burton, 2016). Therefore, selection of participants with at least seven years of cumulative leadership experience assisted with a reasonable parity in the contemporaneous nature of participants’ reported experiences.

**Business with 200 or more employees/CEOs or CFOs.** The researcher’s initial and unsuccessful effort to identify CEOs and CFOs in private corporations as potential study participants began with written and telephone requests for membership lists from professional organizations for business executives, as well as such groups that were limited to women leaders. All responses received from organizations cited perceived issues with ethics or a conflict with written policies related to data privacy of members. The researcher successfully used an alternative method of searching three websites that publish annual lists ranking companies or female CEOs across the nation based on a variety of criteria: (a) Forbes (Valet, Ed., 2019), (b) Zippia (Kolmar, Ed., 2019), and (c) Fortune 500 (Zillman, 2019). The researcher extracted from the rankings listed for 2017 and 2018 the name of corporations or leaders within the nine northeastern states included in this study, identified those companies that had female CEOs or CFOs, and verified through each company’s website that its workforce consisted of 200 or more employees. This protocol yielded 43 potential participants who were sent invitations to engage in the study. Only one person, White/Caucasian in race, returned a signed consent form. However, prior to the first interview, this participant withdrew her commitment due to an unforeseen medical emergency, which resulted in zero participants in this category. Therefore, this case was excised from the research design. See Table 1 for additional details on the sampling frame, which resulted in a multiple case study comprised of five cases in total.
Elected State or Municipal Office/Mayors or Governors. At the municipal level, the job titles of elected officials considered for inclusion in this category of the sampling frame included elected officials in the roles of Mayor, First Selectman, and City Manager (the latter being the case when charters did not provide for the two aforementioned roles). At the state governmental level, females in the role of Governor were the desired participants. The researcher accessed an online national database consisting of names and profiles of 1,400 Mayors, First Selectpersons, and City Managers who served in 2019 as the elected official in cities having 30,000 or more residents and narrowed the search to those leaders within the nine northeastern states of the study setting (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2019). The search for female governors was initiated through a directory on the website of the Coalition for Northeastern Governors (CONEG), which provided the names, photos, and locations of Governors who served in 2019 within seven of the nine states included in the study setting (CONEG, 2019). To complete the search for governors, the researcher accessed state government websites to identify governors serving in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, as these two states are not within the membership region defined by CONEG. Once the data for these two categories of municipal and state elected officials were gathered from these sources, the researcher confirmed the female gender classification. This populated the sampling frame with 96 potential study participants, only two of whom were governors, with all others being mayors, first selectpersons, or city managers of municipalities. Only one individual, a White/Caucasian, female Mayor, returned a signed consent form. However, multiple attempts to initiate verbal contact with this participant were not reciprocated, which the researcher deemed to be an affirmation of withdrawal. With zero participants in this category, this case, also, was removed.
from the research design. See Table 1 for details on the sampling frame, which resulted in a multiple case study that was comprised of five cases in total.

**University or College/Presidents.** Colleges and universities located within the study’s setting were identified using information from the American Council of Education (ACE), which maintains and posts a directory of member institutions in the Northeast Region on its public website (ACE, 2019). This protocol yielded a sampling frame of 95 potential participants invited to join the study, with signed consent forms returned from five Caucasian females. The first participant to respond was President of a two-year technical college and the second participant, also meeting all pre-defined criteria, was President of a four-year university. Because the researcher already had excised two of the proposed six cases from the study’s design, as described above, due to lack of participants who served as business CEOs or CFOs and those who served in elected office of Mayor or Governor, the decision was made to divide the university/college category into two separate cases, one context being the two-year college presidency and the other being the four-year university presidency. This logic was based, also, on the inherent differences in the contexts within which each of the two participants served as leaders – one of which was an academic institution that granted undergraduate and graduate degrees and the other was a career technical setting that granted associates degrees to students preparing to enter the skilled workforce with training for a particular career technology pathway.

**Hospital or Healthcare Organization/CEOs or CFOs.** To identify potential participants who served as hospital or healthcare executive leaders, the researcher began by accessing the website links for each of the nine state settings’ hospital association (Health Guide USA, 2019). For seven of the nine states, the researcher was able to access an online directory of hospital profiles that led to identification of CEOs, either directly on the state’s association
website or on the individual hospitals’ websites. This method did not produce the required information regarding hospitals and CEOs within the states of New York and Pennsylvania. Therefore, for these two settings, the researcher searched the online database of the American Hospital Directory (AHD), which provides a profile for each hospital within a selected state (AHD, 2019). These two combined protocols yielded a sampling frame of 107 potential participants who were invited to join the study. Signed consent forms were returned from four White/Caucasian females. Having met all pre-defined criteria and located within a reasonable out-of-state commuting distance for the researcher, the earliest responding participant was confirmed for inclusion in the study. Table 1 provides additional details regarding the sampling frame.

**K-12 Public School District/Superintendents.** Due to the collective abundance of school districts, large and small, within the nine states of this study’s setting, the researcher developed a protocol for efficiency and cost-effectiveness in proceeding with developing a mailing list of prospective participants. The first step was to research the 2018 population data of each of the nine states included in the study, as a means to identifying the top 35 cities or towns in terms of highest population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The second step involved accessing each of the nine State Department of Education websites to find reports listing the superintendents by district in these 35 most populous towns and cities within the given state. The third step was a review of each local school district’s website to determine the gender of the current superintendent. All other pre-determined participant characteristics were narrowed down once consent forms were returned from potential participants invited to engage in the study. This protocol yielded a sampling frame of 80 potential participants invited to join the study, with return consent forms received from nine White/Caucasian females. Having met all pre-defined
criteria and being within a reasonable out-of-state commuting distance for the researcher, the earliest responding participant was confirmed for inclusion in the study. Table 1 provides details regarding the sampling frame.

**Municipal or State Law Enforcement Agency/Chief of Police.** As with each of the prior described groups, the international and state-wide police or law enforcement professional associations were contacted by the researcher, and representatives cited confidentiality concerns regarding sharing of membership lists. Then, the researcher used the search terms “list of police chiefs in [state]” and successfully located a directory of police chiefs for agencies within seven of the nine individual states in the study setting, in most cases complete with the chiefs’ photographs and brief professional biographies. For the remaining two states in the study’s setting, although no chief’s directory was available online, there were links provided for every police department’s website, which the researcher accessed to identity the chief and determined the match to the study’s pre-defined participant characteristics. The information gathered from each of the online police chief directories and from the individual agency links was narrowed for cost effectiveness in postage and mailing supplies to exclude locally elected sheriffs and directors of college public safety units, in preference for eliciting a more conventional participant reporting of lived experiences that would be likely to accord with a moderate-size law enforcement agency. In three states that had a very large number of law enforcement agencies, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, the researcher confined inclusion in the sampling frame to those female chiefs serving in towns with 20,000 or more residents, which eliminated most towns with limited policing resources. More specifically, numerous locales that had less than 25 sworn officers were excluded as being projected to have distinctly unique challenges that vary from the norm, such as operating with part-time officers or having no full-time sworn
personnel other than the Chief. This protocol yielded 37 potential participants, all of whom were sent invitations to engage in the study. One person, a White/Caucasian, returned a signed consent form and was included in this study. See Table 1 for details regarding the sampling frame. This participant was accepted into the study to ensure the male-dominated field of law enforcement agencies would be included as a case despite this decision resulting in two participants in two different fields being based within the same state, meaning the overall sample for this study consisted of five cases represented by participants in four northeastern states.

Table 1

*Sampling Frame Supplemental Details*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context Job Title(s)</th>
<th>Sampling Frame by State</th>
<th>Sampling Frame</th>
<th>Consent Received</th>
<th>Percent Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business CEO, CFO</td>
<td>CT ME MA NH NJ NY PA RI VT</td>
<td>8 6 4 2 7 6 7 2 1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University President</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 3 17 2 8 32 22 4 1</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Office Mayor, Governor</td>
<td>10 3 13 2 13 9 4 2 0</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>0&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.0%&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital CEO, CFO</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 9 18 8 15 19 26 3 3</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School District Superintendent</td>
<td>11 6 10 7 8 13 5 11 9</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement Police Chief</td>
<td>12 8 12 3 5 5 1 1 1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>54 35 74 24 56 84 65 23 15</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Number reported reflects one participant having withdrawn consent prior to start of study.

<sup>b</sup> See above note. Percentages change to 2.3% and 0.7% respectively if participant had remained.

Once several potential participants had returned a signed consent form and met all the pre-defined sampling criteria, the final sample was determined with preference given to geographic area, in terms of proximity to researcher, and regional and racial/ethnic diversity that promoted data collection from a variety of participant perspectives of lived experiences. As a
final criterion for acceptance into the study, a background search was conducted by the researcher for each participant being considered for selection. The goal of the search was to ensure that all selected candidates were free from allegations or indictments that indicated the presence of compromised ethics or professional reputations; however, results of the search did not necessitate removal of any of the potential participants from the study sample.

**Contexts**

**Four-year university.** The site which served as the workplace and research context for Isabel, Case 1 participant, was a four-year public co-educational university within a state university system in the Northeast Region of the United States. Founded close to 150 years ago to provide post-secondary education, this institution transitioned to become a four-year degree granting university within the past 50 years (Case 1 website, 2020). An historical timeline listing all presidents inaugurated by the university, showed that this study’s participant was the first female to have served in the post (Case 1 website, 2020). According to the U. S. Department of Education (DOE), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in Fall 2018, approximately 5000 students were enrolled at the university, with a slight majority of males (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2018). The racial and ethnic statistics of all undergraduates in the same period was roughly 65% White; about 10% each were Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino, the latter category being slightly higher; and less than 5% Asian (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2018). In 2019, the university’s Diversity Workforce Committee developed its Affirmative Action Plan, which noted a total workforce of about 550 individuals, with a somewhat equal gender group representation that only slightly favored females as the majority (Case 1 Diversity Workforce, 2019). The racial/ethnic composition of female staff was estimated at 40% White as the dominant group, with the remaining percentage nearly equally distributed among the categories of Black/African-
American, Hispanic/Latino, and Other. Among male employees, the report noted a 35% White majority and similar to the female demographics, the remaining percentage of male staff was evenly apportioned among Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and Other (Case 1 Diversity Workforce, 2019).

**Two-year technical college.** The research site and work context for Tamra, Case 2 participant, was a two-year private, not-for-profit, co-educational, technical college in the Northeast Region. According to the college’s self-study report for accreditation, this institution began enrolling students approximately 100 years ago, having been founded as a trade school for students who were at least 14 years of age and had completed an eighth-grade education (Case 2 report, 2020). In the mid-1960’s, the organization transitioned into a post-secondary institution that granted degrees upon completion of three-year programs in specialized trades. In the late-1990s, the state’s Commissioner of Higher Education approved the institution’s application for status as a two-year college after a thorough review of its programs (Case 2 report, 2020). This resulted in a name change for the institution and the ability to confer to graduates the Associate of Science and the Associate of Applied Sciences degrees (Case 2 report, 2020). The most recent student handbook available at the time of this investigation cited that the college offered close to 20 programs of study in trades, technical, and clinical fields and less than five certificate programs (Case 2 handbook, 2019). Throughout this college’s history, only two female presidents had been appointed, the current President who is a participant in this study and her immediate predecessor (Case 2 website, 2020). In Fall 2018, there were approximately 400 students enrolled at the college, with less than 5% having been out-of-state applicants who required student housing (Case 2 report, 2020). In Fall 2018, a gender breakdown of the student body was overwhelmingly male at a 75% majority, the remaining 25% minority being female
In terms of race or ethnicity, enrollment demographics were estimated at 85% White, with Black or African-American and Hispanic/Latino students at roughly 10% each group, and Asian students only at 5% (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2018). The 2019-2020 Student Handbook listed in its appendices 75 employees in faculty and staff roles, 60% of whom were females (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2018). Racial/ethnic demographics for faculty and staff were not retrievable by the researcher through a search of print and electronic reporting sources.

Private community hospital. Teresa, Case 3 participant, was situated in a Catholic hospital context in the Northeast Region that was part of larger healthcare organization operating regionally from outside of the state in which the hospital was located. The corporate network, or larger system, consisted of less than 15 private facilities across five states, a combined two-thirds of which were convalescent homes and assisted-living residences; the remaining third were acute care hospitals (Case 3 corporate network website, 2020a). The nascent stage of this network was in the mid-1980s, when it offered stewardship for Catholic healthcare institutions that were concerned about their longevity because of leadership and staffing challenges caused by the declining number of women entering the religious orders historically filling these roles (Case 3 corporate network website, 2020b). Some 20 years later, the current corporation was formed and assumed legal control of this group of facilities with the approval of the Vatican (Case 3 corporate network website, 2020b). The Catholic hospital that was the primary setting of Case 3, operated within and was influenced by a larger corporate matrix. The hospital was founded in or about 1950 and served its rural county as a community hospital with slightly more than 100 beds in its acute care facility of more than 30 departments that provided services inclusive of but not limited to 24-hour emergent care, surgery, cardiac specialization, radiology, endoscopy, wound treatment, and physical therapy (Case 3 hospital website, 2020). Outside of this hospital’s
corporate network, there are four additional hospitals within the same county in this state. In 2015, this Case 3 hospital site drew a little more than 80% of its patients from its larger county of an estimated 155,000 residents. The racial and ethnic demographics for the county indicated a nearly 100% White majority, the remainder equally distributed in 1% increments among the following groups: Black or African-American, Alaskan Native or American Indian, Hispanic, and Asian (Case 3 report, 2017). In this same period, 17% of individuals in the county were reported to be living in poverty (Case 3 report, 2017). The median household income in 2019 was reported at under $50,000, and unemployment was less than 5% (Town Charts, 2019). According to a 2015 health needs assessment report, the top five health issues that affected approximately 85% to 65% of the county’s population were ranked in highest to lowest occurrence as follows: drug and alcohol abuse, obesity, physical activity and nutrition, mental health, and cardiovascular disease (Case 3 report, 2017).

In terms of leadership of the institution, given that the hospital was founded and operated by a religious order of nuns, there had been a strong line of succession among female presidents or CEOs at the helm. The current study participant was a female layperson, and her immediate predecessor was a religious sister of the order. This hospital employed less than 1000 total staff and professionals (Case 3 report, 2017). Racial/ethnic and gender demographics for staff were not retrievable by the researcher through a search of print and electronic reporting sources.

**K-12 public school district.** The workplace and research site for Thea, the Case 4 study participant, was a K-12 public school district, which was a consolidated school system that served two towns within the same county. This suburban school district consisted of 14 schools, 10 elementary, two middle, and two high schools (Case 4 State Department of Education [Case 4 SDE], 2020). In 2018-2019, the district served an estimated 7,500 students, evenly represented
by gender with a slight majority of males, and less than 15% of the student body classified as economically disadvantaged (Case 4 SDE, 2020). The racial/ethnic majority of the district’s total student body was Asian and White, roughly 45% and 30% respectively (Case 4 SDE, 2020). The remaining students were categorized approximately as 15% Hispanic/Latino and less than 5% Black or African-American (Case 4 SDE, 2020). State assessment data from 2018-2019 reported an estimated 75% of students met proficiency in English Language Arts, and nearly 65% tested proficient in mathematics (Case 4 SDE, 2020). In 2019, there were close to 650 faculty members employed by the district (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2020). The administrators’ group was fairly equal in gender distribution, with close to 5% less females than males (Case 4 SDE, 2020). There was a 95% White majority among administrators, with Black or African-American and Hispanic/Latino comprising the remaining 5%, and no Asian representation in this group (Case 4 SDE, 2020). The gender data for faculty showed an 80% female majority in 2018-19 (Case 4 SDE, 2020). Faculty racial/ethnic data for the same period was 95% White, less than 1% Black or African-American, and the remainder was Hispanic/Latino and Asian, with Asians slightly lower in the demographic (Case 4 SDE, 2020).

**Municipal law enforcement agency.** The research site for Liz, Case 5 participant, was a municipal police department, which served a population of approximately 20,000 residents in the ninth largest city within this northeastern state (World Population Review, 2020). Demographics of residents’ ethnic and racial composition described a town population that had a 95% White majority, with less than 3% Black or African-American as the next largest group, approximately 1% Asian, and less than 1% Hispanic/Latino and Other (World Population Review, 2020). In 2017, an estimated 15% of the population were living in poverty, with a median household income of $55,563, and an unemployment rate of roughly 5% (World Population Review, 2020).
To better quantify the challenges that beset this law enforcement agency’s sworn officers, the city’s crime statistics are described and presented below in comparison to national crime rates. The United States Department of Justice (U.S. DOJ) categorizes arrestable offenses as being either a violent or a property crime (U.S. DOJ, 2019a). Violent crimes involve use or threat of force and are organized from highest to lowest degree of severity as follows: murder or manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault (U.S. DOJ, 2019a). Property crimes involve loss or theft of possessions, organized in descending order as burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft (U.S. DOJ, 2019a). Crime statistics are reported as annual ratios of offenses per 100,000 inhabitants, as well as tallied numerically (U.S. DOJ, 2019a). In 2018, Case 5 city’s violent crime rate was approximately 175 (U.S. DOJ, 2019b) as compared to the United States’ average of 368.9 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants (U.S. DOJ, 2019c). The city’s property crime rate during this period was slightly less than 2000 (U.S. DOJ, 2019b) in comparison with the national average property crime rate of 2199.5 (U.S. DOJ, 2019c). At the time of this research study, the Case 5 police department had been in existence more than 200 years, if taking into consideration its earliest beginnings as an organization limited to a few night watchpersons and constables (Case 5 city website, n.d.). However, the department’s formal structure emerged approximately 150 years ago when the city was incorporated, an event that coincided with the hiring of a City Marshall and three police officers (Case 5 city website, n.d.). Prior to the formal appointment of the current Chief of Police who had been serving first in an interim role, Case 5 study participant Liz, the city’s fire and police departments were jointly led by one executive administrator having the title of Public Safety Chief (Case 5 television news media, 2014). Within more than 200 years of the department’s existence, Liz was the first female who attained this highest leadership rank. At the time of this investigation, the Case 5 police department was
comprised of 40 sworn officers throughout the ranks and five professional support staff members (Case 5 city website, 2020). The gender representation of the combined total 45 employees was approximately 80% male (Case 5 city website, 2020). Females comprised 100% of the professional support staff (Case 5 city website, 2020). Inclusive of the Chief and across all ranks of sworn officers, less than 3% were females. There are currently no females in the specialty classifications of investigator or detective (Case 5 city website, 2020). The department recently appointed its first female sergeant in 2020, who was historically the only female having attained rank above police officer, exclusive of the appointment of Case 5 study participant Chief Liz (Case 5 Facebook, 2020). Racial and ethnic diversity statistics for the department could not be ascertained independently by the researcher through credible published resources.

Participants

Together with the basic descriptions of study participants’ demographics and professional backgrounds that are presented in Table 2, additional background information that further distinguished each female leader as appropriate for inclusion in this study are presented narratively in the subsections identified by case number, participant pseudonym, and professional title. This information within the following descriptions was gathered through participants’ responses to in-person and telephone interviews during the present study.
### Table 2

**Basic Description of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Current Leadership Role</th>
<th>Experience in Exec Leadership</th>
<th>Overall Experience in All Leadership Levels</th>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>University President</td>
<td>≤ 20 years</td>
<td>≤ 45 years</td>
<td>Hisp/Latina</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>70s</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tamra</td>
<td>College President</td>
<td>≤ 5 years</td>
<td>≤ 20 years</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>≤ 10 years</td>
<td>≤ 30 years</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thea</td>
<td>Superintendent of Schools</td>
<td>≤ 5 years</td>
<td>≤ 25 years</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Chief of Police</td>
<td>≤ 5 years</td>
<td>≤ 25 years</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>A.S.</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Participant is first female appointed to this leadership position in current organization’s history.

*b Participant is first person of Hispanic/Latino race or ethnicity appointed to this leadership position in current organization’s history.

*c Participant holds two Master’s Degrees: M.S.N. and M.B.A.
Case 1: Isabel, University President. As the most senior participant in age, Isabel, Case 1 participant, had extensive career experience in higher education, and she was the only racially diverse leader represented in this study, all others being Caucasian/White females. This position was Isabel’s first and only appointment as a University President, and her tenure in the role had spanned nearly two decades. Isabel had the distinction of being the first female and the first Hispanic/Latino inaugurated to the presidency of this university. The leadership structure of the institution placed 10 staff members under her purview as direct reports, who formed the executive cabinet that consisted of a provost and several vice- and associate presidents. Isabel had served more than 40 years in executive leadership positions within three institutions, inclusive of her appointment as President and having served elsewhere in three previous appointments at the level of dean and provost. Prior to advancing through leadership roles, Isabel’s first two decades of her career were served in the role of full-time professor while she maintained a household as a married woman who was raising two sons. She stated she had made a conscious and collaborative decision with her husband to remain with her teaching responsibilities as he planned the advancement of his leadership career in higher education, which culminated once he reached a lengthy tenure as a University President. At the time of the study, Isabel described her own career as moving toward retirement, with her husband having retired several years prior, and her sights set on having more time to enjoy with her adult children, their spouses, and her grandchildren.

Case 2: Tamra, College President. Tamra was the youngest participant, a White/Caucasian female, who at the time of this study was early in her tenure as President of a two-year technical college. Although she was new to the role of President, she had served
at this same institution for approximately 15 years in several executive positions that spanned the levels of director, executive director, vice-president, senior vice-president, and executive vice-president. Prior to joining the college, Tamra held prior executive leadership positions in non-profit organizations, and she had served on several municipal boards. Tamra’s cabinet was comprised of approximately 10 direct reports at the levels of chief, director, and vice-president. Tamra is married to a professional male employed in the private business sector, and they have a daughter of elementary school age.

**Case 3: Teresa, Hospital Chief Executive Officer.** Teresa was among the two most senior participants in this study, approximately five years younger than Isabel. Teresa, a White/Caucasian female, had been serving nearly a decade as CEO at the time of this study, which was her first appointment as the CEO of a healthcare organization or hospital. Over the course of her leadership trajectory across four different hospitals or healthcare organizations, Teresa amassed more than two decades of experience as an executive leader in the roles of nursing supervisor, case manager, and chief operating officer. In addition, Teresa had been a successful entrepreneur who formed, developed, and sold her own firm in a health-related field. Teresa holds two master’s degrees, one in Nursing and the other in Business Administration. As CEO of the hospital setting in this study, Teresa had purview over more than 20 direct reports at the director and vice-president level who were also medical doctors and nurses, as well as professionals in human resources, finance, and operations. Teresa and her husband raised 2 children, now adults, as she worked in various positions as a clinical nurse and supervisor earlier in her career.

**Case 4: Thea, Superintendent of Schools.** Thea was at the median age of the five participants, in her mid-fifties, when engaged in this study. Thea, a White/Caucasian female,
had been serving during the study as Superintendent of Schools in this K-12 public school system setting less than five years. However, Thea was appointed to the position having had slightly more than an additional five years prior experience as Superintendent for a smaller K-8 public school district in a neighboring system. Inclusive of both superintendencies and previous leadership roles, such as an assistant superintendency and two principalships served across five different school districts, Thea had approximately two decades of executive leadership experience in public education; in addition, she had several years of experience as a classroom teacher. In the district which was this study’s setting, Thea was primary evaluator for an estimated 20 administrators and senior staff, who formed her leadership team. Thea has two sons, young adults living in her household, and she was recently divorced from the father of her children, a relationship she characterized as having maintained a mutual admiration of one another’s strengths and friendship.

Case 5: Liz, Chief of Police. Liz, a White/Caucasian female, was within one-year of the median age of study participants when this present investigation began. With nearly three decades of experience as a sworn law enforcement officer, Liz had entered retirement for less than one year when this opportunity to serve as Chief had arisen. During her brief retirement from another city, this municipality offered her the position of Acting Chief and later swore her in as the permanent Chief of Police, a command she held for nearly five years at the time this study began. As the Chief, Liz had five direct reports under her purview, who comprised the department’s highest ranking sworn police officers and the professional support staff in her office. Liz’s cabinet functioned as her executive team of less than 5 officers at the rank of captain and lieutenant, among whom she had divided the responsibilities of operations and uniformed command; administration, records, and the
detective bureau; and the role she had chosen for herself, which she described as human relations. Collectively, throughout her entire career, before and after retirement within two different police departments, Liz had served in high-ranking leadership positions in addition to Chief. She had retired from her prior position with more than a decade at the rank of lieutenant, as well as having served close to 10 years as commander of a special response team due to her training as a crisis negotiator. With regard to her personal life, more than 30 years ago, Liz had been married for approximately one year prior to initiating a divorce. Ultimately, she chose to remain single and without children, a status which she had maintained at the time of this investigation.

**Description of the Research Design**

The research design for this investigation was a phenomenological multiple-case study, with a holistic, single-unit approach to analysis. Yin (2014) posited that “the need for case study research arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” of a contemporary nature (p. 4). Therefore, this design was suitable for this investigation’s research question that focused on the how and what in exploring participants’ perceptions and reported experiences. The present study was comprised of five cases in total, with each case bounded by female gender of the leader, type of professional organization as the context for leadership, and authority level of the leader role as the single-unit of analysis. The model for this research design was adapted from Yin (2014), with each specific case having been embedded within “contextual conditions” (p. 50), represented in this investigation by the type of organization or profession within which a participant served as leader. Yin (2014) had asserted that within his multiple-case study model that utilized a holistic approach, “the boundaries between the case and the context . . . [were] not likely to be sharp” (p.50);
therefore, throughout the present investigation, the researcher considered the relationship between case and context to be permeable, as well.

**Triangulation of methods.** An important feature of the research design for this study was the triangulation of methods with data gathered through interviews, observations, and documents to support an information-rich data collection. Use of data from multiple methods enhanced the opportunity to make within-case and across-case comparisons (Yin, 2014). This assisted in checking emergent themes against different forms of information (Merriam, 2009) while it, also, strengthened conclusions drawn from findings and assisted with trustworthiness.

**Data Collection Tools**

To ensure a more robust multiple-case study, four types of data collection tools were utilized for each case: three semi-structured interviews, the first of which was followed by four brief demographic survey questions that served as the source of data reported in Table 1, observations with field notes on participant interaction with others (i.e., cabinet and leadership team meetings), and documents (i.e., résumés and news articles). These methods of data collection were important to the triangulation of the study. The interviews with brief demographic survey and the observations served as primary methods of data collection, whereas the documents that were reviewed by the researcher assisted with establishing the context in which the leader operated and how she presented herself or was perceived by stakeholders.

**Interviews and Brief Demographic Survey**

Once informed consent (Appendix A) was attained from study participants, three interviews were conducted during this investigation. The first interview occurred on-site at
the participant’s workplace, and the remaining two were telephone interviews, all three collectively having required no less than three hours and ten minutes. Interview protocols (Appendix B) were adapted with author’s written permission (Appendix C) and based on Humberd’s (2014) dissertation on women and their gender-leadership frames. The interview protocols included probes and follow-up questions that provided adequate time to collect in-depth, rich detail of participants’ reported perceptions and experiences. Interviews were semi-structured and primarily focused on exploratory questions which varied somewhat in wording and sequence to provide the necessary flexibility that elicited information particular to the individual participant’s “world view” and allowed the researcher to “respond to the situation at hand” as ideas emerged (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Due to the phenomenological nature of this multiple-case study, the most significant adaptation to Humberd’s (2014) original protocol was the reformattting of questions into three separate interviews, rather than one. These additional interviews provided for data collection at junctures that aligned with the triangulation of methods in this study and accorded with the following pattern: an initial interview with a brief demographic survey, followed by a field observation with a subsequent interview, and concluded with a document review followed by a related interview.

The interview protocols are described in detail below and will be hereafter referred to in this study as (a) Interview 1, Part A and B, with Part A being the Initial Interview and Part B as the Brief Demographic Survey; (b) Interview 2, Post-Observation Interview; and (c) Interview 3, Post-Document Review Interview. In general, these interview protocols revisited some of the initial interview questions with contextual adaptations aligned with the specific type of data collection that preceded each interview. In addition to having functioned as a participant debrief each time new data were analyzed, the overlap in the
questions in the latter two interviews provided opportunity for cross-checking of themes and assisted in having strengthened trustworthiness. Minor revisions to Humberd’s (2014) original protocol included the following: (a) slight edits in wording that reflected inclusion of participants outside of corporate roles in the private sector, (b) addition of a new section on personal values and the development of leadership identity, composed of four questions, (c) two new sub-questions based on developing a network and finding a suitable match for a sponsor, (d) parsing out of the demographic questions in a separate form that was used during the wrap-up section of Interview 1, (e) addition of two new demographic questions that elicited information on marital status and number of children, if any, and (e) more time that accounted for the increase from one to three interview sessions. In addition, several questions were developed by the researcher and integrated throughout the protocols at appropriate junctures to address, more specifically, the present study’s focus. These additional researcher-generated questions were influenced by a review of relevant literature, as indicated by their accompanying citations. Interview questions were vetted by two experts in the field who provided feedback regarding their utility in eliciting participant information that would be pertinent to the study’s purpose.

**Interview 1 – The Initial Interview.** The first interview, referred to herein as Interview 1, Initial Interview, Parts A and B, consisted of a data collection tool with two components (Appendix B). Both parts occurred during the same face-to-face session upon the initial meeting with a participant at her worksite. Part A was limited to open-ended qualitative questions that pertained to the participant’s upbringing or background, personal values and leadership identity, perceptions of the organization and the profession, leadership development, and the construction of gender and leadership. Data were collected through
audio recordings and handwritten notes, having required no less than 1 hour and 35 minutes. Part B concluded this audio-recorded session with four brief demographic questions that required less than five additional minutes to collect data to enable to the researcher to describe participants within the study by age, highest education level, marital status, and number of children (if any). Field notes gathered during the interview pertained to the work environment and provided the researcher with a cursory, and confirmatory, observational sense of the organization’s culture and the individual participant’s place within it.

**Interview 2 – The post-observation interview.** This data collection tool (Appendix B) provided a semi-structured framework for an audio-recorded telephone interview, which required no less than 35 minutes. This interview occurred within the two weeks following a recently observed meeting. The researcher’s objective in arranging Interview 2 was sensitivity to the participants’ busy schedules, balanced with having allowed enough time for participants’ reflection on events without compromising memory. Because the open-ended questions in this interview were contextually reframed from the Initial Interview Part A, this data collection tool maintained a continuing focus on personal values and leadership identity in relation to challenges and successes encountered by the participant within the recently observed meeting.

**Interview 3 – The post-document review interview.** This tool (Appendix B) was used to collect data related to a mid- to late-tenure career challenge experienced by the participant. This was a telephone interview with audio recording that required no less than 55 minutes for completion. It was scheduled during the time period that followed completion of Interviews 1 and 2 and the researcher’s review and initial coding of the three documents that had been collected in relation to each participant. This interview pertained only to the
one document which related to the mid- to late-tenure career challenge. The open-ended questions for Interview 3 were contextually reframed from the Initial Interview and further explored the career challenge document using questions from the following categories of Interview 1A: (a) context of the issue, (b) personal values and leadership identity, (c) perception of the organization and profession, and (d) leadership development.

Audio recorded data from each of the three interviews (Appendix B) described above was transcribed through the web-based voice transcription service at temi.com on the same date of the session in which the data was collected. The service provided 24-hour turnaround for return receipt of the typed transcript. All transcripts completed by the service required the researcher to perform minor edits for word accuracy, as well as proper identification of participants during each speaker transition occurring within a given interview.

**Field Observation**

An on-site observation was scheduled at each leader’s worksite, during which the researcher collected data as the leader facilitated a meeting. Each participant was asked to identify the observation context by choosing an event that focused on the leader’s role or purview and during which she was to be the primary presenter or facilitator for her staff, leadership team, board, or other constituency. Merriam’s (2009) guidelines for “being a careful observer” were utilized by the researcher during field observations for the dual purpose of collecting data and writing field notes (p. 120). In all cases, the five study participants opted for an observation of a cabinet or leadership team meeting. Once the participants had identified the group to be observed, anyone who was expected to attend was provided with a letter that described the study and the researcher’s use of the data, together with a request for their signatures to authorize their informed consent as indicated on the
Field Observation: Participant Consent Form for Research Study (Appendix A). Because the meeting observation was video-recorded, this allowed the researcher to focus on writing only key phrases and important quotations while she remained attentive to actions, settings, and non-verbal details during note-taking. The observation provided a comparison between the leader’s active engagement in her role (the observable facilitation of the meeting) and her self-reported perceptions of her own leadership identity (the interview). As recommended by Merriam (2009), the field notes jotted during observations included rich descriptions of people, setting, and action while capturing what was said and the researcher’s own thoughts in the margins of the notes. Initially, although the researcher remained open to other emergent themes, the notes also focused on those data that appeared to align with the theoretical constructs of agentic versus communal leadership attributes (Weiner & Burton, 2016), in addition to evidence of role congruity or incongruity (Eagly, 2007) in the leader’s behaviors and the meeting participants’ reactions or responses in relation to these attributes during the meeting. The audio portion of the video recording was sent to the same web-based transcription service, and it was processed and edited by the researcher in the same manner and time frame described above.

Documents

The review of documents was an additional form of data collection for this study. Bowen’s (2009) document protocol was used to collect and review data for each document within a case and to support analysis of sense units and themes (Appendix D). Three types of documents were collected in relation to each study participant: (a) a résumé or curriculum vitae with brief professional biography (b) a newspaper article or press release announcing the participant’s appointment to her position, and (c) an article or participant-drafted
document pertaining to a professionally challenging period or decision within the mid- to late-years of the participant’s tenure in her position. These artifacts supported the development of a rich background on the participant with respect to her role and the changing context throughout her tenure while constructing deeper understanding of her leadership identity. Some documents were provided directly to the researcher by the participant, and others were accessed by the researcher through an Internet search conducted during various stages of the research process. According to Yin (2014), in case study research, “the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p. 107). Document review was an element of this study’s triangulation of methods, intended to support trustworthiness while it concurrently provided a point of comparison, similar to the observation, between a participant’s own perception of her leadership identity and the way in which it was manifested through documentation prepared by her or by others about her.

To ensure that documents were utilized to “help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem,” thematic analysis occurred through a coding protocol (Merriam, 2009, p. 163). For this study, the researcher coded data using the theoretical constructs of Role Congruency (Eagly, 2007), Gender-Leadership Frames (Humberd, 2014), Capacious Model (Egan et al., 2017), and Conversational Style (Tannen, 1994, 1995). In addition, the researcher utilized an adapted a coding protocol (Appendix E) from Saldaña (2016) that is further described Chapter Four of this dissertation.
Data Collection Procedures and Timeline

In September 2019, The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) provided written authorization for the researcher to conduct this study. Once IRB permission was obtained, the researcher sent 459 letters and consent forms to potential participants in the sampling frame via United States Postal Services (USPS). As signed consent forms were returned from 19 potential participants, the researcher identified a sample consisting of five participants. The research timeline with procedures pertaining to data collection and analysis are presented chronologically (Table 3) for the reader.

Table 3

Research Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Research Procedures</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 19, 2019</td>
<td>Received IRB approval via e-mail authorizing permission to conduct study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 20 – October 15, 2019</td>
<td>Prepared and sent mailings via US Postal Service (USPS) to potential participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30 – October 25, 2019</td>
<td>Collected signed Informed Consent Forms via USPS. Selected five participants based on signed consent form, internet search, and pre-defined criteria. Contacted participants via telephone to schedule interviews and observations. Collected and reviewed Document 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 25 – November 22, 2019</td>
<td>Conducted Interview 1A and B on-site at each participant’s workplace. Follow-up via telephone for member-checking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1 – December 3, 2019</td>
<td>Collected signed Informed Consent Forms from Field Observation participants in advance of meeting with support of administrative assistants at each Study Participant’s office.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 12 – December 17, 2019</td>
<td>Conducted Field Observation onsite at each participant’s workplace. Follow-up via telephone for member-checking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 22 – December 23, 2019</td>
<td>Conducted Interview 2 by telephone with each participant. Follow-up via telephone for member-checking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 15 – June 5, 2020</td>
<td>Coded and analyzed data within- and across-cases.</td>
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Description and Justification of the Analyses

The data analysis framework described by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009) served as the overarching approach during this study. The initial phase in the process was first cycle open coding, in which the researcher remained open to all suggestions of emergent themes, patterns, and categories (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Concurrently, the researcher noted codes that related to the research in the review of literature that informed this investigation, such as those terms embedded in the constructs of Social Identity (Ridgeway, 2009), Role Congruency (Eagly, 2007), Gender-Leadership Frames (Humberd, 2014), Capacious Model (Egan et al., 2017), and Conversational Style (Tannen, 1994, 1995).

The next phase was second cycle analytical coding, a multi-iterative process in which the researcher focused on smaller units within the initial categories that led to renaming, compressing, and merging similar categories or themes to achieve deeper levels of meaning (Merriam, 2009). During this recursive process, the researcher maintained a journal and spreadsheets as codes and categories developed. These notes were refined and entered in HyperResearch™ (Hesse-Biber, Scott Kinder, & Dupuis, 2015), which assisted in the further refinement, organization, and analyses of the data. In alignment with Yin’s (2014) multiple-case research design model that undergirded this study, data were analyzed within- and across-cases. Within-case analysis supported development of a deep understanding of each individual case, and across-case analysis assisted in connecting the recurrent themes.

The investigator developed two research-based protocols (Appendices D and E) as procedural guidance for data analysis throughout the investigation. The first was the Document Review Protocol (Appendix D), adapted from Bowen (2009) and described above in the Data Collection Tools section of this chapter. The second was the Data Coding and
Analyses Protocol (Appendix E), adapted from Saldaña’s (2016) more detailed and practical explication of the same concepts forwarded by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009), which guided first and second cycle coding of all types of data collected during this study. The latter protocol (Appendix E) also addressed the use of software during second cycle coding. In addition, the researcher utilized a graphic organizer during the process of qualitative coding and analysis (Appendix F) to track the construction of meaning as it emerged from instances within the data and progressed to form codes, code categories, subthemes, and themes, all of which culminated in the articulation of the findings statement.

Ethics Statement

The names of all participants in this study and any implicit or explicit reference to their positions or organizations were referred to only through the use of pseudonyms and alpha-numeric codes in all recordings and written transcripts and documents. All names of places, people, and potential identifiers – including locations or geographic regions – were redacted from written archival artifacts included in the study, in order to protect the confidentiality of each individual and organization. The data were stored on a password protected electronic device, and any data on paper were locked in a filing cabinet by the researcher. Coded data were available to researchers related to the study. Data were available to researchers at WCSU who were members of the researcher’s dissertation committee, and to an internal auditor for the purpose of data verification, coding, and analysis. Study participants were asked to sign the Participant Request Form for Research Study (Appendix A) prior to the initial interview, which included an explanation of their right to opt out of the study at any time and their choice to approve or deny any data collected prior to this point of decision. All persons present during the video recorded field
observation were asked to sign the Field Observation: Participant Consent Form for Research Study (Appendix A) prior to the scheduled meeting observation, which included an explanation of the purpose and use of the data and their right to opt out. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Western Connecticut State University provided written authorization in September 2019 for the researcher to conduct this study. IRB approval preceded all data collection, and the researcher was in possession of a valid Human Subjects Certificate from the IRB throughout the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND EXPLANATION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore of the social construction of females’ leadership identities as described through the self-perceptions and lived experiences of five female executives who, at the time of this investigation, served at the uppermost leadership tier within their different professions and organizations. This chapter provides an analysis of the data collection and findings that resulted from the one research question which guided this study: How do female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs?

Description of Findings

Four tools, primarily, were used for the data collection that frames this analysis: (a) a semi-structured, initial, in-person, on-site interview that served as a general introduction between participant and the researcher; (b) an in-person, video-recorded field observation of each participant as she conducted a staff or committee meeting in the regular performance of her duties; (c) a semi-structured telephone interview that focused on the events captured during the field observation; and (d) a semi-structured telephone interview that was based on the researcher’s review of a document concerning a late-tenure career challenge that the participant had experienced. In addition, as detailed in Chapter Three, three documents collectively comprised a fifth tool, used secondarily by the researcher for the singular purpose of triangulation in checking for reasonable coherence between participant self-reported experiences in relation to three textual or documentary artifacts submitted by each participant. Chapter Four presents the results of this study by identifying a finding based on the data analysis and the themes that emerged from the data to produce this finding. In its
entirety, the analysis of this study, as represented herein, resulted in two finding statements, each comprised of two themes and seven subthemes. All participant quotations excerpted from the data and presented in this chapter are accompanied by citations indicating line numbers from transcripts formatted by the researcher and retained in her secure digital files.

Finding 1
Finding 1: Participants described their leadership identities in terms of their successes or challenges in enacting a communal orientation through which they build and maintain relationships that they perceive as critical to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling, move the organization or community forward, navigate difficult circumstances, evaluate their effectiveness as leaders, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others.

Two themes emerged from the data to result in this finding. The first theme was that the study participants perceived themselves as having specialized skill sets that enabled them to understand how to build, maintain and repair relationships within their organization and the larger community in order to fulfill their purpose or calling, forward their leadership goals or a strategic plan, manage controversial situations, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others. Although the specific skills cited by each leader were different in some respects, all expressed that their acumen within specialized areas enabled them to build and manage relationships effectively. The participants described these relational skills as necessary to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling and to move their organization or community forward. Furthermore, the leaders reported that the cultivation of healthy workplace relationships provided them with additional resources which they could draw upon when managing controversial or challenging situations as leaders. Also related to this
first emergent theme, participants emphasized the value of having extended themselves to mentor others or having been mentored in their own careers, particularly focusing on those relationships in which the mentees and mentors either had similar leadership identity attributes or relatable life experiences.

The second theme that emerged in relation to this finding statement was that the participants’ descriptions of experiences in which they felt at dissonance with their self-perceptions of their own leadership identities or practices mainly concerned situations involving difficult decisions, relationships or the inability to establish a strong relationship, whether with staff member, supervisor, other stakeholders. The leaders who participated in this investigation described their inner dialogue or reflections on practice that centered on an exploration of self-perceived dissonance between their core values and their actual leadership practice. In all cases, these executives expressed a sense of inadequacy as leaders when experiencing failed attempts to establish a trusting relationship, to mentor, or to support a difficult staff member. Similarly, they described being frustrated by stakeholder or supervisor relationships in which they had felt marginalized, devalued, or held back at different points in their careers. Figure 1 represents the emergence of the first two themes in relation to the first finding. The seven subthemes that collectively undergird themes one and two of this finding are presented in Table 4.
Figure 1. Finding Statement 1 Development. This figure illustrates how the first finding statement was developed from the first and second theme.
Table 4

Themes and Subthemes Related to Finding Statement 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Number</th>
<th>Theme Statement</th>
<th>Subtheme Number</th>
<th>Subtheme Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participants perceived themselves as having specialized skill sets that enable them to understand how to build, maintain and repair relationships within their organization and the larger community in order to fulfill their purpose or calling, forward their leadership goals or strategic plan, manage controversial situations, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participants reported having specialized knowledge that enables them to build and manage relationships effectively.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Participants’ descriptions of experiences in which they felt at dissonance with their own perceptions of their leadership identities or practices mainly concerned situations involving difficult decisions, relationships or an inability to establish a strong relationship, whether with staff member, supervisor, other stakeholders.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Participants described inner dialogue which explored a self-perceived dissonance between leadership values and actual practice.</td>
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<tr>
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Theme 1: Participants perceived themselves as having specialized skill sets that enable them to understand how to build, maintain and repair relationships within their organization and the larger community in order to fulfill their purpose or calling, forward their leadership goals or strategic plan, manage controversial situations, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others. Four subthemes emerged from the data related to this theme: (a) Participants reported having specialized knowledge that enables them to build and manage relationships effectively; (b) participants described
relational skills as necessary to fulfill their purpose or calling and to move the organization or community forward; (c) participants reported that the cultivation of healthy workplace or professional relationships provided them with additional resources to manage controversial situations; and (d) participants emphasized the value of well-matched mentor relationships that are based on similar leadership identities and/or relatable life experiences.

**Theme 1, Subtheme 1: Participants reported having specialized knowledge that enables them to build and manage relationships effectively.** Isabel described her ability to communicate through persuasion as influenced by her understanding of relationships with unionized staff, as she, in her role as University President, forwards the vision:

> What I do is point people in a direction that I think the university should go and then pray that they go in that direction. . . . Because it's a university, everybody's tenured. I can only use the art of persuasion. I can't give any orders. And so, I find myself using the art of persuasion all the time, making my best argument, saying that's the direction [the university] needs to go. (Interview 1A, lines 8-11)

Similar to the labor restrictions that Isabel confronted in her professional environment, Liz’s leadership practices as Chief of Police were contextualized in a unionized agency. Liz attributed her advanced training in negotiation as a significant contributor to her management of staff relations within this organization that is regulated by labor contracts:

> I deal with difficult conversations. . . . My primary role in who I am and what I bring to the position is around communication and relationships. That's where my strength is. So, part of my background is [having been a] crisis negotiator through [prior employment in a different police department]. I was on their team for 21 years. I was the commander of the team for my last eight years. (Interview 1A, lines 29-32)
Teresa and Tamra discussed their strengths in terms of understanding the needs of others. As a Hospital CEO, Teresa stated her expertise in building relationships stemmed from a lengthy career in nursing, through which she had become “a highly trained observer of human behavior” (Interview 1A, line 246), constantly “trying to build collaboration and compromise” (Interview 1A, line 638). Having reflected on these aspects of her profession, Teresa stated that

I think that fed . . . well into management because . . . my basic training was [that] you have to really listen to people. Um, you have to really kind of figure out where they're at. You have to help them grow, um, and gain skills. You have to walk beside them. (Interview 1A, lines 249-251)

Comparatively, although Tamra served in a different field as a Community College President, she also emphasized an outward focus toward the other in relationships when she described her ability to forge connections amidst divergent perspectives. This is a skill set Tamra explained as knowing

how to frame what you say, how to have empathy, how to, even if someone's disagreeing with you, how to, like, take yourself out of the conversation and, still, be able to have a conversation with the person, even if inside your head you're like, “No.” (Interview 1A, lines 254-256)

Theme 1, Subtheme 2: Participants described relational skills as necessary to fulfill their purpose or calling and to move the organization or community forward. Liz described her early appointment as Chief as marked by having “inherited an agency that had a lot of conflict in it,” with a gender discrimination lawsuit that was pending resolution and was filed by two female police officers within the small department of less than 50 certified law
enforcement personnel (Interview 1A, line 480). Liz reported her response to this challenge, as one in which she had prioritized enhancement of all officers’ skills in relating to one another as a means to keeping them focused on the critical work of the agency:

I look at it through the lens operationally, the sense that when my cops are in conflict with each other or with others, they are not as productive. I’m not getting the same quality of work, the same quality of behavior out of them, because they’re focused on the conflict and on the person that they have conflict with. So, my job [is] being that advocate and resource for them so that they can do their job safely and in the most effective [way]. And efficiency, in my mind, is . . . I’m going to introduce you to these skills, and these concepts are going to help you be happier, healthier, and more productive. You’re going to use those [skills] to have less stress [and have] less diversion [that takes you] away from what really matters. (Interview 3, lines 492-504)

Teresa expressed that she chooses to think the best of her staff when they fail to adhere to procedural directives. Therefore, she seeks to understand their motivation, as opposed to reprimanding them, because they might have ignored the directive in order to improve the quality of patient care:

When somebody isn't doing something, so they're not, um, you know—nurses are famous for this—um, they're not filling out a form or something that should happen. Uh, instead of going and yelling at them and saying, you know, “Why aren't you filling out that form?” You should be finding out why. They're usually not filling it out because it doesn't do anything for patient care. Um, it's not useful at all, and they're too busy, and so they've found a way to work around it or something else. So,
if you ask them and say, uh, “Geez, why isn't that working? What, why, why did that happen?” Um, so if you believe that they're inherently good, and they're trying to, uh, do the best that they can, and then it's usually processes that get in the way. And nurses, particularly, because I kind of know them the best [having been a nurse], they're the kings and queens of the workaround. Um, they will do whatever it takes to take care of their patients. (Interview 1A, lines 290-299)

Tamra reported that her efforts to recognize the team’s role in having contributed to the development and implementation of a strategic plan that charted the course for the college’s success was a higher priority to her than emphasizing her own significance as the leader. Tamra stated that her purpose was to recognize publicly that there are people on this campus that have been involved in this for a really, long time and . . . just to, hopefully, have them feel good. Like, you know, we've done this much; we've come this far, and we just have a little, little, more ways [sic] to go. But it has been a long haul, and just kind of, you know, recognizing those that have been involved in that [is important]. (Interview 2, lines 240-242)

The excerpts cited above, demonstrate that three leaders perceived their relational skills had assisted them in teaching staff how to interact more effectively with one another, understanding the perspective their staff bring to a situation or directive, and recognizing the contributions of staff working together as a team. These three different leaders reported their reliance upon communal practices and orientations, with the end goal being the furtherance of the organization’s larger mission or purpose and the fulfillment of their leadership calling.

**Theme 1, Subtheme 3:** Participants reported that the cultivation of healthy workplace or professional relationships provided them with additional resources to
manage controversial situations. Isabel explained the value of cultivating strong relationships at work in terms of an overall leadership advantage of having people upon whom she was able to rely, and who would support her directly or indirectly. In this example, she articulated her philosophy, and illustrated it by having recalled a controversial personnel action she had initiated and how those surrounding her chose not to exacerbate the, already difficult, situation:

I have always been of the mind that . . . you always have to have water in the well. And that is that you [must] have good relationships with people. You have to negotiate fairly. . . . If someone needs a special personal leave, you give it to them. If someone needs a little bit of extra work over the summer because they're financially strapped, and they let you know that, you help them out. If somebody wants to travel abroad but doesn't have all their money in their budget for a trip with students, you help them. So, I had a lot of water in the well. I had worked for years, and years, and years cultivating a community of people that I respected. And I cultivated it in a way that I thought was giving, in that I would support them in their efforts. And so, when this [controversial personnel action] happened, there were a lot of people who wanted me to succeed and that wanted me to not get hurt by this decision. So, it was very interesting to see. When I turned to the community-at-large at this university, very few people went against me. . . . Even if they . . . liked him, they didn't want to take sides, [so] they stayed silent. (Interview 3, lines 370-381)

This scenario illustrates that Isabel’s staff supported her indirectly through their choice not to oppose her decision. Isabel explicated further by exploring another element of the same personnel issue, one which demonstrates the direct support she received from one of her
subordinates whom she asked to help negotiate the impacted staff member’s separation from the university. This strategy afforded her a position of neutrality in discussions occurring between two trusted colleagues of similar hierarchal status, and it assisted her with containment of any potential adverse reactions on campus. Isabel explained how she came to develop the relationship with the person who had served as a go-between and the reason this strategy was effective:

When I became President, the man who was head of the Faculty Senate was a faculty member [who] was a Biologist and a very strong member of this community, well-respected, I mean, a good guy. I just respected him enormously and enjoyed his company, as a faculty member and professional, and [I] held him in high regard. And he retired. So, when this situation arose, I remembered that he and [the impacted staff member] were very close. And so, I called him and asked him, “In the negotiations with [this person], would you take the lead? He trusts you, and he . . . is not going to [want to] talk to me, but you could talk to [him], and [explain that] this is what I'm prepared to offer.” And then I would give . . . [this retired staff member] the terms of my offer, and he would take that back to [the impacted staff member] because [he] was very respected by [the impacted staff member and his wife]. The [impacted staff member’s] wife also got involved because this was financial for them. They trusted [this retired staff member], and [he] was the key to a very soft landing in a wonderful exit strategy for [the impacted staff member]. (Interview 3, lines 356-362)

Isabel reported that she was pleased with this strategy, which enabled her to help the embattled staff member “retire with dignity,” as opposed to facing a termination action. Her strategy rested upon a relationship she had forged with a retired faculty member during his
tenure with the university, which in turn, also worked because of the existing relationship between the impacted staff member and his former colleague.

On a larger scale, Thea describes how the relationships she had cultivated with and among all layers of her school district, from support staff to administration and Board of Education, provided her with the additional resources of increased moral support and operational assistance when the district had attracted national attention due to a controversial policy decision. The newly hired middle school principal’s communication with parents regarding her intention to adhere to an existing Board of Education policy banning strapless dresses at school sanctioned events and dances had produced opposition from a group of parents and students, which caught the attention of national news reporters and talk show program hosts, as well as print and social media. Thea explained that in the weeks prior to the dance, reporters and news camera operators were stationed outside the middle school building and the district’s central office, were present at Board of Education meetings, and were positioned in the parking lot of the dance venue in their attempts to interview school community members. Concurrently, the middle school principal had received threatening telephone and e-mail messages from across the country. Thea recounted her self-perception of how the relationships she had cultivated as superintendent came to serve as a resource to the district:

I saw that we all—I mean the secretaries, my board office secretaries, our supervisors who also had responsibilities in that middle school, the teachers—that we all were looking out for each other and especially helping out at the middle school. I had, even, my elementary principals calling and saying, you know, “Is she [the middle school principal] okay? What can we do to help?” Um, and it was it was really neat.
So that, that was sort of the saving grace . . . as difficult and, and [as much of a] pain in the neck as it was, it was great to see that your people [did] rise to the occasion.

(Interview 3, lines 304-309)

Thea’s description specifically articulated several positional levels of the organization within which she felt these relationships had permeated, along with an accompanying desire to offer additional support as a resource to the new middle school principal and the superintendent.

During an extended process in which Tamra was one of the candidates under consideration in the search for the new college president, Tamra explained to the researcher that she and the staff were feeling stressed. As Senior Vice-President at that time, Tamra reported that she was the second highest ranking administrator at the college, and she had been leading most of the day-to-day operations for the President, who had reassigned tasks as part of her transition toward retirement. Tamra described the environment during this period, and the importance of staff relations in continuing the work of the college, as follows:

We didn't know who the next [College] President was going to be for a while. What if it wasn't me? And we still stuck together, um, and were doing what was best for the institution. And I think, you know, I took a step back, and I said, “I hope you all see your voice in this and your, your, imprint in all of this because it's really, it's not just me, it's we [who] did this together.” (Interview 1A, lines 962-965)

All three situations recounted by Isabel, Thea, and Tamra emphasized the value of the team, a relational leadership orientation, that these leaders described as having added value and resources to the management of controversy, crisis, or uncertainty.

**Theme 1, Subtheme 4: Participants emphasized the value of well-matched mentor relationships that are based on similar leadership identities and/or relatable life**
**experiences.** Participants focused on gender-specific elements when describing attributes that enabled them to be a match as a mentor who had a strong ability to relate to others. Isabel and Teresa had shared perceptions that their experiences as working mothers had helped them connect with mentees who were navigating the same circumstances they had experienced in the past. Teresa reflected that

> what's [sic] been nice for me is to be able to, uh, nurture, women in leadership roles and, um, particularly women who are, you know, trying to have children and, and, juggle that sort of thing. Um, because it was very difficult, uh, for me. (Interview 1A, lines 588-590)

Similarly, Isabel explained how her ability to relate to female mentees was grounded in her own experience as a woman who built a career while raising children:

> I'm a mother. I take my role as a mother very seriously. Um, I respect people who have families and commitments, women who are doing that, you know, job and family and all of that. Uh, I have empathy for that. Um, I am empathetic, [and] I tell young women, “Do not do administration until your children or you're older because you're going to just beat yourself up that the house isn't clean, that this isn't done, that you're at work, you're missing your kid's football game or basketball game.”

(Interview 1A, lines 708-711)

Although similarly focused on her ability to relate to gender-alike mentees, Tamra’s comments were not centered on women’s roles within the family structure. Rather, Tamra emphasized her perception of a gender-specific type of support that she is equipped to provide to female mentees:
With women . . . the leadership development conversations I have are, continually, “You deserve to be here. You don't have to make a point. Like, the point is you're here, and now, like, we're going to do this in a collaborative way”. . . . [because women feel like] I need to prove myself. And I need to prove that I'm right. And I'm like, “Okay, let's take a deep breath . . . and think about how we get there, so it doesn't look like you're bulldozing all over everyone.” But it's a real thing. Like, they, the women, really strive [to prove themselves]. (Interview 1A, lines 711-718)

Thea and Isabel shared their own experiences in the leadership aspirant phase of their careers during which they had invested effort in seeking a mentor with whom they felt they could relate, with different resulting perspectives. Thea reported that she perceived an advantage in seeking a mentor of the same gender because she perceived differences presented by male and female leaders in their practices, either leaning toward a task or a relationship orientation:

The women just sort of had styles that I thought like, okay, that works for me. Um, you know, they were much more visible in their positions than the, than the, [males]. I mean the men administrators I had were good at, at things, and certainly, they managed buildings well. . . . But when I look at the people who built relationships, um, knew more about teaching and learning, that was the women. (Interview 1A, lines 809-813)

In contrast to Thea’s reported experience, Isabel expressed that times were different when she was an aspiring leader; therefore, gender similarity had the opposite influence in her estimation of whom would serve as a suitable match for a mentoring relationship with her.
I never found any woman taking an interest in me. You know, I think that they weren't around. I think there were women, [but] not so much at the beginning when I started, because of my age, it was always men [who] were in power. So those men became [my] mentors. And then when I went into, um, administration, what I found was . . . that the women that were in positions of power behaved like men. And so, what they did was kick [butt], and they were always rough and tough and mean and, and so they never took time to mentor anybody. They just were going to show you that they could do the job. And they weren't always, you know, they were always, you know, combative and mean-spirited. And I didn't want to be a leader like that. So, I don't think I sought them out as mentors. I just didn't…. I worked for two women who were, probably, two of the meanest people I've ever worked for in my life or known in my life. And I used to think, “Why do they have to be so mean, so angry?” And so, neither of them could have been mentors to me because I didn't, wouldn't, want them. But for the most part, I think, women in my generation were fighting for their own leadership ground. And so, they didn't think of other women or younger women around them. Now I think it's more, more, common. (Interview 1A, lines 505-517)

In summary, each of the excerpts cited above illustrate that participants reported their views that mentor-mentee relationships have value when the parties are well-matched in similarity of leadership identity or life experiences. However, these examples offer mixed perspectives in the participants’ perceptions of whether gender is a criterion of similarity between mentors and mentees that could help determine the likelihood of high relatability between the parties. Furthermore, in the case of Isabel, dichotomous views are expressed by
the same individual, wherein Isabel reported that her gendered role of mother has helped her relate well to female mentees while also having stated that gender was a deterrent in her own experience of finding a suitable mentor for herself, with time and mores being the moderator she noted in her latter statement.

**Theme 2:** Participants’ descriptions of experiences in which they felt at dissonance with their own perceptions of their leadership identities or practices mainly concerned situations involving difficult decisions, relationships or an inability to establish a strong relationship, whether with staff member, supervisor, or other stakeholders. Three subthemes emerged from the data: (a) Participants described inner dialogue, which explored a self-perceived dissonance between leadership values and actual practice; (b) participants expressed a sense of inadequacy as a leader in failed attempts to establish a trusting relationship or to mentor a difficult staff member; and (c) participants described being frustrated by stakeholder or supervisor relationships in which they felt marginalized, devalued, or held back.

**Theme 2, Subtheme 1:** Participants described inner dialogue which explored a self-perceived dissonance between leadership values and actual practice. As illustrated throughout the earlier analysis of the first theme and its subthemes in relation to Finding 1, all five of the study participants discussed their values, attributes, and leadership practices as being primarily associated with a relational or communal orientation although they also indicated that the context of situations influenced the impressions they sought to convey to others through their leadership identities. Thea, Teresa, and Liz described their reflections on practices they enacted in some circumstances that they felt were at dissonance with their core values. For example, Thea described the inherent tensions she had felt when having reflected...
upon the agentic stance required of her in managing a recent union dispute in contrast to the communal beliefs that are more intrinsic to her nature:

   We've got some grievance issues that are still lingering, . . . but I think what was difficult for me was having to be really directive and authoritarian. And I do it when I have to, but it's just not the way I behave, you know? I, really, just expect that people are going to do the right thing [Thea laughs]. Most of the time that happens [laughs again]. (Interview 1A, lines 339-342)

   As referenced earlier, Teresa had self-reported that her former training as a nurse enabled her to observe deeply and connect with people’s needs and motivations. In this next example, however, she reported a sense of personal disappointment that she had not been cognizant that staff morale had become an issue at the hospital. The language she used to express her thoughts on the situation was disfluent and repetitious in areas, in addition to having made reference to self-doubt or a questioning of her abilities, as she described the dissonance she observed between employee engagement survey outcomes and her leadership values. She reported the thoughts which coursed through her mind in these terms:

   As I go around in the organization, again thinking I'm a highly trained observer of human behavior, I have not sensed it. Um, I know that there were issues. I know there were issues with the morale, but not to that level. I haven't sensed it towards, towards, me. I mean, I, I, I go on nights, I do huddles, people are approachable. So, then I start thinking, “Wow, my radar is really off!” Or, “I am really disconnected from the organization!” Um, you know, “What kind of leader am I that I am representing this organization that has employee engagement of 30%?” I mean, I feel bad for my colleagues [at other hospitals in the same corporate network] who have
1% [employee engagement scores]. I think I'd have to quit. I, I don't, I don't know how you wake up and go in [to work] and say, “Am I, am I, going to be able to turn this around?” (Interview 1A, lines 839-845)

In comparison to all participants, the excerpts from Liz’s interview transcripts that were presented in the analysis of Theme 1, similarly indicated that she values communality and relationships. There are nuances in this particular case that are not apparent in such a pronounced fashion among the other participants’ reported experiences as compared to how the issues had manifested in Liz’s commentary in areas. Liz acknowledged her awareness that she has been impacted by, and has adapted to, the experience of having worked for many years in the highly male-congenial environment of law enforcement agencies:

I have not aligned myself with gender specific organizations [professional associations]. I’m not comfortable in that realm. Um, honestly it may, maybe not so much now in my 40s and 50s, as when earlier in my life, I'm more comfortable around men than I am women. Um, just being myself, being a straight shooter and talking, as well as [expletive deleted] talking, um, and the insults and the one-liners, in that, I mean, I grew up in a male-dominated role, a job, and I adapted to that early—that I'm a wise [expletive deleted]. Like I said, this has gotten [me into] much, much trouble. (Interview 1A, lines 1045-1050)

This point of contrast between Liz’s case and the other cases’ participants, appeared in several areas of her commentary in interview transcripts that indicated a dual level of dissonance existed in her reflections on her actual leadership practice and her values, meaning that Liz expressed conflict both when acting with agency, as well, as when she enacted leadership communally. This was anomalous to the four other cases that comprised
this study. Liz shared with the researcher a self-reported account of an event in which she had demonstrated agentic leadership behaviors while responding to an incident in her former role as Lieutenant with another police department. Liz perceived a notable dissonance between her actions on the scene and her preferred communal leadership identity, and she stated that this event, therefore, has remained a part of her thought process throughout the ensuing years:

We had some young punks [citizens] that were causing a problem, and one of my officers was in a, just running their mouth back and forth at each other [sic]. And I was in a really, really, really, really, really [expletive deleted] mood that night. And I stepped in between them, and I pushed the citizen back. And I turned to the officer, and I said, I told him, to shut the [expletive deleted] up and go over there. Um, and I regretted it as soon as I did it. And the next day I apologized to the officer, [and I] said I was way out of line, and it took me a few more days to process it. But I apologized to my staff. I said, “Typically I want you to model, um, what I do. Don't model that. I was way out of line. I was wrong. I can't take it back. All I can do is apologize for it.” Um, and that was easily close to 15 years ago, and it still sticks with me. Yeah, and still not the only one, I'm, certainly, I've had other times.

(Interview 1A, lines 360-368)

In other scenarios, in keeping with this dichotomous anomaly in the type of disconnect that Liz had reported as being part of her own leadership experiences, the following example from her current role as Chief illustrates that she felt a presence of dissonance, also, when she exercised leadership that was communal in practice:
So [I act with] fairness by collecting as much information as possible before I make a decision, whether that's a disciplinary decision, a personnel selection decision, an operational change, modification, um, hiring process, whatever, . . . knowing that for the vast majority [of these situations], I've done well and right. So, I get feedback from my staff, and have even [done so] back in those days of [staff telling me], “Yes, I don't always agree with you, but you are fair.” Um, you know, [I am] firm but fair, and [staff] had that said [about me] more than once. Um, and that's, again, a reputation that I prefer to have over many others. The challenge around doing it, um, is the cupcake side of me, that . . . compassionate side. (Interview 3, lines 373-378)

Each of the instances analyzed within this subtheme are indicative of a leadership practice of engaging in self-reflection and an attempt to consider, on a consistent basis, whether actions accord with the leaders’ values. When the leaders noted dissonance, it caused them to reflect on their identity and values as leaders. In the case of Teresa and Thea, dissonance occurred in thought processes when they perceived they were less attuned to their communal values, whereas Liz presented with greater complexity in the dual tensions she felt when aligning leadership practices with agentic values, as well as, feeling dissonance when leading communally.

**Theme 2, Subtheme 2: Participants expressed a sense of inadequacy as a leader in failed attempts to establish a trusting relationship or to mentor a difficult staff member.**  
The term *mentor*, as used by the researcher herein, is not confined to people who are matched through a formal program of staff induction. Instead, references to mentor-mentee relationships or mentoring extend to include informal connections established between parties in which guidance or professional advice is shared or sought. Three of the five
Participants in this study discussed their self-perceptions that they might be lacking in some regard as leaders when their attempts to establish a trusting relationship with a staff member had been unsuccessful or, in some circumstances, directly rebuffed by a person whom these leaders felt was in need of guidance or direction. For instance, Liz described the internal tensions she experienced when she perceived that her intentions and her leadership identity were misunderstood by a female police officer who rejected her efforts to provide guidance through a difficult situation. The officer Liz attempted to mentor was one of two female plaintiffs in a sexual harassment and gender discrimination lawsuit against male superiors and male officers, an issue that Liz had identified as having had a long-term negative impact on relationships in a department with little more than 40 sworn officers, mostly all males. Liz described her perspective on her lack of success to connect as mentor to this female officer and Liz’s self-perceived inadequacies as leader in this situation, as follows:

She [the female officer] has got such a black and white personality and a militaristic, rigid perception of chain of command that no matter how compassionate, no matter how mentoring, no matter how I attempt to get a one-on-one connection with her, she will, she resists it. Um, I'm the Chief; she's the officer; that's not the way those relationships work [in this officer’s viewpoint]. Um, and in my attempts to try to mentor her and help her get through her intellectual processing and away from emotions, I damaged any relationship I might be able to have with her because she sees me as being still part of the good old boy network, which really frosts my [expletive deleted] berries, by the way. (Interview 3, lines 65-71)

Liz’s description of these circumstances included a sense of disappointment when reflecting on this female officer’s perception of her leadership identity as being counter to the type of
leader she strived to be, an identity which she had established as a result of her own personal challenges with gender discrimination in a male-congenial profession:

To be considered part of the good old boy network, and, and not feeling like I am, uh, I have fought against the good old boy network in my whole career! Um, so yeah, to have to have somebody, especially another woman, um, believe and perceive and perpetuate that I am, um, part of that good old boy network is a hit to my identity.

(Interview 3, lines, 74-77)

Considered together, both of these excerpts illustrate that Liz had engaged in sense-making with regard to reasons that could be attributable to the failure in her ability to communicate, build trust, and establish a relationship with this officer. In previously cited excerpts from Liz’s interview transcripts that appear in this chapter, it is clearly stated that these are skills and attributes that this Police Chief had referred to as her leadership strengths.

While the above situation articulates Liz’s experience that involved frustrated attempts to initiate or form a mentorship, the next two examples focus on relationships that had been functional for several years, in which Isabel and Thea, separately, perceived a sense of failure at times when setbacks occurred within these types of relationships. Isabel described her thought process and her sense of inadequacy as a leader that had a tendency to occur whenever a veteran administrator demonstrated obstinace rather than collaboration when her team was engaged in problem-solving. Isabel stated that she imagined herself saying to the administrator, “We do this all the time. Just, you know, just please, can you put your head on this and get it? Don't, don't try to fight it. You're trying to be right” (Interview 2, lines 400-401). In addition, Isabel reported a perceived ineffectiveness of her own leadership skills, which she described, as follows:
And I, and I think, oh, my God, I failed! Because, you know, he's been working with me almost 15 years, and he still does it [persists in negative behavior] like it was yesterday. Yes, he does it less, but he still does it. And, but then, I conclude, you know, it is me, that I haven't succeeded. But it's just, he's, it's ingrained in his personality. (Interview 2, lines 402-404)

Thea, similarly, discussed a long-established mentoring relationship. This instance involved the President of the teachers’ union, with whom Thea must consult regularly on labor issues. Additionally, she advised and supported him as he pursued training toward his career objective to advance to administration. Thea stated there were lapses on this staff member’s part in meeting her expectations for advanced disclosure of sensitive issues, which she believed could have impacted her ability to uphold a public perception of her strength or authority as a leader. Thea described this situation as having presented difficulties in maintaining a good relationship with him when I knew he was not being truthful with me, you know . . . I always give him a heads up on anything that may come his way. I always do that. And he does not do the same thing with me. Although he always promises me [that] he will, he doesn't, which is very sneaky on his part. . . . So, that was a real struggle for me because I needed—I knew he wasn't being truthful with me—and, yet, I was not going to get in the mud with him, and I just kept smile on my face. And I'm sure some people thought, you know, [Thea], you're letting [the Union President] walk all over you, but I just felt that was the leadership profile [to convey], just [an identity of] consistency. (Interview 1A, lines 302-313)

Each of the examples presented in the preceding analysis are indicative of these three leaders’ views of their own effectiveness in their roles when having experienced a failure to
connect successfully with staff members whom they had deemed to be in need of guidance. In one case, the relationship was challenged before it could be initiated, and in the other two cases, the difficulties continued to surface at various times within the context of a mentorship that had been established for several years or more. All three leaders discussed these reported challenges in association with a perception of their own leadership attributes or skills.

**Theme 2, Subtheme 3: Participants described being frustrated by stakeholder or supervisor relationships in which they felt marginalized, devalued, or held back.** The impact of the participants’ focus on relational values was not confined to their sense of self when situated within their own leadership practices toward staff. In addition, participants described being affected by the relationships in which they failed to connect meaningfully with their own supervisors or stakeholders at various points in their careers. Tamra expressed that her candidacy for College President was a stressful process, during which she had perceived that the Board did not understand fully the value in the work she had been doing as the outgoing President’s second-in-command, particularly once the search was extended following Tamra’s interview for the position. Tamra recounted her perception that she had been devalued as the internal candidate:

"I was probably the worst version of myself that I ever was. Oh, I don't know why I just took it really personally. I had worked with Board members all these years and just felt like . . . I've been doing the job and basically, and my predecessor admitted to that. Um, it just, it was tough, and I probably didn't go into it with the right mindset. Um, I mean I pulled it out in the end, um, but I wish I would have enjoyed the process more because I really think it wasn't [the Board’s] fault. The Board has, has a job to
do. And, then, I've served on many boards, and I knew that. Um, but it just, you know, I was, I was tested, and there were a couple of times where I'm [sic] just like, this isn't, this isn't worth it, and maybe I don't want this. Maybe I'm not cut out to be [College President] if this is making me this much of a wreck. [Tamra laughs]. Maybe I'm not. Um, but, but yeah, it's hard for any internal candidate. (Interview 1A, lines 436-470)

Tamra shared this experience with the researcher more than two years after the search process had occurred and while she was the sitting College President. Notwithstanding the passage of time, she indicated that the emotions remained accessible to her as she recounted how the experience had shaped her self-conception of identity and fitness to lead during that time period.

In Thea’s case, she recounted a sense of frustration while working in another district, in relation to her self-reported inability to be perceived by the Board of Education as an effective communicator:

I feel I communicated with that Board nearly constantly, and it was never good enough. I remembered . . . preparing my review for the Board on how I accomplish the district goals . . . and they would still come back to me and say, in my evaluation, and we admit every goal and you know, we were, we were winning awards and we were doing great stuff, and they would still say, “You know, [Thea], we feel you should communicate more with us.” And, and I said to them, “Could you tell me what that looks like? Because here's what I'm currently doing, and I'm not sure. You know, I'm at a loss” . . . and yet they could not articulate it. You know, . . . I would say . . . “I do a weekly newsletter with you. I call the Board President whenever
there's an issue, or I call the appropriate chairperson of the committee. We have closed session items regularly. I ask for your [input] if I include you on different committees. Tell me what else I should be doing.” [And they would reply.] “Oh, we don't really know, but we really just need you to communicate more.” (Interview 3, lines 462-472)

It was Thea’s perception that the Board’s feedback was broad and lacked support; therefore, she felt devalued for the efforts she had expended in improving Board communications. Thea stated that this self-reported disconnect with the Board had distracted her from attending to business that required her attention: “I feel that their need to be in on things probably took my attention away from some parent things or from teachers. I mean, in the end I still did what had to be done, but that, that, took a lot of my time” (Interview 3, lines 473-474).

For Liz, the self-reported challenges in connecting with her supervisor [in her former department], similarly, arose in the context of annual reviews that she perceived as having included negative feedback on relational skills that was unsubstantiated by specific evidence:

I had one Captain . . . that was my mentor that towards the end of my career, [and] he was holding me back. Um, two years in a row in my evaluations. I am marked as needing improvement in interpersonal communication skills. Um, and I'm a crisis negotiator. I'm the commander of the Crisis Negotiation Team! So, the first time around . . . I ask him, “Can you give me some examples?” And, um, he couldn't. He kept coming back with, “It just resonates with me. It just resonates with me.” And, uh, [he] used the terms in the evaluation that I was difficult to get along with [and] I was obstinate. . . . I even said when he couldn't give me examples, I said, “If my
Sergeant came into your office and said, ‘Lieutenant's writing me up in an evaluation where she's marking me as needs improvement, and she can't give me any specific examples as to what I've done.’ What would you be saying to me as a Lieutenant?

I'd have to change the evaluation.” (Interview 1A, lines 711-732)

Liz reported that the Captain failed to change her rating but made minor changes to his wording in the evaluation. In Liz’s words, her decision to attach a rebuttal of approximately three pages in length to the evaluation form “probably hurt me in more ways than not, but it felt better at the time” (Interview 3, line 736). Liz perceived herself as having skills that the supervisor failed to recognize or value: “Those things that held me back, I think, were . . . some of the personalities [that were] threatened by my competence” (Interview 1A, line 737).

Isabel reported that, early in her administrative career, she worked with a female supervisor whom she perceived to have marginalized the different skill set and focus she contributed to the organization:

I worked for a very difficult woman, smart, very competent, and difficult. And she was interested in making money because it was a private institution, and . . . I was interested in academic issues, quality issues. She wasn't interested in that, so we were a marriage made in hell. Basically, you know, it just was not ticking. And one day I went to talk to her, and I told her, “You know, Anne [pseudonym], I don't think this is working.” I think I had been there for three or four years, . . . and she says, “That's right. I think you should leave.” Just like that she basically fired me on the spot. . . . That was the roughest spot I've ever had in my career. (Interview 1A, lines 566-599)

Although this experience had occurred more than two decades in the past, Isabel stated that she continued to draw upon this experience in her mentorship of others. She
reported that she cautions younger people with the following advice based on this experience:

You have to be ready, then, in these jobs [where] you're working for somebody, and . . . it may not tick right. You know, you're working for them, and they may not like you. You think you don't like them, but they may not like you. (Interview 1A, lines 580-582)

Another way in which Isabel reported her own understanding that the experience has remained with her in the long-term was through her recounting of a chance meeting with this former supervisor in a restaurant, years later, once Isabel was well-established as University President. Isabel stated that, although Anne expressed to her that she wished she had handled the situation differently, Isabel chose not to assuage the feelings Anne expressed because, in her own words, “I was just too scarred from it” (Interview 1A, line 591).

In summary, each of the four reported instances recount experiences in which these four leaders felt that they were misperceived or under-estimated by supervisors and stakeholders in contexts in which their performance was assessed informally or formally in ways which did not accord with each leader’s self-perception of value or competence within their organizations. In all instances, their relational skills were challenged and resulted in a feeling of frustration.

Finding 2

Finding 2: Participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in
a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good that is linked to mission, purpose, and objectives

The second finding in this study resulted from the emergence of the third and fourth themes. This finding captures a fluidity in the leaders’ construction of their identities as they situationally shifted between a more prominent reliance on agentic or communal traits and practices, with the degree to which either orientation held overall prominence being dependent upon the contexts the leaders confronted situationally in the enactment of their responsibilities. The third theme was that the participants described situations in which their leadership practices were largely agentic on the surface, but they were undergirded by the leaders’ communal rationales or purposes with regard to a sense of responsibility for making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting people and factors that can threaten the greater good, and expressing directives or unvarnished honesty to move the organization forward. A component of this theme was that participants expressed it was their preference to invite others to the table while having maintained the ultimate right to make the decisions on issues and retain their duty to be the responsible party in such determinations. Participants reported exercising their commitment to hold staff accountable but doing so in a manner that preserves trust or honors fairness. Participants communicated that they have a self-perceived responsibility to confront directly the people, systems, and practices that threaten to impede their greater purpose, calling, or mission. In addition, the participating leaders in this study described their need to express themselves to others through directives or hard truths, when they deemed it necessary, in order to forward the organization’s mission or objectives.
The fourth theme emerging from the data was that participants described the use of a strategic blend of agency and communion that supported their impression management as effective leaders and served a greater purpose, which was evidenced through instances that involved their willingness to maintain boundaries despite a desire to forge relationships, to moderate use of power to accomplish challenging goals, and to confer credit to others. Despite their self-reported propensity to forge strong relationships and a preference tending toward a communal orientation, which was evidenced throughout both findings of this investigation, participants in the study discussed as a non-negotiable their need to maintain boundaries and distance in relation to others in the workplace while instead seeking external means to process their job-related stressors. Participants described a clarity and awareness of their power or authority while discussing both the negative and positive effects of their efforts to moderate it as they saw fit. Although top-tier leaders are held primarily responsible for the success of their organizations by virtue of their positional status, the participants in this study reported their reliance on a strategy of credit-sharing of their own initiatives or ideas as opposed to exercising self-promotion, specifically interpreting this as a means to having voice or driving change that would serve the greater good. Figure 2 represents the emergence of the third and fourth themes that comprise finding statement two of this investigation. The seven subthemes that buttress themes three and four with respect to this second finding are presented in Table 5.
Finding 2: Participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good that is linked to mission, purpose, and objectives.

Finding 2, Theme 3: Participants described situations in which their leadership practices were largely agentic on the surface, but they were undergirded by the leaders’ communal rationales or purposes with regard to a sense of responsibility for making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting people and factors that can threaten the greater good, and expressing directives or unvarnished honesty to move the organization forward.

Finding 2, Theme 4: Participants described the use of a strategic blend of agency and communion that supported their impression management as effective leaders and served a greater purpose, which was evidenced through instances that involved their willingness to maintain boundaries despite a desire to forge relationships, to moderate use of power to accomplish challenging goals, and to confer credit to others.

Figure 2. Finding Statement 2 Development. This figure illustrates how the second finding statement was developed from the third and fourth theme.
Table 5

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<th>Theme Number</th>
<th>Theme Statement</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Participants expressed that they choose to invite others to the table but maintain the ultimate right to decide and the duty to be responsible.</td>
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<td>Participants reported a duty to hold staff accountable in a manner that preserves trust or honors fairness.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Participants perceived a responsibility to confront directly the people, systems, and practices that threaten to impede the greater purpose, calling, or mission.</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Participants described an awareness of their power or authority and the negative and positive effects of moderation.</td>
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<td>Participants reported relying on a strategy of credit-sharing versus self-promotion as a means to have voice or drive change for the greater good.</td>
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**Theme 3:** Participants described situations in which their leadership practices were largely agentic on the surface, but they were undergirded by the leaders’ communal rationales or purposes with regard to a sense of responsibility for making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting people and factors that can threaten the greater good, and expressing directives or unvarnished honesty to move the organization forward. Four subthemes emerged from the data in relation to the third theme:
(a) Participants expressed that they choose to invite others to the table but maintain the ultimate right to decide and the duty to be responsible; (b) participants reported a duty to hold staff accountable in a manner that preserves trust or honors fairness; (c) participants perceived a responsibility to confront directly the people, systems, and practices that threaten to impede the greater purpose, calling, or mission; and (d) participants described the need to express directives or hard truths that will forward the organization’s mission or objectives.

**Theme 3, Subtheme 1: Participants expressed that they choose to invite others to the table but maintain the ultimate right to decide and the duty to be responsible.** Without exception, all five participants in this study discussed the importance of gathering feedback from others to inform their decision-making. This desire to be inclusive, however, did not equate with negating the importance of their own responsibility in the process. Isabel, Liz, and Thea explicated on their practice by establishing the boundary between gathering input and taking decisive action.

Isabel recounted that she gathered a faculty committee to inform her decisions regarding budget cuts that had potential impact on staffing. Isabel reported that she was transparent in communicating the role of the committee’s feedback, regarding the extent of their input in the decision-making process:

> I made it clear to them, you're not going to tell me what to do because the budget is my responsibility, but you are going to give me your best advice. And then, once in that period of time, I told them that I had made some decisions, [and] we talked about the cuts. (Interview 1A, lines 234-236)

Isabel, also, reported her perception that her clear communication with the committee members about their role in the process appeared to unify them as a team. She based this on
the outcome in which she told the group that her next steps were to send an email to the university community to inform them of the cuts. This led to a committee member being supported by the others in the assertion that Isabel reported to have been stated as follows: “The email should not come from you. That email should come from this committee.” (Interview 1A, line 238).

Liz related that her prior experience as a union secretary earlier in her career had supported her “natural instinct to be an inclusive leader” (Interview 1A, line 159). Similar to Isabel, in the following instance, she reported being clear with the executive officers of the police union in stating the parameters of their role in the process, as follows:

I am going to make a decision that's going to impact you, and I have the time to confer with you as to what that's going to be. So, I'm going to tell you the why and the what, and we're going to work out, together, the how. I want your input before I make a decision. (Interview 1A, lines 167-169)

In this transcript excerpt, Liz begins and ends her words by positioning herself as the invested decision-maker. Concurrently, she confirms what their role is in providing input.

Like Liz and Isabel, Thea stated that she seeks feedback and information from others prior to making key decisions. From Thea’s perspective, the goal is to ensure that the team is on-board and understands the expectations resulting from a decision.

I communicate decisions or, where it's appropriate, brainstorm solutions with the proper supervisors, principals, in advance, so that I make sure that whatever we end up with, we're all on the same page. . . .I think we've just created a really good environment where we can express ourselves, express our opinions, in a respectful way, um, and have a really healthy dialogue about things. In the end, there is an
understanding that if, uh, if I feel strongly about something, we're going to move forward [with it].  (Interview 1A, lines 499-580)

This excerpt from Thea’s interview indicates that while she enjoyed communing with others as a team, she reserved the right of her positional status to make the final decisions, even in cases in which the team might have disagreed with her. The examples presented in prior themes and subthemes within this chapter center on a relational or communal orientation shared by all five of the study participants; therefore, it follows that these instances reported above include processes that enable these three leaders to seek input from staff and stakeholders when facing important decisions.

**Theme 3, Subtheme 2: Participants reported a duty to hold staff accountable in a manner that preserves trust or honors fairness.** Liz had described the primary importance to her in projecting fairness in her interactions with staff and the sworn officers as she prepared to assume her post as Interim Chief of Police, prior to her permanent appointment. She entered the role aware that the department’s internal relations had been damaged amidst the unresolved gender discrimination lawsuit that was pending at the time. Liz stated that her message to the department and to town leadership was that

> I can't change the past. What I can try to do is influence the future going forward, and my approach to leadership is to be firm and fair to all, no matter what gender, no matter what person, and what relationship I may have with them. So, I am going to set the tone and the message that it will be just that firm and fair across the board.  

(Interview 3, lines 343-346)
Additionally, Liz explained that her initial focus within the department was issuing directives about the timely submission of incident reports and tightening up issues in which accountability had been lacking in general leadership practices.

Teresa reported that she tried to help people grow through her leadership, but she expressed she believed in taking decisive action or having difficult conversations when people fail to meet expectations. Teresa described herself as a leader who tempered her desire to develop others with her awareness that sometimes the fit just is not good for the organization and needs to be addressed:

I want to be a leader who is a conductor, you know, or sometimes I use the analogy of a gardener who is able to help . . . the potential that's there [to] flourish. And I want to be able to put the guard rails on there. Sometimes people need to be, um, you know, guided, and [I must] say, “You know, this isn't the place for you,” and hold people accountable for that. (Interview 1A, lines 402-405)

Teresa’s explanation of her leadership identity supported both her preference for being communal and developing relationships with others. However, her description of the need for accountability, prioritizes the overall health of the organization and its mission or goals, which is a communal intent.

Several years into her tenure as University President, Isabel was confronted with the need to investigate and render an employment continuance decision on evidence that was presented against a coach with a long-established tenure and who had received recognition by his peers in regional sports conferences. She described the factors in her thought process as she deliberated on how to move toward ensuring the employee’s separation from the university:
During that investigation, it was easy to conclude the fact that he had thrown the object and jeopardized the lives of students, parents and staff; the fact that I had, now, witnesses that said he had verbally abused the student athletes; I had witnesses that said that he had taken money from student athletes; and on, and on, and on. What would continue to happen? So, I wanted to be strong in that regard. . . . I needed to be fair, and I needed to make sure that this wasn't me [being] frustrated with [him] over the years because he wouldn't do a budget correctly [or because] he wouldn't listen to the fundraising parameters that we had set. So, was it me being frustrated with [him], or was it me understanding that [he] was no longer a member of this community who would abide by the rules and regulations and the protocols and values of the Institution? I concluded the latter. (Interview 3, lines 135-173)

Within Isabel’s description of these events, a tension existed between her consideration of acting in a manner which was fact-based and grounded in results of the investigation, in addition, to having held the faculty member accountable as a member within the greater university community. She considered how this solution would be fair to the individual and would influence the values and the continued trust of the organization, which indicated she moved toward an agentic decision that was grounded in communal ethics. This factor places Isabel’s retelling of events in alignment with the thought processes undergirding the leadership approaches discussed by Liz and Teresa in relation to this same subtheme.

Theme 3, Subtheme 3: Participants perceived a responsibility to confront directly the people, systems, and practices that threaten to impede the greater purpose, calling, or mission. Teresa reported that she had been instrumental in forming a group of CEOs from local hospitals and health-related facilities to address a regional opioid crisis that was
accompanied by a rising death count in her state, but this proved to be a challenge to her when some external and internal political pressures threatened to impede the group’s progress. An example she related had pertained to the decision of one CEO from a major hospital who withdrew his membership and resources from the group due to attorney advice on pending investigations of doctors’ actions within his hospital. Teresa stated that she responded by directly confronting the CEO and warning that

I would try and make that [decision] pretty well known in the community. . . . I told him that I was going to be talking about it. I said, “I don't think you're fulfilling your responsibility as a community partner. You're a community hospital. Um, you're a not-for-profit. You, you need to be, we've got, we've got an epidemic in this community, and you're not coming to the table!” (Interview 3, lines 459-463)

From Teresa’s perspective this confrontation was going to have a potential impact on the group’s ability to help save lives that were being lost due to the opioid crisis. She directly stated in this excerpt that her issue with her colleague was the larger mission of serving as the stewards of their community that was vulnerable at this time.

Teresa, also, recounted a different situation, on a localized level, in which she confronted her hospital’s corporate leadership for the greater purpose of ensuring people were treated in a manner that accorded with her values. Joan, a corporate supervisor, had terminated a director of a department in Teresa’s hospital, an area over which Teresa did not have purview at the time. Teresa reported that she became frustrated when she asked Joan about plans to inform the staff of the reason this person would no longer be present at work. Teresa recounted this dialogue as below:
Supervisor: We're going to set up a phone in the center of the Pharmacy [Department], and I'll talk to them.

Teresa: Uh, well, that really is not a good plan.

Supervisor: Well, you know, I can't come down.

Teresa: Well, then, I'm going to need to be present.

Supervisor: No, I don't need you present.

Teresa: No, I will be present because people here still think that I have some responsibility. (Interview 1A, lines 347-351)

In this situation, Teresa was concerned that staff would surmise the wrong impression of her leadership identity and her regard for staff relations if she were not present to support the members of the department as they received the news in a manner she saw as dissonant with her own approach, disempowering of her role as CEO, and below her own standard of practice in personnel actions. Teresa chose to assert herself when the corporation’s approach failed to align with her perceived values of how a Catholic community hospital should treat people. These examples illustrate that Teresa reported her willingness to confront people, systems, and practices that she perceived as barriers to the greater purpose of the organization, the mission of healthcare providers, and her own leadership calling.

Isabel reported her use of a similarly agentic approach to confronting a barrier to the organization’s mission. Albeit somewhat stronger than Teresa’s examples, in terms of Isabel’s self-reported directness in her choice of conversational style, this leader described the manner in which she has confronted staff who have disregarded her past directives:

When I realize that they're not doing what I told them to do, I go crazy. I have said, “I told you to do this, and you didn't do it. You chose to do whatever the [heck] you
wanted to [do]. You're not the President!” And I'll tell them, “Now, see the mess you got us into? Now I have to fix it! I have to accept the blame for all this, not you!” That's what I always try to teach them. That every decision you think you're making is not going to affect just you. It affects me. Everybody blames me. And I will, I will, go off on somebody and say, “This is just unacceptable that you did this! Unacceptable!” (Interview 2, lines 414-419)

Isabel expressed in this excerpt that it was concerning to her that the independent actions of her staff reflected upon her in a manner that she would not approve of in leading the organization. Although agentic in the reported delivery of the message, she includes a comment that identifies her purpose as seeking to teach the staff member where the error exists in his or her actions, which is a communal practice. Another key element of this example is Isabel’s stated concern that the staff member’s actions reflected on her own conception of self as leader.

A more communally tempered approach to confronting people and systems to fulfill her leadership objectives was described by Thea, as she recounts her discussion with the Board of Education to discuss their expectations and her preferred course of action in dealing with union members’ protests during contract negotiations. Thea stated that she began receiving communications from Board members who questioned how she was going to stop teachers from organizing to express dissent on labor issues. To which inquiries, Thea described her response as follows:

I said, “Okay, I read through our policy about gathering, political signage, and all that. I've had a very clear conversation with the Association President, and he knows. And so, any gathering is happening [will be] off school grounds.” At our high school,
for example, they were across the street at the apartment complex. It was like five teachers holding up signs, but you know what? They're off school grounds, and if they want to freeze their behinds off on a January morning, fine. So, I had very clear conversations with [the Board], and I felt very confident because, for me, it was coming back to taking the high road, not dying on every hill. My leadership needs are elsewhere, and if you want my leadership to be here, then other things are not going to happen. (Interview 1A, lines 939-946)

According to Thea’s recounting of this instance, her response was intended to be based on her having researched information on existing parameters for practice, facts as to the acceptable circumstances in which policy allows teachers to gather in protest of labor issues, and an explanation on best use of her resources by the district as its appointed leader. In her self-reported approach and delivery of the message, Thea’s practice was relational, as was her over-arching goal of confronting the Board’s expectations in order to preserve her greater leadership purpose in serving the educational needs of the district.

Using a strongly communal approach in exercising persistence when having managed staff resistance that Tamra perceived as potentially disruptive to the best interests of the college or its students, this leader described her practice as follows:

I think I'm striving to be somebody that still . . . can listen to everybody and, still, be able to synthesize the information and say, “Well, you know, I appreciate how you feel. I hope you appreciate how I feel, but we still need to come up with a game plan to move forward.” Um, so I try to be the leader that's, that's still action oriented, no matter how many challenges or obstacles or [how much] negativity somebody wants
to throw into a situation. Um, and I think, you know, because I do try to keep the larger outcome in mind. (Interview 3, lines 110-114)

Tamra’s example illustrates confrontation of a less agentic manner than that of an outward expression of conflict in reaction to someone’s decision or comments. Nonetheless, it qualifies as striving to move a staff member forward toward a determined course of action despite his or her resistance, which is a type of confrontation that is enacted communally. In addition, Tamra expressed her end goal as achieving the greater good of the organization, another indicator of a communal focus.

The examples presented in support of this subtheme were organized in order of those having the most to least agentic approach to handling issues that leaders’ perceived as having posed a potential threat to their communal goal of serving in the best interest of their organization’s mission and purpose, as well as being true to their own leadership identity or calling. Isabel, Teresa, Thea, and Tamra conducted themselves in a manner that they reported as having been situationally effective for their leadership and the organization’s purpose or mission. Some participants were, according to self-reports, more agentic in their approach than others, but all of their self-identified purposes in challenging these systems, practices, or people were grounded in a greater communal intentionality that is in keeping with their preference for a relational orientation in their leadership identity.

**Theme 3, Subtheme 4: Participants described the need to express directives or hard truths that will forward the organization’s mission or objectives.** Leaders in this study frequently focused on the importance of clear communication, even when it meant the leader felt compelled to deliver a message or issue a directive that would make others feel discomforted. According to Isabel, “most of us are not painfully honest because we’re afraid
of offending people . . . [and] you want to be liked;” therefore, it is important that the “principle is adhered to [that] you’re honest but respectful” (Interview 2, lines 163-164). Although expressing this philosophy in relation to her personal values, Isabel had stated a concept that was ubiquitous throughout all interviews with all the participants of this study. The examples presented below were excerpted from the transcripts of Tamra, Isabel, and Thea, but these instances were representative of the self-reported, lived experiences of all five participants. Tamra described her experience delivering honest feedback to an employee who needed improvement, an issue that had been unaddressed by Tamra’s predecessors:

I always firmly believe in being as honest as you can be with somebody without hurting them because I feel like you’re not being kind if you do [not tell them]. There was one financial aid staff person who . . . just had no understanding of how she was perceived. And she had really good technical skills, but, really, no people skills. And I feel like I was the first person whoever shared that feedback with her. And I thought, you know, shame on all those other people she reported to over time for never sharing some honest feedback with her because she probably wouldn’t have gotten herself into the situation if just one other person had just shared [this feedback]. (Interview 1A, lines 892-898)

Tamra framed the issue from the perspective that it requires both technical and relational skills to be effective in the workplace, which indicates that her motivation in having shared this feedback with the staff member was communal in terms of her duty to do that which was best for the organization, ensuring a congenial environment. Tamra expressed her role in delivering this hard truth as, also, being grounded in a strategy of being kind to the person and in correcting a past practice that prevented this person from developing in her role,
another indication of the communal underpinnings of an action which might appear to be agentic in its task orientation of providing corrective feedback.

Isabel stated that her rationale for having frank discussions is tied to the issue’s larger impact: “It is really important that they get a sense of honesty from me and not whitewash whether I think they’re doing a good job or not. It's not about them, it’s about the problem” (Interview 2, lines 59-61). Isabel described the challenges in having communicated such issues effectively to a member of her team, focusing on her strategy for having done so and her rationale for the purpose of such conversations with him:

Sometimes I don't want to talk to him. I avoid him because . . . I know I'm going to tangle with him. And, now, I've gotten to the point where I say to him, “Okay, I'm going to say something, and I don't want you to get defensive. Or if you get defensive, let's limit the amount of defense with this that you give me.” Because he gets so defensive; he sees it as a personal attack. [However,] I always believe that communication, clear communication, is important, but it's founded on the principle of honesty. And if you don't communicate honestly with people, it really leaves people with mixed information, wrong information, incomplete information. And that's not fair to people in the decision-making roles that they have. (Interview 2, lines 148-162)

While Isabel described the tensions inherent in this type of dialogue, both on the part of the leader delivering the feedback and the staff member as recipient, concurrently, she expressed her rationale that truthful communication has importance to the organization and the furtherance of its goals because of its effect on the ability of people to do their job from a
well-informed perspective. These elements illustrate Isabel’s approach to these situations is based on a blend of communality and agency in her leadership practices.

Thea described her thoughts regarding the actions of the teachers’ union in response to labor negotiations, which she cited as having motivated her to issue a directive to a group of teachers and their principals. The directive to staff was that they would be required to participate in a previously scheduled event, and the directive to principals was that they were required to communicate the message to their staff using Thea’s verbiage while supporting compliance with the teacher directive:

Sometimes you have to step in and save teachers from themselves. . . . Physical] Education] teachers at the elementary level [were] telling their building principals, “We're not going to do Field Day.” And, then, I would have to come back, and I would coach the principals and say, “Here's the language you're going to use, ‘Field day takes place during the school day, during their contractual time.’ If you need to free them up during the day to put the cones out for the relay races, please do that. But they will run Field Day if you tell them to, and you will tell them to [do it].” So, there were times where I needed to be really directive. I don't like to do that, but again, like . . . [if I do not] then I'm going to have parents [coming] after our principals. (Interview 1A, lines 318-325)

Thea’s reporting of this instance regarding the issuance of an authoritarian set of statements directly expressed her preference for a relational style. At the same time, Thea’s language surrounding the description of the problem and her solution contextualized this agentic action within her intentions to preserve communality by ensuring teachers would refrain from creating a more difficult situation for themselves and that the principals would be protected
from complaints from parents that would have, otherwise, arisen if Field Day were to have been boycotted by the teachers.

Each of the excerpts which indicate the presence of this subtheme within the data collection, as explicated herein, demonstrates that the leader had chosen to have a difficult conversation or to issue a directive as a means of supporting or helping staff members and preserving workplace relations. As such, these actions appear to be agentic on the surface, but it is Isabel, Tamra, and Thea’s communal values that motivated them in each of these reported instances to proceed in this manner when they deemed it necessary to maintaining their relationships with staff and stakeholders.

**Theme 4: Participants described the use of a strategic blend of agency and communion that supported their impression management as effective leaders and served a greater purpose, which was evidenced through instances that involved their willingness to maintain boundaries despite a desire to forge relationships, to moderate use of power to accomplish challenging goals, and to confer credit to others.** Three subthemes emerged from this fourth, and final, theme in the researcher’s analysis of the data: (a) Participants discussed, as non-negotiable, the need to maintain boundaries and distance in the workplace and to find external means to process stress; (b) participants described an awareness of their power or authority and the negative and positive effects of moderation; and (c) participants reported relying on a strategy of credit-sharing versus self-promotion as a means to have voice or drive change for the greater good.

**Theme 4, Subtheme 1: Participants discussed as non-negotiable the need to maintain boundaries and distance in the workplace and to find external means to process stress.** This subtheme is presented in two sections that follow below. First, the researcher
cites examples in which Isabel, Teresa, and Tamra shared their perceptions on the importance of maintaining social boundaries that limit their closeness to staff members, which is a self-reported strategy they employ in order to preserve their effectiveness as leaders. Second, the researcher provides excerpts in which Isabel, Tamra, Teresa, and Liz described how they managed job-related stressors by enlisting the support of confidants who are external to their organizations.

Isabel spoke about being “very careful not to mix church and state” by maintaining “a very, very, very straight line between . . . [a] personal . . . and professional life” (Interview 1A, lines 436-437), not even revealing to staff when her mother had passed away recently. She reported a specific rationale for how this strategy helped her with impression management as leader:

I just don't, I don't, show my vulnerabilities. I mean, there's some [vulnerabilities of mine] that are obvious, but others that are [not]. And people want a strong leader. They don't want to know your vulnerabilities. They don't want to know that you're ready to burst into tears because something happened in your personal [life]. . . . They want a healthy, strong leader, who is going to guide them. They don't want to know that you have this issue or that issue. (Interview 1A, lines 491-495)

Whereas, Isabel addressed this issue in terms of a general philosophy of leadership identity, Teresa described both the sense of isolation she felt as a leader and a specific example of the negative effect of this strategy that resulted in staff misperceptions that she had favored one of the directors:

It is lonely because you don't have a team. . . . When we'd be driving down to [the out-of-state corporate office], this particular woman would always say, “Oh, Teresa,
I'll drive with you.” Well, she played that off the others, like, “Why, I'm closer to Teresa because I drive down with her.” I mean, and we had this, kind of like a, boil that just [impacted] the team. . . . and so, all [of] that came out. So, from now on, it's like, I don't drive with anybody. I don't socialize with anybody, but you know, sometimes having been part of teams as a staff nurse and everything else, it's like, wow, you know, I, I see them here, and it's like, oh, I wish I could have that. You know, but you just don't. There's, there's nobody. So, you’ve got to have a real strong inner core, um, I always say, as to what your right and wrong are and what you’re about because there’ll be people all around you, uh, telling you what you did wrong or what they don’t like. Um, you know, when I worked at [another hospital], it was, it was, pretty awful, sometimes, the stuff people would say. (Interview 1A, lines 708-722)

Teresa reported that she chose to curtail her own actions to avoid a misperception that she had favored this staff member. She also reported a sense of nostalgia and loss regarding the relationships she had experienced earlier in her career when working as part of a unit of nurses. In analysis of prior excerpts appearing in this chapter, Teresa’s comments had identified her orientation as a relational leader. This excerpt illustrates how her perceived need to maintain social distance for the good of the team presented tension in the manner she chose to project her leadership identity.

Tamra reported that as the internal candidate under consideration for the college presidency, she had perceived it necessary to maintain a level of distance with colleagues at a time when her emotions were intensifying during the search process:
You know how difficult it is during any presidential transition [in higher education institutions]. Again, the whole campus community's feeling this, and I'm always the go-to-person. Um, and this was one time like nobody could talk to me about it. Nobody could, you know, ask about it. So, like, everybody knew, but nobody knew. Um, and it was just, like, I was not that positive person. Now, people give me feedback and say, “Oh, we never even knew when [you felt like that].” And I'm like, “Well, I did, my husband did, our VP of HR did!” [Tamra laughs.] (Interview 1A, lines 449-453)

The Vice President of Human Resources worked closely on confidential personnel issues with Tamra in her role as Senior Vice President of the college at that time; therefore, Tamra had reported that she had identified this person as her internal confidant during the search process. This excerpt ends with Tamra having identified her husband as a source of external support in whom she could confide about the stress she had experienced in relation to her candidacy. The next section of analysis of this subtheme expands upon the confidants Tamra and the other leaders relied upon who were outside of the organizations in which they had served.

Tamra, Teresa, and Isabel are the participants in this study who were married and in long-standing relationships with their spouses. Each of these three married leaders reported that their spouses had filled the role of the trusted external confidant. This dual role of spouse and confidant helped these participants maintain the social boundaries they had deemed necessary to preserving their identities as fair and competent leaders by limiting their social relationships and the sharing of confidences within the workplace. Tamra recalled having once read that the choice of one’s spouse was one of the most important decisions a
leader will make. Tamra expressed her trust in her husband as her external confidant, as follows:

I didn't even know way back then [when we first married], but, like, he just fills that role [of confidant]. He's the appropriate, sort of, balance of, like, when to be tough on me and when to be like, “Okay, let's just hug it out. Like, you just need a hug here.” And he tells me, more often than anybody, not to be so hard on myself. Um, he never says, like, “You need to think more like a man.” He'll say, “You know, just so you know, a man wouldn't apologize for what you're getting ready to apologize for.” He'll just point that out, like, gently. But he'll never say, “You need to think more like a man or talk like more like [a man].” He's just like, “You just have to be, be yourself. That is good enough.” And, so, it's just fascinating to me how, sometimes, your partner can make or break [you]. I never would've gotten through the [College President] search process without him. Never, if I was [sic] married to somebody [else], a different person, or not married . . . I wouldn't have had this strength.

(Interview 1A, lines 298-308)

Tamra’s description included specific examples of the types of supportive messages her husband conveyed to her in the period when she was feeling stress in her work environment due to the presidential search and during other instances which she chose to generalize in her comments. In addition, Tamra described the dialogue with her external confidant in a manner which included, also, the issue of gender frames and leadership identity, which is pertinent to role congruency and gender frames theories that are referenced in the researcher’s discussion of the theoretical foundations of this study (see Chapter Two).
Teresa, also, provided an example of her husband’s comments, as he functioned in the role of an external source she relied upon to process issues that emanated from her workplace. She began, first, by mentioning her children as another element that grounds her, and then she proceeded to discuss the role of her spouse:

My other strength is my husband . . . because I get stubborn [about work issues], um, and I get pretty riled up, but I try for compromise. Although, my husband will say to me sometimes, “You know what? I think you're the only one that's working for compromise. I don't think anybody else [in your organization] is,” which is, you know, sometimes, how it feels [to me]. (Interview 1A, lines 503-508)

Through this excerpt, Teresa expressed that her husband listened to her work issues and responded with positive, supportive statements. In addition, she indicated that her confidant had a perspective with which she identified regarding the issue of having tried to work toward compromise.

Although Tamra and Teresa both reported that they had spouses who were professionals in other fields, Isabel shared the unique advantage that her spouse, also, had personal experience in having served long-term, prior to his retirement, in the role of University President at a different institution. Isabel described her perception of the critical role her husband filled as her external confidant during the sensitive personnel decision that was presented earlier in this chapter:

I was consumed with [the personnel investigation] for three weeks, [and] I did nothing else. And, I have a very, very loving relationship with my husband. And, that was a gift from God because I could talk to [my husband], . . . [and] he would listen objectively. I could talk to him openly. He was a good person [for the role of
confidant]. He's an experienced University President. . . . so he knows [the issues] and was able to give me very good feedback. (Interview 3, lines 229-234)

Isabel referred to her trust in her husband within their marriage relationship, but she emphasized the unique advantage of his advice as someone who had success in serving in the same role and in the same professional field. In addition, Isabel expressed the importance of her spouse’s objectivity in having focused on the issues she had discussed with him.

Liz, also, discussed her need for an external confidant, which she found in a different context than Tamra, Teresa, and Isabel, who shared counsel with their spouses. Liz, on the other hand, stated that her external means of processing work-related stress was her therapist and her friends who are loosely connected to or, in other cases, not involved in law enforcement. She described these supports as follows:

Therapy, [I] dump it there. . . . And, pretty much, it's [through] my personal life [that I find support], and without having a relationship and [with] the vast number of people that I know, I kind of use those different friends [for this purpose]. Like, two to three nights a week, I probably have social plans, on average, with people. Like tonight, um, I’ve got to check with Carla [pseudonym]. . . . She works [as] a mental health liaison [at my former] police department. She's in a billing position, but she works within the community around mental illness and co-existing substance use disorder dynamics. So, anyway, um, just friends like that. I'll have dinner plans, and depending on who they are and the level of trust [between us], I'll vent about this thing or that thing and, oftentimes, get perspective when . . . I'm targeting and looking for perspective. I tend to stick more to the professional side of things [by relying on
my therapist], but when it's just the emotions, and I need to dump, um, it's, it's more my non-law enforcement friends. (Interview 1A, lines 567-576)

Liz described a network of supports she relied upon as her other outlets for processing work-related stressors, such as participating in therapy sessions and dining with friends. Liz’s description was in contrast to those offered by the three married participants, who referred to positive relationships with their spouses using idealized terms, Tamra and Teresa having identified their husbands as a strength while Isabel called her spouse a gift from God. Liz, who was single, stated elsewhere in the same interview, “I have a therapist that I see in order to survive this job and to survive [it for] . . . 29 years” (Interview 1A, line 17). Liz is the only participant who described her external supports as a means to survive on the job, and she was further differentiated from the other three leaders excerpted above, as having been the only participant in the most highly male congenial and dangerous field of law enforcement.

In summary of this subtheme, the first section of this analysis explained that the four leaders whose interviews were excerpted had reported that they perceived it as a necessity to maintain distance in social relationships in the workplace although some shared that they found this to be isolating. The second section of analysis of this subtheme, examined the similarities and differences in how these four leaders identified their external resources for processing work-related stress. One differentiating factor between the self-reported explanations of these four leaders was that they found their supports in different contexts, with the married participants having discussed their reliance upon their spouses whereas Liz, who was neither married nor in a committed relationship, reported that her supports emanated from an array of outlets and different groups of people. An additional point of
contrast among these four leaders’ discussion of their supports was in the linguistic nuances they employed in describing them, with three married participants using idealized language related to their marriage relationships or spouses, and Liz having used terminology associated with survival. Finally, Liz, who served as the contrasting case in this section of the analysis, worked within the field of law enforcement, which is the most male congenial of the professions involved in this study, also carrying greatest risk of bodily harm or loss of life in situations commonly encountered in performance of this leader’s duties.

**Theme 4, Subtheme 2: Participants described an awareness of their power or authority and the negative and positive effects of moderation.** This subtheme concerning the leaders’ recognition of the authority with which they are vested through their positional status and their philosophies regarding the advantages and disadvantages of enacting and moderating this power was a concept that arose in the data collected from across all five cases in this investigation. Isabel discussed her perspective that it is a necessity and a potential risk for a leader to share power:

> To be a successful College President, you have to be willing to share power. And you have to be willing to understand that in sharing power, sometimes, you won't get everything you want. I think I've gotten more than I've given, you know, over time. But it is a risk that you take when you share power because you don't know [whether] the people you're sharing power with have the same intention as you have. But that's really an important quality that a person has to have to be a successful leader. And people do that differently depending on [their] style. (Interview 1A, lines 348-352)

To reiterate, these leaders stated that they had shared power in different ways, as has been illustrated above in the case of Isabel. In the paragraphs which follow, this subtheme will be
analyzed through interview excerpts that address the actions and discourse strategies used by three of the study participants.

The potential for risk in loosening control of one’s power, to which Isabel alluded, was an idea that Tamra described from the perspective of ensuring that the person with whom one intends to share power is trustworthy. Tamra described this in the context of her relationship with her Chief Academic Officer, with whom she has chosen to share responsibility for the design, implementation, and communication of the strategic plan of the college:

There has to be a lot of trust there. Um, and you know, again, understanding that I'm not there to step on her [in] her role. She's, you know, not there to, like, look more, like, authoritative than the President. There definitely has to be a lot of understanding of, like, rules and that we're there to, you know, make each other and the institution, um, look good. (Interview 2, lines 277-280)

Tamra described the risk in moderating power through sharing it with others as an issue of a leader’s impression management. She made the assertion that the person with whom the leader chooses to share power must be made aware of the boundaries, to safeguard the leader’s ability to maintain an identity of competence in her role.

Liz discussed power in relation to her professional rapport in dialoguing with one of her captains, a rank that is second-in-command to the Chief. Liz recounted that, in her general interactions with this Captain, his “opinions are formulated, and . . . they come out pretty direct and blunt” in his critique of policies or operations that she has put in place for the department; however, her chosen response strategy had been to respond with “tact” by
“holding back” in her reaction to this (Interview 2, lines 149-150). Liz explained that there is a tension that has accompanied her rationale to have moderated her authority in this manner:

Someone might say, you're giving him too much power. You can't tell him that.

Well, I don't. To me, it's not so much that I'm giving him that much power. Um, [in my view], I give him power when I make my actions and decisions different than otherwise I would. (Interview 2, lines 178-181)

Liz’s statement conveys that she has reflected on her comfort level in assessing the potential risk to her positional power through her actions in having accepted the Captain’s blunt critique of departmental practices she had instituted. However, in Liz’s prefatory comments to this example, she, conversely, had described a lack of internal resolution in having mitigated her power during these exchanges with the Captain through her statement that “I've actually talked to my counselor about this. Um, there's [sic] times when I find myself holding back or not being forthright with how I truly feel or think because I do not want his disapproval” (Interview 2, lines 151-152).

The next four excerpts related to this subtheme are presented below to illustrate that the majority of the study participants had expressed an understanding of the authority invested in them as leaders while also having been clear that there were situations in which the choice to mitigate their power had a greater impact in having enhanced staff investment in issues and having supported the smooth functioning of the organization. For example, Isabel explained her rationale in choosing to accept a retirement notice in lieu of termination from the coach whose actions she had investigated and found, as she described it, justification for his dismissal:
It is really, hard, as a [University] President, to criticize somebody that's [sic] beloved. Now, he wasn't beloved by everyone, but he was beloved by a number of people. So, he retired, and I said [to myself], this is much better for him to retire, and I'm willing to let him retire. I can terminate him, but I don't want to terminate him. I want him to retire with dignity, and he could have a retirement party with people that he loves and all of that. But he's got to leave. (Interview 3, lines 266-275)

In her reporting of the situation, Isabel stated that she was satisfied with her choice to refrain from using her authority to terminate this staff member. She noted that her means were accomplished, in that a separation from the university was the result she deemed necessary to occur, and she referred to her focus on preserving relationships within the workplace by allowing him to exit his employment in a positive manner.

Tamra, Liz, and Teresa discussed their efforts in mitigating the influence of their authority in group settings by choosing to speak less, so others would feel free to share their views and ideas. Tamra described her efforts to listen actively while limiting her input as a strategy that she employed “just to make sure everyone knows that, like, I don't have to have, I'm not the keeper of all the information. Um, I'm not like the all-powerful Oz that, like, knows or remembers everything” (Interview 2, lines 237-239).

Liz reported that, as the Chief, she was careful within group settings to minimize the staff’s perceptions of her authoritative presence by monitoring her natural impulse to lead, to speak, to use body language, with the intention of clearing the path for others to participate:

It's in my nature to, to take charge or to, at least, get involved. And to me, that's leading, even if I'm sitting in the background. Um, and even as I've developed in my own emotional intelligence, [I have learned] when to bite my tongue and sit back,
even when I have an idea. Um, and when, when to, when I disagree with somebody else's idea, [I, also.] bite my tongue. So, especially in that leadership role, I don't want to shut down my staff, and my volunteers, and the community. So, [I am] trying to control the body language and the mouth, um, while the brain's still back here going. (Interview 1A, lines 271-276)

From Teresa’s perspective, she reported that self-awareness of the power conferred to her through her role has led her to adopt the strategy of not only speaking less in a group setting, but having recognized, also, that the timing of her input was equally important:

I think, um, if I step in too quickly . . . it cuts off dialogue and discussion sometimes. You know, if the boss speaks up and says, “No, I don't like that option,” you might not hear the full sense of why it's a good option. (Interview 2, lines 22-24)

Tamra shared a similar concern that her status within the community college might have had potential to cause others to be reticent in their feedback, so she chose to mitigate her power by speaking less, in order to elicit the thoughts and input of her staff:

No matter what, when I'm in the room, I'm the President and CEO. . . . It's like I'm not [Tamra] anymore. . . . I am speaking as the President and CEO. And even though I like to think that, well, I'm just one more voice at the table, I still . . . try to catch myself in this. But it's really hard because, you know, I want to jump in, too, sometimes, like, hey, I have something to say still, too. But sometimes it's, it's, it's hard . . . because no matter what, like I said, at the end of the day, like, I'm there and speaking as the President. And sometimes, too, people are like, “Oh, well, now, can I really say something? Is she going to listen, or is everybody else going to listen because the President just spoke?” (Interview 2, lines 187-195)
Leadership is characterized through a leader’s words, decisions, and behaviors. Choosing when to exercise restraint in action or speech is a self-reported strategy used by these leaders to enhance the engagement of others, as is supported by the lived experiences that have been cited above. In effect, these leaders have utilized their authority in these situations to limit the outward manifestation of their own power, so they could, in turn, empower others to speak or engage.

*Theme 4, Subtheme 3: Participants reported relying on a strategy of credit-sharing versus self-promotion as a means to have voice or drive change for the greater good.* Liz, Teresa, and Tamra reported their preference in prioritizing collaboration and the achievement of their leadership goals for the betterment of their respective organizations; therefore, they stated that this motivated them to either share credit for their work with others or to confer full credit for their work to others in furtherance of these greater objectives or outcomes. In the example which follows, Liz described the successful completion of four years preparing documentation that led to the demotion of a ranking officer by sharing credit for this work with her leadership team:

> Today, I sent out a memo [about] filling the Sergeant's position. We were able to successfully settle the demotion process, um, for one of my sergeants who was not working to the standard that we expected him to be. And that took us four years to do a lot of work on it. [Captain 1] and [Captain 2], and I, did it together. (Interview 2, lines 60-63)

Liz chose to use the plural pronouns “we” and “us,” rather the singular pronoun “I” in this instance. Also, in the last sentence of this excerpt, Liz gives credit to each Captain by his name, placing herself last in sequence as she stated that all three of them were responsible for
this accomplishment. The diction and the style of communication, as well as the message content, is inclusive, in that Liz does not self-promote in her reporting of this event, choosing instead share credit for the amount of work involved in bringing this four-year process to conclusion in order to help move the organization ahead in achieving its purpose of appointing a replacement.

Teresa reported that credit-sharing is a strategy she has utilized to counter the potential marginalization of her voice when decisions must be made within a group of role- alike peers. Teresa described credit-sharing as helpful in mitigating gender biases that she perceived as having had the potential for her ideas to be disregarded within a group:

The two other presidents [Hospital CEOs in the same corporate network] that have [been hired in] the last year and a half are both men. And I have noticed a substantial difference in how the rest of those, [who are] my colleagues, react to what they say compared to what I say. . . . The three of us [Hospital CEOs] are quite close, and we just put it out on the table. And I’ll say sometimes, “You know what? One of you guys has to bring this [idea] up because it won’t go if I say it.” Now, that could be, maybe, because I’m a woman. It could be because people are sick of hearing me argue, or talk, or whatever, or because I’ve been here for eight years, and . . . they’re new. But, you know, it’s not like their experience is so much greater than mine. You know, in one case I have more experience, but, um, you can see the difference. As women, we don’t have huge egos. It’s not like, you know, I have to have credit for everything, or all that. So, it’s really easier to just say, “Okay, c’mon, we’re going to get together, so, yeah, okay, you can . . . take credit for this and do whatever.” We’re just trying to get something done. (Interview 1A, lines 627-649)
In contrast to Teresa’s example in which she explained that credit-sharing had been advantageous to her as a leadership strategy, Tamra discussed a potential detriment that she perceived to have resulted after she had allowed her work to be attributed to her supervisor. Tamra self-reported that she was responsible for the design of the college’s strategic plan; however, because the Board of Directors had thought this was the work of the President who was retiring from the institution, Tamra felt limited in her ability to claim this project as one of her strengths when meeting with Board members who served on the interview committee during her candidacy to compete for selection as the new College President:

The [outgoing] President, was involving me in everything. I mean, everything, and I was making a lot of the decisions, and some of it, like maybe, she should have told the Board more [about my leadership on projects]. Maybe she didn’t want to make herself look bad. I mean, she looks back on it now, too, and recognizes her role in the whole thing. And, you know, hindsight is 20-20 for all of us. (Interview 1A, lines 465-469)

Tamra had made several references throughout the data collection of this study regarding her leadership efforts in having developed the college’s strategic plan, as a point of professional pride. The above excerpt illustrates that there was a need to consider potential consequences of this strategy, as well. In the case of Liz and Teresa, credit-sharing, was a self-reported strategy that was advantageous in different ways: preserving effective work relationships, functioning as a team, and mitigating perceived gender sanctions that could marginalize one’s voice. In contrast, Tamra’s case could illustrate that a failure to self-promote or claim credit for one’s own work could serve as a barrier to proving one’s potential to lead. In all three cases, credit-sharing was described by Liz, Teresa, and Tamra
as a strategy that enabled them to contribute to the goals or purposes of their respective organizations.

In summary, Finding 2 has been supported with the participants’ descriptions of their leadership identities as having consisted of a blend of agentic and communal approaches. When they recounted actions or behaviors that were presented as agentic, concurrently, they expressed communal motivations or intentions as the rationale that framed their decisions to act in this manner. The participants described their inclusivity in decision-making as, also, having clear boundaries that they reported they explicitly had communicated to their staff, which pertained to the final decisions being made by the leader. The participants’ reported experiences in having held staff accountable for their actions were expressed in terms of the tensions this raised for leaders in their desire to preserve trust and fairness as an operating leadership principle. In most cases, these instances were described as those that had potential to impact the organization or staff morale, such as those situations that had involved sensitive personnel decisions like taking actions to terminate an employee, sanctioning of behaviors, and identifying budget cuts to programming or staffing. Participants described their experiences in issuing directives or delivering hard truths to others as a perceived necessity that supported the furtherance of the organization’s greater purpose or goals; however, they expressed that there was an inherent, internal tension that they experienced when they felt compelled to lead in this manner. The development of social relationships at work was discussed in terms of the leaders’ beliefs that they must maintain distance to function effectively and fairly in their role. While all participants noted the need to find an external outlet to process their work-related stressors, the married participants stated that they relied upon their spouses to fill this purpose in a positive manner whereas one unmarried participant
discussed her positive supports as a reliance on friends, counseling, and social activities like regularly dining out with others. Role-associated power was described by participants in a manner which illustrated their awareness of its impact and the need to moderate it at times when they reported it had the potential to limit the cohesiveness or investment of the members of their team. Most participants reported that this moderation was affected deliberately by them in exercising the choice to talk less within a group to ensure they would elicit the input of their staff. Additionally, another participant reported that she chose to moderate agency by agreeing to a lesser sanction that had achieved the same end result in how she handled a disciplinary action. Finally, the analysis of Finding 2, included participant reports that these particular leaders have chosen to share credit with others or confer credit to others for their own ideas and plans when they felt the ends would justify the means in accomplishing their goals with expediency. In one case, however, this approach was identified as having been a possible detriment during her candidacy for promotion within the organization.

In summary, four themes emerged within Findings 1 and 2, illustrating participant descriptions that were consistent in their perception of their leadership identities as being primarily relational, an orientation which they had self-reported as their preferred leadership identity. Participants’ reports were consistent, also, in having noted a sense of dissonance between leadership identities and practices when they encountered challenges involving sensitive personnel decisions or when they failed in attempts to forge relationships with staff or supervisors. All leaders in this study described a perceived situational necessity to act with greater agency in specific situations, and they were consistent in having explained this approach with a communal rationale. There were some inconsistencies in the manner in
which participants described their perceptions of the positive and negative effects of having presented an agentic-communal blend of leadership identity, specifically in relation to sharing power and sharing credit with others. Some participants expressed a perceived need for caution when sharing power, to preserve the impression of leadership competency. While most participants discussed the advantages of credit-sharing as a means to forwarding their own goals, one participant expressed regret in not having claimed credit for her accomplishment because she perceived it, subsequently, had hindered her ability to project her fitness-to-lead during her candidacy for an advanced leadership position. The analysis of this study’s research question was supported through the collective consideration of these themes.

**Synthesis of the Research Question**

Data from three separate interviews and one field observation were used to examine the single research question that guided this study: How do female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs? The five leaders who participated in this investigation identified similar factors that supported and challenged them in the construction of their leadership identities. These self-reported perceptions illustrated that each of the leaders drew upon multiple, socially constructed identities that they enacted strategically and situationally according to the issue or context with which they were presented.

Some of the factors that participants expressed as being supportive of their leadership identities arose from their perceptions of their preferred approach as being relational, an orientation which they described as having provided a comfort level in the advantages it offered to them as leaders, as well as having benefitted the organization. In some instances,
participants reported having experienced a feeling of dissonance and discomfort when they exercised agency in the furtherance of their leadership goals or calling, trust and fairness in the workplace, or accomplishment of the organization’s mission or greater purpose. However, in such instances, the participants discussed the enactment of an agentic approach as a means to having achieved specific ends that were communal in nature. In times of controversy or crisis, the participants perceived that their preference and comfort in enacting leadership communally had enabled them to enlist support from inside and outside of their organizations. Sometimes, this was exemplified as an instance in which a staff member or the staff helped negotiate a difficult situation or served as supporter or communicator of the leader’s decisions or plans. Because of the participants’ self-perceived communal leadership values, they reported they had a positive perspective of the importance of commonalities when matching mentors to mentees. They attributed this to their ability to reflect on times when they had experienced a poor leader-subordinate fit in their earlier careers. As a result of these negative experiences, they expressed that they have developed the acumen to be empathetic toward their own mentees and to forge connections that would better serve mentees.

One type of challenge that participants identified in the construction and enactment of their leadership identities is the self-reported tension they internalized when they were aware of a perceived dissonance between their core values and their actual leadership practice in certain situations they had experienced. Personnel issues were the most commonly cited issues in which participants were challenged by the necessity to act with greater agency or to be more directive in deference to their preferred communal orientation. Another difficulty participants described as a complication in the construction of a values-consistent leadership
identity was the inadequacy these leaders felt when they were unsuccessful in forming a trusting relationship or effective mentorship with a staff member whom they perceived as being either difficult or in need of guidance. When rebuffed in such attempts to connect with others in this way, the participants reflected on the misperceptions they believed the other, the one who was to be mentored, held of the potential mentor as leader; their disappointment as a leader who valued relationships, but who was rejected, when seeking to mentor or support someone; and their sense of inadequacy in being unable to establish trust with the staff member who chose not to engage. Another area in which leadership identity proved challenging to participants was illustrated in their past experiences in which they perceived that they had been devalued, marginalized, or held back by former supervisors as they were aspiring to this highest tier of their present leadership status. In some cases, the participants considered whether their competence or gender was a threat to their supervisors or if unsubstantiated feedback regarding their leadership approach had distracted from the contributions they believed they had brought to their organizations.

The study participants, having indicated a strong preference toward communality, also, recognized that effective leadership required them to act situationally with a blend of agency and communion. Some challenges reported by participants to have influenced their enactment of this agentic-communal blend of leadership involved the importance of engaging others in informing their decision-making process while, at the same time, understanding the onus to take leadership responsibility for the final resolutions to difficult issues. Leaders in this study had reported the need to be strategic in balancing the tension between agency and communion. One participant provided the example of ensuring clarity when communicating to a team the role they had in a problem-solving discussion, such as being limited to
providing input to the leader while the leader retains the power to make the final
determination in course of action. This type of strategic approach to difficult situations was
reported by some leaders as having enhanced loyalty or solidarity between their team
members and themselves when controversial responses were anticipated because of a
decision or action. Holding others accountable for maintaining the values and standards of
the organization was another reported challenge that the leaders noted as a potential
challenge to the impression management of their desired leadership identity in given
situations. Participants in this study spoke about the importance of trust and fairness in these
contexts, which enabled them to maintain a communal orientation when acting with agency.
These leaders, also, described themselves as willing to engage in confrontation when they
perceived that a person, practice, or system posed a threat to the greater purpose, calling, or
mission. Participants perceived it necessary to be willing to directly express their concerns to
staff while maintaining their communal values. Some participants reported that they
achieved this through subtle means while others were blunt in their delivery. The factor that
helped them maintain their relational identity as leaders was that their motive in being
confrontative was outwardly focused toward a higher purpose, rather than serving their own
needs as an individual. Similarly, the participants described the challenge of blending
agency with communion when their roles required them to have issued directives or to have
been blatantly honest to forward the mission or objectives of the organization. As in the
aforementioned situation with regard to staff accountability, a values-consistent projection of
the participants’ desired leadership identity was preserved by their perspective that their
leadership practice in this context was, again, grounded in the communal objective of
achieving a greater good beyond their own interests.
The leaders in this study were unanimous in expressing the necessity, along with the isolationism, of maintaining boundaries between themselves and their staff and having recognized, instead, that their confidants or sources of relief from work-related stressors must be sought external to the workplace. Those who were married, relegated this role to their spouses, all of whom were professional executives, and with one study participant having had the greater advantage in being married to someone who had served in the same field and the same role as herself. While an unmarried participant reported, also, the value in external supports for this purpose, she served as a contrast to the others in that she found her stress-release in positive external sources like her friendships, dining arrangements, and professional therapy sessions outside of her professional realm. Study participants, also, described a potential challenge to their leadership identity as one that was tied to the impact of their power on others. All participants who discussed this challenge stated that they managed its effect by having learned to moderate the degree to which they speak in problem-solving sessions with staff, having said they were careful not to allow their authoritative status to prevent others from sharing their perspectives. One other participant discussed how she considered this factor, also, in choosing to accept a lesser disciplinary sanction for a staff member because she could do so by still achieving the same result of his separation from employment within the organization. In both cases, the leadership identity of communality is preserved by moderating power and authority through speech and through administrative actions. Also, in relation to the challenge of balancing power and authority with the desired impression these leaders wished to convey of their identities, study participants reported their perspective that power-sharing with others, although potentially risky, is a strategy that helped them mitigate the negative impact of operating from the highest tier in the leadership
hierarchy. By ensuring the existence of trust between the leader and those with whom she
decides to share elements of her power, as well as by setting out the parameters in advance,
the participants in this study expressed that they used this strategy to balance the tensions
between agency and communion in projecting their leadership identity in a way that accords
with their own values and beliefs, with a preference toward communal practices. A final
challenge cited by participants in this study involved the practice of credit-sharing with
others, as a strategy through which they overcame barriers that, otherwise, might have
impeded the leader in having maintained voice when working on solutions with their own
supervisors or that might have circumvented their efforts to drive important change. While
most leaders spoke of the advantages that credit-sharing afforded in accomplishing their
goals with greater expediency and less push-back from those in opposition, at least one
participant relayed an instance in which she perceived that credit-sharing might have masked
her own accomplishments at a time when it would have been advantageous for her to
showcase this work while competing for a promotion. Whether positive or negative in
outcome, all participants who spoke about this strategy had conveyed its usefulness in
projecting the desired leadership identity that reflected their values and beliefs.

**Summary of Chapter Four**

Themes one and two led to the identification of the first main finding of this study;
participants described their leadership identities in terms of their successes or challenges in
enacting a communal orientation through which they could build and maintain relationships
that they perceived as critical to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling, move the
organization or community forward, navigate difficult circumstances, evaluate their
effectiveness as leaders, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others. Analysis
of the third and fourth themes resulted in the second finding of this study; participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good that is linked to mission, purpose, and objectives. In Chapter Five, which follows, the implications of the themes and findings of this research investigation are discussed, and the pertinent recommendations and conclusions are presented to the reader.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides the summary and conclusion of this research investigation. The chapter consists of an overview of the study, and the research question is addressed in four sections: (a) review of the results, (b) discussion, (c) implications for leaders and aspirants, and (d) implications for future research. Trustworthiness and a final summary conclude this chapter.

Overview of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore the social construction of female leadership identities from the perspectives of women executives at the uppermost level of the hierarchy of their organizations or institutions across different professions. Specifically, the researcher explored the perceptions of five female executives through their self-reported experiences of the factors that have supported and challenged them in forging leadership identities that are consistent with their core values and beliefs. Eagly and Karau’s (2002) Role Congruency Theory (RCT), Ridgeway’s (2009) Gender Frames Theory (GFT), and Egan et al.’s (2017) Capacious Model of Leadership Identities Construction (CMLIC) formed a triadic theoretical foundation for accomplishing the purpose of this investigation. Firstly, RCT provided awareness of a double standard that results in differential treatment of people whose traits or behaviors fall outside the boundaries of societal expectations for gender-appropriate roles and behaviors, extending to evaluative perceptions of performance in the workplace. Secondly, GFT, offered the lens through which the lived experiences of the study participants held meaning to the researcher in the exploration of the impact of gender on the self-concept of these leaders, as well as their followers’ and stakeholders’ perceptions of these female executives’ fitness to lead. Thirdly, CMLIC, assisted in articulating the dynamics that
influence leaders to adopt with fluidity a chosen leadership identity or orientation for a particular set of circumstances, which may be guided by a complex interplay of contexts such as their professional and personal relationships with others, the culture of their organizations or professions, and shifts over time with respect to societal acceptance of women leaders in the workplace. In the aforementioned ways, RCT, GFT, and CMLIC were critical to the researcher’s ability to link the interpretation of data from the present investigation to extant literature in the effort to corroborate her analysis of participants’ experiences as female leaders.

The researcher used purposeful and convenience sampling to select five female executive-level leaders from the Northeast Region for this investigation. Gender, field or organization, professional role or title, and experience level were the pre-defined criteria used to guide the participant selection process. All participants were employed actively, with a minimum of seven years of experience within a top-tier, executive-level leadership position in one of the following professional contexts: (a) four-year university, (b) two-year college, (c) hospital or healthcare organization, (d) K-12 public school district, or (d) municipal law enforcement agency. Each of the five cases that comprised this study was bound by female gender of the leader, type of professional organization as the context for leadership, and authority level of the leader’s role as the single unit of analysis.

Participants completed a total of three semi-structured interviews, as follows: (a) an in-person, initial interview conducted on-site at the participant’s workplace, (b) a telephone interview focused on a previously conducted field observation, and (c) a telephone interview focused on a mid- to late-tenure career challenge. A field observation was conducted at the participant’s workplace as she facilitated a staff meeting. In addition, three documents were
collected and reviewed for purpose of triangulation, with one of the three documents having provided background information in relation to the career challenge that was addressed within the third interview. Data was collected through the aforementioned tools between September through December 2019.

A multiple-case research design with a holistic approach, as described by Yin (2014), was utilized for this study. Data were analyzed, firstly, as a within-case analysis for each of the five individual cases. Secondly, this was followed by an across-case analysis that reiteratively occurred throughout various stages of the analysis, which the researcher deemed necessary to provide consistency in confirming and condensing codes while searching for across-case patterns. In preparation for first-cycle coding, the researcher segmented the research question into conceptual components. Next the researcher referred to the peer-reviewed research studies and research-based theories that were discussed in the review of literature, and grouped terms and concepts from these studies and theories under each component of the research question, which, then, served as the basis for the researcher’s development of a codebook. The codes which were derived from the peer-reviewed research studies and theories were arranged by this study’s researcher into domains and taxonomies within the initial codebook (Saldaña, 2016). During first-cycle coding, In vivo codes, terms representing the participants’ own words, were added to the codebook, in addition to, versus codes to note contrasting concepts, such as competing leadership orientations (Saldaña 2016). As analysis progressed to second-cycle coding, emergent patterns and themes were identified and codes were subsumed into categories, for which code frequency reports were referenced to guide this process (Saldaña 2016). Visual models of emergent theme categories were constructed using post-it notes and analytic memos with journaling
techniques throughout the data coding and analysis process (Saldaña 2016). Code frequency reports were analyzed consistently at several junctures during the process using HyperResearch™ software and a researcher-developed set of spreadsheets on Microsoft Excel™.

This study produced four emergent themes: (a) Participants perceived themselves as having specialized skill sets that enable them to understand how to build, maintain and repair relationships within their organization and the larger community in order to fulfill their purpose or calling, forward their leadership goals or strategic plan, manage controversial situations, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others; (b) Participants’ descriptions of experiences in which they felt at dissonance with their own perceptions of their leadership identities or practices mainly concerned situations involving difficult decisions, relationships or an inability to establish a strong relationship, whether with staff member, supervisor, other stakeholders; (c) Participants described situations in which their leadership practices were largely agentic on the surface, but they were undergirded by the leaders’ communal rationales or purposes with regard to a sense of responsibility for making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting people and factors that can threaten the greater good, and expressing directives or unvarnished honesty to move the organization forward; and (d) Participants described the use of a strategic blend of agency and communion that supported their management as effective leaders and served a greater purpose, which was evidenced through instances that involved their willingness to maintain boundaries despite a desire to forge relationships, to moderate use of power to accomplish challenging goals, and to confer credit to others.
Analysis of the four emergent themes produced the two findings of this research investigation. Firstly, Finding 1 emerged from Themes 1 and 2, as follows: Participants described their leadership identities in terms of their successes or challenges in enacting a communal orientation through which they build and maintain relationships that they perceive as critical to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling, move the organization or community forward, navigate difficult circumstances, evaluate their effectiveness as leaders, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others. Secondly, Finding 2 arose from Themes 3 and 4, as follows: Participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good that is linked to mission, purpose, and objectives.

**Review of Findings**

**Research Question**

This investigation was based on one research question: How do female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs? This question was formulated to be complex, sufficiently broad, and non-directional in order to support a qualitative investigation based on one open-ended question. Therefore, to assist in thoroughness of the discussion provided in this chapter, the review of findings will be organized into subsections, aligned with the four conceptual components that were extracted from the segmented research question during the data coding and analysis processes, as previously discussed in
 Chapters Three and Four. These four components of the research question are labelled and sequenced accordingly as headings, to guide the resulting discussion as follows: (a) self-perception of leadership identity, (b) supports in leadership identity construction, (c) challenges in leadership identity construction, and (d) consistency of values or beliefs in leadership identity construction.

**Self-Perception of Leadership Identity**

Participants described their leadership, predominantly, in communal terms. They spoke about their practices and orientations as centered on their ability to build positive relationships and to achieve collaboration with others, even in times of crisis or controversy. They discussed their use of their skills in communication, negotiation, or persuasion in service of the individuals or the organizations they lead, which, again, emphasized their focus on communality or working toward the betterment of someone or something they perceived as the means to fulfilling a greater purpose than oneself as leader. Participants reported their reliance on communal strategies, such as seeking input when faced with important or controversial decisions, initiating dialogue to understand the perspectives of those who failed to comply with established protocols rather than resorting to disciplinary measures, and preferring to work as part of a team as opposed to self-promotion or independent leadership of projects. Participants also expressed the necessity or the willingness to draw upon agency, as they deemed to be required situationally in certain contexts. However, most participants, concurrently, indicated a modicum of discomfort with agentic practices such as the issuance of directives, display of positional power, and enactment of sanctions. In this regard, they provided communal rationales as the underpinnings of such actions on their part, indicating that communality is their preferred leadership orientation, augmented by an agentic-
communal blend when circumstances warranted greater exercise of control. These types of circumstances included, but were not limited to, the participants’ reporting of instances in which they directly had confronted people or practices they perceived as having had potential to obfuscate the organization’s purpose and mission or their own calling to lead; expressed truths or issued directives that had the potential to discomfort others, but doing so for the betterment of the organization and its ability to meet its high-priority objectives; and held others accountable to standards, again, with communal emphasis on establishing trust and fairness in the workplace or the betterment of the organization and the fulfillment of its mission.

**Supports in Leadership Identity Construction**

Communality was reported by study participants to be an advantage in developing and managing the construction of their leadership identities, mainly due to benefits afforded to these leaders as a result of the positive relationships they have nurtured through their role as leader. All participants cited their reliance on honest, clear communication and the establishing of trust as having primacy in their ability to commune effectively and positively with others. The relationships they have cultivated, according to study participants, afforded them with additional resources and the ability to gain assistance from staff to support them or act as negotiators or go-betweens in facilitating difficult or controversial situations.

Participants in this study stated that they find fulfillment in their abilities and opportunities to forge meaningful relationships with staff because this has a reciprocal effect in building leadership capacity of the mentee and the mentor. Participants expressed that mentorships work well when there are commonalities of life experiences or approaches to leadership that are present in this type of partnership.
Participants described their reliance on external confidants or other external sources of work-related stress relief as a significant factor that was supportive to the construction of their leadership identities. Married participants identified their husbands as confidants who understood their values and their intentions as leaders while, also, having met the criteria of being safe in external position relative to their workplaces. In one anomalous case, a participant had the advantage of having a spouse who was both an outsider to her organization, while, concurrently, filling the role of a highly experienced insider who has insight to her profession, positional status or responsibilities, and her organizational environment. This married subset of participants used idealized terms to describe their spouses in fulfillment of this role. Conversely, an unmarried participant spoke about her friends outside of her profession as her external confidants, as well as a professional therapist; both of whom she referred to in terms denoting survival as an end goal.

Many of the excerpts cited in Chapter Four exemplified participants relating their lived experiences in terms that indicated self-reflective or metacognitive processing of events. They related their questioning of their enactment of leadership in certain situations, the perceptions they believed others to hold of their leadership identity, sometimes functioning as a reinforcement of their reflection; additionally, the leaders frequently explored their communal or relational values and uncovered rationales to explain dichotomies in identity and practice. This reflection on practice was apparent in participants’ reporting of their duty to hold others accountable for performance and behaviors, their willingness to engage in confrontations that they believed to serve the greater good, and their justification of actions involving difficult decisions and managing relationships that were challenging to them. In addition, the participants’ self-evaluative reflections on such
challenges were self-described as having served to improve their own leadership capacity and their ability to develop capacity of others.

**Challenges in Leadership Identity Construction**

In reporting the challenges encountered in constructing a leadership identity, participants, frequently emphasized situations that were dissonant with their preferred orientation as communal leaders. Participants expressed that positional authority or power were accompanied by risk factors in the enactment of their roles. Most of the leaders reported having learned to share power with others to mitigate some of these risks, which could, otherwise, result in being regarded as lacking in fitness to lead, misunderstood in their level of concern for others and the value of others’ input, or being sanctioned in terms of their likeability by followers. They discussed strategies that blended agency with communion in addressing their awareness of the negative implications of being invested with such positional authority and power. Some of these strategies involved inclusive approaches to decision-making, accompanied by explicit setting of parameters in retaining their onus to determine the outcome or resolution; and speaking less in group settings to encourage others to share their input freely.

Participants, also, described existing tensions when they perceived their identity to have been misunderstood by potential mentees or staff who needed redirection, as well as instances in which participants felt marginalized or devalued by their past supervisors. The participants’ self-perception as leaders who have relational strengths or place high value in communality appears to be a primary factor in their reasoning that these situations were stressors or challenges. These leaders discussed situations in which they tried to coach or guide staff members who misunderstood their intentions or lacked the trust to establish an
effective relationships that could be assistive to their situations, which caused the participants to feel they were rebuffed or that they were in some way inadequate in their leadership skills. When participants discussed the self-reported ways in which they perceived themselves to be sanctioned in formal and informal evaluation of their leadership competencies, they described a sense of betrayal or frustration that they were unable to be properly mentored or inappropriately regarded in accordance with their own perception of the value they added to their organizations. Furthermore, they linked these unsuccessful relationships with their supervisors with having impacted their access to leadership roles.

Participants self-reported a sense of tension in enacting leadership through directives because they perceive themselves to be inclusive leaders who value relationships, staff input, and collaborative decision-making processes. As they reflected on their motivation for, at times, issuing directives, they related this to circumstances in which their intentions were to protect the staff or to further the organization’s mission or purpose. A similar tension was identified by participants who discussed their responsibility to hold others accountable, which they viewed as imperative to operating with fairness and with trust for the betterment of staff or the organization and the fulfillment of a higher purpose. Participants, as noted herein, coupled these practices with communal rationales, an indicator of the tensions that are present when moderating agency with communion.

**Consistency of Values and Beliefs in Leadership Identity Construction**

The preceding paragraphs are inclusive of specific examples of instances that are grounded in the value or belief that was self-reported with high frequency by study participants, the importance of building positive relationships and enacting leadership with concern for others and the organizations. Leaders in this study, discussed difficult personnel
issues in which they considered the impact on the affected staff member, as well as their own impression management as one who is a communal leader. Many participants, also, discussed a resolve to correct past transgressions that were committed against themselves as they were embarking on their leadership trajectory, such as Liz’s insistence on evidence-based feedback in staff evaluations, or Teresa’s concern with helping a young leader gain confidence in expressing a view which diverges from her own as the CEO, or Thea’s commitment to allowing principals the latitude to make decisions based on their knowledge of their staff and students’ needs because she had experienced being micro-managed by supervisors earlier in her own career.

Despite being relational or communal and valuing relationships, leaders expressed their understanding, as described above, of the importance in maintaining professional distance in their relations with staff. Also, while valuing communality, participants gave many examples of instances in which they directly confronted people, practices, or systems which they perceived to be a threat to the greater purpose or mission of the organization or the well-being of the staff or workplace culture and climate. Perceiving themselves as communal leaders, the participants described their practice of sharing credit with staff as the means to accomplishing important objectives. However, they reported that they knew the risks involved in doing so, such as being perceived by others as lacking in leadership responsibility or competence. One participant described having gone to the extreme of strategizing with others to confer total credit for her own ideas to another as an expeditious measure to ensure fulfillment of a crucial objective.

Common to all leaders who participated in this discussion, there were rich descriptions in the data collection that indicated they were highly self-reflective with regard
to examining and questioning self-perceived dissonance that they recognized as occurring between their values and their leadership practices. This is another indicator of the tensions inherent in the attempts to enact leadership with a blend of agency and communion.

**Discussion of the Findings**

This section provides a discussion of the two findings that emerged from the present investigation in relation to four published studies, also appearing within Chapter Two in the Review of Literature. Considered together, the published research and this study’s findings, are presented to assist the reader in understanding the basis of this researcher’s answer to the singular research question that framed this investigation: How do female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs?

Buttner (2001) conducted a qualitative study of 129 female entrepreneurs, using focus groups and interviews, for the purpose of determining whether their self-reported descriptions of their interactions with employees and clients was relational. Results indicated that 73.4% of participants made at least one comment that was classified as relational with regard to their approach in working with clients and staff. Participants described themselves as nurturers, who focused on building positive relationships through developing, teaching, and empowering their employees and business associates. They discussed the importance of a relational approach in furthering the success of their business and operating as a team. Participants described their disappointment when team members were unresponsive to their efforts to care for them or to help them, their practice of maintaining distance or boundaries in relationships with staff, their preference for collaborative decision-making, their sense of empowerment in teaching or mentoring others to enhance their capacity, and their efforts to
develop and forward a common vision that set the purpose for their business. Buttner’s (2001) findings align with this present investigation’s participant reporting of their preferred communal leadership orientation and approach, the relational descriptors participants used in identifying their skill sets as leaders, their self-reported disappointment or frustration when attempts to mentor a struggling staff member were rejected, and their awareness of the necessity to maintain professional boundaries or distance in relation to their staff. Buttner’s (2001) study differs from this present investigation because of the inherent differences between entrepreneurship versus large scale leadership of the institutions and organizations for which participants in this study were responsible. Entrepreneurs have a greater locus of control over their continued viability or continuance as leaders within the organizations in which they function as owner and leader whereas participants in the present study are accountable to boards or corporations that function as their evaluators and employers that have power to sanction them with non-renewal of their employment contracts. Nonetheless, both groups of female leaders in the two studies, despite these inherent role differences, reported having the similar concerns or experiencing similar tensions in enacting leadership in a consist manner with their self-described communal orientations.

Weiner and Burton (2016) conducted a qualitative study of 9 participants (6 females, 3 males; 5 Caucasians/whites, 4 non-whites) in a one-year, turnaround principal training program to determine how participants understood school leadership and their place within it. The researchers found that all participants described turnaround school leaders as communal in attributes and approach. Participants reported that feedback delivered to them during training in the presence of all enrolled in the program differed by gender. Males reported that feedback affirmed and reinforced their growth by favoring their agentic behaviors.
Females reported that feedback was negative, in that they were encouraged to be more agentic and to be less concerned with likability, to tone down their style or image, to temper their gestures, and to be more political. Participants were assigned male mentors throughout the program. Females reported having received less time and support from their mentors and expressed that they felt a lack in self-confidence because they perceived the mentoring relationship as one in which they had less power as the apprentices in comparison with their mentors whom they regarded as experts. Conversely, male participants reported that they had increased access to their mentors for feedback, and they viewed themselves as being equal in expertise in comparison to their mentors. Males searching for employment as turnaround principals were hired by districts immediately following the training program. Conversely, females received interview feedback from prospective employers that emphasized a lack of fit or recommendation to first secure an assistant principalship instead. This relates to the present study because some participants perceived that they had received unsubstantiated negative feedback on their performance or leadership competencies that might have been tied to their gender-leadership identities, which caused them to question if they were marginalized, devalued, held back, or prevented access to leadership opportunities by their supervisors. The results of Weiner and Burton’s (2016) study relate, also, to the present investigation’s emergent subthemes on the significance of well-matched mentor-mentee pairings that are based on partners’ commonalities in life experiences or leadership orientations. Each of these findings that are noted above as having emerged from Weiner and Burton’s (2016) study of aspiring school leaders enrolled in a principal training program align with the same issues that were raised by the present study’s five female participants despite the difference being that the present study’s participants cited these issues as relevant
to their current or previous experiences while serving in actual positions of authority, as opposed to the context of being an aspirant in a training program.

Zheng et al. (2018) conducted interviews with 64 female executives in 51 organizations across the Midwest area of the United States that explored self-perceptions of tensions experienced in negotiating agentic and communal leadership attributes as leaders. Participants reported having learned to lead contextually and having presented themselves as agentic, communal, or a blend of both to accord with “the demands of a particular situation or target audience” (Zheng et al., 2018, p. 640). In addition, study participants reported that they used a variety of leadership strategies to mitigate the tension they experienced between agency and communion, which were organized in the following three categories: (a) act with greater agency, (b) reject agency and favor communion, and (c) blend agency and communion in leadership approach. The first two strategies were described by the study’s authors as negative. Agentic female leaders can experience backlash or sanctions and develop challenges with likeability and followership. Communal females risk their impression management of their competency to serve as leaders. A blend of agency and communion was described as an advantage to females’ emergence as leaders, effectiveness as leaders, and follower satisfaction with their leadership. This study’s findings relate to the present investigation because participants reported similar tensions and issues arising from the situational necessity of enacting leadership through agentic practices in concert with their preferred communal leadership orientation. In addition, the present study’s participants expressed they used communality as a moderator to agency in order to preserve relationships or maintain the trust and positive engagement of their followers in the workplace. These participants, also, shared their perceptions of risk factors in being regarded as too communal.
in situations they identified as having required agency, such as terminations or controversial personnel decisions.

Rudman and Glick (2001) conducted a study to determine whether agentic females experience stronger bias in applying for a female gender-type job versus applying for male gender-typed job in management. This experiment occurred in a lab setting with 107 Rutgers University undergraduate participants who were provided with a computer lab manager job description that either emphasized communal (female) traits or agentic traits (male), which they utilized to evaluate male and female candidates in terms of competency, social skills, and hireability. Agentic females were perceived to have greater competency, but lower likability, than the androgynous/neutral females. The researchers found that women job candidates who moderated their agency with communality were able to mitigate the female stereotype of being deemed too soft or too nice for leadership. The researchers did, however, note that the right balance would be situational and, therefore, difficult for candidates to determine when posturing for a position. The authors concluded that unless agency was moderated with communality, the agentic female would not be hired; however, the same was not true for the agentic male candidates. This relates to the present study because participants articulated an awareness of the tensions experienced in enacting leadership through a blend of communion and agency, as well as having expressed their successful navigation of challenging circumstances in which they moderated agency with communality in enacting their authority and its impact on perception of their fitness to lead. Some participants related this tension to the feedback they considered to be unsubstantiated in formal performance evaluations or informal conversations with supervisors who assessed their leadership competency or orientation. In addition, the content of participant reported
self-reflections on their practice as leaders referred to questioning their fitness to lead or thoughts about the impact on their impression management of their identities as competent leaders with regard to their exercise of communal or agentic leadership.

Discourse strategies emerged during data analysis of the present study as an area that has impact on professional identity due to its relationship with gender frames. In her popular trade book on gender and communication in the workplace, Tannen (1995) utilized layperson’s terms to identify dialogic strategies and rituals that are perceived as congruent with gender frames; additionally, she examined the potential impact of these gendered discourse stereotypes on the viability of the individual’s professional identity. Participants in the present investigation described the strategy of speaking less in group settings when their goal is to moderate their power in order to elicit input from staff. Tannen (1995) posited that a female’s decision to talk less in mixed gender groups in the work setting, such as a cabinet meeting, can be misperceived by others as an indicator of diminished power or lack of confidence when, conversely, it can be a strategy of empowerment. Tannen (1995) explained that one who chooses to remain less vocal has the advantage of analyzing and observing the exchange of ideas and interactions that transpire; therefore, the individual maintains the advantage of entering the discussion at a juncture that will strengthen their position once they decide the time is right to reveal their perspective. According to Tannen (1995), speaking less is a “conversational ritual” within the workplace in high-stakes discussions, that is associated mistakenly with a negative female stereotype of a leader who lacks confidence, hesitates in enacting authority, or feels discomfort with power when, in fact, it is a discourse strategy practiced by both genders for reasons that can be empowering or disempowering, depending on the person and the context (p. 23).
Implications for Leaders and Aspirants

The implications for leaders and aspirants in relation to the findings of this present study are literature-based. Although this study’s participants were all female in gender, the implications are anticipated to be applicable to leaders, aspirants, and relevant stakeholders, regardless of whether they are male, female, or non-binary in gender identity. These implications are presented in the context of the challenges expressed by the study participants in relation to the research question, with an emphasis on the redress of these self-reported issues. Specific issues to be addressed and linked to these implications appear in the following order within this section: (a) the impact of communality on access to leadership positions, (b) the influence of gender role congruency issues that intersect with fitness to lead, and (c) the tensions inherent in a leadership orientation that relies upon an agentic-communal blend of attributes and behaviors.

Participants in this investigation described their leadership orientations in terms of communality, as their preferred approach and as a strength. Participants discussed their sense of fulfillment in mentoring others, and their frustrations and feelings of inadequacy when they were unable to establish effective relationships with staff members, supervisors, or other stakeholders. Therefore, leaders and stakeholders in a position to hire, promote, mentor, or recommend candidates and aspirants for executive roles should examine their leadership recruitment, training, and promotion practices to ensure implicit biases with regard to gender and role congruency are eradicated. This pertains to selection criteria, hiring and promotion protocols, training programs, and job postings. The desired outcome is to ensure that recruitment components control the potential for gender stereotyping that, otherwise, could tend to exclude communal, as well as female, candidates from accessing
executive-level roles. For example, key staff could benefit from training on implicit biases, which should incorporate design elements that assist in building self-awareness and developing role-specific strategies to improve their professional practices. The training design components might include the use of implicit bias self-assessment instruments, case study analysis, and moderated discussions aimed at goal-setting among job-alike peers. With minor contextual adjustments, this one example with the noted design considerations has potential benefit for all groups referenced in the entirety of the discussion that follows herein.

Participants in the present study, and those in the published studies referenced herein, discussed formal performance evaluations or informal feedback that perpetuates gender role congruency biases, serving to obfuscate the career trajectory of female leaders, who have been sanctioned for agentic and communal practices or attributes, indicating a double bind for these leaders. Therefore, protocols and reports associated with evaluations or other assessments of fitness to lead should be audited to redress implicit and explicit gender biases, with emphasis given to measures that require objective evidence to support feedback intended to support growth or redirection.

Professional development, apprenticeships, or training programs designed or offered by organizations, in addition to higher education leadership courses within university programs, should be audited to ensure performance-based feedback shared with leadership candidates or students is free from gender bias or gender stereotypes. Management or leadership training programs and materials or systems of leadership recruitment within institutions and organizations should be reviewed and revised, as part of a recurrent and reliable cyclical process, to be more inclusive of theories that frame leadership orientations as contextual or situational in practice. Such materials and resources should promote the
blending of agentic and communal practices and support the development of case studies analyses or other instructional methodologies that would develop in aspirants, as well as their mentors, criteria or processes for considering and supporting the rationale for assessing and implementing either of the two approaches or the appropriate degree of a blended approach.

In summary, the implications for leaders and aspirants that have been described in this section are based in literature that was presented in accordance with its relevance to the present study. These implications have been limited to those that address specific challenges and tensions that participants in the present study have reported as issues in the development and enactment of socially constructed leadership identities that enable them to have access to leadership positions, to be fairly evaluated or assessed with respect to their leadership competencies, to mitigate implicit and explicit gender bias as it relates to role congruency and fitness to lead, and to address the inherent tensions that these participants have perceived to pose challenges in their efforts to lead with a blend of agency and communion. A chart is included in the Appendices that summarizes these implications, as well as, those which follow with regard to future research (Appendix G).

**Implications for Future Research**

The implications for future research that are presented below are supported by the findings of this investigation with regard to the research question: How do female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs? The researcher gathered data for this study in-person and by telephone using a combination of the following tools: (a) three semi-structured interviews, (b) one field observation, and (c) a review of three participant-provided documents for the purpose of triangulation. This researcher recommends that future studies...
on this topic would benefit from greater diversification of the sample and the addition of a
data collection tool that assists in gathering feedback from the participating leaders’
followers and stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the leaders’ attributes and efficacy
of practice.

It is recommended that future research include a more diverse and inclusive sample of
participants who represent the male gender, a range of races/ethnicities, and for-profit
businesses or organizations. All five participants in this present study were females. Four of
the participants were Caucasian/white, with only one Latina representing diversity. All five
participants were leaders in non-profit organizations that can be categorized as providing
human services: education, healthcare, and law enforcement. Therefore, future researchers
should consider diversifying the sample to include males, non-whites, and leaders in for-
profit organizations that are less apt to be associated with human services, such as banking or
finance, advertising, and other such professional fields. Diversifying the sample with respect
to gender and type of profession can assist in determining if participants’ self-reported
description of their communal leadership identities persists across genders and professions.
Including participants in the sample to represent a range of racial/ethnic diversity could assist
in exploring the full concept of the double-bind, which extends to sanctions against women
of color as an additional complexity of the barriers faced due to gender. The present study
focused only on the gender aspect of the double-bind as a result of the limited response from
potential participants who represent persons of color.

It is recommended that future research incorporate a data collection tool designed to
collect follower and stakeholder perceptions of the leadership attributes and efficacy of the
executives who are study participants. The peer-reviewed studies referenced in this section
of Chapter Five (Buttner, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Weiner & Burton, 2016; Zheng et al., 2018), and all others presented in Chapter Two, produced results that were based on participants’ self-reported lived experiences through qualitative research or findings that emanated from experiments conducted in laboratory settings. In the former context, the participants’ self-reports could be biased by their own perceptions, and in the latter case, the results might not represent actual outcomes that would have occurred if the research had been conducted with actual job candidates or based on real staff members’ feedback pertaining to their actual supervisors. Therefore, future research could benefit from the use of a 360-type instrument to collect data from actual staff or stakeholders that would reflect perceptions of the actual participant leaders’ orientations, effectiveness, and attributes. Together with semi-structured interviews of leader participants, the data collected from the 360-type instrument could be used to triangulate leaders’ self-reported descriptions and perceptions of their practices and effectiveness.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln & Guba (1985) posited that a study’s trustworthiness is established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Efforts intended to support trustworthiness within each of these categories are described in the paragraphs which follow.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with “truth value” of a study’s findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). Credibility could have been a limitation of this study due to the phenomenological multiple-case design in which several participants reported many truths through their lived experiences and the researcher was tasked with developing data collection tools, identifying themes, creating sense units, and summarizing the meaning suggested by the data. The
researcher used a reflexive journal to bracket and position herself within the study, which helped to maintain awareness and to eliminate any biases or preconceptions (Krefting, 1991). Member-checking (Krefting, 1991; Saldaña, 2016) assisted with accuracy in the representation of each participant’s truth, with the researcher having asked them to review the data following the interviews, observation, and document review to determine the veracity of the researcher’s analysis and conclusions.

**Transferability**

Transferability relates to other researchers’ desire to know how applicable or generalizable the study’s results are to other situations or people (Merriam, 2009). Transferability was a small limitation because this research was based on the personal experiences and perceptions reported by participants. Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013), as described above, was intended to support transferability whereas pre-defined criteria (Creswell, 2013) was used to support the selection of participants who had experienced the phenomenon being studied. Also, the researcher provided “dense background information about the informants and the research context and setting to allow others to assess how transferrable the findings are” (Krefting, 1991, p. 179).

**Dependability**

Dependability relates to the consistency with which the findings can be repeated to obtain the same results (Merriam, 2009). Dependability could have been a large limitation to this study due to the small sample size. It was not likely that participants chosen for the study were representative of the larger population of female executives or that their individual experiences and perceptions corresponded with others. To address this, cases were sampled from different contexts or professions, as noted above in the section describing
the research design of the present study. In addition, transferability was supported by the researcher’s use of protocols (Appendices B and D) previously described for interviews (Humberd, 2014) and document review (Bowen, 2009), as well as through the application of Merriam’s (2009) guidelines for field observations.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability concerns the researcher’s ability to maintain a neutral position throughout the investigation (Krefting, 1991). Due to the potential limitation to this study, triangulation of methods was built into the data collection and analyses procedures (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014), with data collected through interviews, observation, and documents pertaining to each individual case. Member-checking, as described in the above section on credibility, also assisted with confirmability (Krefting, 1991; Saldaña, 2016). Additionally, on a consistent basis, the researcher’s primary advisor audited the data coding and meaning-making processes to confirm the findings of the study.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore the social construction of female leadership identities of women executives at the uppermost tier in the hierarchy of organizations or institutions across different professions. Specifically, the researcher explored the perceptions of five female leaders in the uppermost tier of their organizations’ administrative hierarchy through their self-reported lived experiences of the factors that have supported and challenged them in forging leadership identities consistent with their core values and beliefs. In this study, data were collected using three semi-structured interview protocols, conducted in-person and via telephone, in addition to one on-site field observation. For the purposes of
triangulation, the researcher conducted a review of three documents provided by study participants that were relevant to their leadership experiences and career history.

Four themes emerged from the data: (a) Participants perceived themselves as having specialized skill sets that enable them to understand how to build, maintain and repair relationships within their organization and the larger community in order to fulfill their purpose or calling, forward their leadership goals or strategic plan, manage controversial situations, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others; (b) Participants’ descriptions of experiences in which they felt at dissonance with their own perceptions of their leadership identities or practices mainly concerned situations involving difficult decisions, relationships or an inability to establish a strong relationship, whether with staff member, supervisor, other stakeholders; (c) Participants described situations in which their leadership practices were largely agentic on the surface, but they were undergirded by the leaders’ communal rationales or purposes with regard to a sense of responsibility for making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting people and factors that can threaten the greater good, and expressing directives or unvarnished honesty to move the organization forward; and (d) Participants described the use of a strategic blend of agency and communion that supported their impression management as effective leaders and served a greater purpose, which was evidenced through instances that involved their willingness to maintain boundaries despite a desire to forge relationships, to moderate use of power to accomplish challenging goals, and to confer credit to others.

The two findings of this study resulted from analysis of the four themes. Finding 1 emerged from Themes 1 and 2, and is presented as follows: Participants described their leadership identities in terms of their successes or challenges in enacting a communal
orientation through which they build and maintain relationships that they perceive as critical to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling, move the organization or community forward, navigate difficult circumstances, evaluate their effectiveness as leaders, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others. Finding 2 arose from Themes 3 and 4, as follows: Participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good that is linked to mission, purpose, and objectives.

This study’s themes, findings, implications for leaders and aspirants, and implications for future research were presented and discussed through the lens of the single research question that framed this study: How do female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs? In addition, to ensure thorough treatment of the discussion of findings, the question was addressed in accordance with its four main components: (a) self-perception of leadership identity, (b) supports in leadership identity construction, (c) challenges in leadership identity construction, and (d) consistency of values or beliefs in leadership identity construction.

In conclusion, the researcher explored the social construction of five female executives’ leadership identities, through their self-reported perceptions of the supports and challenges they have encountered in enacting leadership that is consistent with their values and beliefs. These female leaders represented various professions, which differed from studies reviewed in the extant body of literature on leadership identity, and they were employed actively in their role as leaders within the highest tier of their organizations’
hierarchy of role responsibility. This research is intended to contribute to the existing body of literature on female leadership identity construction and the inherent challenges and advantages of gender and role congruency perceptions of followers, stakeholders, and leaders. In addition, this research is intended to inform leaders, aspirants, personal directors, facilitators, and developers of leadership training programs and courses of the implicit and explicit gender biases regarding fitness to lead as it intersects with role congruency, so they can address these issues through programming and protocols that mitigate reliance on stereotypes with regard to making decisions that determine who is fit to lead.
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women leaders manage the paradoxical tensions between agency and communion.

Appendices
Appendix A:

Informed Consent (Age 18 and above)
September 2019

Dear <Prospective Participant’s Name>:

My name is Jean Evans Dávila. I am a former Assistant Superintendent of Schools, a certified teacher, and a doctoral candidate in the Instructional Leadership Program at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) in Danbury, Connecticut. For my dissertation, I will be conducting a study of six female leaders in different professions to examine their perceptions of factors that support and pose challenges in developing a leadership identity consistent with their values and beliefs. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information to support women currently engaged in or seeking leadership roles, particularly those within male-dominated professions or roles.

I am reaching out to you to request your voluntary participation in this study. As a token of my appreciation for your participation in this study, you will receive a $25.00 gift card. Participation will require the following five commitments on your part:

1. An initial, in-person, interview of approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes, to be audio-recorded.
2. An observation of you facilitating a meeting with a group pertinent to your leadership role, to be video-recorded with the camera focused on the female leader who is the main study participant. This meeting can involve the study participant’s staff, leadership team, board or other constituency.
3. Two separate telephone interviews, the first requiring approximately 35 minutes and the second estimated at 55 minutes, both to be audio-recorded.
4. An email in which you provide the researcher with a copy of your résumé, professional biography, or curriculum vitae.
5. A brief follow-up phone conversation, if the need arises, to ask clarifying or related questions for accurate representation of the data collected in any of the above steps.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time. Privacy will be protected for all participants through the use of numerical coding; this includes the female leaders who are main participants in the study and those staff or constituents who will be present during the videotaping of the meeting as described in item 2 in the above list of commitments. Staff, leadership team, board members, or other constituents participating in the meeting during which the female leader (as main study participant) is being video-recorded will be asked two weeks in advance to return a signed consent form that outlines the purpose of the study and use of the recorded data from the meeting, as well as their right to opt out of the video-recorded meeting. All identities will be
maintained in a secure location to protect confidentiality. In order to obtain feedback and support during analyses, all audio and video recordings will be reviewed by WCSU faculty supervisors, Dr. Catherine O’Callaghan and Dr. Marcia Delcourt, in addition to outside advisor Dr. Marlene Zakierski of Sage Colleges in Albany, New York. Regarding this qualitative data, outside reviewer Dr. Jeanette Moore also will be provided with conclusions, findings, implications, themes, categories, codes, and data related to the findings and the line of argument for those findings in order to follow and examine the line of reasoning created by the investigator. There will be no identifying information provided with any data presented for review.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the WCSU Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions concerning the rights of subjects involved in this research study, please email the WCSU Assurances Administration at irb@wcsu.edu and mention Protocol Number 1920-23. This study is valid until September 19, 2020. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or any of my advisors.

If you agree to participate in this study, please the attached form and return it in the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope as soon as possible.

Best regards,

Jean M. Evans Dávila, M.S., B.A.
WCSU Doctoral Candidate
davila014@wcsu.edu

Catherine O’Callaghan, Ph.D.
Faculty Advisor
Western Connecticut State University
ocallaghanc@wcsu.edu

Marcia A. B. Delcourt, Ph.D.
Coordinator, EdD in Instructional Leadership Program
Western Connecticut State University
delcourtm@wcsu.edu
Participant Consent Form for Research Study

I, ________________________________, agree to voluntarily participate in the research study, “The Social Construction of Women Leaders’ Gender Frames.” I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my participation.

I understand this study involves completion of three individual interviews with me, to be audio recorded; an on-site observation in my workplace as I conduct a meeting, to be video recorded; and my submission of my résumé, professional biography, or curriculum vitae to the researcher. I further understand that as part of this study, the Internet and publications will be used by the researcher to access documents, articles, or other media pertaining to my leadership tenure.

I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time should I choose to do so. All information obtained through this research study will remain completely confidential and will be coded to maintain the confidentiality of the individual participants and her workplace. The Principal Investigator and members of her dissertation committee will have access to the raw data and no identifying information will be presented at meetings and in publications. A qualified outside reviewer will also be provided with conclusions, findings, implications, themes, categories, codes and data related to the findings and the line of argument for those findings in order to follow and examine the line of reasoning created by the investigator. Any data presented for review will not have identifying information.

Signature of Participant: ________________________________ Date _______________
September 2019

Dear <Prospective Field Observation Participant’s Name>:

My name is Jean Evans Dávila. I am a former Assistant Superintendent of Schools, a certified teacher, and a doctoral candidate in the Instructional Leadership Program at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) in Danbury, Connecticut. For my dissertation, I will be conducting a study of six female leaders in different professions to examine their perceptions of factors that support and pose challenges in developing a leadership identity consistent with their values and beliefs. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide valuable information to support women currently engaged in or seeking leadership roles, particularly those within male-dominated professions or roles.

As part of this study, I will be conducting a field observation of each main study participant as she facilitates a meeting at which you will be invited to attend and/or take part. This meeting will be video-recorded, and the camera will be focused on the facilitator of the meeting, who is your leader and is the main participant in this research study and field observation.

I am reaching out to you to request your voluntary participation to be in attendance and/or take part in a meeting to be arranged and to be facilitated by the leader connected with your organization who is the main participant in this study.

Participation in this field observation within this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Privacy will be protected for all participants through the use of numerical coding; this includes the female leaders who are main participants in the study and those staff or constituents who will be present during the videotaping of the meeting as described above. Staff, leadership team, board members, or other constituents participating in the meeting during which the female leader (as main study participant) is being video-recorded will be asked two weeks in advance to return a signed consent form that outlines the purpose of the study and use of the recorded data from the meeting, as well as their right to opt out of the video-recorded meeting. All identities will be maintained in a secure location to protect confidentiality. In order to obtain feedback and support during analyses, all audio and video recordings will be reviewed by WCSU faculty supervisors, Dr. Catherine O’Callaghan and Dr. Marcia Delcourt, in addition to outside advisor Dr. Marlene Zakierski of Sage Colleges in Albany, New York. Regarding this qualitative data, outside reviewer Dr. Jeanette Moore also will be provided with conclusions, findings, implications, themes, categories, codes, and data related to the findings and the line of argument for those findings.
in order to follow and examine the line of reasoning created by the investigator. There will be no identifying information provided with any data presented for review.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the WCSU Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions concerning the rights of subjects involved in this research study, please email the WCSU Assurances Administration at irb@wcsu.edu and mention Protocol Number 1920-23. This study is valid until September 19, 2020. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or any of my advisors.

If you agree to be present at this meeting during which your leader will be video-recorded, please signed the consent form enclosed with this letter and return it as soon as possible via United States Postal Service using the stamped and addressed envelope that has been provided by the researcher.

Best regards,

Jean M. Evans Dávila, M.S., B.A.
WCSU Doctoral Candidate
davila014@wcsu.edu

Catherine O’Callaghan, Ph.D.
Faculty Advisor
Western Connecticut State University
ocallaghanc@wcsu.edu

Marcia A. B. Delcourt, Ph.D.
Coordinator, EdD in Instructional Leadership Program
Western Connecticut State University
delcourtm@wcsu.edu
WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

Field Observation: Participant Consent Form for Research Study

I, _______________________________, agree to voluntarily participate in the research study, “The Social Construction of Women Leaders’ Gender Frames,” through my attendance and/or participation in a meeting in which the facilitator will be video-recorded by the researcher. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research study, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my participation.

I understand that my participation in this study involves my attendance and/or participation in a meeting while the facilitator is being video-recorded by the researcher. During this meeting, the camera will be focused on the facilitator who is your leader and this study’s main participant. The researcher’s analysis of the meeting also will be focused on the facilitator as the study’s main participant. I further understand that as an attendee and/or a contributing member of the meeting, I am not the focus of the video recording or the focus of the analysis.

I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any point in time should I choose to do so. All information obtained through this research study will remain completely confidential and will be coded to maintain the confidentiality of the individual participants and their workplace. The Principal Investigator and members of her dissertation committee will have access to the raw data and no identifying information will be presented at meetings and in publications. A qualified outside reviewer will also be provided with conclusions, findings, implications, themes, categories, codes and data related to the findings and the line of argument for those findings in order to follow and examine the line of reasoning created by the investigator. Any data presented for review will not have identifying information.

Signature of Participant: _______________________________ Date ____________
Appendix B:

Interview Protocols
Interview 1, Part A: Initial Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
Study of Women Leaders’ Socially Constructed Gender Frames

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Warm-Up and Role Overview (15 minutes)
*I would like to open up by spending a few minutes learning about you and what you do here.*

1. Briefly describe for me your leadership role in this, or your most recent, organization?
   a. What do you do?
   b. Where do you fit in the reporting structure (What roles directly report to you)?
   c. How long have you served in this role here?
   d. How long have you served in similar roles in other organizations?
   e. Is there anything you would like to share about your life outside of work (i.e., marital status or if you have children)?

Personal Background and Upbringing (10 minutes)
*I will begin by asking you a few questions that will lead you to reflect on your upbringing and early experiences, relative to career and leadership.*

1. First, I would like to get a sense of the values that were instilled in you with respect to your career and leadership as you were growing up.
   a. Do you recall what was expected of you or hoped for you in terms of your career and your future while growing up?
   b. To what extent was leadership or being a leader a part of that equation?
2. Is being a leader an important part of who you are?
   a. Has it always been this way?
   b. Is it shifting for you now at this point in your career?
3. Do any experiences stand out to you in relation to when you first started developing leadership aspirations or thinking of yourself as a leader?
   a. What activities or organizations are related to your leadership?
   b. What leadership traits did you recognize in yourself or did others point out to you in these early experiences that helped you recognize your ability to lead?

Personal Values and Leadership Identity (15 minutes)

1. What values and beliefs do you bring to your work (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   Tell me about a situation when it was difficult for you to uphold these values or beliefs.
   How did you navigate the situation?
   What issues did it pose for you?
2. What kind of leader do you strive to be, and why are these qualities important to you (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ridgeway, 2009)?
3. What is a recent situation in which you experienced challenges in exerting your authority or in owning your power (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   a. What factors made this difficult for you?
   b. How did you respond to these factors?
4. What leadership qualities do you rely on most often when faced with difficult decisions (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?

Perceptions of the organization and profession (20 minutes)
Next, I want to talk in more detail about day-to-day experiences in this organization.
1. In general, how would you describe where you work?
   a. What adjectives/metaphors come to mind? If you want, you can tell me a story that represents your sense of this place.
   b. What do like most about working here?
   c. What do you like the least?
2. From your perspective, what does it take to be successful here?
   a. Probes: Describe a successful leader in this field/profession.
      i. Who are they and what do they look like?
      ii. What do they do?
3. I also would like to hear a little bit about what the environment here is like for women, from your own perspective.
   a. What types of leaders are recognized as being the best fit here? (Ridgeway, 2009)
   b. What is most challenging in making this fit work for you? (Ridgeway, 2009)
   c. What comes easy to you?
4. Finally, I want to get a sense of some of your relationships in the organization, particularly to understand how supported you feel as leader here.
   a. Who do you turn to for support as a leader, either formally or informally? Who do you reach out to?
   b. What steps have you taken to cultivate a network of most trusted peers inside and outside of your organization? (Eagly & Carli, 2007)
   c. Are other women a part of this network? (Eagly & Carli, 2007)
   d. Probes: Is there anyone you look up to as a leadership role model in the organization?
      i. Do you consider anyone a mentor for you? In what ways is this person similar to you or different from you (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
      ii. What was your experience in finding a female sponsor/mentor? Have they been available to you? Does it matter to you if your mentor is female (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
      iii. Do you see any junior employees as your “mentees”?

Leadership Development (20 minutes)
Now, I would like to talk more specifically about your development as a leader in this organization. I am going to ask you a broad question and then probe along the way.
1. Tell me the story of your leadership ascent here in this field or profession.
   a. What has gone well or what has facilitated your progress?
   b. What has been most challenging or what has hindered your progression?
2. Now I am going to ask you to tell me some recent stories that focus on your confidence and credibility as a leader.
   a. Think of a time, recently, when you felt particularly confident about yourself as a leader.
      i. What happened and who was involved?
      ii. What felt good and why?
      iii. How do you think others saw you in this situation?
   b. Think of a time, recently, when you felt particularly bad/underconfident about yourself as a leader.
      i. What happened and who was involved?
      ii. What felt bad and why?
      iii. How do you think others saw you in this situation?

3. What are you doing to develop yourself as a leader?
   a. Are you taking any proactive steps yourself?
   b. What opportunities have been presented to you by the organization in which you worked or by supervisors or managers in order to develop your leadership?
   c. Do you wish there were others who helped? (Rephrase: What could have helped your career even more that was not provided to you by the organization or your supervisors?)

4. Give me an idea of your future career goals and aspirations as a leader. Over the next few years, who do you want to be or become as a leader?
   a. What is important to you as you envision your future leadership, such as achieving a certain level or certain type of leadership?
   b. Probes:
      i. What are your barometers for figuring out where you head from here?
      ii. Do you have any concerns about your future as a leader in this organization or in your field?

Constructions of Gender and Leadership (10 minutes)
In this final section, I will ask you a series of questions about how you see your gender as having a role in your experiences as a leader. I recognize these may or may not feel relevant to you or may or may not be things you think about every day. Both are okay.

1. I will read you two identity statements, and I would like you to tell me which statement resonates more with you: “I am a woman leader” or “I am a leader, who just happens to be a woman.” (Rephrase: In what ways, if any do you see your gender as relevant to your leadership?)
2. Why did you choose that statement?

Wrap-Up on Open-Ended Segment (5 minutes)
Those are all the open-ended interview questions I planned to ask today.
1. Because I am interested in your experiences as a leader in this workplace and field, “Is there anything else you think I should have asked you to better understand?”
2. Do you have any questions for me?
Follow-up:
With this sort of research, the themes are usually evolving, so I expect that as the study progresses some new questions might arise. Therefore, I anticipate wanting to do a follow-up interview, likely by telephone with you. Is that okay with you?

Source [Unless specifically cited otherwise within text] (Adapted with author’s permission; See Appendix C):

Additional Sources [Specifically cited within text]
Interview 1, Part B: Brief Demographic Survey Protocol
Study of Women Leaders’ Socially Constructed Gender Frames

<table>
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Warm-Up and Data Collection (5 minutes)

*In closing to today’s open-ended interview, I now would like to ask you four short answer questions about yourself to collect some demographic information. Your response to these questions is voluntary, and you do not have to answer them if you choose not to do so.*

1. Age?
2. Education, highest level?
3. Marital status?
4. Children, number of?

*Thank you so much for the time you have spent talking with me today during the interview and answering this brief set of demographic questions. I know you have a lot of responsibilities, so I truly do appreciate you having met with me.*

Source (Adapted with author’s permission: See Appendix C):
Interview 2: Post-Observation Semi-Structured Interview Protocol
Study of Women Leaders’ Socially Constructed Gender Frames

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Warm-Up and Overview of Purpose (5 minutes)
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me again today. I’d like to ask you some questions to better understand your personal values and your leadership identity. These questions are reframed from our initial interview to focus specifically on the meeting I observed.

Personal Values and Leadership Identity (30 minutes)
1. What values and beliefs did you convey in the meeting and your interactions with others? (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   a. In what ways did you try to make these values and beliefs apparent to others?
   b. Why are these values and beliefs important to you in this context?
2. What situation in the meeting made it difficult for you to uphold your values or beliefs (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   a. How did you navigate the situation?
   b. What issues did it pose for you?
3. What situation(s) within the meeting or the team dynamic had the potential to pose challenges to your authority or to owning your power (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   a. What factors made this difficult for you?
   b. How did you respond to these factors?
4. Which of your leadership qualities did you rely upon when discussing sensitive issues or difficult decisions? Please tell me an example (Eagly & Carli, 2007).
5. Tell me something that occurred during the meeting that made you feel particularly confident about yourself as a leader.
   a. What happened and who was involved?
   b. What felt good and why?
   c. How do you think others saw you in this situation?
6. Tell me something that caused you to feel bad/underconfident about yourself as a leader.
   a. What happened and who was involved?
   b. What felt bad and why?
   c. How do you think others saw you in this situation?

Thanks again for the time you have spent talking with me today and for your commitment to the study. I know your time is valuable, so I truly do appreciate you having met with me.
Source [Unless specifically cited otherwise within text] (Adapted with author’s permission; See Appendix C):

Additional Source [Specifically cited within text]:
Warm-Up and Overview of Purpose (5 minutes)
Thank you for agreeing to speak with me again today. I have finished reviewing the documents that I have collected from you for this study. Now, I'd like to ask you some questions to better understand your personal values and your leadership identity in connection with the article or document that relates to a career challenge you faced as a leader in mid- to late-tenure of your leadership. These questions are reframed from our initial interview to focus specifically on this document.

1. First, can you give me a short background to help me contextualize the issue this article addresses?
   a. What was involved and who were the players?
   b. What was your role?
   c. What factors made this a difficult or controversial situation?

Personal Values and Leadership Identity (15 minutes)
Thinking back to some of the values and beliefs we’ve been discussing as important to your view of your work. (Interviewer’s Note: Identify a couple traits and values from prior interview transcripts).

1. I’d like to hear about some of the challenges within this situation (Eagly & Carli, 2007).
   a. Tell me about the factors in this situation that made it difficult for you to uphold these values or beliefs (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   b. How did you navigate the situation?
   c. What issues did it pose for you?

2. What kind of leader were you striving to be in this situation, and why were these qualities important to you in this context (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ridgeway, 2009)?

3. Describe for me some of the challenges this situation posed for you in exerting your authority or in owning your power (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   What factors made this difficult for you?
   How did you respond to these factors?

4. What leadership qualities did you rely on most heavily when faced with difficult decisions within this situation (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?
   a. Can you identify some ways in which you drew upon these qualities during this time?

Perceptions of the organization and profession (15 minutes)
Next, I want to talk in more detail about day-to-day experiences in this organization.

1. In general, how would you describe the environment in which you worked during that time or situation?
a. What adjectives/metaphors come to mind to represent your sense of the workplace?
b. What did you like most about working there?
c. What did you like the least?

2. From your perspective, what did it take to be successful there?
   a. Probes: Describe what a successful leader would be in this field in this situation.
      i. Who were they and what did they look like?
      ii. What did they do?

3. I also would like to hear a little bit about what the environment was like for women, from your own perspective.
   a. What types of leaders were recognized as being the best fit there or in this situation (Ridgeway, 2009)?
   b. What was most challenging in making this fit work for you at that time (Ridgeway, 2009)?
   c. What came easy to you?

4. Finally, I want to get a sense of some of your relationships in the organization, particularly to understand how supported you felt as leader there at that time.
   a. Who did you turn to for support as a leader [formally, informally]? Who did you reach out to?
   b. What steps had you taken to cultivate a network of most trusted peers inside and outside of the organization?
   c. Were other women a part of that network (Eagly & Carli, 2007)?

**Leadership Development (20 minutes)**

*Now, I would like to talk more specifically about your development as a leader in this organization at the time of this professional challenge. I am going to ask you a broad question and then probe along the way.*

1. Tell me the story of your leadership ascent within the workplace where this situation occurred.
   a. What had gone well or what had facilitated your progress?
   b. What had been most challenging or what had hindered your progression up to that point?

2. Now I am going to ask you to tell me about some aspects of the situation that focus on your confidence and credibility as a leader at that time.
   a. During this situation, what factors or aspects of the issue caused you to feel particularly confident about yourself as a leader?
      i. What happened and who was involved?
      ii. What felt good and why?
      iii. How did you think others saw you in this situation?
   b. During this situation, what factors or aspects of the issue caused you to feel particularly bad/underconfident about yourself as a leader?
      i. What happened and who was involved?
      ii. What felt good and why?
      iii. How did you think others saw you in this situation?

3. What did you do to develop yourself as a leader in response to this situation?
   a. Did you take any proactive steps yourself?
b. What opportunities were presented to you (by the organization in which you worked or by supervisors or managers) in order to develop your leadership?

c. Do you wish there were others who would have helped? [Rephrase: What could have helped your career even more that was not provided to you by the organization or your supervisors?]

Thanks again for the time you have spent talking with me today and for your commitment to the study. I know your time is valuable, so I truly do appreciate you having met with me.

Source [Unless specifically cited otherwise within text] (Adapted with author’s permission; See Appendix C):

Additional Sources [Specifically cited within text]
Appendix C:

Author Permission to Use/Adapt Interview Protocol
Request for Use of Protocols

January 21, 2019

Dear Dr. Humberd:

I am writing to request permission to adapt the semi-structured interview questions and protocol you developed for your dissertation entitled Seeing herself as leader: An examination of gender-leadership frames in women’s leader identity development. In addition, I am hopeful you could share with me or recommend a document review protocol.

Presently, I am preparing a proposal to conduct a research study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU). I plan to draw upon your work on Gender-Leadership Frames in my study. Although my research will be a phenomenological, multi-case study, I will employ the same methods of data collection used in your study: semi-structured interviews, documents, and observations.

The purpose of my proposed study is to explore how female executives define the factors that have supported and have posed challenges in shaping a leadership identity that is consistent with their values and beliefs. My participants will be six executive-level female leaders in the Northeast, working in distinct professions. Their professional titles are likely to include the following: CEO, CFO, University President, Mayor or First Selectman, Chancellor or Superintendent of Schools, and Chief of Police or Deputy Chief of Police.

Your research on Gender Frames resonates with me as a student and is professionally significant to me, as well, in providing insight for self-reflection on my own professional practice in my role as the Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Newtown, Connecticut.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my requests.

Best Regards,

Jean

Jean M. Evans Dávila
Doctoral Candidate
Western Connecticut State University, Instructional Leadership Program
E-mail: davila014@wcsu.edu
Re: Request for Use of Protocols

January 24, 2019

Hi Jean,

Thanks for reaching out. I appreciate hearing that you found my work useful. You can certainly adapt my protocol, so long as you cite my work in doing so. For now, you can cite the dissertation (though I have a paper based on it in process of being published); and please, if you use the concept of “gender-leadership frames” please also cite my work. Thank you!

Best of luck with your research and thanks again for reaching out.

Beth

Beth K. Humberd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Management
Manning School of Business, UMass Lowell
Associate, Center for Women & Work
978.934.2740
beth_humberd@uml.edu
September 23, 2020

Dear Dr. Humberd:

I hope all is well with you since our last communication in January 2019 when you had granted me permission to adapt and use your interview protocol from your 2014 dissertation for my doctoral research study. As I prepare to upload my dissertation into ProQuest, following my defense next week, I wanted to follow-up to ask if I have your permission to include the adapted interview protocol with the citation in my document’s Appendix.

By the way, I wanted to let you know that I have been enjoying reading your recent work on the impact of the pandemic on women’s careers. The discussion on this is important to many.

Best Regards,

Jean

Jean M. Evans Dávila
Doctoral Candidate
Western Connecticut State University, Instructional Leadership Program
E-mail: davila014@wcsu.edu
Re: Request for Use of Protocols – Follow-up

September 23, 2020

Hi, Jean,

Congrats on being almost done – best of luck at your defense! Thanks for checking in on this – as long as you cite my dissertation as to where it came from or was adapted from, then I am all good with however you use it. Appreciate you checking on that.

Trying to call attention to the ways in which this period is doing some lasting damage on women’s careers and families . . . hoping for some balance soon.

Best of luck,

Beth

Beth K. Humberd, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Management
Manning School of Business, UMass Lowell
Associate, Center for Women & Work
978.934.2740
beth_humberd@uml.edu
Appendix D:

Document Review Protocol
Document Review Protocol
Study of Women Leaders’ Socially Constructed Gender Frames

Participant Code: ___________________________ Date of Document Collection: ___________________________

**Document Review Steps:**
1. Skim the document to determine its overall relevance to the study.
2. Read the document thoroughly to interpret its content and context while separating relevant information from that which lacks pertinence to the study.
3. Re-read the document and organize the data into categories of information that relate to the research question.
4. Analyze the selected data to find patterns and use pre-defined codes to label the emergent themes related to the phenomenon being studied.

**Brief Notes Organizer:**
1. **Type of Document** – Check one of the following:
   - Résumé, Curriculum Vitae, or Brief Professional Biography
   - Leadership Appointment (News Article)
   - Mid- to Late-Tenure Career Challenge (News Article or Participant-Authored Text)

2. **Authorship and Audience** – Complete the chart below with known information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Source/Publication</th>
<th>Intended Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. **Intended Purpose** – Why was the document originally produced?

4. **Context** – What is known about the context in which the document was produced (i.e., prevailing views or values, organizational or public biases, transition in leadership, etc.)?

5. **Themes** – For quick reference guide, complete the table below to briefly note codes in this document review that correspond with emerging themes across data collection methods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code/Theme in Current Document</th>
<th>Check Box to Indicate Correspondence of Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doc 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source (Adapted from):**
Appendix E:

Data Coding and Analyses Protocol
First Cycle, Open Coding:

1. Pre-code the raw data manually with paper and pencil or word processing software:
   a. Circle, highlight, bold, underline, or color the rich or significant participant quotes (InVivo Code) that seem worthy of attention.
   b. Codes can cover a data range of a single word, or one or more sentences.
   c. Coding will occur both during and after data collection (and multiple times thereafter).

2. Begin the preliminary jottings by making notes directly on the transcripts, documents, field notes, analytic memos or research journal for future reference. Be sure to write out the code words or phrases completely without abbreviations.
   a. Create the template to format data for jottings
      i. Column 1: Raw data (widest column on the page; double-spaced)
      ii. Column 2: Preliminary codes
      iii. Column 3: Final codes (goes through several iterations from this stage)
   b. Start coding as soon as data is collected and formatted. Do not wait until all fieldwork is completed.
   c. Some jottings can be written concurrent with the data collection, while in the moment.

3. Stay focused by keeping a copy of this information in front of you as you code:
   a. Research concern
   b. Theoretical framework
   c. Central research question
   d. Study goals
   e. Major issues
4. Code one participant’s data first, then progress to second participant’s data.

5. Code the second data set and maintain awareness that it will influence and affect the re-coding of the first participant’s data.

6. During coding, maintain a codebook as a record of emergent codes that contains entries pertaining to each code to identify the following:
   a. The code
   b. Brief definition of the code
   c. Full definition of the code
   d. Guidelines for when to use the code
   e. Guidelines for when not to use the code
   f. An example from the data to illustrate each code

**Protocol for Second Cycle, Analytic Coding, with Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS):**

1. Enter the codes developed during First Stage analysis into the chosen CAQDAS program, such as HyperRESEARCH.

2. Enter smaller portions of data in the CAQDAS, such as one day of field notes or a single interview transcript. Also, code as data is being transcribed.

3. Back up original files for safekeeping.

4. Review and recode the data multiple times as desired to manage, filter, highlight, and focus the analysis, with the purpose of generating any or all of the following:
   a. Categories
   b. Themes
   c. Concepts
   d. Meaning
   e. Key assertions
5. While recoding, further refine codes and categories, which may be subsumed, re-labeled, or dropped. At this stage, previously coded data may be rearranged or reclassified into different or new categories.

6. Use search or query to display key words, phrases, and similarly coded data.

7. Use code lists generated by CAQDAS to analyze range/importance of codes.

8. Make copious use of the analytic memo writing feature of the CAQDAS to support the reflective journal and to prompt recall of analytic decisions and interpretations with regard to the data.

9. Explore patterns that are in progress.

10. Continue analyzing and recoding through multiple iterations.

11. Check interpretations with participants to support trustworthiness through accurate representation of their truths.

Source (Adapted from):
Appendix F:

Qualitative Coding and Analysis
Qualitative Coding and Analysis: Finding Statement 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding Statement 1</th>
<th>Participants describe their leadership identity in terms of their successes or challenges in enacting a communal orientation through which they build and maintain relationships that they perceive as critical to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling, move the organization or community forward, navigate difficult circumstances, evaluate their effectiveness as leaders, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Participants perceived themselves as having specialized skill sets that enables them to understand how to build, maintain and repair relationships within their organization and the larger community in order to fulfill their purpose or calling, forward their leadership goals or strategic plan, manage controversial situations, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Participants’ descriptions of experiences in which they felt at dissonance with their own perceptions of their leadership identities or practices mainly concerned situations involving difficult decisions, relationships or an inability to establish a strong relationship, whether with staff member, supervisor, other stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subthemes</td>
<td>Theme 1, Subtheme 1: Participants reported having specialized knowledge that enables them to build and manage relationships effectively. Theme 1, Subtheme 2: Participants described relational skills as necessary to fulfill their purpose or calling and to move the organization or community forward. Theme 1, Subtheme 3: Participants reported that the cultivation of healthy workplace or professional relationships provided them with additional resources to manage controversial situations. Theme 1, Subtheme 4: Participants emphasized the value of well-matched mentor relationships that are based on similar leadership identities and/or relatable life experiences. Theme 2, Subtheme 1: Participants described inner dialogue which explored a self-perceived dissonance between leadership values and actual practice. Theme 2, Subtheme 2: Participants expressed sense of inadequacy as leader in failed attempts to establish a trusting relationship or to mentor a difficult staff member. Theme 2, Subtheme 3: Participants describe being frustrated by stakeholder or supervisor relationships in which they felt marginalized, devalued, or held back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Communal Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instance 1

| Isabel: | What I do is point people in a direction that I think the university should go and then pray that they go in that direction. That's what I do all the time. Cause it's university, everybody's tenured. I can only use the art of persuasion. I can't, I can't give any orders. And so, I find myself using the art of persuasion all the time, making my best argument saying that's the direction [the university] needs to go. (Isabel – Int 1A, lines 8-11, Persuasion) |
| Liz: | I look at it operationally, the sense that when my cops are in conflict with each other or with others, they are not as productive. I'm not getting the same quality of work, the same quality of behavior out of them because they're focused on the conflict and on the person that they have conflict with. So, my job of being that advocate and resource for them so that they can do their job safely and in the most effective and efficiency in my mind is I'm going to give you these. I'm going to introduce you to Isabel: I have always been of the mind that you never, that you always have to have water in the well. And that is that you have to have good relationships with people. You have to negotiate fairly. Make sure if someone needs a medical leave or--a medical isn't a good example--but if someone needs a special personal leave that you give it to them. If someone needs a little bit of extra work over the summer because they're financially strapped and they let you know, that you help them out. If somebody wants to travel abroad, Isabel: I tell you never, that you always have to have water in the well. And that is that you have to have good relationships with people. You have to negotiate fairly. Make sure if someone needs a medical leave or--a medical isn't a good example--but if someone needs a special personal leave that you give it to them. If someone needs a little bit of extra work over the summer because they're financially strapped and they let you know, that you help them out. If somebody wants to travel abroad, Isabel: I tell young women, do not do admin. until your children or you're older because you're going to just beat yourself up that the house isn't clean, that this isn't done, that you're at work, you're missing your kid's football game or basketball game. (Isabel - Int 1A, lines 708-711, Mentor - Others) |
| Teresa: | … it's the same, like when you develop policies, I mean we, we develop policies that are really for that 5% who are, are the problem. And so consequently we make life hell for the 95 or trying to do the right thing and that 5%, they'll figure out a way to get around that policy. You'd be better off, like don't tell policy at all and just try and work on those 5%. Say, "You know what? You don't belong here. You need to go." Um. (Teresa - Int 1A, lines 309-313, Open Comm) |
| Liz: | She's got such a black and white personality and a militant, rigid perception of chain of command that no matter how compassionate, no matter how mentoring, no matter how I attempt to get a one on one connection with her, she will resist it. Um, I'm the Chief, she's the Officer, that's not the way those relationships work. Um, and in my attempts to try to mentor her and help her get through her intellectual processing and away from emotions, I damaged any relationship I might be able to have. (Liz - Int 1A, lines 309-313, Open Comm) |
| Liz: | I mean for the last year and a half, Jean, every, there wasn't a day that I had to work that I did not get up in the morning, think “how can I take the day off or how can I go in late”. Um, and it really, there was no place for me to go, but out at that point, I had, again, just shy of, September 1st of 1985 is when I was sworn in. Um, and I left again July to July 4th of 2014 so, and there was no, every position above the rank of Lieutenant was taken and filled and no place to go but 'out'. So I opted for 'out' when I got old enough. (Liz - Int 1A, lines 8-11, Persuasion) |
these skills. And these concepts are going to help you be happier, healthier, and more productive. You're going to use those to have less stress in less diversion, away from what really matters. 

(Liz - Int 3, lines 492-504. Persuasion)

but doesn't have all their money in their budget on a trip with students, that you help them. So I had a lot of water in the, well, I had worked for years and years and years cultivating a community, um, of people that I respected. And I cultivated it in a way that I thought was giving, that I would support them in their efforts. And so when this happened, there were a lot of people who wanted me to succeed and that wanted me to not get hurt by this decision. So, it was very interesting to see. When I turned to the community-at-large at this university, very few people went

(Liz - Int 1A, lines 748-753. Self-Reflection/Self-Talk)

have with her because she sees me as being still part of the good old boy network, which really frosts my …berries by the way.

(Liz - Int 3, lines 65-71. Mentor – Others)
against me. Very few people, if a handful only, almost everybody. Even if they didn't, if they liked him, didn't want to take sides, they stayed silent. *(Isabel - Int 3, lines 370-381. Relationships)*

| Instance 2 | **Liz:** I think that a huge basis for who I am today is the years of Crisis Negotiator Training, communication skill building, interpersonal skills and personal skills, training, leadership training, and how I bought into and absorbed and practiced, um, the concepts that make sense to me. And trying, leading, by example and living, trying to | **Liz:** I'm trying to be a negotiator, a facilitator, in the sense that there's some really strong, strong emotions and identity impacted, um, on all sides in all perspectives. I talked to recently as a couple months ago and talking to one of my Sergeants who is still employed with us, about this lawsuit. He's still very sensitive about it. So to help them navigate those | **Isabel:** The environment felt very hostile. It felt like there were more people in favor of his continuance here and that they were really angry at me and that they didn't want the facts .... First of all, my team, my Provost, all my Vice Presidents were there--uh, not, not to say yes to me, but were there--to help me make the right decision. And I felt, I felt very | **Teresa:** ...what's been nice for me is to be able to uh, nurture, uh, women in leadership roles and, um, particularly women who are, you know, trying to have children and, and juggle that sort of thing. Um, because it was very difficult, uh, for me. *(Teresa - Int 1A, lines 588-590. Mentor - Others)* | **Liz:** And down there we had some young punks that were causing a problem, and one of my officers was in a, just running their mouth back and forth at each other. And I was in a really, really, really, really (x) mood that night. And I stepped in between them, and I pushed the citizen back. And I turned to the officer and I said, I told him to shut the (x) up and go over | **Tamra:** I said [to the Chief Academic Officer], "Like now the decision's done." And she's like, "Why are they angry?" I'm like, "Cause you didn't include them. I can tell you why they're angry. Their voice. They don't feel as represented here." Um, so just again, like try, how do you teach that? Like empathy? And like, "Hey listen to everybody." | **Tamra:** I was probably the worst version of myself than I ever was. Oh, I don't know why I just took it really personally. I worked with board members all these years and just felt like, so now I'm getting like, "I've been doing the job and basically, and my predecessor admitted to that," um. It just, it was tough, and I probably didn't go into it with the right mindset. Um, I |
live, what I preach.
(Liz - Int 3, lines 213-216. Relationships)

emotions and, and set them aside, own them. Um, and then looking at things intellectually. Um, and just use some of that, is one of my things that build my confidence is when I listen to my staff use the terminology, the concepts, the beliefs, the practices that we have created through my vision from them educating me to me being willing to be vulnerable.
(Liz - Int 3, lines 114-120. Persuasion)

much, um, supported.
(Isabel - Int 3, lines 261-352. Relationships)

there. Um, and uh, regretted it as soon as I did it. And the next day I apologized to the officer. Said I was way out of line, and it took me a few more days to process it. But I apologized to my staff. I said, "Typically I want you to model, um, what I do. Don't model that. I was way out of line. I was wrong. I can't take it back. Alls [sic] I can do is apologize for it." Um, and that was easily close to 15 years ago, and it still sticks with me. Yeah. And still not the only one. I'm certainly, I've had other times.
(Tamra - Int 1A, lines 265-268. Shared Decision)

(mean I pulled it out in the end, um, but I wish I would have enjoyed the process more because I really think it wasn't, the Board has, has a job to do. And then I've served on many boards, and I knew that. …Um, but it just, you know, I was, I was tested and there were a couple of times where I'm just like, "This isn't, this isn't worth it, and maybe I don't want this. Maybe I'm not cut out to be, if this is making me this much of a wreck, (Tamra laughs at her thoughts) maybe I'm not" …. Um, but, but yeah… it's hard for any internal candidate.)
| Instance 3 | Tamra: ...how to frame what you say, how to have empathy, how to, even if someone's disagreeing with you, how to like take yourself out of the conversation and still be able to have a conversation with the person even if inside your head you're like, "No." | Teresa: I...was trying to talk about their own health-risking behavior. You know, so if people think it's as easy as pulling up your bootstraps to stop drinking, um, or you know, just don't, you know, don't take the needle. Obviously, they don't understand the physiology of the Dopamine. And that was one intervention. We had two physicians in the area that did these great presentations, and they had them down pretty quick, um, to explain the pathophysiology of the addiction cycle and you know, the | Thea: We've got some grievance issues that are still lingering...but there, but I think what was difficult for me was having to really directive and authoritarian, and I do it when I have to, but it's just not the way I behave, you know? I really just expect that people are going to do the right thing (she laughs). Most of the time that happens (laughs). (Thea - Int 1A, lines 339-342, Self-Reflection/ Self-Talk) | Isabel: We do this all the time. Just, you know, just please can put your head on this and get it. Don't, don't try to fight it. You're trying to be right." And I, and I think, Oh, my God, I failed because, you know, he's been working with me almost 15 years, and he still does it like it was yesterday. Yes, he does it less, but he still does it. And, but then I conclude, you know, it is me that I haven't succeeded, but it's just, he's, it's ingrained in his personality. (Isabel - Int 2, lines 400-404, Self-Reflection/ Self-Talk) | Thea: As frustrating as they [the Board of Education members] may be, they don't fight me on curriculum. They don't fight me on the things that matter. And so if I need to spend an hour and a half in a board meeting talking about, and this actually happened an hour and a half in a public board meeting talking about what kind of tree we are going to plant on the front lawn of the Middle School to provide proper shade. You know what, I'll do that because I got the curriculum through that I thought was off most important. |
Dopamine and how it's impacted and all that. They, after you listened to them, it was like, "Wow, now I understand a little bit more." Like, you know, when your Dopamine gets so low, um, your body is telling you like, "You are about to die, do whatever it takes to uh, get this Dopamine back up." So, he said. "It would be like you were out on the desert and hadn't had water for five days." You know, "you'd almost kill the person next to you to get water. So, your brain and your body's telling you that." (Teresa - Int 3, lines 307-316, Persuasion)

| Instance 4 | Teresa: As a woman, what comes easy? | Tamra: … just to make sure everyone knows | Thea: I saw that we, that we all are, when I, | Liz: “There's only so many positions to go | Liz: And as I learned as a leader, if | Isabel: I came to realize that you can't fix | Thea: I feel I communicated with that Board | (Thea - Int 3, lines 358-362, Self-Reflection/Self-Talk) |
Uh, I think, uh, trying to build collaboration and compromise. You know, when I see, um, my role, like out in the community and, even somewhat at the corporate level, um, the thing that I am good at is bringing, um, people around the table, uh, to say, okay, how are we gonna work on this?

(Teresa - Int 1A, line 638 and 638-640. Relationships) that like I don't have to have, I'm not the keeper of all the information. Um, I'm not like the all powerful Oz that like knows or remembers everything and that, and just to recognize too that like there, there are people on this campus that have been involved in this for a really long time and it has like, you know, just to hopefully have them feel good. Like, you know, "We've done this much, we've come this far and we just have a little, little more ways to go." But it has been a long haul and just kind of, you know, recognizing those that have been involved in that.

when I said we all, I mean the, the Secretaries, my Board Office Secretaries, our Supervisors who also had responsibilities in that Middle School, the Teachers that we all were looking out for each other and especially helping out at the Middle School. I had, I had even my Elementary Principals calling and saying, you know, "Is [RMP] okay? What can we do?" Um, and it was it was really neat. So that, that was sort of the saving grace of as difficult and, and pain in the neck as it was, it was to see that your people rise to the occasion. (Liz - Int 1A, lines 430-433. Mentor-Others)
you can be vulnerable to your people, that makes you a little more real as opposed to basically crossing my arms and saying, "No, you're wrong." Being able to take additional inputs, um, and change my opinions. And that comes with a lot of pluses and some challenges around, um, just sometimes I don't want to look at myself. Sometimes I don't want to look at the situation and to do the right thing. I have to and that can be challenging. (Liz - Int 1A, lines 74-78. Self-Reflection/ Self-Talk)
eybody, and that there's sometimes a time in your career where you just have to cut your losses and, and, let go. And that's sad for me because my values say, "No. You work with people. They have strengths. You listen, you work with them, you coach them." And, but, not everybody's coachable; not everybody's coachable. (Isabel - Int 1A, lines 192-195. Self-Reflection/ Self-Talk) and nearly constantly, and it was never good enough. Um, I remembered as I, you know, as you get to the end of the year, and I'm preparing my, my review for the Board on how I, um, accomplish the district goals so that they can evaluate me and, and they would still come back to me and say, in my evaluation, and we admit every goal and you know, we were, we were winning awards and we were doing great stuff and they would still say, "You know, [Thea], we feel you should communicate more with us." And, and I said to them, "Could you tell me what that looks like?
(Tamra - Int 2, lines 237-242, Values Others’ Skills)  (Thea - Int 3, lines 304-309, Relationships)  Because here's what I'm currently doing and I'm not sure, you know, I'm at a loss. I need you to-” And yet they could not articulate it. You know, I said I would say, you know, "I do a weekly newsletter with you. I called the Board President whenever there's an issue or I call the appropriate Chairperson of the Committee, you know, we have Closed Session items regularly. I ask for your, if I include you on different committees, tell me what else I should be doing." "Oh, we don't really know, but we really just need you to communicate more." So that was, that I think
| Instance 5 | Teresa: Um, it's a quote that all my team hears me say it all the time that like, "[Teresa] would, you," I'm, I'm a highly trained observer of human behavior. You didn't know. So I think some of that, um, background in nursing, uh, you know, the field of nursing is to help people. | Teresa: And, um, and so when somebody isn't doing something so they're not, um, you know, nurses are famous for this, um, they're not filling out a form or something that should happen. Uh, instead of going and yelling at them and saying, you know, why aren't you filling | Tamra: We didn't know who the next [College] President was going to be for a while. What if it wasn't me? And we still stuck together, um, and were doing what was best for the institution. And I think, you know, they take a step back and they, and I said, "I | Liz: …the piece of the identity that is impacted for me is wanting to be that teacher, that mentor, that respected veteran that knows that the people recognize that, "She's experienced experience and perspective that's going to help me avoid some of the pitfalls and | Teresa: But as I go around in the organization, again thinking I'm a highly trained observer of human behavior, I have not sensed, um, I know that there were issues. I know there were issues with the morale, but not to that level. I haven't sensed it towards, towards me. I mean, I, I, | Liz: [One of the Captain’s] personality is very strong, very, um, his opinions are formulated, and he's not afraid to say him when he says when they come out pretty direct and blunt. In some ways, it's me, but I've learned tact throughout my career and my life. Um, and | Liz: I had one, one Captain and the man, that was my mentor that towards the end of my career he was holding me back. Um, two years in a row in my evaluations. I am marked as needing improvement in interpersonal communication skills. Um, and |
adapt, uh, to their illness. I mean, we, we diagnose also, we kind of curve on the medical side, but that, that's really what we do. So, um, I think that fed, well into management because one, you're my basic training was you have to really listen to people. Um, you have to really kind of figure out where they're at. You have to help them grow, um, and gain skills. You have to walk beside them. (Teresa - Int 1A, line 246 and 249. Self-ID - Who Am I as Leader, Relationships)

out that form? You should be fine. They're usually not filling it out because it doesn't do anything for patient care. Um, it's not useful at all and they're too busy and so they've found a way to work around it or, or something else. So if you ask them and say, uh, "Geez, why isn't that working? What, why, why did that happen?" Um, so if you believe that they're inherently good and they're trying to, uh, do the best that they can, and then it's usually processes that get in the way. And nurses particularly because I kind of know them the best, again, hope you all see your voice in this and your, your imprint in all of this because it's really, it's not just me, it's, we did this together." (Tamra - Int 1A, lines 962-965. Values Others’ Skills)

help me be a better public servant and grow. (Liz - Int 3, lines 91-94. Mentor - Others)

I go on nights, I do huddles, people are approachable. So then I start thinking, "Wow, my radar is really off" or "I am really disconnected from the organization." Um, you know, "What kind of leader am I that I am representing this organization that has employee engagement of 30%?" I mean, I feel bad for my colleagues who have 1%. I think I'd have to quit. I, I don't, I don't know how you wake up and go in and say, and then it's saying, you know, "Am I, am I going to be able to turn this around?" (Teresa - Int 1A, lines 839-845. Self-Reflection/ Self-Talk)

I've actually talked to my counselor about this. Um, there's times when I find myself holding back or not being forthright with how I truly feel or think because I do not want his disapproval. Um, and it's just a for me, and I haven't owned to him. And I think someday, I might say to him that his opinion of me matters. And when I think that I'm meeting his disapproval. It impacts me and you know, talking, and this was literally the first time I just said that and thought that in the words I just gave to you, Jean. Someone might say, you're giving him too much power. You can't tell Negotiator. I'm the Commander of the Crisis Negotiation Team! And I the first, so the first time around I'm, I, I ask him, I say, "Can you give me some examples?" Um, and um, he couldn't. He kept coming back with, "It just resonates with me. It just resonates with me." And, uh, used the terms in the evaluation that I was "difficult to get along with." I was "obstinate"…. ultimately, he, said, "Well, I'll change some of the wording." Cause I said "Obstinate, to the definition that I recall, was no matter what points of view you put in, no matter what facts are put in front of you, you stick
they're the Kings and Queens of the workaround. Um, they will do whatever it takes to take care of their patients. *(Teresa - Int 1A, lines 290-299. Values Others’ Skills)*

To your view even when it's wrong. And that is not me. It never has been." He goes, "Well, that's not what I mean!" I said, "Well okay, but, the next person that reads this, that knows the definition of this is going to assume that I am this." So, um, and just, I even said when he couldn't give me examples, I said, "If my Sergeant came into your office and said, 'Lieutenant's writing me up in an evaluation where she's marking me as 'needs improvements,' and she can't give me any specific examples as to what I've done,' what would you be saying to me as a Lieutenant? I'd have to..."
**Instance 6**

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<tr>
<th>Isabel</th>
<th>Teresa</th>
<th>Liz</th>
<th>Isabel</th>
<th>Isabel</th>
<th>Thea</th>
<th>Isabel</th>
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<td>I think significantly I what I bring to my work is the, um, value that everybody can</td>
<td>Um, I really believe that the Leadership Team--and we usually meet in</td>
<td>Um, professionally, probably as the Lieutenant, I'm trying to think of the people that</td>
<td>I never found any woman taking an interest in me. You know, I think that they</td>
<td>…it's painful because most of us are not painfully honest because we're afraid of</td>
<td>Um, maintaining a good relationship with him when I knew he was not</td>
<td>I worked for a very difficult woman, smart, very competent, and difficult. And</td>
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contribute and that we all have limitations. And so I really, really work very hard at working with people on their strengths and not worrying about their weaknesses. (Isabel - Int 1A, lines 161-163. Values Others’ Skills)

this room, so I usually focus on this-- that I don't care what your background or role is. You know, I always kind of point out the, the CFO, the Chief Financial Officer, um, I expect that if you're gonna sit at this table that I want your brain focused on all the issues-- that I don't care what your background or role is. You know, I always kind of point out the CFO, the Chief Financial Officer, um, I expect that if you're gonna sit at this table that I want your brain focused on all the issues-- that you're, you're not there just to tell us that we're off our budget or whatever. You need to be as knowledgeable about patient care and the issues that we have here and have a voice about how we're going to change things as anybody else. Right. And, and you work collaboratively as a team, but when you have a matrix there, have had more impact is a gentleman who was a retired DEA agent turned attorney that's connected with me over a, uh, not selected for a position. And um, his help in navigating that reality or that situation. And it continued to instill in me that I do have the leadership, uh, just wasn't being valued. Um, and then the gentleman that actually got me this position once I retired, uh, Chief, he was the Assistant City Administrator at the time and influenced the Mayor to give me a shot. He saw in me things that I didn't see in myself. (Liz - Int 1, Mentor – Male)

weren't around, I think they were, there were women, not so much at the beginning when I started because of my age, it was always men were in power. So those men became mentors. And then when I went into, um, administration, what I found was, is this, you'll find interesting was that the women that were in positions of power behave like men. And so what they did was kick (x) and they were always tough and mean and, and so they never took time to mentor anybody. They just were going to show you that they could do the job. And they weren't always, you know, they offending people. You want to be liked, so you know, making sure that that principle is adhered to where you're honest, but respectful, is to me really [important]. (Isabel - Int 2, lines 163-164. Agentic and Communal Blend)

being truthful with me, you know. I would say, uh, you know, cause I am always, I always give him a heads up on anything that may come his way. I always do that. And he does not do the same thing with me. Although he always promises me he will, he doesn't, which is very sneaky on his part. So that was a real struggle for me because I needed--I knew he wasn't being truthful with me and yet I was not going to get in the mud with him and I just kept smile on my face." And I'm sure some people thought, you know, [name]. I don't think this is working." I think had been there for three or four years....and she says, "That's right. I think you should leave." Just like that she basically fired me on the spot. .... That was the roughest spot I've ever had in my career. (Isabel - Int 1A, lines 566-599.}

she was interested in making money because it was a private institution, and... I was interested in academic issues, quality issues. She wasn't interested in that. So we were a marriage made in hell, basically, you know, it just was not ticking. And one day I went to talk to her, and I told her, uh, "You know, [name]. I don't think this is working." I think had been there for three or four years....and she says, "That's right. I think you should leave." Just like that she basically fired me on the spot. .... That was the roughest spot I've ever had in my career. (Isabel - Int 1A, lines 566-599.
| they're all siloed up, uh, you know, up this way. So, the team this way was, uh, separated. Yeah. And, and didn't grow.  
(Teresa - Int 1A, lines 103-110. Shared Decisions) | were always, you know, combative and mean spirited. And I didn't want to be a leader like that. So I don't think I sought them out as mentors. I just didn't....I worked for two women who were probably two of the meanest people I've ever worked for in my life or known in my life. And I used to think, "Why do they have to be so mean, so angry?" And so neither of them could have been mentors to me cause I didn't, wouldn't, want them. But for the most part, I think women in my generation were fighting for their own leadership ground. And so they didn't think of other women or younger | felt that that was the leadership profile that was gonna make me, I think it was for me, just consistency.  
(Thea – Int 1A, lines 302-313. Strategic Leadership) | Evaluations of Performance/Competence) |
women around them. Now I think it's more, more, common. (Isabel - Int 1A, lines 505-517. Female v Male Leaders, RCT - Gender Roles)

Instance 7

**Liz:** I deal with difficult conversations… my primary role in who I am and what I bring to the position is around communication and relationships. That's where my strength is. So part of my background is a Crisis Negotiator through [another city’s] PD. I was on their team for 21 years. I was the Commander of the team for my last eight years, last six years, for sure. (Liz-Int 1A, lines 29-32. Self-ID-Who am I as Leader)

**Isabel:** When I became President, the man who was head of the Faculty Senate was a faculty member and he was a Biologist and a very strong member of this community. Well-respected, I mean, a good guy. I just, I just, uh, respected him enormously and enjoyed, enjoyed his company, uh, as a faculty member and professional and held him in high regard. And he retired. [Int 3, Lines 352-355] So when the [personnel] situation arose, I

**Tamra:** …with women, more of the conversations I have are continually, "You deserve to be here. You don't have to make a point. Like the point is you're here, and now like we're going to do this in a collaborative way because then” they--sure, they're Chief Academic Officer--but she just becomes very, then, "Well, I have to do everything then on my own, and I'm not going to
remembered that he and [staff member] were very close. And so I called him and asked him, "In the negotiations with [staff member], would you take the lead? Because he trusts you and he, and you could be the person talking to me. Because [he's] not going to talk to me, but you could talk to [him], and this is what I'm prepared to offer." And then I would give him the terms of my offer. He would take that back to [staff member] because he was very respected by [him], and [staff member's] wife also got involved because this was financial for them. They trusted [him], and [he] was the collaborate, and I'm not, cause I, you know, I need to prove myself. And I need to prove that I'm right, and I need to prove." And I'm like, "Okay, let's take a deep breath. Okay, let's, you know, you could still do all those things and again, you will still get the same result, but let's just think about how we get there. So it doesn't look like you're bulldozing all over everyone." But it's a real thing. Like they, the women really strive. (Tamra - Int 1A, lines 711-718. Female v Male Leaders)
| Instance 8 | **Thea:** …and this is the piece that I’m really proud of, that they felt that I really included teachers and promoted teacher leadership just in a general philosophy. Um, which made teachers feel respected. It made supervisors feel respected. It create, I think it made it easy for the supervisors to do their work because we embraced teacher voice.  
*(Thea – Int 3, lines 446-449. Self-ID - Who)* | **Isabel:** I thought if this goes off the rail, if I, if I do this termination--and it was not a termination because, at the end of the day, two people that he really liked--helped to negotiate a retirement settlement. So he retired and I said, "This is much better for him to retire, and I'm willing to let him retire. I can terminate him, but I don't want to terminate him. I want him to retire with dignity."  
*(Isabel-Int 3, lines 271-274.)* | **Thea:** The women just sort of had styles that I thought like, "Okay, that works for me. Um, you know, they were much more visible in their positions than the, than the, I mean the men administrators I had were good at, at things and certainly rent managed buildings well. And some of them were very large buildings, but when I look at the people who built relationships, um, knew more about teaching and learning. |
**Am I as Leader?**

**Strategic Leadership—Go-Betweens**

that was the women.  
*(Thea - Int 1A, lines 809-813. Female v Male Leaders)*

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<th>Instance 9</th>
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|  |  | **Isabel:** I'm a mother. I take my role as a mother very seriously. Um, I respect people who have families and commitments, women who are doing that, you know, job and family and all of that. Uh, I have empathy for that. Um, I am empathetic.  
*(Isabel: Int 1A, lines 692-694)* |  |
### Qualitative Coding and Analysis: Finding Statement 2

**Finding Statement 2**

Participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good that is linked to mission, purpose, and objectives.

**Theme 3**

Participants described situations in which their leadership practices were largely agentic on the surface, but they were undergirded by the leaders’ communal rationales or purposes with regard to a sense of responsibility for making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting people and factors that can threaten the greater good, and expressing directives or unvarnished honesty to move the organization forward.

**Theme 4**

Participants described the use of a strategic blend of agency and communion that supported their impression management as effective leaders and served a greater purpose, which was evidenced through instances that involved their willingness to maintain boundaries despite a desire to forge relationships, to moderate use of power to accomplish challenging goals, and to confer credit to others.

### Subthemes

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th><strong>Theme 3, Subtheme 1:</strong> Participants expressed that they choose to invite others to the table but maintain the ultimate right to decide and the duty to be responsible.</th>
<th><strong>Theme 3, Subtheme 2:</strong> Participants reported a duty to hold staff accountable in a manner that preserves trust or honors fairness.</th>
<th><strong>Theme 3, Subtheme 3:</strong> Participants perceived a responsibility to confront directly the people, systems, and practices that threaten to impede the greater purpose, calling, or mission.</th>
<th><strong>Theme 3, Subtheme 4:</strong> Participants described the need to express directives or hard truths that will forward the organization’s mission or objectives.</th>
<th><strong>Theme 4, Subtheme 1:</strong> Participants discussed as non-negotiable the need to maintain boundaries and distance in the workplace and to find external means to process stress.</th>
<th><strong>Theme 4, Subtheme 2:</strong> Participants described an awareness of their power or authority and the negative and positive effects of moderation.</th>
<th><strong>Theme 4, Subtheme 3:</strong> Participants reported relying on a strategy of credit-sharing versus self-promotion as a means to have voice or drive change for the greater good.</th>
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<td>Categories</td>
<td>Decision-Making</td>
<td>Accountability and Trust</td>
<td>Confrontation</td>
<td>Directives and Truths</td>
<td>Boundaries and Distance</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Credit-Sharing</td>
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<td>Instance 1</td>
<td>Isabel: ...but I made it clear to them, you're not going to tell me what to do because the budget is my responsibility, but you are going to give me your best advice. And then once in that period of time, I told them that I had made some decisions. We talked about the cuts and that I had to send an email out to the community informing them, and somebody raised their hand and said, &quot;That email should not come from you. That email should come from this committee.&quot; (Isabel – Int 1A, lines 234-238. Agentic and Power, Self-ID: Who Am I as Leader, Leadership)</td>
<td>Isabel: And that's when I put out, after I learned my lesson, which is that everybody's on notice that you are a reporter, and if you don't report and something does happen, you get fired. So, it's, it's, that's really important that they understand who's on notice as a reporter and that you have a moral obligation to report things. Because up until that point, nobody had reported anything to me! (Isabel – Int 3, lines 432-436. Power)</td>
<td>Isabel: When I realize that they're not doing what I told them to do, I go crazy. I have said, &quot;I told you to do this, and you didn't do it. You chose to do whatever the [heck] you wanted to. You're not the President.&quot; And I, and I, I'll tell them. &quot;Now, see the mess you got us into? Now I have to fix it! I have to accept the blame for all this, not you!&quot; That's what I always try to teach them. That every decision you think you're making is not going to affect just you. It affects me. Everybody blames me. And I will. I will go</td>
<td>Isabel: And so it is really important that they get a sense of honesty from me and not whitewash whether I think they're doing a good job or not. It's not about them, it's about the problem. And that's really important. (Isabel – Int 2, lines 59-61. Strategic Leadership) Sometimes I don't want to talk to him. I avoid him cause I don't want to go into the battle because, I know I'm going to tangle with him, because I know I'm going to tangle with him. And, now, I've gotten to the point where I say to him, &quot;Okay, I'm going to say something, and I Isabel: At this role, I'm very careful not to mix, you know, church and state. I keep a very, very, very straight line between my, my personal life and my professional life. I don't tell people here anything. So when it comes to my personal crises, which I've had, I, my mother just died. ...I'm very private, so I, if, if I had a personal challenge, I would never go to anybody here. I have people on the outside that I can trust. (Isabel – Int 1A, lines 436-441. Distance and Boundaries) Isabel: We were working on a pretty significant project here, um, in terms of, of, um, building acquisitions. Uh, and I thought that I had it all under control and, and the system office participated in, in, the, um, negotiations, and they decided that they were going to take it in another direction. And I was trying to pull it back, you know, so that we could make the acquisitions that I wanted. Um, and I lost the battle because, um, they're; the bosses they're the heads of the system. And so I think I miscalculated the power source</td>
<td>Teresa: You know, that article is one of the first times that it was even mentioned that, um, I was really a part of forming that group. Uh, it was more beneficial for the credit to go to the City Manager or later, the, it was the, you know, the Director of Public Health. (Teresa -Int 3, lines 355-358. Self-Reflect/Self-Talk)</td>
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| Values Others’ Skills, | Disagree/ Challenge, Strategic Leadership |

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| **Instance 2** | **Liz:** Because of my knowledge and experience around the labor side of things and my natural instinct to being an inclusive leader… my approach to leading [with the Union] is, "I'm going to make a decision that's going to impact you, and I have the time to confer with you. | **Liz:** One of my biggest frustrations with [former boss] separate from not being valued, um, to move me up the ranks was that I didn't have as much influence. I could influence the whatever team, whether it was 17 people to eight people, whatever was within my | **Teresa:** I would try and make that pretty well known, uh, in the community. Um, and I, I told them that I was going to be talking about it. I said, "I don't think you're fulfilling your responsibility as a community partner. You're a community hospital. Um, you're a not-for- | **Liz:** So, you know, that type of (x) that, um, it just really, I came out and said, "Before end of shift for everybody now. These are the expectations. This what I'm holding, these, these are the standards." And then, you know, a year later I'm disciplining a Sergeant. "I | **Isabel:** And I just don't, I don't show my vulnerabilities. I mean there's some that are obvious, but others that are, um, and people want a strong leader, they don't want to know your vulnerabilities. They don't want to know that you're ready to burst into tears | **Isabel:** To be a successful College President, you have to be willing to, to share power. And you have to be willing to understand that in sharing power, sometimes you won't get everything you want. I think I've gotten more than I've given, you there. And that made it hard for me because we lost the advantage, you know, in purchasing the buildings. ..I think that was once where I, I was very aggressive, and they didn't like it, and they didn't like a woman being that aggressive. (Isabel – Int 1A, lines 623-630. Agentic – Task Orientation) |
| **Communal Blend)** | off on somebody and say, "This is just unacceptable that you did this! Unacceptable!" (Isabel – Int 2, lines 414-419. Discourse - Directness/ Agency) | don't want you to get defensive. Or if you get defensive, let's limited the amount of defense with this that you give me." Because he gets so defensive; he sees it as a personal attack. (Isabel – Int 2, lines 148-152. Discourse - Directness/ Agency) | | | | (Isabel – Int 2, lines 414-419. Discourse - Directness/ Agency) |

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**Notes:**
- **Liz:** I have to be careful not to, uh, push my ideas forward and not listen to the rest of the group. Um, and, you know, again, I think if I, if I slipped, uh, too much, cause sometimes it would happen where it was like, "Oh, you know, [Teresa's] got this idea." Um, you, you
control, so to speak, my authority, um, my chain of command that I could influence there to an extent. Then I had to always ask for permission going up and I was always struggling with the, with my staff saying, "Well, well, Lieutenant so-and-so doesn't make anybody on their staff do that." You know, so trying to do the right thing and hold people accountable and, and, encourage them to meet the expectations. First of all, just set expectations, you know, um. (Liz - Int 2, lines 146-152. Power)

Teresa: Uh, you know, having been in these roles, uh, it is

Isabel: Someone might say, you're giving him too much power.

Liz: Someone might say, you're giving him too much power.

Teresa: Uh, you know, having been in these roles, uh, it is

Liz: Someone might say, you're giving him too much power.

Teresa: Uh, you know, having been in these roles, uh, it is

just, you know, as usual, you don't get the buy in.

(Teresa - Int 3, lines 417-420. Self-Reflect/ Self-Talk)
actions and being fair by, "Okay, I think I have information, but I need more information." So, the fairness around collecting as much information as possible before I make a decision, whether that's a disciplinary decision, a personnel selection decision to an operational change, modification, um, hiring process, whatever. Um, and knowing that for the vast majority, I've done well and right. (Liz – Int 3, lines 371-374. Agentic and Communal Blend)

inherited, the first one retired three months after I came on the job. The second one retired a year later, 15 months after I came on the job. And it was neither one of them wanted to work for me because they were going to be held accountable. (Liz - Int 3, lines 40-43. Power)

um, what, what are we going to do about that?" And to which I said, "Okay, I read through our policy about gathering, political signage, and all that. I've had a very clear conversation with the Association President, and he knows. And so, any gathering is happening off school grounds." At our high school, for example, they were across the street at the apartment complex. It was like five teachers holding up signs, but you know what? They're off school grounds. And if they want to freeze their behinds off on a January morning, fine. So, but I had very clear a lot of questions to me and then I, my very first response back to you would be, 'Okay, and how would you like to handle it?' And you wouldn't have really thought that through yet." And I finally said, "Let me be really frank with you, [EMSG], I don't pay you $100,000 to just bring me questions. I need you to bring me answers," to which she nodded. And you know what? That has never happened again since then. (Thea – Int 2, lines 195-199. Discourse: Directness/Agency)

lonely because you don't have a team..... When we'd be driving down to [Corp Office out of state], this particular woman would always say, "Oh, [Teresa], and I'll drive with you." Well, she played that off the others, like, "Why I'm closer to [Teresa], cause I drive down with her." I mean, and we had this kind of like a boil that just the team just kinda like, and so when all that came out, so from now on, it's like, I don't drive with anybody. I don't, um, you know, I don't socialize with anybody, but you know, sometimes having been part of teams as a staff nurse and everything else, You can't tell him that. Well I don't, to me it's not so much that I'm giving him that much power. Um, I give him power when I make my actions and decisions different than otherwise I would. (Liz - Int 2, lines 178-181. Power)

around, uh, filling the Sergeant's position. We were able to successfully settle the demotion process, um, for one of my Sergeants who was not working to the standard that we expected him to be. And that took us four years to do a lot of, um, work with [Capt 1] and I, [Capt 2] and I did together. (Liz – Int 2, lines 60-63. Discourse: Credit-giving)
conversations with and I felt very confident because for me it was coming back to taking the high road, not dying on every hill. My, my leadership needs are elsewhere and if you want my leadership to be here then other things are not going to happen.

(Thea – Int 1A, lines 938-946. Discourse - Directness/Agency)

it's like, "Wow,"--you know, I, I see them here, and it's like, "Oh, I wish I could have that." You know, but you just don't. There's, there's nobody. So, you've got to have a real strong inner core, um, I always say, as to what your right and wrong are and what you're about because there'll be people all around you, uh, telling you what you did wrong or what they don't like. Um, you know, when I worked at [another hospital], that it was, it was pretty awful, sometimes the stuff people would say.

(Teresa – Int 1A, lines 708-722. Distance)
| Instance 4 | Thea | Thea: I said, "Let me just share some observations with you about some things that I'm noticing from a leadership perspective. I want to help you... let's talk through this." I didn't feel he knew his students. He was leaving the building at 2:30 every day... his secretaries were covering for him. Um, I felt that he had some non-tenured Vice Principals who really craved leadership and mentorship, and he was not taking advantage of that. Um, I felt that he, when it came time to achieve goals, he was a one guy show and wasn't  
| Tamra | I think I'm striving to be somebody that's still, you know, that I can listen to everybody and still be able to synthesize the information and say, "Well, you know, I appreciate how you feel. I hope you appreciate how I feel, but we still need to come up with a game plan to move forward." Um, so I try to be the leader that's, that's still action oriented no matter how many challenges or obstacles or negativity somebody wants to throw into a situation. Um, and I think, you know, cause I do try to keep the larger outcome in mind.  
| Tamra | I won't hesitate even if it has to be an awkward or difficult conversation. I'm like, you know what, I just want to nip this in the bud. Um, over the years, especially here, there's been things where I've like canceled certain meetings because I feel like something's come up that's more important. I'm like, "You know what? I just, I have to go up the hill, um, and talk to this person, like right now. So we can just, I need to understand better where they're coming from. I need to express better where I'm coming from." Um, because I feel like it will move whatever it is.  
| Thea | In [former district] there was me as the Superintendent, there was no Assistant and then everybody else was a Supervisor and a Principal. And I evaluated them. So, while certainly there were some things, like I said, our Supervisor of Special Education was probably the one person who I really felt was at a level where I could confide a bit more in her. I did that less with the others just because I felt more of a distance in our role.  
| Tamra: Um, but it's very likely there has to be a lot of trust there. Um, and you know, again, understanding that I'm not there to step on her, on her role. She's, you know, not there to like look more like authoritative than the President. There definitely has to be a lot of understanding of like rules and that we're there to, you know, make each other in the institution, um, look good.  
looping in the network of very smart teachers who were in his building. So I bulleted that out for him. And, um, I finally stepped back. I said, "Okay. I talked a long time," I said, you know, "go ahead. What do you think? Do you want some time? You know, what would you like to do?" I said, "We don't need to decide anything right now, but I would like to help you craft goals to address these." And he said, "I'll be honest with you. Some of this smarts because nobody has told me this before," he said, "but I appreciate the feedback." I'd like to go back and reflect and then come back and talk.

was that we were trying to move forward like that much faster, and we'll both feel better about it. So that definitely comes easy to me.

(Tamra - Int 1A, lines 723-729. Agentic and Communal Blend)
| Instance 5 | **Liz**: I want to formalize how those officers are selected, identified and selected, how we train them, how we support them and how we implement the actual training itself with documentation and check off lists. And we've got probably 75, 70, 75% of it already done. I want to formalized, I want, and [Capt 1], this is really, um, an operational piece that falls onto [Capt 1], this position over operations and giving him and his team, the autonomy of producing the some more with you." | **Teresa**: I want to be, um, I want to be a leader who is a conductor, you know, or sometimes I use the analogies of a gardener who is able to help, um, kind of help the potential that's here, uh, flourish. And I want to be able to put the guard rails on there. Sometimes people need to be, um, you know, guided and say, "You know, this isn't the place for you." And to hold people accountable for that. | **Liz**: And, uh, very often when I would talk to them about, you know, legislating for programs that support, you know, they would talk about how, you know, these people made the choice to, uh, take that person needle and inject it. And that was their choice. So, you know, it's up to them to change. And so I would turn to them because most people are, you know, overweight to some extent. I remember one in particular and I said to them, you know what, you're, you're overweight and | **Tamra**: You know how difficult it is during any presidential transition. Again, the whole campus community's feeling this. And I'm always the go to person. Um, and this was one time like nobody could talk to me about it. Nobody could, you know, ask about it. So like everybody knew, but nobody knew. Um, and it was just like, was not that positive person. Now people give me feedback and say, "Oh, we never even knew when." And I'm like, "Well, I did.** | **Teresa**: Oh, because I think, um, if I step into quickly and again, I probably did in, uh, in the meeting, um, but it cuts off, uh, dialogue and discussion sometimes. You know, if the boss speaks up and says, "No, I don't like that option," you might not hear the full sense of why it's a good option. | **Tamra**: I struggle with that. I think part of it is because I was struggling with the Search. Um, you know, you were getting a lot of questions about vision, which like it was hard for me cause, like, well, the vision’s been mine. Like that Long-term Strategic Visioning process, like that was mine. I created it. I owned it. When I said I wanted us to be more diverse and, you know, we have to do things so that we can accommodate more students and full-time students, and |
different documents. And realizing that, yeah, we don't, they. [Capt 1] is one of those guys that he wants action--he doesn't want reports, he doesn't want meetings. He wants to minimize all that (x). And I know that there's times when you need to have the documentation, you need to have the meetings and pushing forward on those items to have the necessary conversations for the planning, for the transparency, for the input. Um, and then with the, the, same time trying not to bog down the process. (Liz – Int 2, lines 329-338. Agentic– Task Orientation)

Who Am I as Leader)

you're probably a type two diabetic and I bet you're hypertensive and you have some cholesterol issues. I said, and you probably know very well what you should eat and what you shouldn't eat and that you should exercise, but you don't. So, should I not treat you? You have a chronic illness." (Teresa - Int 3, lines 36-44. Agentic or Communal Blend)

training and yeah, exactly. Yeah. Well that Speed of Trust book. Yeah. I had people from anywhere from, "(x) her. She can't make me do it" to "I want to do it because I'm an overachiever, and I'm going to get something out of it right now and everywhere in between." Um, so, and there's benefit in it. Um, even the ones, I remember sitting at a Detectives Meeting--I meet with them monthly--and one of the guys was using it sarcastically. I smiled, and I said, "I'm still winning. Cause you're using it." (Liz – Int 1A, lines 480-490. Strategic Leadership)

my husband did, our VP of HR did" (Laughs). (Tamra – Int 1A, lines 449-453. Distance and Boundaries)

part-time students—all of that was mine. So I have to admit, I struggled a little bit at the beginning. (Tamra – Int 1A, lines 670-675. Discourse: Credit-giving)
| Instance 6 | **Thea:** We've had the opportunity to hire three Elementary Principals during my time here, and every time we do, um, our screening and our eventual interviews, I always include other principals and typically one of the curriculum supervisors in on that interview because their input--you know, this is going to be a colleague to them--their input matters to me.  
(Thea - Int 2, lines 124-127. Discourse: Input or Consensus) | **Thea:** So, let's be really clear about, you know, here's the agenda here. If people are double-booked, let's figure out who needs to go where. And one of the things I think we can correct for next time is, for example, [SPED], if you're having Inclusion Meetings with a K-2 population then the department folks aren't going to grab that grade level. They're going to grab a different grade levels, so people don't feel they're pulled in multiple directions.  
(Thea - FO, lines 556-560. Agentic-Directive) | **Teresa:** I publicly in forums, um, spoke about how I was so disappointed that, you know, certainly I understand the risk of a lawsuit and um, but really viewed this as a very conservative approach and that when you were in an epidemic with people dying, um, you know, every week, uh, that was not the time to leave the table. Um, and they have now come back, you know, under some kind of restricted wording or you know, whatever. But, um, they are at least, uh, back at the table.  
(Teresa – Int 3, lines 199-203. Strategic Leadership) | **Thea:** You know how you, you sometimes you have to step in and save teachers from themselves ….Phys Ed teachers at the elementary level [were] telling their Building Principals, "We're not going to do Field Day." And then I would have to come back and I would coach the principals and say, "Here's the language you're gonna use. 'Field day takes place during the school day during their contractual time.' If you need to free them up during the day to put the cones out for the relay races, please do that. But they will run Field Day if you tell them to, and you will tell them to. So, there were | **Liz:** Um, I rely on my two Captains quite a bit. Not in the sense of talking to them about my feelings and emotions and how I'm processing stuff, but more when, when I have decisions to make.  
(Liz – Int 1A, lines 544-545. Distance and Boundaries) | **Teresa:** I think I have to work with her more on that. I'm a hard person to disagree with--especially, um, in our fields being similar and she, being younger in the field. So, uh, that is something that I think we've got a dialogue a little bit more about."  
(Teresa - Int 2, lines 241-244. Power) | **Teresa:** The two other presidents that have come in the last year and a half, uh, are both men. And, uh, I have noticed, um, a substantial difference in how the rest of the corporate, my colleagues, how they react to what they say compared to what I say. And to the point, um, the three of us are quite close, and, uh, we just put it out on the table. And I'll say sometimes, “You know what? One of you guys has to bring this up because it won’t go if I say it.” Now that could be maybe because I’m a woman. It could be because people are sick of hearing me argue or talk or whatever. |
times where I needed to be really directive. I don't like to do that but again like really cause then I'm going to have parents after our Principals. (Thea – Int 1A, lines 318-325, Agentic-Directive)

Because I’ve been here for eight years, and uh, whatever, and they're new. But, you know, it’s not like their experience is so much greater than mine. Um, you know, in one case I have more experience, but, um you can see the difference. As women, we don’t have huge egos. It’s not like, you know, I have to have credit for everything or all that. So it’s really easy to just say, “Okay, c’mon, no, we’re going to get together. So yeah, okay, you can go, you know, take credit for this and do whatever.” We’re just trying to get something else done. (Teresa – Int 1A, lines 627-
| Instance 7 | Teresa: What has become, um, even more difficult since we have switched the Corporate structure [is that] we still have these Corporate leaders who are left from the so-called matrix structure. So it has been difficult, you know. I don’t want to go to them and just say, “Hey, I’m the boss now, so I get to make all the decisions.” Um, I’m trying to be respectful of what they bring to the table. (Teresa –Int 1A, lines 434-437. Values Others’ Skills) | Thea: And he crafted goals that I then nudged a little further for my second year as Superintendent. He’s already a tenured administrator at this point. He crafted goals that he was going to be working on. To his credit, some of them he worked, he completed, but some of the other pieces now I was seeing that, I just don’t think that he was capable of doing this. Um, and the window for mentoring him at this point, he’s a veteran, tenured high school principal. There's only so far I'm going to guide him and frankly I have other things to be doing as well. (Teresa –Int 1A, lines 434-437. Values Others’ Skills) | Liz: “We need to define what the qualifications are. Even if we’re not going to have a formal selection process, we need to have some criteria of the job description. I don’t think we have a job description for FTOs in my memory right now out of the various job descriptions that we have. Um, so setting up what those expectations are once they are living the role, as well as defining for them, this is the goal. Um, and what we haven't done to my knowledge is ask who's interested. (Liz – FO, lines 546-550. Agentic-Task Orientation) | Liz: Um, for purposes of where our strengths are, her personality, she and I being of the same age group, uh, she and I developed a personal friendship. And that friendship, me and her being able to vent and say some things that she probably wouldn't say to a different Chief, [and I’m] still making operational and personnel decisions based on fairness. (Liz – Int 3, lines 281-284. Distance and Boundaries) | Thea: Um, I, I work really hard not to appear to just be, I work really hard not to look like I'm the smartest person or the most important person in the room--that I think when we're there we're all on even even ground. (Thea - Int 2, lines 30-31. Power) | Teresa: I think there were other people in the group that needed to, um, have credit for it or, or if they were really gonna join in and collaborate. So, there was one individual, who headed up the, uh, [FHC]. He's since retired. But he was one of the people that, um, people had a lot of issue with in the community. Um, he is the largest [FHC]. Um, and uh, you know, they said he was getting grants that other people should, should get. It was important that [he], um, really shined, uh, in this. And eventually what he did is he turned over one of his grants that
| Instance 8 | **Isabel:** And during that investigation it was easy to conclude the fact that he had thrown the [object] and jeopardized the lives of students, parents and staff. The fact that I had now witnesses that said he had verbally abused them. I had witnesses that | **Tamra:** I was just like, "[BC], this is your role as the Board Chair. You've got to take control." And I feel like I was coaching him. I'm like, "Yeah, you gotta take control of the Board. They, it, looks to you as the Board Chair." | **Isabel:** I was consumed with it for three weeks. I did nothing else. Basically, came to work, and I have a very, very loving relationship with my husband. And that was a gift from God because I could talk to him, objectively, you know, I could, I mean not to talk to him--he, he | **Isabel:** And it is really hard as a [University] President to criticize, somebody that's beloved. Now, he wasn't beloved by everyone, but he was beloved by a number of people. So, he retired, and I said, "This is much better for him to retire, and I'm willing to let he had gotten, uh, to the whole group of the [CHB], so it could be used in a, in a broader way. And, um, you know, he, uh, I mean that was a huge thing to do. And, uh, I think it was important that he and others, uh, got the credit for that. |
said that he had taken money from them. Uh, and on and on and on. What would continue to happen? So, I wanted to be strong in that regard. Second, I needed to be fair, and I needed to make sure that this wasn't me frustrated with [him] over the years, because he wouldn't do a budget correctly. He wouldn't listen to the fundraising parameters that we had set. So was it me being frustrated with him, or was it me understanding that [he] was no longer a member of this community who would abide by the rules and regulations and the protocols and values of the institution? I would listen objectively, and I could talk to him openly. He was a good person [in which to confide]. He's an experienced University President from [another institution]. So, he knows [the issues] and was able to give me very good feedback. (Tamra – Int 1A, lines 1029-1031. Discourse: Disagree/Challenge) him retire. I can terminate him, but I don't want to terminate him. I want him to retire with dignity, and he could have a retirement party with people that he loves and all of that. But he's got to leave." (Isabel – Int 3, lines 266-275. Agentic and Communal Blend)
concluded the latter.  
(Isabel – Int 3, lines 135-173.  
Agentic or Communal Blend)

Instance 9

Liz: I can't change the past. What I can try to do is influence the future going forward and my approach to leadership is to be firm and fair to all, no matter what gender, no matter what person and relationship I may have with them. So, I am going to set the tone and the message that just that firm and fair across the board.  
(Liz – Int 3, lines 343-346.  
Strategic Leadership)

Liz: …firm but fair and had that said more than once. Um, and that's again a reputation that I prefer to have over many others. The challenge around doing it, um, is the Cupcake side of me, that compassionate side of me.  
(Liz – Int 3, lines 376-378.  
Agentic and Communal Blend)

Teresa: She said, "We're going to set up a phone in the center of [the Dept] and uh, I'll, I'll talk to them." And I said, "Uh, well, that really is not a good plan." And she said, "Well, you know, I can't come down." And I said, "Well then I'm gonna need to be present." “No, I don't need you present.” And I said, "No, I, I will be present because people here still think that I have some responsibility."  
(Teresa – Int 1A, lines 347-351.  
Discourse: Disagree/Challenge)

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(Teresa – Int 1A, lines 347-351.  
Discourse: Disagree/Challenge)

Tamra: And I have to say like, my husband, like, and again, I didn't even know what back then, but like he just fills that role. He's the appropriate sort of the balance of like when to be tough on me in when to be like, "Okay, let's just hug it out. Like you just need a hug here." And, um, he tells me more often than anybody not to be so hard on myself. Um, he never says like, "You need to think more like a man." He'll say, "You know, just so you know, a man wouldn't apologize for what you're
getting ready to apologize for." He'll just point that out, like gently. But he'll never say, "You need to think more like a man or talk like more like." It, he's just like, "You just have to be, be yourself." Like, "That is good enough." And so it's just fascinating to me how sometimes your, your partner can make or break. I, I never would've gotten through the search process without him. Never if I was married to somebody, a different person or not married, I, I don't, I wouldn't have had this strength. (Tamra – Int 1A, lines 298-308. Family-Spouse Support)
Teresa: Um, you know, my, my other strength is my husband.... So, I've been trying, uh, because I, I do, I get stubborn, um, and uh, I get pretty riled up. Um, and I try for compromise. Though my husband will say to me sometimes, "You know what?" He goes, "I think you're the only one that's working for compromise." He goes, "I don't think anybody else is," which is, you know, sometimes how it feels.

(Teresa – Int 1A, lines 503-508. Family-Spouse Support)
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<tr>
<th>Instance 11</th>
<th>Liz: I have a therapist that I see in order to survive this job and to survive 25 years. Uh, actually, well, not, I did 29 years. (Liz – Int 1A, line 17. Self-Care)</th>
<th>Isabel: I think it's really important that I honor and respect the Vice Presidents by meeting with them alone as a group, because that pumps them up, that they're important... that gives them a lot of um, power at the university. (Isabel – Int 2, lines 353-357. Power)</th>
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<td>Instance 12</td>
<td>Liz: Um, therapy. Dump it there... Um, and pretty much, it’s, my personal life and without having a relationship and the vast number of people that I know, I kind of use those</td>
<td>Tamra: ...no matter what, when I'm in the room, I'm the President and CEO. Even, you know, um, it's like I'm not [Tamra] anymore. I'm not like, I am speaking as the</td>
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different friends. Like two to three nights a week. I probably have social plans on average with people like tonight, um, I gotta check with [her]. Um, it's a, she, uh, she's actually the, she works, um, Mental Health Liaison for [a different] police department. She's in a [job role], but she works within the community around mental illness and co-existing, um, substance use disorder dynamics. So anyway, um, just friends like that, I'll have dinner plans and depending on who they are and the level of trust, I'll vent about this thing or that thing. Um, and, and oftentimes get perspective President and CEO. And even though I like to think that, "Well, I'm just one more voice at the table." I still think it's an a, I try to catch myself in this, but it's really hard cause you know, I want to jump in, too, sometimes like, "Hey, I have something to say still, too." Um, but sometimes it's, it's, it's hard...Because no matter what, like I said, at the end of the day, like I'm there, and speaking as the President. And sometimes, too, people are like, "Oooo, well, now can I really say something? Is she gonna listen? Or is then everybody else gonna listen because the
| Instance 13 |  |  | when I'm looking, when I'm targeting and looking for perspective. Um, I tend to stick more to the professional side of things, but when I, when it's, when it's just the emotions, and I need the dump, um, it's, it's more my non-law enforcement friends.  
(*Liz – Int 1A, lines 567-576, Confidants-External*) | President just spoke?"  
(*Tamra – Int 2, lines 187-195, Self-Reflect/Self-Talk*) |

**Liz:** Um, and even as I've developed in my own emotional intelligence of when to bite my tongue and sit back, even when I have an idea. Um, and when, when to, when I disagree with somebody else's idea to bite my tongue. So, especially in that leadership role, I
don't want to shut down my staff and my volunteers and in the community. So trying to control the body language and the mouth, um, while the brain's still back here going. (laughs). (Liz – Int 1A, lines 271-276. Discourse-Talk Less)
Appendix G:

Implications for Leaders/Aspirants and Future Research
### Implications for Leaders/Aspirants and Future Research

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<th>Findings</th>
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<td>Finding 1: Participants describe their leadership identity in terms of their successes or challenges in enacting a communal orientation through which they build and maintain relationships that they perceive as critical to their ability to fulfill their purpose or calling, move the organization or community forward, navigate difficult circumstances, evaluate their effectiveness as leaders, and improve leadership capacity of themselves or others.</td>
<td>Buttner (2001) conducted a qualitative study of 129 female entrepreneurs, using focus groups and interviews, for the purpose of determining whether their self-reported descriptions of their interactions with employees and clients are relational. Results indicated 73.4% of participants made at least one comment classified as relational in describing their approach with clients and staff. Participants described themselves as nurturing, developing, teaching, empowering, and building relationships through their role as leaders. They discussed the importance of a relational approach in furthering the success of their businesses and operating as a team. Participants described their disappointment when team members were unresponsive to their efforts to care for them or to help them, their practice of maintaining distance or boundaries in relationships with staff, their preference for collaborative decision-making, their sense of empowerment in teaching or mentoring others to enhance their capacity, and their efforts to develop and forward a common vision that sets the purpose for their businesses.</td>
<td>Participants in this investigation described their leadership orientations in terms of communality, as their preferred approach and as a strength. Participants discussed their sense of fulfillment in mentoring others, and their frustrations and feelings of inadequacy when they were unable to establish effective relationships with staff members, supervisors, or other stakeholders. Therefore, leaders and stakeholders in a position to hire, promote, mentor aspirants, or recommend candidates for executive leadership positions should examine their hiring, leadership training, and promotion practices to ensure implicit biases with regard to gender and role congruency are eradicated from selection criteria, hiring and promotion protocols, training programs, and job postings to ensure that recruitment components control for gender stereotyping that could, otherwise, tend to exclude communal candidates from accessing executive-level roles.</td>
<td>All five participants in this present study were females. Four of the participants were Caucasian/white, with only one Latina representing diversity. All five participants were leaders in non-profit organizations that can be categorized as providing human services: education, healthcare, law enforcement. Future researchers should diversify the sample to include males, non-whites, and leaders in for-profit organizations that are less apt to be associated as providers of human services, such as banking or finance, advertising, and other such professional fields. Diversifying the sample with respect to gender and type of profession can assist in determining if participants’ self-reported description of their communal leadership identities persists across genders and professions. Including participants in the sample to represents a range of racial/ethnic diversity could assist in exploring the full concept of the double-bind,</td>
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<td>Finding 2: Participants described their leadership identity as a complex blend of agency and communion which moderates their approach in making decisions, holding staff accountable, confronting barriers, expressing directives and hard truths, maintaining appropriate distance or boundaries, exercising power, and sharing credit with others in a manner which enables leaders to accomplish the greater good.</td>
<td>Weiner and Burton (2016) conducted a qualitative study of 9 participants (6 females, 3 males; 5 Caucasians/whites, 4 non-whites) in a one year, turnaround principal training program to determine how participants understood school leadership and their place within it. The researchers found that all participants described turnaround school leaders as communal in attributes and approach. Participants reported that feedback delivered to them during training in the presence of all enrolled in the program differed by gender. Males reported that feedback</td>
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**Findings**

 affirmed and reinforced their growth by favoring their agentic behaviors. Females reported that feedback was negative, in that they were encouraged to be more agentic and to be less concerned with likability, to tone down their style or image, to temper their gestures, or to be more political. Participants were assigned male mentors throughout the program. Females reported having received less time and support from their mentors and expressed that they felt a lack in self-confidence, having perceived the mentoring relationship as one in which they had less power as apprentices as compared to mentors whom they regarded as experts. Conversely, male participants reported that they had increased access to their mentors for feedback, and they viewed themselves as being equal in expertise in comparison to their mentors. Males searching for employment as turnaround principals were hired by districts immediately following the training program.

Conversely, females received interview feedback from prospective employers that emphasized a lack of fit or a recommendation to secure an assistant principalship prior to applying to become a principal. Zheng, Surgevil, and Kark (2018) conducted interviews with 64 female executives in 51 organizations across the Midwest area of the United States that explored self-perceptions of tensions experienced in negotiating agentic and communal approaches to leadership. Participants reported having learned to lead contextually and having presented themselves as agentic, communal, or a blend of both to accord with “the demands of a particular situation or target audience” (p. 640). In referenced herein, make reference to formal performance evaluations or informal feedback that perpetuates gender role congruency biases, serving to obfuscate the career trajectory of female leaders, who have been sanctioned for agentic and communal practices or attributes, indicating a double bind for these leaders. Therefore, protocols and reports associated with evaluations or other assessments of fitness to lead should be audited to redress implicit and explicit gender biases, with emphasis given to measures that require objective evidence to support feedback intended to support growth or redirection. Higher education courses or industry-provided apprenticeships should be audited to ensure corrective feedback is free from gender bias or gender stereotypes. Management or leadership training programs and materials or systems of leadership recruitment within institutions and organizations should be reviewed, and revised as needed, to be more inclusive of theories that frame leadership orientations which extends to sanctions against women of color as an added complexity of barriers faced due to gender. The present study was limited to the gender aspect of the double-bind due to limited response from those interested in becoming study participants. The peer-reviewed studies referenced herein produced results that were based on self-reported lived experiences through qualitative research or emanated from experiments in lab-settings (Buttner, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Weiner & Burton, 2016); and Zheng et al., 2018). In the former context, the self-reports could be biased by the participants’ perceptions, and in the latter, they might not represent actual outcomes that would occur with actual job candidates or based on authentic staff feedback of their actual leaders. Therefore, future research may benefit from the addition of a 360-type instrument that collects actual staff and stakeholder feedback on their perceptions of the participant leaders’ orientations.

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<td>affirmed and reinforced their growth by favoring their agentic behaviors. Females reported that feedback was negative, in that they were encouraged to be more agentic and to be less concerned with likability, to tone down their style or image, to temper their gestures, or to be more political. Participants were assigned male mentors throughout the program. Females reported having received less time and support from their mentors and expressed that they felt a lack in self-confidence, having perceived the mentoring relationship as one in which they had less power as apprentices as compared to mentors whom they regarded as experts. Conversely, male participants reported that they had increased access to their mentors for feedback, and they viewed themselves as being equal in expertise in comparison to their mentors. Males searching for employment as turnaround principals were hired by districts immediately following the training program.</td>
<td>Zheng, Surgevil, and Kark (2018) conducted interviews with 64 female executives in 51 organizations across the Midwest area of the United States that explored self-perceptions of tensions experienced in negotiating agentic and communal approaches to leadership. Participants reported having learned to lead contextually and having presented themselves as agentic, communal, or a blend of both to accord with “the demands of a particular situation or target audience” (p. 640). In referenced herein, make reference to formal performance evaluations or informal feedback that perpetuates gender role congruency biases, serving to obfuscate the career trajectory of female leaders, who have been sanctioned for agentic and communal practices or attributes, indicating a double bind for these leaders. Therefore, protocols and reports associated with evaluations or other assessments of fitness to lead should be audited to redress implicit and explicit gender biases, with emphasis given to measures that require objective evidence to support feedback intended to support growth or redirection. Higher education courses or industry-provided apprenticeships should be audited to ensure corrective feedback is free from gender bias or gender stereotypes. Management or leadership training programs and materials or systems of leadership recruitment within institutions and organizations should be reviewed, and revised as needed, to be more inclusive of theories that frame leadership orientations which extends to sanctions against women of color as an added complexity of barriers faced due to gender. The present study was limited to the gender aspect of the double-bind due to limited response from those interested in becoming study participants. The peer-reviewed studies referenced herein produced results that were based on self-reported lived experiences through qualitative research or emanated from experiments in lab-settings (Buttner, 2001; Rudman &amp; Glick, 2001; Weiner &amp; Burton, 2016); and Zheng et al., 2018). In the former context, the self-reports could be biased by the participants’ perceptions, and in the latter, they might not represent actual outcomes that would occur with actual job candidates or based on authentic staff feedback of their actual leaders. Therefore, future research may benefit from the addition of a 360-type instrument that collects actual staff and stakeholder feedback on their perceptions of the participant leaders’ orientations,</td>
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addition, study participants reported that they used a variety of leadership strategies to mitigate the tension they experienced between agency and communion, which were organized in the following three categories: (a) act with greater agency, (b) reject agency and favor communion, and (c) blend agency and communion in leadership approach. The first two strategies were described by the study’s authors as negative. Agentic female leaders can experience backlash or sanctions and encounter challenges with likeability and followership. Communal females risk their impression management of their competency to serve as leaders. A blend of agency and communion was described as an advantage to females’ emergence as leaders, effectiveness as leaders, and follower satisfaction with their leadership.

Rudman and Glick (2001) conducted a study to determine whether agentic females experience stronger bias in applying for a female gender-type job versus competing for male gender-typed management positions. This experiment occurred in a lab setting with 107 Rutgers University undergraduate participants who were provided with a computer lab manager job description that either emphasized communal (female) traits or agentic traits (male), which they utilized to evaluate male and female candidates’ competency, social skills, and hireability. Agentic females were perceived to have greater competency, but lower likability, than the androgynous/neutral females. The researchers found that women candidates who moderated their agency with communality were able to mitigate the female stereotype of being deemed too soft or too nice as contextual or situational in practice. Such materials and resources should promote the blending of agentic and communal practices and support the development of analyzing case studies or other instructional methodologies that would develop in aspirants, as well as their mentors, criteria or processes for considering and supporting the rationale for assessing and implementing either of the two approaches or the appropriate degree of a blended approach.

Together with semi-structured interviews of leader participants, the data collected from the instrument could be used to triangulate leaders’ self-reported descriptions and perceptions of their practices and effectiveness.
for leadership. The researchers did note, however, that the right balance would be situational and, therefore, difficult for candidates to determine when posturing for a position. The authors concluded that unless agency was moderated with communality, the agentic female would not be hired; however, the same was not true for the agentic male candidates.

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Department of Education and Educational Psychology  
Dissertation Registration Form

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Dissertation Title: The Social Construction of Women Leaders’ Gender Frames

Dissertation Committee Members: See attached Dissertation Approval Page

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