

Leadership Identity in a Gendered World: An Autoethnographic Journey

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THESIS

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I. INTRODUCTION

The slow growth in women achieving leadership positions in the fields of healthcare and education, both fields in which women predominate the workforce, remains unexplained in the literature. Upon investigation, the research in each field did not adequately address the resistance to and lack of change over time. The literature describes the situation with possible contributing features but stops short of recommending how to pick up the pace in resolving the inequities. Few incentives exist in the systems to create ladders to leadership. Moreover, there is little outcry about the imbalance and the need for change.

My interest focused upon understanding the systemic and cultural barriers that prevailed and discouraged change in the number of women in leadership positions. My own career path spanned thirty years of increasingly responsible positions in both healthcare and education. Growth as a leader during these years was difficult but not in the same way that the literature represents. My story is different from the published biographies of other women leaders in my fields. My story is unique because I worked in both fields and can draw upon my healthcare experience as I analyze the prevailing shortages of women in leadership in education. I chose to document my personal journey and analyze it through the lens of feminist scholars and theorists of leadership and identity.

My identity as a leader developed while working in two feminized professions: healthcare, and education. This research takes advantage of that experience to analyze more deeply the impact of unknowingly joining and working in a gendered field. Through my own leadership journey, I analyzed the interplay between the socially constructed self, a career journey over time, and social change to uncover/decode/explain organizational gendered

structures and processes that prevent women from reaching leadership positions still held predominantly by men.

The next section briefly identifies the long-standing barriers for women interested in leadership found in the literature. Parity of opportunity, access to opportunity, cross-domain isolation and resistance to change are situations that continue to live long past the women's movements and the passage of equal opportunity laws.

A. Background

Analysis of the inequality of the power structure in education may provide transparency about the number and steepness of the steps necessary to reach a position of leadership and explain the ambiguities women face when preparing for future roles as educators and educational leaders. For example, the pathway to the principalship and superintendency is still through the ranks of administration. One moves from assistant principal to principal to assistant superintendent. However, many women are in staff support positions, like director of curriculum, reading specialist, or district leader of a new program. These women are not considered viable candidates for promotion from a structural perspective and not based on experience or expertise. Previous research uncovered the lack of parity and the barriers to opportunity for women (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1999; Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

1. Parity of opportunity

Leadership can take many forms in an organization. Organizational titles identify leadership roles. Nevertheless, leadership can also be identified by accomplishments and acknowledged for the work product individuals produce. Historically, women did not have the leadership opportunities afforded to men (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1999; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Parity of opportunity has been slow in certain professions. The most puzzling patterns

appear in organizations where predominantly women work, feminized professions. Leadership in health care, school systems, social work, and libraries remain predominantly male domains 40 years after laws changed that made access to these top positions possible for women (American College of Health Executives (ACHE), 2006; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Malka, 2007; Rosen, 2006).

The National Center for Education Statistics in the 2012 annual report, *The Condition of Education*, reported there were over 98,800 public schools in the United States during the 2011 school year. The public school systems employed approximately 3.3 million full-time teachers in the fall of 2012. The most recent data available shows that schools employed 118,400 principals in the 2008 school year, up 8% from 110,000 principals in 2000. In 2008, there were 62,015 elementary public school principals, and 21,560 secondary public school principals, a three to one ratio. The percentage of female elementary and secondary principals increased between 1999 and 2008; elementary schools from 52% to 59% and secondary schools from 22% to 29% (Aud, Hussar, Johnson, Kena, Roth, Manning, Wang, & Zhang, 2012). The gender distribution of principals among elementary and secondary schools varied and was not well documented (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Aud et al., 2012).). Figure 1 shows the distribution of men and women in leadership positions in elementary and high schools. The figure highlights the relative stability in the ratio of men to women, even as the numbers of principalships grew.

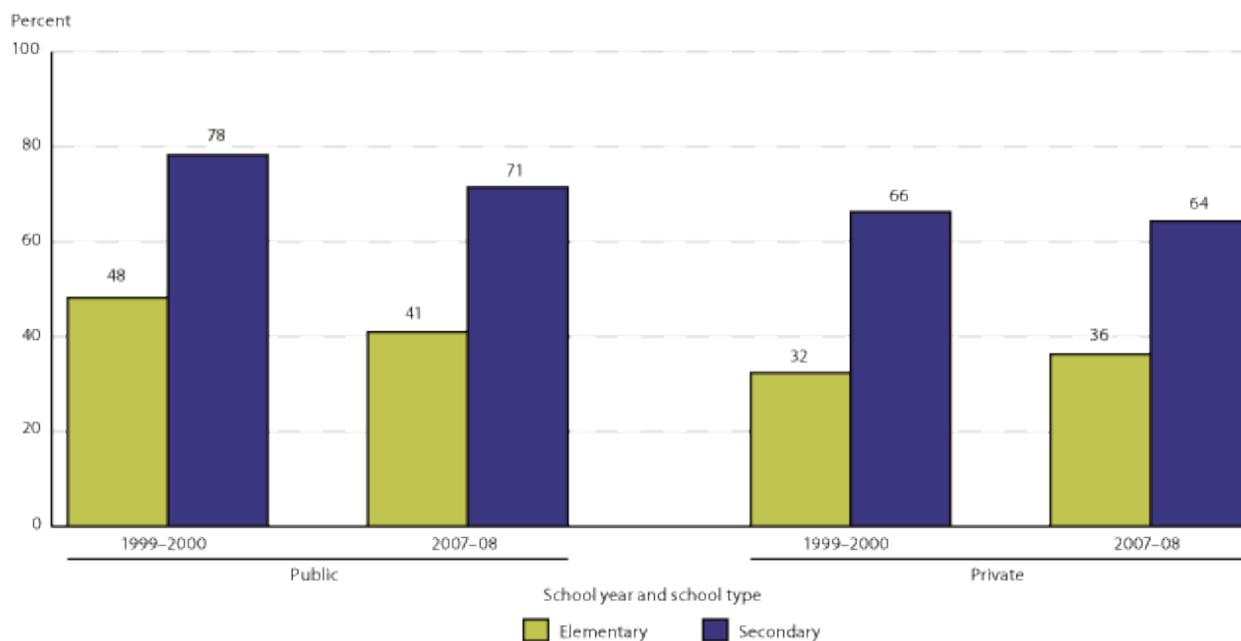


Figure 1. Percentage of male principals, by school type and level: School years 1999–2000 and 2007–2008.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), “Public School Principal and Private School Principal Data Files,” 1999–2000 and 2007–08, and “Charter School Principal Data File,” 1999–2000.

Figure 1 portrays that even as school systems grew, there was a lack of progress in hiring women for more secondary school principalships over time. Some argued that progress is positive because more women are in principal positions than in prior years (with a majority in elementary schools) and there are more women superintendents (Brunner & Grogan 2007; Gupton & Slick 1996). However, the rate of change stayed relatively stable, so on the surface numbers look good but in reality the numbers are not a good indicator of parity. In 2011, Illinois employed 843 superintendents and 28% were women, according to the Illinois State Board of Education (Holland, 2011). The most recent findings of the American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study show that in a survey of about 2,000 superintendents nationwide, 24% of those responding to the survey were women 13% when the survey was last taken more than a decade ago. The 2010 Decennial Study analysis points out that, “While the number of female superintendents is on the rise, at the current rate of change it will take more than 3 decades

before women achieve parity with men in the superintendent ranks” (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Progress may be positive but is it enough to change the structural inequality?

2. Accessing opportunity

Previous studies show that the underrepresentation of women is not due to a lack of qualified women (Grogan, 2005; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Shakeshaft, 1999). Women represent the largest percentage of students in the teaching profession and in educational-leadership preparation programs (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Hoff & Mitchell, 2011; Shakeshaft, 1999). “Yet women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, particularly in high school principalships and superintendencies, the positions that carry the most responsibility and influence and the highest salaries (Brunner & Grogan 2007; Shakeshaft, 1999)” Hoff & Mitchell, 2011 .

Brunner and Kim (2011) conducted a secondary analysis of two large national data sets used in the study of women superintendents and central-office administrators (Brunner & Grogan, 2007) and the American School Superintendent 2000 national study of superintendents (Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000). This secondary analysis debunked the idea that women are not prepared for a superintendent position. Instead, the researchers found better educated women, experienced in curriculum and instruction, a skill required by school board directors. The researchers concluded that the idea of a normative path to the superintendent’s office is a gendered construction and these gendered norms create barriers for women seeking the superintendency (Brunner & Kim, 2011).

Trends in higher education follow a similar pattern. During a five-year span, 1986 to 2001, the percentage of women working as presidents in higher education doubled as did the number of minority presidents increase. Yet, this is still not representative of the female student

body. The majority of female presidents—76.4%—serve at women’s colleges with 100% female student body. There has been no additional progress in the last decade. Only 10 to 15% of leadership positions at top institution are filled by women (Langland, 2012).

The field of hospital administration, like education, has had a historically disproportionate ratio of male leaders compared to female leaders who are not in a religious order. Data suggest that the number of women in leadership roles is increasing. “Women are more involved than men in specialized management areas including nursing services (12% vs. 2%), planning, marketing, quality assurance (18% vs. 11%), and the continuum of care (ambulatory, home, and long-term care, 4% vs. 2%)” (ACHE, 2006, p. 1). However, as in the field of education, women at the top of organizations are still underrepresented. The American College of Healthcare Executives Survey in 2006 shows that women are more likely than men to be a department head or to fill a staff role, whereas men are more likely to be chief executive officer, chief operating officer, president, or vice president (Lantz, 2008). The workforce in healthcare is primarily composed of women, almost 80%. Women use the healthcare system more frequently than men do. Yet women are sparsely represented within the leadership ranks, suggesting serious structural barriers impeding progress (Lantz, 2008).

The proportion of top-level management positions (defined as CEOs, COOs and senior vice presidents) varies by gender and race. Among men, Caucasian men continue to dominate with 56 percent in top positions. But this represents a decline of 6 percent when compared to 2002. (American College of Healthcare Executives, 2008)

These data identify a lack of parity by gender and race, thereby creating competition among candidates for the few leadership spots.

3. Similarities across professions

In my study, feminized professions are understood from a historical perspective, in which certain professions were the only available positions open to Caucasian women who worked

outside the home, following Bourdieu's concept of the influence of social space on power in organizations. Two alternative interpretations include the Marxist-influenced definition of the feminized professions that challenged scholars to question, abandon, and demolish issues of sexual differences and gender roles as they apply to employment and services. Another alternative interpretation referred to less occupational segregation, where a greater number of men work in culturally defined feminine types of professions like nursing (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Structurally these historically feminized professions remain dominated by a female workforce, which influences the social context of the professions. For example, in healthcare management and educational leadership, recommendations for improving access by women to top-level positions included reducing gendered assumptions about female leadership, mentoring, informal social networks, and work-life balance policies (Grogan, 2005; Lantz, 2008). However, both these domains have ongoing challenges that take precedence over the gendering of leadership, such as No Child Left Behind or the Health Care for America Plan. Little has improved since the 1990s (Blount, 1998; Grogan, 2005; Lantz, 2004). The Equal Opportunity Act opened the door for workplace parity, but did not change the patriarchal and political nature of organizations. As the numbers demonstrate, change in workplace parity is incomplete and very slow.

4. Changing the status quo

Changing policy and enforcement of policy, in theory, would result in implementation of more significant changes than have been seen. Despite the literature describing the biased conditions women face, there is little change as a result of research. The lack of change in response to research is problematic. The amount of movement necessary to change the culture

inherent in hierarchical organizations like healthcare and education can be significant. However, this is not a new discovery. The continuing pattern of gendered leadership is problematic, as the literature points out (Grogan, 2005; Lantz, 2004; Gregory, 2003; Hoff, Menard, & Tuell, 2006; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). What will motivate the necessary change? The voices identifying barriers in the workplace in “feminized professions” like education and healthcare have not stirred action. The impact of patriarchal norms on these career fields may not seem relevant or constraining, but the distribution of leadership positions continues to be gendered (Grogan, 2005; Lantz, 2004). Researchers describe a problem in access to leadership positions by women but these scholarly descriptions have not spurred change. Part of the problem may lie in the continued replication of a historically and culturally constructed system.

Women’s accomplishments and their significance in history fall short of representation in the literature. This is true for understanding the role of women in all work sectors, including those predominantly dominated by women. Literature about and by women leaders tends not to be historicized or reflective about cultural and political forces (Bower & Hyle, 2009; Brunner, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Jordan, Hunter, & Derrick, 2008; Lopez-Mulnix, Wolverton, & Zaki, 2011; Wolverton, Bower, & Hyle, 2009). With gaps in the background story, it is important to discontinue this pattern of historicizing and normalizing only the majority, by encouraging those outside the accepted norm to include their voices and document their lived experiences. Even though the existence of gender bias in feminized professions is well documented, women and men seem to disclaim its presence.

Miller (2005) stressed the critical importance of addressing the concept of gender bias in programs to prepare future leaders in education, educating them to resist the still functioning

patriarchal paradigm where gender differences are a permanent historical structure rather than constantly recreated. One of the ways youth are motivated to pursue different careers is learning by observing behaviors modeled by others (Colbeck, Cabrera, & Terenzini, 2000). Leadership research is critical to determine the impact a gendered construct of management has on students as they form their own identities. Students observe models of discrimination in leadership opportunity and learn patterns of behavior when in an environment where workers are clearly women and leaders are predominantly men (or the reverse).

In addition to providing more clarity and validity to the sometimes oppressive experience of women in education, and uncovering a possible structural barrier, perhaps telling my story will influence leadership-preparation programs. Because I am still immersed in the profession, it may require subtlety when exposing my story. Informing leadership-preparation programs may help improve the preparation model. In addition, this enlightenment may create demand for changes in the educational system.

B. Statement and Significance of the Problem

The continued imbalance in the number of women leaders in feminized industries, like healthcare and education, captured my interest. Moreover, why was there little outcry about the imbalance and the need for change. How do women leaders in these professions develop their identity that enables them to break through the glass ceiling?

My research interest focused upon understanding the systemic and cultural barriers that prevailed and discouraged change in the number of women in leadership positions. My personal and professional background in both healthcare and education generated my interest in looking at gender bias in educational leadership and informs my scholarship. I am a member of the generation of women who were deeply affected by the second-wave women's movement in the

1970s. My understanding and sensitivities to gender issues are always present and serve as a lens through which I interpret my daily life, including my development as a leader.

I felt adequately prepared for being a “first” and breaking gender barriers because of my activities during my undergraduate years, 1976–1980. I pursued my interest in women’s issues: I was involved in a woman’s group and trained as a rape and abuse hotline counselor. I was immersed in the conversations going on at the time as part of the second-wave feminist movement. I was captivated by the lack of knowledge available to women about their own bodies. The book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, written by the Boston Women’s Health Collective, a nonprofit organization committed to education about women and health, rocked the culture by opening up the silence around and among women on a variety of issues concerning women’s health and their bodies. During this period, medicine was delivered by predominantly White male physicians in a paternalistic or autocratic style, in which educating patients about their bodies and illnesses was not the common practice (Raffel, 1980).

Doors opened in fields like hospital management that had previously been closed to women in much the same way doors were beginning to open in corporations. I represented the growing numbers of well-educated nonclinical middle managers who entered the field; a growing field because of the increasing complex nature of the health industry (Raffel, 1980). Nurses challenged the helper role assigned to them and established their own organizational path into management positions responsible for patient care (Malka, 2007; Raffel, 1980), whereas middle managers like me stayed focused on running the departments that *supported* patient care, such as facilities, radiology, and finance. Change in the organizational power structures started to occur with the rising pressure by insurers to reduce hospital stays to lower costs. Lowering hospital costs required the cooperation of physicians and support by nursing staff. The need for

health administrators grew, not only because of the management skills needed, but also because of the importance of understanding the patient–physician relationship, knowing about health and sickness, and knowing how the professions deal with the ill (Raffel, 1980).

Prior to 1980, hospitals were organized around the physician rendering the best care for the patient. Physicians were not employees of the hospital, yet managed the entry and exit of patients (Raffel, 1980). Nursing began as a helping profession primarily delivered by religious groups. In 1850 professional training programs for nurses were established. Training took place in general hospitals and student nurses served as uncompensated labor. The profession evolved and preparation of nurses moved to the university in 1923, where students were taught a deeper theoretical understanding of nursing practice. Long dependent on physicians, after World War II, nurses sought an independent identity and a role at par with the medical staff. Part of that independence required relinquishing some extraneous roles, such as dietician, social worker, medical recorder, and phlebotomist. That search for a professional identity in the 1960s continued as new roles developed that required more independence from physician supervision, such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners. In addition to growth in clinical expertise, nurses managed the patient units and daily care of the patient. However confident in their identity as managers, the addition of nonclinical health administrators further distanced nurses as top administrators of the hospital (Malka, 2007; Raffel, 1980; Roberts & Group, 1995). Part of working in a hospital environment today is living with the ongoing tension among physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, and administrators.

I was educated as a healthcare administrator, obtaining my undergraduate and master's degrees in the field, and worked in a variety of management positions between 1980 and 1991. I then transitioned into an informal education setting beginning in 1991 through the museum field.

I transferred my knowledge of neurosciences and management into a project-management role for developing AIDS education through the museum setting. Next, I entered the academy on a research project until reaching my current position as CEO of a health-education organization for the past 8 years. Because of my background, I often drew comparisons between the two fields of education and healthcare and noted both domains struggled in similar ways with gendered work cultures. Each employed a majority of women, but men primarily held leadership positions; each existed in an extremely bureaucratic and patriarchal organizational structure; and each was highly regulated by external stakeholders. For this reason, I believe my story is valuable to help fill the gap in understanding gendered leadership in two different fields. With “dual citizenship” in health and education, my experiences help strengthen an argument for changes in policies to address these ongoing disparities in leadership roles (Lantz, 2008).

In 1982, I entered the field of hospital administration, directly after completing my graduate program, into a midsize community hospital. My graduate program was new, housed in a major medical institution in the Midwest and built on a teacher-practitioner philosophy. This philosophy supports a greater depth of practical, hands-on competencies than a traditional, university-based program and is taught by practitioners who combine theory with their professional experience. I worked as assistant to the assistant vice president for 2 years while enrolled in the program. After completing graduate school, I was hired as an administrative assistant, a management position, reporting to the CEO and the assistant administrator for planning. This was a new position, but more significantly, I was the first woman hired in the senior-leadership circle besides the nursing administrator, a role traditionally filled by a woman. Additionally, the hospital was part of a Catholic hospital system managed by a religious order of nuns, which played a role in the hospital administrator’s motivation to hire a woman. I was

acutely aware of my gender on a daily basis, and of the unique position it placed me in the organizational culture.

The position was unique because it was new, not well defined, and I was a gender-specific hire. The organizational culture was unprepared for the change and the response was unwelcoming. The nursing leaders or the hospital-operations leaders because I bypassed working my way up through the hierarchy of a department director, and bypassed others to attain a senior-leadership role did not embrace me. My entry as the first female administrator created much tension in power dynamics. Although not unusual for the time period, my immediate colleagues were all married White men with female secretaries. As a young, single, female administrator, I felt less than full support from the secretarial staff and was viewed with constant suspicion by colleagues' wives. I felt alone in what seemed a foreign territory, blazing a career path I hoped would be successful regardless of my gender, but very much aware of its impact.

My story is sprinkled with examples of gender bias. It begins with my rationale for going into hospital administration rather than teaching. As a single mother, I decided that my interest in teaching would not adequately support my son and me. I leaned away from business management as too difficult, given my social-service orientation, and identified hospital administration as a compromise. My decision-making was gendered.

As another example, after getting to know the colleague who interviewed me for my first position, he told me I almost did not get the job. He explained the clothing I wore to my first interview was viewed by him as unacceptable, but when I came back for a second interview and wore more traditional clothing in his view, he decided to recommend me for the job. The second choice of clothing included a blue blazer, a khaki dress with a bow tie, and navy blue pump shoes. At the time the wardrobe for women new to the management world was a skirted version

of a man's corporate uniform: suits and ties. I learned that stepping outside those imposed norms was risky. As I explore situations more deeply in my autoethnography, the organizational power structures and cultural norms that existed confirm my interpretations.

Additionally, I will address the social behaviors in an organization that also influenced me. For example, in my next position at another hospital, the CEO who hired me told me the decision was between two candidates and I received the offer due to my *body language*. Because I assumed he was looking for the best-qualified candidate, I interpreted this as a positive professional statement, thinking of my ability to look directly in the eyes of my interviewer and my firm handshake. Shortly after joining the organization, the CEO sent me a love letter and started pursuing a relationship with me. I had not interpreted my body language as seductive, but rather direct and confident. I felt disoriented, as if I was in a new culture with which I was unfamiliar. When I relate this story to other men, the term *body language*, is considered a type of sexual invitation rather than a positive interview cue. Language is not clear and serves to feed gender bias. This experience had a profound effect on the next few years of my life. It affected my confidence, my work performance, and my ability to assimilate in a new environment. Immediately following my short-lived tenure at this hospital, I was laid off after turning down my supervisor's advances. This experience also contributed to my decision to transition away from healthcare and into a more positive environment.

These are just a few examples of the influence gender had on my development as a professional and a leader in organizations that historically located women as the workforce and men as the managers.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE

A. Conceptual Framework

This autoethnographic journey reveals the structural and cultural influences that existed as my identity formed as a leader in a gendered world. I reflected on the significant experiences in my journey to bring a deeper understanding of how these gendered events affected the development of my role and choices as a leader. I used Bourdieu's (2001) concepts of masculine domination, historical inaccuracies, and the intersections of identity, culture, and social structure to guide my analysis.

Bourdieu (2001) spoke to the social effects of exposing domination, recognizing that many misunderstandings may occur once the narrative is public. I speculated that in the biographies of other female leaders the stories were incomplete as they publicly exposed their experiences, hardships, and the challenges they faced as their responsibilities grew in a gendered environment. Their works described their gender and leadership experience through behaviors, traits, or personality. The authors often left out recommendations for change and instead prepared women for the status quo. In my narrative, I try to go deeper into the meaning behind the experience to uncover the good, the bad, and the ugly. My research does not put my current career at risk; my narrative will exist inside the academy, not on bookstands, and my experience spans two domains and many different organizations, making specific organizations less identifiable to the average reader.

I examine my experience following Bourdieu (2001), whose work connects the insights of structure, culture, education, and feminist scholarship to understand the continued masculine domination and privilege in educational systems. The important tenets to consider follow (Bourdieu, 2001; Dillabough, as cited in Skelton, Francis, & Smulyan, 2006):

1. The constancy of structure in gender relations and the difficulty changing established structures appears to contribute to the slow movement in feminized professions.
2. Social conditions and opportunities are shaped by the cultural systems and the use of symbolic and historically inherited forms of masculine domination and privilege. Education in particular is embedded in politics and creates a power struggle each time the status quo is threatened. The struggle comes from the dominant and dominated groups.
3. The gendered discourses in education and healthcare link power to micro- and macrostructures of domination. Power and privilege nurture, sustain, and legitimize the silencing of certain groups. It is important to know who was silenced and who was not silenced.
4. A relationship between culture and the economy exists in an analysis of power.

Bourdieu (2001) argued that history privileges masculine domination. Until feminism challenged the ways one conceptualized history, historians failed to see or understand women's roles. Until now, the representation and writing about the history of feminized professions and women reflected the dominant culture's attitudes, values, and skills. By revisiting historical interpretations of these fields, evidence of women's lives, experiences, and achievements emerge. This understanding guides my work so that I considered history as reported, while I was forming my own identity inside culturally influenced workplaces.

The concept of capital sits at the center of Bourdieu's (2001) construction of social space. Capital refers to the different forms of power held by social agents including economic (e.g., wealth), social (e.g., social connections), cultural (e.g., artistic taste), symbolic (e.g., prestige), linguistic (e.g., vocabulary and pronunciation), academic (e.g., tertiary qualifications), and corporeal (e.g., physical attractiveness). The power of an agent to accumulate and legitimize various forms of capital is proportionate to their position in the social space.

Symbolic capital is another name for distinction: status, lifestyle, honor, and prestige (Thorpe, 2009. P. 493).

Bourdieu's (2001) concept of the social space's influence on power in organizations also guides my analysis. My analysis deconstructs the systems of power found in the structure, hierarchies, and social environments of my workspaces and the environments around them. My lived experience in health care and in education, as well as the cultural timeframe in which I was educated, offers an opportunity to understand the similarities in two fields of practice still struggling with gender parity.

After 30 years of practice, my study is a reflection of my own understandings. As an educator, it serves as a check and balance to my influence on other young women and men, allowing me to teach with better clarity the historical, cultural, and social conditions that exist and affect one's chosen profession. For example, structurally, the acceptable paths into a leadership position are gendered; culturally, recruitment of leaders is male dominated both internally and in the search firms outside the organization; and historically, acceptable and rewarded leadership styles are masculine. These conditions and others are embedded in the industries and if uncovered and articulated may benefit women and stimulate change. Finding clarity may contribute to further understanding of how I understand my identity as a leader, to help other women understand the creation of their own identity.

B. Research Questions

- a. How was my own gendered identity as a leader constructed in relationship to the activities, social organizations, and historical cultural representations of the time period?
- b. What are the systems of power that marked my experience in health care and education and are they similar?

- c. What understandings of the impact of working in a gendered environment on the development of leadership identity are important in the preparation of school leaders?

C. Impact of the Research

My research contributes to understanding the impact of working in a gendered environment on the development of one's identity as a leader. Using autoethnography to explore reflexively the development of my identity as a leader in a gendered domain, I will critically analyze the intersections of identity, culture, and social structure on my career journey. The analysis of my experience in healthcare and education is an opportunity to look across domains at the power structures as defined by patterns of behavior, political power, and organizational structures that were the conventional norms. I closely follow the systems of power and the contradictions created that marked my experience in healthcare and in education.

Making the invisible visible is part of the feminist agenda. Given the tenacity of the current male-dominated power structure in the public school systems, a critical feminist lens will assist in representing reality that uncovers and deconstructs its complexity. Feminist scholarship also places the subject at the center of the analysis. Adding my previously invisible lived experiences as a healthcare and educational leader to the scholarly conversation around educational leadership may improve the understanding of significant barriers to shifting the power equation and creating more parity.

D. Relevant Literature Review

The literature review began with a broad search across multiple domains and subject areas: education, healthcare and social work history, leadership theory, feminist theory and history, feminist-education theory, gender theory, and identity development. The review

summarizes the literature within these domains, relevant to the construction of an identity as a leader in a gendered profession.

The literature review includes an analysis of the systems of power that influenced my personal development and career path across two different professional domains, healthcare and education. The review begins with a description of the historical conditions of feminized professions and the discourse developed about those conditions. The history contextualizes the influences on the development of professions dominated by women. Next, the review addresses leadership development and its formation in context with gender and identity. The scholarly discourse acknowledges leadership as a masculine construct and the review discusses three of the most significant contributing gendered constructs. The analysis moves on to the reasons why these situations exist in feminized professions. Next, a review of the intersections of one's identity, culture and social structure preface the discussion of identity construction. Identity construction, a significant element in this research, outlines the theoretical conversations around the cultural context of sex and gender, the intersectionality of identity, and the historical impact of the different waves of feminism. The literature review wraps up with an analysis of current gaps in the discourse.

1. Discourse and historical conditions of feminized professions

The dominant culture's attitudes, values, and skills are reflected in the representation and writing of the history of feminized professions and women. Scott (1991) argued that the very practice of representing the history of a phenomenon reproduces the structure of gendered constructions.

Nonetheless, the discipline of history, through its practices, produces (rather than gathers or reflects) knowledge about the past generally and, inevitably, about sexual difference as well. In that way, history operates as a particular kind of cultural institution endorsing and announcing constructions of gender. (Scott, 1991, p. 9)

Healthcare and education are feminized professions. The paucity and uneven distribution of women in leadership roles in education are indicators that gendered barriers exist. The voices of contemporary women leaders found in various biographies and autobiographies plainly reveal inequities in expectations and personal sacrifices necessary to succeed (Blount, 1998; Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Jordan et al., 2008). For example, below are examples of comments from women superintendents shared with Brunner & Grogan (2007):

Every interaction as a leader with board members, fellow superintendents, contractors, sales personnel, etc. is all influenced by the fact I am a female. My decisions seem to be more often questioned. I am rarely one to proclaim prejudice or bias, but I have found this to be true. Women in the superintendency must work harder and or longer than their male counterparts, and accomplish more to be respected.

It is lonely—You must be very careful with male colleagues for fear of misunderstandings of the nature of the relationship.

The job will probably never change—we need to prepare better for it. When we survive, we need to help others so they can get a frame of reference for what is normal. As I learn, I am committed to help others on their way. (as cited in Brunner & Grogan, 2007, p.105)

In the field of school-leadership, theory has made little use of the evidence to resist the gendered construction of male leadership. Although history and biographical representations show us that bias exists, and to some degree, what it looks like, leadership theory continues to situate and normalize leadership as a male construct in a patriarchal political system.

In the early 1970s, as women in the United States successfully entered the workforce in management positions, more attention was paid to gendered leadership, especially after the Equal Opportunity Act of 1962. The literature review reveals an ongoing conversation about gendered leadership and the role gender plays in leadership dynamics. The data collected from women leaders describe some of the challenges and barriers in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, yet these same challenges remain. An understanding of the continued existence of gendered leadership has not produced change or a call to action.

2. Leadership development

The prolific literature about leadership published in the 1990s looked at leadership theory: transformational, situational, contingency, behavior, trait, and charismatic (Bass, 1990), gender bias, and feminisms (Brunner, 1999; Enomoto, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Leach, 1990). Blackmore (1999) called for a reconstruction of leadership that would include a view of power, which is multidimensional and multidirectional.

Leaders possess power that they yield to others to control, coerce, and dominate. Leadership is a process of influence whereby a vision is articulated and accomplished. Leadership is most often defined in terms of the individuals in a position of power. Feminist deconstruction reads power relations in gendered language that signifies a particular dominance (Dillabough, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006). Personality traits and dispositions describe attributes of leadership. Leadership defined in this way tends to stereotype leader personas. If the leaders in feminized professions are primarily men, this produces a masculine construct that uses men's behavior as normative (Langland, 2012). The gender categories *male* and *female* may serve to empower or exploit. Leadership is a relational concept in which leaders exist when there are followers and followers exist when there are leaders. Followers are voluntary and not required to take direction from the leader (Hogg & Reid, 2001). Managers have subordinates who, because of a chain of command and hierarchy, must be accountable. The terms *management* and *leadership* are used interchangeably (Langland, 2012), but mean very different things.

In the 1980s, a theory emerged that a company's profits could be bolstered by the special qualities women possess. Human-capital theorists saw traits seen in women as an opportunity to create economic change, once again identifying women's "softer sides" as desirable, compared

to men's harder sides. Langland (2012), points out these special female qualities included "cooperative decision-making, the ability to share power and communicate well, experience in nurturing the development of others, and comfort with less hierarchical organizations" (p.6).

These "human capital" theorists argued that ignoring these attributes was a gross underuse of resources and was wasteful, irrational, and disadvantageous to a firm's profitability and competitiveness. However, both the equal-opportunity and human-capital arguments are nonetheless based on the assumption that when a woman's advancement in a career is based on merit alone, she will be able to excel and advance into management and leadership positions, if she desires (Fondas & Mason, 2014).

Other scholars define leadership as an orientation toward effective action, an ability to instill confidence, or even a blending of modesty and willfulness or shyness and fearlessness. Scholars agree that often what women call leadership is more commonly called management in the literature (Langland, 2012). Management is created through hierarchy, organizational charts, and job descriptions. The gender socialization and privileging of masculinity seen in classrooms and leadership roles throughout education affects women's understanding of leadership identity and career-advancement opportunities (Acker, 1990).

3. Gender and identity formation and their relationship to leadership

Is a leadership position implicitly a gendered concept? Gender offers a way of thinking about inclusions and exclusions and how these are constituted. Gender is one avenue through which power is represented. Because the gender categories male and female are part of a system of power relations that empowers some and exploits others, identities and experiences are variable phenomena in a social system organized in particular contexts or configurations.

In many cases, social practices are structured in relation to gender. For example, a leadership position in education includes 12-hour days, board meetings, and special events in evenings and on weekends. This structure leaves little time for family responsibilities and nonworking obligations, resulting in limitations as to who can meet these requirements. This

position is gendered because social practices replicate the reproductive division of people into male and female. Thus, gender takes on the meaning that institutions create over time (Dillabough, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006). Structure becomes a characteristic of not individual people but collectivities.

4. Gendered constructs of feminized professions

The literature is clear that feminized professions are gendered and characterized by three specific understandings of gendered work: first, gendered work is situational in that it changes with the context of the discourse and may look different; second, gendered work is relational and hierarchical; third, gendered work is enmeshed in the discourse of merit (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Tallerico, 2000).

a. Gendered work is situational

“Women’s work is a gender norm determined by the expectations society holds for masculine and feminine behavior, and the norm serves to limit what are and are not considered appropriate roles and behaviors for men and women” (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008, p.1). At the turn of the 20th century, women broke norms by fighting for the right to vote. Young girls growing up in the 1970s faced cultural conflict about opportunities that opened as a result of the Equal Opportunity Act. This second wave of feminism was fighting for parity in the workplace, access to leadership roles, and respect for working women. The backlash organized by Schlafly in the early 1980s polarized working women against women who stayed at home to raise a family (G. Collins, 2009). Schlafly argued that the proposed Equal Rights Amendment would bring many undesirable changes to American women. This movement situated women against women. Despite early gains by the feminist movement, the rise in social conservatism defeated the Equal Rights Amendment.

The story of American women is the tension between the yearning to create a home and the urge to get out of it. The history of American women is about the fight for freedom, but it is less a war against oppressive men than a struggle to straighten out the perpetually mixed message about women's role that was accepted by almost everybody of both genders. (G. Collins, 2003, p.xiv)

As G. Collins (2003) suggested, concern over working outside or inside the home is never a compromise but rather an either-or discussion. The family responsibilities as barriers to management opportunities is well documented in the literature (Blount, 1998; Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Tallerico, 2000). Women who chose to teach cited the ability to balance home and family life as the reason. In contrast, studies show that a superintendent's schedule is not family-friendly or gender-neutral (Brunner, 2000; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Thus, the organization of a position that requires a great commitment to community and school activities in the evening may create a barrier for a career transition from teaching to leadership positions for women who are still responsible for the care of children and the household. Since women first entered the U.S. workplace in large numbers at the beginning of industrial age of the late 1900s, employers have treated women with children differently from other employees (Gregory, 2003). Employers hold false assumptions about female workers and assume working mothers will be problematic because of responsibilities to their children (Smith-Doerr, 2004). Employers fear women will take time off to give birth to children and to care for sick children. One reason the average age of women in the superintendency is older than men is the career delay women take voluntarily until their family responsibilities lighten. The impact of family on men is not considered. In education, the development of public schools fostered the stereotype that teaching was women's work and managing was for men (Blount, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

As the U.S. population grew and the economy shifted from agrarian to manufacturing, the rural one-room schoolhouses changed into large centralized urban bureaucracies. This rapid expansion created an economic and political shift and, out of economic necessity, women were

offered teaching positions (Blount, 1998). Given very few options for employment, women were offered and willing to work for significantly lower salaries than men. Lower salaries helped lower the cost of operating the quickly ballooning public school system, which served a political agenda, to keep taxes low. In this way, the status of teaching as a profession was lowered when women started to dominate the workforce (Scott, 1999).

As we see demonstrated in this case, based on Walkerdine, Lucey, and Melody's (2001) research, when major economic shifts occur, class and its intersection with gender becomes significant in any type of cultural analysis (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Walkerdine & Ringrose, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006; Walkerdine et al., 2001). "Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of our culture: race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, class, disability, and other markers of difference" (Collins, P H., 2000, pg. 42). These markers do not act independently of one another. Instead, these forms of oppression interrelate. Intersectionality examines the socially and culturally constructed categories to analyze the deeply embedded bias (Collins, P.H., 2000).

Blount (1998) described how teaching, during the common school era, 1873 to 1900, became women's work and school administration men's, while analyzing the gendered division of roles and power in education maintained in spite of tensions from feminists. Blount (1998) concluded that simple solutions, like recruiting more women into superintendent roles, ignores the appropriateness of the structure for distributing power in public schools; it ignores the complexity of how power is constructed. She argued that the discrepancy in power in educational employment is embedded in traditional gender-role definitions. Even more powerful is her point

that students observe the power structures and gender stratification in schools and take that lesson into the world with them.

It is difficult to influence norms when representations of history are masculine dominated and inherently political (Goodall, 2000; Leach, 1990; Scott, 1999). History is a story of many voices and forms of power: power of the weak and strong, the elite and commoner (Leach, 1990). Challenging the mainstream construction of historical representations makes room for the silenced and invisible to emerge, those not in the dominant majority. This is particularly relevant in educational research. The marginalization of gender as a variable, Leach (1990) argued, has worked in two ways: to keep women and their past out from view and to keep the history of women from being accurately integrated into broader narratives. Enomoto (2000) argued for a more inclusive history because a field of study leaving out the experiences of historically marginalized people is limited, less complete, and inaccurate. Additionally, scrutinizing cultural assumptions may destabilize the underlying patriarchal assumptions, beliefs, and values, and may result in a feminist theory of administration that offers useful reform and revitalization in current management practices (Enomoto, 2000).

b. Gendered work is relational and hierarchical

As a relational phenomenon, gender is difficult to see. Hoff and Mitchell (2011) argued that “gender norms are learned roles and behaviors, not genetically determined by sex, yet become so ingrained that the line between the two becomes blurred and difficult to see. These norms about sex differences that play a central role in shaping men’s and women’s professional lives have a profound impact on leadership development”. Relational leadership is not seen as a strength, but as a feminine trait women are socialized to provide: empathy, vulnerability, and connection. Organizations, while needing these skills, do not acknowledge their effectiveness

and create meaning that reinforces the mainstream model and silences the relational alternatives. Achievement remains dependent on individual actions, causing a collision of gender and power, serving to squash any means of radical change (Fletcher, 2001).

The gendered work women do is also relational and hierarchical. Since the establishment of public schools, the patriarchal organizational structure of school systems has not changed (Blount, 1998). A patriarchal system is male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered (hooks, 2000; A. Johnson, 2005). The school administration has organized around the domination of males controlling females, and unless those traditions and structures are deconstructed, the same power inequities will continue (Blount, 1998). Simply increasing the number of women in positions like the superintendency will not change how power is constructed (Adkison, 1981). For example, to shift the power in public schools, women activists campaigned for and won the right to vote in school elections. In response, school administrators around the country lobbied to take the superintendency out of politics by making it a nonelected position. One simple change in the structure denied women a voice. This happened repeatedly over the past 150 years (Blount, 1998). To date the public school systems of power have not been rid of patriarchy.

Blount (1998) argued:

I realized that gender discrimination played an inescapable role in shaping my experiences in public schools—both as a student and teacher. Teachers have little structural support for devising their own curricula, determining their own schedules, deciding who should be accepted into their ranks and otherwise controlling the terms and conditions of their work and environment. These decisions are made by school or system-level administrators, most of whom are men. Over the past century women have been systematically restricted in their access to these administrative positions. Women, then, essentially have little formally structured control over the purposes or conditions of the profession they dominate numerically (p.156).

The complexity of the journey women face, getting to and in leadership roles, as Blount and others described, suggests a challenging path with few solutions. Rather than one path

leading to the glass ceiling, a metaphor that was so prominent in the second wave of feminism, implying a rigid impenetrable shield that, once one surpassed the level of the glass ceiling, their work to overcome discrimination was over (Bower & Wolverson, 2009; Lopez-Mulnix et al., 2011; Mertz, 2009; Wolverson et al., 2009). Eagly and Carli (2007) used a more realistic metaphor of a labyrinth to symbolize a path filled with stops and starts. This metaphor aptly captures barriers and supports that exist in the bureaucratic hierarchical structure of public education.

c. Gendered work is enmeshed in the discourse of merit

Gendered work is enmeshed or measured by the discourse of merit. Meritocracy seeks to code gendered work in a discourse about merit. With the economic downturn, vocal conservatism, immigration debates, and welfare budget cuts, the construct is now an influential part of the debate. Representative of this view is the belief that several values embedded in American cultural ideology—“that hard work and initiative lead to success, that individuals are masters of their own destiny, that possibilities are limitless”(Tallerico, 2000, p. 84) , and that everyone can lift themselves up by their own bootstraps—are what lead to success. In relationship to the social structure, meritocracy is still the preferred way all superintendents like to think they got their job, even when the numbers argue otherwise (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Tallerico, 2000). For example, statements like “I think any qualified individual who wants the superintendency can get one”; and “Gender is not an issue—women who work hard enough will succeed, period,” have been reported from men and women (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Discussion in recent research about situational gender norms, patriarchal history, and structural gender bias in the education profession clearly establish teaching as gendered work with barriers for women to move into leadership positions. The literature is descriptive but does

not suggest ways to dislodge the gendered discourses and enable educational leaders to see the world in a different way.

5. Leadership, a gendered discourse

“By reflecting on ... our own lives, we can identify the points along the road of leadership that have served in some way to propel or compel us to where we are today” (Stavem, 2008, p. 73).

Teaching is gendered work. Much of women’s leadership has remained invisible. First because few historical studies have looked at the role of women in leadership. Second, leadership positions do not exist in a vacuum and are constructed in the structure and organization of patriarchal school systems. Third, the persistent cultural image of leadership as masculine serves as a disincentive for women to join the ranks of leaders who do not identify with that cultural norm.

a. Women’s leadership is invisible

Much of women’s leadership has remained invisible: first, because women are not historically written about as leaders nor considered to have the character and skills to be in charge (Blount, 1998; Griffiths, 1995). Women’s leadership is also invisible because leadership is often defined in terms of the individual in a position of power, which by default makes it a masculine construct that uses men’s behavior as the normative. When the role of women’s leadership is acknowledged, it has been reported as looking *different*, thereby generating doubt about it fitting in to the culturally universalized definition of a leader.

Historian Joan Scott (1999) argued that history reflected masculine values because women were never in the stories or the subject of study. She asserted that gender offers a way of thinking about inclusions and exclusions and how these have been constituted.

The form that knowledge has taken—the remarkable absence or subordination of women in the narratives of the “rise of civilization,” their particularity in relation to Universal

Man, their confinement to studies of the domestic and private—indicates a politics that sets and enforces priorities, represses some subjects in the name of the greater importance of others, naturalizes certain categories, and disqualifies others. It is not a conspiratorial politics, nor is it narrowly self-interested; rather it protects an established corporate tradition. (Scott, 1999, p. 25)

Scott (1991, 1999) maintained that gender is a primary field in which or by means of which power is articulated. In education, the binary has played out as women are teachers and men are administrators, with shifts made over time for managing elementary schools. The masculine leadership construct continues to dominate unchallenged. Hierarchical structures in education rely on generalized understandings of “natural relationships” between men and women. This binary of how relationships play out become part of the power itself and any hint of disruption threatens the system (Scott, 1991, 1999). As we look to school leaders to improve academic outcomes, can there be an understanding of the leadership role without looking at its gendered construct? Without this understanding the focus on school leaders as change makers will be missing a significant component that may serve as a barrier to change. I argue that if not changed, the organizational practices in schools will continue to produce a highly political patriarchal system that privileges men for leadership opportunities, a gendered discourse.

b. Leadership and the structure of school systems

Leadership positions do not exist in a vacuum and are constructed in the structure and organization of school systems. Leadership is constructed in a way that positions it as a masculine domain. Early in the field of education, women were positioned as teachers and men as administrators. This type of arrangement is an example of how identity can be constructed in a way that is gendered through structure. Actual behavior may—or may not—correspond to those representations and expectations, but either way people can be seen as socially or culturally constructed in relation to power and domination. Gender is one component of social meaning

attached to leadership; leadership positions do not exist in a vacuum, nor are they accessible using the traditional male routes and behaviors (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Enomoto, 2000).

Hoff and Mitchell (2008) found three factors that negatively impact women trying to advance in educational leadership: “lack of insider status, fewer support structures, and an image of leadership that is still associated with masculinity. In addition to the social dynamics of meritocracy, patriarchy and gender socialization contribute to the systemic nature of gender discrimination” (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Tallerico (2000) used a representation of a nested series of concentric circles. At the center, the small circle is individual agency, which includes elements such as personal and professional experiences, aspirations, ambitions, abilities, values, family responsibilities, and geographic mobility. The next wider concentric circle emphasizes educational structures such as systems of administrative recruitment, statewide organizational units of governance, and professional organizations of administrators, which serve as information networks. A wider concentric circle focuses on the professional norms of educational administration including traditions of mentoring and sponsorship. Tallerico concluded that, taken together, these various intersecting levels of influence help explain the enduring sameness of the demographic profile of school superintendents during the past 100 years (Blount, 1998; Grogan, 1996; Tallerico, 2000). This metaphor suggests that access to the superintendency is shaped by cultural norms regarding women’s and men’s roles, norms that are not changing.

c. Cultural image of leadership

The persistent cultural image of leadership as masculine serves as a disincentive for people to join the ranks of leaders if they do not see themselves as belonging to the cultural norm (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elliot & Mandell, 1995; Rusch, 2004). The gender structures of a society

define certain patterns of behavior as masculine or feminine or as individual or collective. Gender structures come into existence because of patterns of practice in organizations (Connell, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006). Leadership as a masculine construct is organized around dominance or expertise. We expect masculine leadership traits in all leaders (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Blount, 1998; Lugg, 2003).

Gendered roles are constructed in the structure and organization of school systems (Blount, 1998). School systems incentivize and reward masculine leadership traits for both men and women (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Both men and women acknowledge that the “Good Ol’ Boy” network and patriarchal collusion with professional superintendent associations are problematic. Primarily male association leaders network to place primarily male associates into school-leadership positions. The patriarchal bureaucratic system in which public school leaders operate may function as a barrier for women to access leadership opportunities (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 1996; Tallerico, 2000).

6. Intersections of identity, culture, and social structure

G. Collins (2009) argued that growing up and into the role of a leader is a socially constructed experience with competing narratives found in feminized professions like education, nursing, and social work that employ predominantly women. Historically, these were professions that were deemed acceptable for women to pursue (Blount, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). But even as a feminized career field, only a narrow sector of the profession was accessible to women: teaching in education or nursing in health care. Leadership positions, such as superintendents, doctors, or CEOs, remained primarily the purview of men. Top leadership positions in these fields still struggle with stratification by gender (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Malka, 2007; Tyack & Hansot, 1988). Following Bourdieu’s (2001) model, this stratification does not

change over time as one would expect, because professional roles and work patterns are embedded and replicated in the culture and economics of these fields.

Research findings describe some of the obstacles to leadership roles. “Internal obstacles include sex-role stereotyping, lack of aspiration, role conflict, and low self-esteem. External obstacles include lack of encouragement, family responsibilities, lack of mobility, and hiring and promoting practices” (Pirouznia, 2006. p. 5).

Family responsibilities continue to be cited in the literature as barriers to leadership roles (Coffey & Delamont, 2000). Other studies examined the actual process by which women lead, the results achieved, and the impact (Astin & Leland, 1991). Bernal (2006) proposed a paradigm shift in the way scholars understand and study leadership that allows them to see how women emerge as leaders.

Feminist scholars suggest the absence of women’s voices and lived experiences from the academic discourse on leadership has profoundly affected theorizing about leadership and the continuation of the status quo (Chin, Lott, Rice, & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Eagly, 2005; Mertz, 2009; Rusch, 2004). Subsequently, leadership, because it has been dominated by men, is seen in terms of White male behaviors and characteristics that then frame the cultural norm in these terms. Women’s leadership capacity is then compared to this norm. Lopez-Mulnix et al. (2011) challenged this way of assessing women’s leadership capacity by suggesting leadership is about effectiveness rather than gendered behavior. They argued that effective leaders, men or women, have similar beliefs about leadership, and behave in similar ways in leadership roles.

Bernal (2006) and Astin and Leland (1991) argued that leadership is a collective process in which members of a group are empowered to work together toward a common goal that will create change with the inclusion of women’s voices. Bernal identified five interrelated

dimensions of leadership that are not gender specific: persistence, developing consciousness, networking and linking diverse groups, holding office more visibly, and acting as spokesperson. These same dimensions were documented in the biographies of women leaders (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Lopez-Mulnix et al., 2011; Wolverton et al., 2009). These dimensions are very much dependent on the traits of the individual and do not address more systemic barriers and supports.

Women and men have different lived experiences as leaders. One way to understand this difference theoretically puts gender at the center of the study (Grogan, 1996; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Hoff and Mitchell (2008) conducted a study looking at the impact of gender on career advancement. The study found meritocracy, patriarchy, and gender socialization contributing forces to discrimination. Women experienced the majority of discrimination in access to school leadership positions (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Two explanatory patterns of behavior emerged from Hoff and Mitchell's (2008) study.

The first was the tendency for participants to "other" the issue of gender, saying problems happen elsewhere, but not here. Believing that gender issues are occurring outside their sphere of influence to "others," further relieves one of responsibility to examine broader contexts and the implications at every level (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Gender socialization and privileging of masculinity are another factor in inhibiting women's development into leadership positions. Class, age, race, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and ability remain complex intersections in a woman's identity (Griffiths, 1995). Women constantly negotiate their gendered identities through discourses of femininity and other categories of social difference (Aapola et al., 2005). The intersections, experiences, and meanings found in girlhood and into adulthood cause shifts in one's identity throughout one's lifetime (Aapola et al., 2005). The privileging of masculinity in educational leadership plays out in classrooms throughout women's education and affects their understanding of career

advancement. Women feel they have to be over prepared before applying (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Young & McLeod, 2001), unlike men who are less prepared. Social norms accept men who self-promote, whereas modesty is the socially acceptable norm for women (Skrla, 2000).

Any definition of credibility of a leader in gendered ways that have nothing to do with the actual work serves to continually reinforce rigid gender stereotypes (Blount, 1998; Lugg & Tooms, 2010). The role of the educational leader becomes about adhering to previously defined norms and reproducing those norms (Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). The social reality of educational systems in a community heavily influence those chosen for leadership positions, resulting in the replication of sexist and heterosexist communities (Blount, 1998; Gee, 1996; Lugg & Tooms, 2010).

As an example of this phenomenon, Lugg and Tooms (2010) told the story of how a “St. John suit” became important in a school district to explain how a particular presentation of self as an educational leader is defined by specific clothes, hairstyle, weight, race, and sexual orientation. In this story, a new Latina principal dressed to fit in with the other principals. She kept her hair cropped and wore dark conservative suits replicating the others, but never truly represented her real self. The pressure mounted when the new informal dress code included a designer St. John knit suit. These suits cost over \$1,000 and were not in her clothing budget, much less her salary. She scrimped and saved for weeks to buy the suit while receiving more and more pressure from her superintendent. This story reflects how the importance of the “packaged look” of a leader, determined by the superintendent, gave a powerful message about reaching a level of power that needed to be evident to the public. The image had nothing to do with effective leadership, but not wearing the suit was unacceptable. Standing out as an individual was not an acceptable part of the school-district culture. Thus, the social construction of what a

leader is can be based on intuitive perceptions of what a leader looks and acts like, as well as their specific skill sets (Lugg & Tooms, 2010).

The social context of leadership has often been ignored in dominant leadership theories (Kariuki, 2011). Leadership is discussed in terms of the individual leader rather than the social context of the organization that reports only a piece of the actual experience. Women in leadership roles have not always been represented in leadership theories, creating a gap for women looking for deeper understanding and role models in specific professions.

The constructed understanding about a leader is similar to one's beliefs about men rather than women, as Schein demonstrated in her "Think Manager, Think Male Studies" (as cited in Chin et al., 2007). Followers are inconsistent and more likely to be more comfortable with male forms of leadership. When women display this same leadership style, they are rejected (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

A considerable body of research has shown that women can be disliked and regarded as untrustworthy in leadership roles, especially when they exert authority over men, display very high levels of competence, or use a dominant style of communication. To offset these negative reactions, female leaders have also to display warmth and lack of self-interest by, for example, expressing agreement, smiling, supporting others, and explicitly stating an interest in helping others reach their goals (Eagly & Karau, 2003, p. 573).

A series called a *Pathway to Leadership* produced by Lopez-Mulnix et al. (2011) profiled successful women at the peak of their careers. Three different publications featured presidents in universities, African American leaders in higher education policy, and Latina leaders in education, business, and not-for-profits. This series of life histories documented and enhanced understanding of the challenges and rewards of female leaders' experience. These individual narratives add to other examples of life history work and case studies of women leaders in the literature (Brunner, 1999; Grogan, 1996; Mertz, 2009). This work brings voice to the

marginalized, but does not address the relational interactions of the structure in which women fill leadership roles.

What is often missing in these case studies is analysis or attention to the topic of gender. The freedom to comment retrospectively on the barriers the women experienced around gender may put their current professional positions in jeopardy. In some cases it may inadvertently hurt those who have helped with their careers. The politics of discussing the “elephant in the room” appears too risky. The biographical literature demonstrates that success achieved in a male structure does not always look unfulfilling. The barriers that exist—balancing family demands, long hours, relocation, traditional pathways to promotion, access to networks—were worked through and forgotten, or at least minimized (Lopez-Mulnix, Wolverton, Zaki, 2011; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Wolverton, Bower, & Hyle, 2009; Jordon, Hunter, Derrick, 2008; Gupton & Slick 1996).

What is clear from the literature is that leadership in education is burdened with a history of patriarchy and gender bias, as well as symbolic and structural patterns of privileging masculinity. Conversations are needed to debunk and deconstruct the gendering and universalizing that takes place in leadership. When the politically constructed systems of power that influence the social construction that forms one’s identity as a leader are analyzed and articulated, it could illuminate other ways to construct a different kind of identity for a leader that replaces the embedded representation and normative performance of the role.

7. Identity construction

To understand the scholarly conversations about identity and its place in understanding myself as a woman and leader I focused on three areas of research: the cultural constructs of sex

and gender, the intersectionality of identity, and the historical impact of the different waves of feminism.

a. Cultural constructs of sex and gender

Gayle Rubin (1992) described a sex/gender system in which sex is the biological body into which one was born and gender is the social role division that is imposed on the sexes. From this construct, G. Rubin argued that society's division of labor by sex is "a taboo which exacerbates the biological differences between the sexes and thereby *creates* gender. And the division of the sexes has the effect of repressing some of the personality characteristics of virtually everyone, men and women" (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011, p.793).

G. Rubin (1992) argued that sex is institutionalized and shapes societies not due to biological needs, but rather social norms that are formed in different time periods. Like gender, sexuality is political. It is organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others" (p.309).

Sex is used as a political agent in that sexual repression creates an inherent caste system (G. Rubin, 1992) that privileges some sexual identities more than others, giving power to the dominant group and limiting the rights of others outside the dominant group. In the same way, G. Rubin argued that historical patterns of female oppression occur because women are the outsiders in capitalist societies (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011).

Scott (1999) argued that definition of gender has two parts and several subsets. They are interrelated but must be analytically distinct. The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power. Gender theory, in this instance sees the negotiated meaning of gender as a political process. Political structures and ideas set the boundaries of public discourse and living. Even those excluded are defined by being left out (p.1067).

A system that is politically motivated results in a person's experience conditioning one's identity rather than developing a sense of self, objectively defined by personal needs and interests. Identities and experiences are variable phenomena organized in particular contexts or configurations. Thus, identity is political and never stationary. In education, the understanding of power and gender exposes the more subtle gender inequities and binaries that shape school knowledge and curriculum (Dillabough, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006).

b. Intersectionality of identity

In the model of multiple dimensions of identity, Jones and McEwen (2000) conceptualized the relationship of socially constructed identities such as race, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and social class, to a core identity of personal attributes and characteristics and drew attention to the relative importance of each identity dimension. The more significant the social identity, the closer to the core sense of self that identity is located. Identity significance shifts with changing contexts such as family background, current experiences, and sociocultural influences, all influenced by systems of privilege and oppression (Jones, 1997; Jones & McEwen, 2000). The newly conceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity suggests that one's meaning-making capacity acts as a filter between contextual influences and personal identity that creates resistance to external influences. The result, according to Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007), is a richer portrayal of not only *what* relationships individuals perceive among their personal and social identities, but also *how* they come to perceive them (Abes et al., 2007).

Weedon (2004) maintained that in Western societies, individual and collective forms of identity are closely linked to ideas of national, local, and family history and tradition. History and tradition, combined with personal and collective memories, create a sense of where one comes from and where one belongs. This sense of history and tradition is learned informally in the family, through media representations and in school (p.24)

Marxist, feminist and postmodern theories and critiques of historiography have debunked history as an objective narrative of the past. Analyses of the ideological underpinning of history show a clear connection to putting forth a particular set of values, resulting in challenges to the authenticity of the traditions infused in families and personal identity. Yet history, albeit edited, and tradition continue to induce a sense of identity and belonging.

Clearly, identity development combines cultural and personal understanding.

Intersectionality is a framework that more completely and accurately captures the complexities of everyday life and identity by explicitly linking individual, interpersonal, and social structural domains of experience (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Shields, 2008). As Shields (2008) noted, intersectionality first and foremost reflects the reality of lives. The facts of one's life reveals that there is no single identity category that satisfactorily describes how one responds to their social environment or is responded to by others. In research informed by intersectionality, the unit of analysis is the individual, situated in larger social locations and structures of power (P. Collins, 2009). According to the research, when examining my own identity it is necessary to include my lived experience, my individual and group identity, and the influencing systems of power and privilege I experienced (P. Collins, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). A key form that the reclaiming of history can take is the first-person narrative, which functions as a transparent testimony to experience (Weedon, 2004).

c. Historical impact of feminism

Historically, the different waves of feminism served to articulate the social, cultural, and economic influences on the identity of women holding and looking for leadership opportunities, that is, breaking the *glass ceiling*. The feminist movements are important because they showed some women what was possible in their lives and challenged the status quo. They created a

social movement grounded in activism, produced a resurgence of gender research, and challenged the community about the media image of women. The different waves of feminism served as performances of the existing cultural and political tensions in each new generation.

Three key discourses in the feminist movements are significant. During the first wave of feminism, women upset the balance of power, gaining personal freedoms and political power. In the second wave, the personal became political and policies changed to protect women's rights in the workforce. The third wave demonstrated the individuality of all women, immersed in the culture of our country.

1) First wave of feminism

During the first wave of feminism, women upset the balance of power, gaining personal freedoms and political power. From the 1850s through the 1920s, women struggled to gain access to education, to win the right to vote, and to contend with barriers preventing them from entering the workforce and politics. The first-wave feminist movement in 1928 was organized around the suffrage movement, seeking the right to vote for women. Coontz (2011) saw the campaign to vote as a demonstrative challenge to the image of the 19th-century woman as passive and timid. The exercise of characteristics deemed unladylike unbalanced the system of power dominated by men. Husbands were not in control of their wives, fathers were not in control of their daughters, and brothers were not in control of their sisters. Women who led and participated in the Suffrage movement were denigrated by the press, by other women, and by their families. This is a continuing pattern today: women attack those who wish to change the status quo, assuming they would need to change, thereby resisting any multicultural construct.

The constitutional amendment to approve women's suffrage was passed in 1919 and ratified by the states in 1920. By gaining the right to vote, the cultural norms about gender and

sexuality changed. Women could go out in public unaccompanied, date without a chaperone, and wear clothes that showed their arms and legs (Evans, 2004). During the first wave of feminism, women gained personal freedoms and an independent identity.

Some of the backlash to the change in women's roles voiced concern over loss of some of women's traditional privileges: to be emotional, of service, domestic, and maternal. The rhetoric became about "too much liberation" (Evans, 2004). The onset of the Depression shifted the discourse. Women in the workforce were taking jobs away from men, resulting in lost ground, when they were pushed into low-wage positions so higher waged jobs could go to men. The first wave of feminism lost momentum without a unifying issue like voting rights and because of the impact of the economic downturn.

2) Second wave of feminism

In the second wave, the personal became political and policies changed to protect women's rights in the workforce. These changes were not available to non-White women.

Betty Friedan is often credited with creating the spark that launched the second wave of feminism through her book *The Feminine Mystique* (as cited in Coontz, 2011). The book served as a reference point for what was missing in some women's lives personally and professionally. The unifying goals of the women's movement became equality and access in the workforce. Feminism, during this period, attempted to bridge the ideological and strategic differences among women. These differences among feminists fueled debate, but Evans (2004) argued that the unity came from the shared challenge to undo the deeply rooted inequalities based on gender, regardless of difference. However, the narrow application and inclusion of "all women" did not resonate with all feminists in the movement, and to some it felt more exclusionary than unifying.

Again, the fear of being defined by someone else's interpretation of a woman's identity splintered the movement away from the larger goals.

The economic status of women improved because of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Presidential Executive Order in 1967. The passage of these laws legislated equal wages for doing equal work, prohibited discrimination by businesses and federal government contractors. Changes in the law, however, did not immediately improve the situation for women in the workforce (G. Collins, 2009).

In the context of equal opportunity in the workforce, the legislation stimulated changes, but I believe even more importantly, the voices of women that identified the structural barriers to full inclusion emerged. The personal became political and issues not normally addressed like sexuality, domestic violence, and the exercise of authority in a family were politicized (Evans, 2004). Through these voices, concepts like glass ceilings were given a name and defined. The term glass ceiling serves as a metaphor for discriminatory limitations experienced by women in the workplace, particularly in the area of upper management (Carli & Eagly, 2001).

The backlash to the second wave of feminism's fight for an Equal Rights Amendment was religious and political conservatism: the Equal Rights Amendment versus family values. The second wave idea of a cohesive, similar sisterhood metamorphosed into the image of the superwoman, balancing family and career. As women began seeing the world through their individual eyes and not the collective, "the feminist movement fragmented, and new populations of women, trade unionists, the old, the young, racial and ethnic minorities began to assert different priorities" (Rosen, 2006, p.xv). Once again, economic strife ensued with the 1979 oil crisis and recession, and the political priorities and conversations changed.

The multiplying voices of women spawned many different feminisms. The politics of universalizing the identity of all women taking a feminist perspective, seemed straightforward enough in the early days of feminism; 40 years ago sisterhood among White women was powerful. However, the discourse of standing as one and universalizing women's position in life, served to illuminate the actual differences and inequalities among women, creating another backlash in the feminist movement. Walkerdine et al. (2001) argued gender and the intersection of class were strong forces on one's identity during periods of economic change, like moving from an industrial to a service workforce or globalization of the economy. This new reality made it hard to live the "I can have it all" idea that was perpetuated in the 1960s second wave of feminism.

3) Third wave of feminism

In the 1990s, a third wave of feminism emerged as a cultural movement. The third wave of feminism demonstrated the individuality and talents of all women representing the many cultures in the United States. Evans (2004) characterized it as assertive, multicultural, and sexy. Third-wave feminists tolerate disagreement and difference, and prefer to tell their own personal stories to distinguish generational experiences. Evans reported that multiplicity, contradiction, and lived messiness are recurrent words in the stories of third-wave feminists (Evans, 2004). The rhetoric of the third wave was found in music: punk rock and rap, Madonna and Riot Grrrls. Activism was directed at the cultural exclusion of women and minorities. The attack on abortion rights and the complacency around sexual harassment, as demonstrated in the Clarence Thomas hearings, created new momentum in the feminist movement.

The rise, fall, and reconstructed periods of the feminist movements broke the silences (Blount, 1998; Miller, 2005; Skelton et al., 2006). These are key moments in history when

women challenged the status quo that kept them narrowly defined. Major political changes occurred that legislated rights held only by White men to women. Rosen (2006) argued that a women's movement serves as a unifying force, "to address the many ways women feel exploited, to lend legitimacy to their sense of injustice, and to name and reinterpret customs and practices that had long been accepted but for which no language existed" (Rosen, 2006, p.xii). Each wave of feminism accomplished different political goals by changing the interpretation of a woman's role in the culture. Gender as a socially constructed discourse is better understood because of the waves of feminism, such that the realities of women's lives are articulated and made relevant and differences are exposed in each generation. Fundamentally, all of these discourses are based on an unequal distribution of power.

Aapola et al. (2005) suggested that the narrative for girls and young women now is either a world of opportunity and choices previously not enjoyed by women or a world of risk and crisis, given global influences, and neither represents the reality. Instead, they suggest a new narrative in which the two worldviews are negotiated to represent the reality lived by girls, and that all young women must clarify their own identities for themselves.

8. Gaps in the literature

What the literature does not tell us is why, after decades of analysis about women's role in educational leadership, we have seen no movement to permanently change the balance of power. An opportunity exists now, as we focus on producing highly qualified future leaders in preparation for the large number of baby boomers retiring from the teaching profession, to dislodge the current hierarchical and patriarchal structures to enable more women to enter leadership positions. An opportunity exists now to improve the status of education as a profession by challenging the lack of parity in educational leadership. Given the number of

women employed in education, I argue that the importance of addressing gender and identity as a subject area in the preparation of school leaders would broaden the understanding of all types of othering that goes on in school systems; school systems that do not look much different than they did during the first wave of feminism. Educators' needs to find the passion needed to change the status quo, to motivate the brightest students to see themselves as school leaders.

The literature on leadership focuses on training school leaders to improve student outcomes, and on the impact of many stakeholders in the system. However, missing is consideration of the politically constructed systems of power that define gender and affect leadership. The hierarchical construction of education, the legislative control of practice, licensing and revenue distribution, are easier to focus on than the continued disparity in the number and diversity of women in leadership roles, or the myths and misconceptions about the role. As each wave of feminism showed, the landscape for women is not fixed or welcoming with opportunities. A constantly redefined project needs to be opened up for conversation. The support for young girls and practicing educators to *see* themselves in the role of school leader is missing and not well understood.

III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study looked at gender and its impact in my life story to deconstruct the development of my identity as a leader. This study used autoethnography as a research method to reconstruct and document the historical, cultural, social, and feminist journey I experienced from 1980 to the present, and the impact of this journey on the formation of my identity as a woman, a mother, a teacher, and a leader.

I chose autoethnography as my research method to add my voice to the literature on leadership in a gendered environment. I considered my voice significant because my experience spanned two different feminized professions, health care and education; my path was unique and difficult; and I grew up during the second wave of the woman's movement and passage of the Equal Opportunity legislation. My story is representative of a particular time in history, a personal set of expectations, and the impact of their intersection on my road to leadership. I argue the impact of feminism is important for younger women to appreciate and more powerful when related through personal authentic stories.

The autoethnography produced meaningful new knowledge gained from my personal story and a feminist lens. I traced my personal development and career progression chronologically and share the most seminal moments of my life that I believe and the literature suggests influenced my identity. My analysis speaks to the cultural influences, environmental and economic structures and symbols that were most relevant. My literature review guides the direction my analysis takes.

Autoethnography provides a less risky method for silenced individuals to share their stories. It removes the chance of misrepresenting others, This method places the researcher at the center and uncovers new knowledge that may inform problems and situations. (Denzin &

Lincoln, 1994; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). Deconstruction is a method used to critique the gendered metanarratives about categories like woman and man. Feminist deconstruction is a method of reading power relations, like uncovering gendered language, signifying particular dominance and polarities, and is extremely important in education (Dillabough, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006). My story traverses psychological and literal journeys to reflect on and convey a “patchwork of feelings, experiences, emotions, and behaviors that portray a more complete view of ... life” (Wall, 2006, p. 44). The truth I reveal is contextual, contested, and complicated (Adams, 2011).

The second significant reason I chose autoethnography was to confront the myths about gender and leadership that persisted and I personally experienced. Feminist literature discusses many of these myths but the education research is sparse. I produced this research for my community of scholars to stimulate change in teacher preparation programs. Educators, both men and women, receive their training in colleges and universities. The research literature reveals higher education has its own struggle with granting women equal access to tenure, peer-reviewed journals, and department-leadership roles (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Gupton & Slick, 1996; Henry, 2011). Anecdotally, I have noticed that most of the resources used in my graduate-level classes on administration were written by men, both in my master’s program in healthcare and my doctoral work in education. Women scholar’s voices are missing (Henry, 2011). Does it make a difference in the future access and success of women in leadership roles? Hoff and Mitchell (2008) argued it is important to start confronting the myths and belief in the normative, so that women see the void.

In terms of leadership preparation, the challenge is to raise issues of gender so that students will start confronting their assumptions and questioning what seems normal. With over half of the participants believing that gender factors exist elsewhere or not at all (despite numbers to the contrary), it is clear that societal beliefs surrounding gender

socialization, patriarchy, and meritocracy are going largely unchallenged. Leadership programs need to provide enough reading, discussion, and practice in viewing educational issues through a feminist lens. Only then will they be able to recognize and respond to gender factors that are operating all around them, often impeding women's advancement. (p.1)

An opportunity exists now, to improve the status of education as a profession, by challenging the lack of parity in educational leadership. Understanding the intersectionality of my gender with my race, sexuality, age, ability, class, education, or religion is a way of examining the impact of socially and culturally constructed categories on my identity as a leader. These systems of power are deeply embedded in the structures in which leadership positions exist. This research identifies and deconstructs the systems of power that mark my experiences. It informs my research about changes needed in the system.

My work is grounded in feminism because it is through feminist thought that I began to understand the barriers and contradictions I experienced in my career. Feminist thought is a history of resistance to the hierarchical construction of the relationship between men and women in specific contexts and an attempt to reverse or displace it (Scott, 1999). The second-wave feminist movement deeply affected the development of my identity and career choices. My career experiences deeply affected my identity as a leader. My identity as a leader affects my ability to make a difference.

My voice will join the voices of other women in the leadership literature. My self-study serves as a valid way to understand the impact of gender on leadership and the lack of responsiveness by the profession (Grogan, 1996; Miller, 2005; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). "For many, especially for women being educated as researchers, voice is an acknowledgment that they have something to say" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 423), (Wall, 2006). I have monitored the influence of gender on my career and personal life since I was a teen. I tell my story to motivate others to reveal the most personal experiences, some happy, some sad, to acknowledge the

“elephant in the room” in order to counter the dominant story. Failure is a powerful influence on my identity. I would like to leave a smoother path, a more equitable path, and a more understandable path to those women and men who follow me. As Wall (2006) suggested, unless challenged, the masculine dominance in leadership will continue in the feminized professions:

Many feminist writers now advocate for research that starts with one’s own experience. In contrast to the dominant, objective, competitive, logical male point of view, feminist researchers “emphasize the subjective, empathetic, process-oriented, and inclusive sides of social life.” This is the philosophical open door into which autoethnography creeps. The questioning of the dominant scientific paradigm, the making of room for other ways of knowing, and the growing emphasis on the power of research to change the world create a space for the sharing of unique, subjective, and evocative stories of experience that contribute to our understanding of the social world and allow us to reflect on what could be different because of what we have learned (p.147).

In response to Wall’s challenge, my inquiry uses autoethnography to explore my identity as a woman in the gendered roles of leadership. I acknowledge and document the deeply held feelings and reflections on being a woman learning to lead during the years between 1980 and 2013. My story will connect to the cultural, political, and social discourses of the time by examining the political environment reported in the media during the time periods of my study. My personal narrative speaks to the barriers and supports that I experienced firsthand.

My personal narrative is the product of my study. Writing as a *method of inquiry* is a way of finding out about oneself and one’s topic. Although writing is often considered to be a form of “telling” about the social world ... writing is also a way of “knowing”—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, one discovers new aspects of their topic and their relationship to it (Wall, 2006, p.151).

Annette Henry (2011) used five of her journal entries to tell a story about the work lives of Black women (p. 520). In much the same way, I use my work-life story to unearth issues that may be significant in women’s role in educational leadership. What I believe strengthens my story is my experience in two different fields that mirror similar experiences in my leadership journey and allow me to reflect on the cultural impact each had on my career.

My inquiry uses my preparation and pathway to leadership to explore my identity as a woman in the gendered roles of leadership in predominately female-employed professions, that is, feminized professions. Patti Lather validated this approach writing, “Studying women from the perspective of their own experiences so that they better understand our situations in the world is research designed for women instead of simply research about women” (as cited in Brunner, 2000, p. 10).

A. Autoethnography

An autoethnography is a reflexive account of one’s own experiences, critically examined in relation to the cultural practices of the time (Ellis et al., 2010). Hughes, Pennington, and Makris (2012) explained autoethnography as the sharing of personal experience in such a way that describes the author’s cultural characteristics to any reader. My narrative also provides a vehicle for talking across disciplines and identity locations: healthcare and education.

The use of autoethnography as my research tool acknowledges the subjectivity and influence I carry into my research. Some categorize autoethnography as a postmodern approach: a method that questions the objectivity of the observer in standard ethnographic research, but also questions the notion of a coherent individual self in postmodern ethnography (Reed-Danahay, 2001). Autoethnography allows me to recognize that my assumptions about how the world works are different from other people’s, and my assumptions are a result of the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, class, education, or religion.

Autoethnography offers an opportunity to reframe and refocus my inquiry, which may create conclusions and more questions. I consider my life story a valuable contribution to understanding gendered leadership in feminized professions, using my education and healthcare

leadership experiences for the past 30 years. It requires a rigorous process of continual reflection, resolutions, evolutions, and redefinitions (Hughes et al., 2012)

The process of autoethnography means the researcher “retrospectively and selectively” writes about transformative experiences that “stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture or possessing a particular cultural identity” (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 104). Autoethnographers analyze these experiences and, through the analyses, “make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. To accomplish this might require comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research, interviewing cultural members, or examining relevant cultural artifacts” (p. 104). (Ellis et al., 2010; Hughes et al., 2012).

Through personal narrative I retrospectively tell the story of my career development. The narrative acknowledges and documents my deeply held feelings and reflections on being a woman learning to lead during the years between 1980 and 2013. I connect my story to the cultural, political, and social discourses of the time. I speak to the barriers and supports I experienced firsthand and apply these understandings to the constructs of leadership and identity in education. Making my experiences visible and making sense of them will bring forward the oppression embedded in the path I chose.

I also review the following historical documents: job descriptions, performance reviews, personal annotated calendars, and other items I may have kept that were significant to me, for presenting a perception of the social world and me (Wall, 2006, 2008). The research narrative is consciously constructed as Ellis & Bochner (2000) argued, because I chose the resources when constructing the story; I place, order, and rank them; I identify the conflict and tensions; I interpret and form the arguments.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) recommended that I simultaneously focus in four directions: inward and outward; backward and forward. Inward reflection is about feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions that arise while writing and reviewing materials. Outward focus is a commentary on cultural conditions and context. Backward and forward is the review of past, present, and future.

This research will identify and deconstruct the systems of power that mark my experiences and identity formation. Additionally, I use this experience to more deeply understand why these oppressions exist and recommend changes to uproot these barriers. I chose this method to pursue meaning because Scott (1999) argued that a “women’s place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does but of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interaction” (p. 42). To pursue meaning, one needs to address *individual relationships*, because both are necessary to understanding how gender works, how change occurs, and how identities are formed.

Autoethnography is the appropriate methodology for this study.

Wall (2006) argued that using autoethnography to nudge against the traditional scientific approaches holds wonderful, symbolic, emancipatory promise. It says that what I know matters. The essence of postmodernism is that many ways of knowing and inquiring are legitimate, and that no one way should be privileged. What I see as most significant is that traditional research and writing conventions create only the illusion that the knowledge produced is more legitimate (p.4).

Autoethnography connects the personal to the cultural, social, and political (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). Ellingson and Ellis (2008) saw this type of research as a “social constructionist project.”

The researcher’s analysis of the lived experience identifies transformative experiences that shaped the story. However, the same transformative experiences may not affect others in the same way. Thus, the autoethnographer not only tries to make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging, but also, by producing accessible texts, may be able to reach wider and more diverse

mass audiences that traditional research usually disregards, an action that can make personal and social change possible for more people (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010. p. 104)

Forms of autoethnography can differ; for this study I use a *layered account* (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010), focusing on my experience alongside the literature review and cutting across two distinct disciplines: education and healthcare. This form of ethnographic research emphasizes the procedural nature of research making.

Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2010) used the example of the release of Betty Friedan's, *The Feminine Mystique* in 1964 to demonstrate the value in sharing one's personal story.

Freidan described the “problem that has no name”—the “vague, chronic discontent” many white, middle-class women experienced because of not being able to engage in “personal development,” particularly of not being able to work outside of the home in equal, supportive working environments. Freidan observed that many women, as homemakers, did not talk to each other about such a feeling. Isolated to home-work for most of the day, these women did not have the opportunity to share stories of discontent; thus, they felt alone in their struggle, as if their isolation and feelings were issues with which they had to contend personally. Friedan thus turned to writing in order to introduce and share women's stories. Her writing not only came to function as therapeutic for many women, but also motivated significant cultural change in our understanding of and public policies toward women's rights. (p. 8)

B. Examining the Cultural Context

Intersectionality will serve as a way of examining the impact of social and cultural constructed categories on my identity as a leader. Understanding the intersectionality of my gender with my race, sexuality, age, ability, class, education, or religion is another way of examining the impact of socially and culturally constructed categories on my identity as a leader. These systems of power are deeply embedded in the structures in which leadership positions exist.

For example, 20 years after the second wave of feminism started creating opportunities for women, I was the “first” female administrator hired in a midsize suburban hospital, part of a Catholic hospital system. Catholic hospital systems are led by religious orders of women, yet it

took that long to implement change at a local level. These systems of power are deeply embedded in the structures and contexts in which leadership positions exist. The historical, political, and economic influence of the culture are studied by reviewing media reports during the same time periods as my narrative. This research identifies the systems of power that marked my experiences.

C. Data Collection: Reliability, Generalizability, Validity

My choice of autoethnography as my methodology impacts the reliability, generalizability, and validity of the research. First, reliability is dependent on my memory and supporting documents. This makes the narrative a very individual portrayal requiring me to address trust in the authenticity of the data. Second, the individual and personal nature of the research compromises the ability to generalize the research to others. This requires strategies to broaden my interpretation. Third, validity of the research is only as good as the documented support of the narrative.

Reliability is dependent on my credibility, memory, and supporting documents. This study produced a personal narrative. The narrative was written from my own personal memories and reflections and produced research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The narrative unites ethnography, looking outward at the world, and autobiography, gazing inward for a story of oneself (Schwandt, 2001). In telling the story, there will be a constant shift between the outward and inward, connecting the personal to the cultural. The research may be characterized by stories aimed to evoke an emotional response from the reader and as an invitation into the lived experience (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Schwandt, 2001). The process is further characterized by reciprocity, reflexivity, dialogue, storytelling, and movement toward social action (Holman Jones, 2005).

Autoethnography is a narrative based on the experience of the writer and is heard by the reader with his or her own set of experiences. Memory is fallible and therefore facts may change from the original experience to the represented experience.

It is difficult to recall or report on events in language that exactly represents how those events were lived and felt. Reliability is dependent on the author's credibility (Ellis et al., 2010. p.105).

I propose that an ongoing internal dialogue and analysis of my identity, career, and leadership contributed to a commitment to writing a serious narrative. This is not the first reflection of my experience. I have also used my understanding to mentor and train others. I am also committed to improving the future for young leaders in education by identifying ways to shift the gendering of leadership, after 30 years' experience.

Postmodernists believe that the methods and procedures that are employed in research are inextricably tied to the values and subjectivities of the researcher (Bochner, 2000). Any efforts to achieve objectivity are obstructed from the outset, because the researcher always comes with ideas that guide what they choose to describe and how they choose to describe it.

One of the ethical dangers in telling my personal story is the exposure I may bring to others in my life. The essence and meaningfulness of the research story is more important than the precise recounting of certain details, as long as the integrity of the work and interpretation remain (Ellis et al., 2010).

Bochner responded to an objection that a focus on self is decontextualized, arguing that no one speaks free of a societal framework of co-constructed meaning. There is a direct and inextricable link between the personal and the cultural. Rich meaning, culturally relevant personal experience, and an intense motivation to know are what characterize and strengthen autoethnography. In testing the general value of the research Ellis & Bochner (2000) suggested asking the following questions:

- Can the author legitimately make these claims for her story? (Yes)
- Did the author learn anything new about herself? (Yes)

- Will this story help others cope with or better understand their worlds? (Yes) (Ellis et al., 2010. p.105).

The individual and personal nature of the research compromises the ability to generalize the research to others. Readers test generalizability as they “determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know, or illuminates unfamiliar cultural processes” (Ellis et al., 2010. p.10). This research may serve as a beginning point for others, based on what they interpret from my story. I am addressing very specific questions that relate to my experience and the interpretation of the gendering of my identity as a leader.

No prescribed methods exist for analyzing autoethnographic data. Creswell (2007) identified a general process for data transformation that includes description, analysis, and interpretation. During the process of analysis, descriptive themes in the narrative of my story are summarized and then interpreted using intersectionality as a lens. As Bourdieu (2001) suggested, this connects the personal narratives with the sociocultural contexts in which they were embedded and to explore the complex dynamics at work.

Validity of the research is only as good as the documented support of the narrative. According to Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010) issues of validity mean “that a work seeks authenticity; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible; a feeling that what has been represented could be true and help readers think about their own lives in similar or different ways” (p.10).

Autoethnography is criticized for either being art and not science, or vice versa. Ethnographers criticize the work as not being sufficiently rigorous, theoretical, and analytical; rather it is too aesthetic, emotional, and therapeutic (Ellis & Bochner, 2003) and lacks adequate fieldwork for observing other cultural members (Delamont, 2007). By using personal experience, Autoethnographers are thought to use bias and do not fulfill scholarly obligations of

hypothesizing, analyzing, and theorizing (Ellis et al., 2010). “Autoethnographers view research and writing as socially just acts; rather than a preoccupation with accuracy, the goal is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change people and the world they live in for the better”(Ellis et al., 2010. p. 11).

D. Timeline

- November, 2012—Defend proposal
- November 2012—March, 2013
 - a. Reconstruction of my career beginning in 1982 through the present.
- Document first through recall into a journal.
- Review my calendars from each year and other significant documents, i.e., job description; evaluations; correspondence, major projects.
- Describe in detail the organizations in which I worked.
- Describe the political environment in the field for which I am working, the national conversation, the local conversation, the professional conversation, consulting newspaper articles and professional journals.
- Summarize themes
- March 2013–April, 2013
 - a. Analysis of themes in relationship to literature and theory
 - i. Thematically organize narrative
 - ii. Place literature in conversation with narrative
 - iii. Reflection - results
 - b. Conclusions and implications of analysis including limitations and gaps
 - c. Recommended future research

- May 2013
 - a. Write, format and edit paper
 - b. Committee review and revisions
- June 18, 2013 Defense

E. Summary

In summary, the literature is clear that the embedded gender bias in educational leadership is a longstanding issue. The reasons for that are grounded in the history, culture, and social condition of public school education and the position of women in feminized professions. The leadership model is masculine, making it a challenge for others to understand the conditions necessary to move into these roles. I am not proposing to dislodge the anchor that weighs down the opportunity for change and diversity. I am proposing that my voice and story will resonate with others, bringing clarity, understanding, and comfort to those with similar experience. I intend my research to add to the literature by framing my autoethnography around the development of my identity as a leader and the many intersections crossing that identity.

Self-reflection is a powerful tool for change. Using a methodology like autoethnography provided me with the opportunity to contribute creatively to the field of educational research. According to the research, when examining my own identity it is necessary to include my lived experience, my individual and group identity, and the influencing systems of power and privilege I experienced (P. Collins, 2009; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). A key form that the reclaiming of history can take is the first-person narrative, which functions as a transparent testimony to experience (Weedon, 2004).

IV. PERSONAL NARRATIVE

This narrative acknowledges and documents my deeply held feelings and reflections on being a woman learning to lead during the years between 1980 through 2013. I will connect my story to the cultural, political, and social discourses of the time. Just as other women's narratives helped me understand my experience, my story contributes to the continued definition and interpretation of becoming a leader in patriarchal systems. I will speak to the barriers and supports that I experienced firsthand and apply these understandings to the constructs of leadership and identity in education. My career spanned two professional domains: healthcare and education. Based on this experience, I was not surprised, after reviewing the literature on leadership and gender in feminized professions, of the similarities in the scholarly conversations around the gendered construction of leadership (Grogan, 2005; Lantz, 2004; Gregory, 2003; Hoff, Menard, & Tuell, 2006; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, (1992) . My narrative I will seek to clarify some of the reasons for the slow growth in women achieving leadership positions. My research will recommend changes and incentives to improve the balance of power.

Making my experiences visible and making sense of them brings forward a definition of oppression embedded in the path I chose inside two professions—healthcare and education—dominated by female workers and male administrators. I place my voice in conversation with the literature and reflect on the adequacy in understanding how the intersections of gender, organizational conditions, and culture influenced the development of my identity. The narrative focuses on the specific experiences that shaped my identity. These experiences are organized thematically. First, I relate experiences in my life that reflect the cultural systems their impact on the social conditions in which I worked and leadership opportunities. The reader will find sexual

undertones, gendered relationships, structures of domination and prevalent gendered discourses. My story ends with a discussion of my life outside work.

A. Social Conditions and Opportunities Shaped by the Cultural Systems

In 1969 I sat across from my father at the kitchen table late one evening. We were discussing my future aspirations in preparation for my entry into a regional Catholic high school. I revealed my dilemma to him: How do I have a career and a family? At 14, in the midst of the feminist movement, I was overwhelmed by opportunity and set my sites on going to Yale, which had just become coeducational. I absolutely wanted a family, too. He expressed his understanding of the dilemma I faced but had no answer to my conundrum. Rather, I received academic direction, take Latin, and join Forensics in extemporaneous speaking and debate. These choices served to set myself apart from the majority of students and that resurfaced a feeling of being different that I was familiar with since kindergarten.

My father's advice served me well. I gained a strong vocabulary, a capacity for public speaking and a skill at quickly forming arguments. These skills helped me overcome my introversion and shyness. Later, these positioned me as an influential leader.

In 1969 when I entered high school, Richard Nixon was President, the Vietnam War was raging, the races were battling over civil rights, and the feminist movement was growing. I took an interest in the political conversations going on during my high school years. Everywhere one looked, there was discontent and rebellion. Public protests were popular, youth rejected adult values, music was different and a drug culture appeared. My early emotional development was influenced by popular music, for example, Carol King, John Lennon, Janis Ian, Michael Jackson, and Jesus Christ Superstar. Culture change was everywhere: Vatican II; clothing—bell bottoms, hot pants, maxi dresses, leisure suits; Roe v. Wade, Planned parenthood and the pill; Nixon

impeachment, Kent State student deaths; Three Mile Island, oil embargoes; the right to vote at 18.

Through the chaos, though, I saw opportunities for change; solutions that could make the world a better place. This is a significant character trait and filter of mine. I embraced the idea of making a difference in the world. I did not notice people existed who feared change. In both my personal and professional lives my comfort with change simultaneously nurtured my comfort with risk taking.

My fearlessness created opportunity. During my junior year in high school my friends and I saved up enough money to travel from Pennsylvania to the New Jersey shore. We traveled by bus unaccompanied by parents for a week of sun and fun. I reflect on this and the other traveling I did and realize that the exposure I received to new places contributed significantly to my sense of identity and opportunity. I never felt “trapped” in my small town as a child because there was no expectation to remain; in fact just the opposite, we were expected to achieve and relocate just as my parents did. My independence came from both my fearlessness and my role as the oldest.

I was taught that women had choices and opportunities. The idea that I would not go to college and have a career because I was female was never a conversation in my home. My mother was a nurse and worked outside the home as long as I can remember, often the night shift. I was the oldest of six children and functioned as the substitute parent. My mother was the responsible adult and my father, the unreliable adult. Yet I never relied on my mother for advice, particularly as it pertained to my future goals. My father was college educated but my mother “only” went to nursing school. Moreover, my father was on his way to medical school before he and my mother eloped because I was on the way. Somehow, I picked up the nuance of who had

better credentials. I never looked to my mother as a role model. I was perplexed because she was not like the other moms who had friends and available time for things like Girl Scouts and dance class. Yet the only time we ever talked about her career was years later when I was an adult, living far away. I never got the feeling she considered her work a career. In fact, as she was promoted for her achievements she became less secure in her competence. She received her nurse training in a hospital and never earned a bachelor's degree. There was a lot of conversation about the quality of nurses based on their education.

My paternalistic preferences were a contradiction to my feminist beliefs. I recognized the male dominant culture I lived in and resulting comfortableness working with men. Throughout my life I have found women more resistant to claiming the power they demonstrate in the home and workplace. This is frustrating and hard for me to explain. Men resist giving up power and that makes sense. The literature reports that cultural norms construct the role of a leader (G. Collins, 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elliot & Mandell, 1998; Rusch, 2004; Scott, 1991). To be successful as a leader, women need a reflection of themselves. One tool for assisting women in seeing themselves as leaders is a role model or mentor to offset the masculine image of leadership. As the research suggests a strong role model and mentor is important for empowering women but I do not know if it fully resolves the failure of women to claim power. I suggest that the importance of a role model occurs throughout childhood and not just when a woman enters the workforce. Leadership capacity is not a set of skills. My experience suggests it is an identity created over time within a culture of norms.

My model of leadership was present everyday as I grew up. My mother worked outside the home and ran the household. She was not a soft spoken, congenial, empathic person. This created dissonance for me because I wanted the mother who stayed home and baked cookies,

arranged play dates, and nurtured me. In the literature, personality traits and dispositions describe women as persuasive decision makers with the ability to share power and communicate well, who possess experience in nurturing the development of others, and prefer less hierarchical organizations (Langland, 2012). This type of conversation where women are born with these characteristics becomes less and less credible. Applying these characteristics to all women creates the stereotypes that the third wave of feminism rejected. My mother's success proves otherwise. As Bourdieu (2001) suggested, the structure of the situation is much more significant than personality traits and dispositions.

My mother's demeanor was reflective of her role. My mother functioned as a leader in the workplace, in the feminized field of nursing, and at home. In many ways, I accepted the idea of female and male roles and stereotypic behaviors for my parents, but not for me. As Scott (1999) argued, the terms of female and male identities are culturally determined. My belief was that my identity would be different from my mother. I dreamed about a stereotypic mother and yet did not want that for myself.

I am sharing this because it is significant when one analyzes the cultural and social context of identity. My identity was heavily influenced in my formative years by the cultural norms found inside my family structure and the community definitions of a woman's role. This conversation was not in the leadership literature. However, identity is not considered static, and the social and cultural forces one lives among are constantly changing, thereby influencing one's identity.

As I mentioned earlier I looked to my father for guidance. That early career conversation with my father was the only talk we ever had about my future, until my senior year, when he crushed any hope of going to any college other than Penn State University. I interpreted this

limitation as contrary to the cultural messages I embraced, that women had choices and opportunities. My tendency to take risks and resist boundaries fueled by my frustration with my father's decision about my options generated an alternate path that even I had not anticipated. Immediately after high school graduation and not yet eighteen I married. Bewildered at my limited choices at home I thought creating a new family would be better. My three-year marriage stripped me of my identity as a strong independent young woman. I was now an uneducated single mom.

With my family's support I went to college at the local Penn State campus. I chose healthcare administration as my profession, a new career path for nonclinical men and women. I came from a family immersed in healthcare careers and I was familiar with the landscape. After four years I moved on to a graduate program in health care administration in Chicago. My graduate program was housed in a large urban medical center and the students worked part time in the medical center. I never experienced gender as a barrier at the medical center during this time, certainly not in my work. My graduate colleagues and instructors were a mix of men and women. Since I relocated to an urban area I speculated that the new cultural context was different than my experience in a small town. The literature suggests that it is a community that defines the conditions that exist for a woman. I moved to a new community for my first job after graduate school and found less acceptance of professional women. My time as a student was a six-year hiatus from the real world. Even though I worked in a professional role during graduate school my identity remained as a student. At work my identity took time to make the transition from student to professional.

My professional identity and growth as a leader over the next twenty-five years had significant gendered themes. In the next section I discuss the sexual undertones that existed; the

organizational structures that enforced male domination; and the ongoing gendered discourse that polarized men and women.

1. The sexual undertones

G. Rubin (1992) addressed the political nature of sexuality. Like gender, the systems of power reward and encourage some individuals and activities, while punishing and suppressing others. Sex as a political agent gives power to the dominant group and limits the rights of others outside the dominant group. I argue this is a subject that is suppressed by scholars and professional women. In my professional spheres, a claim of sexual harassment may end one's career. The repercussions are just as negative as the actions. For example, in the 1990s, a friend of mine became involved with a male married administrator. When the relationship was discovered, she was dismissed but he kept his position. My friend ended up enlisting in the Navy because she was unable to find another administrative position. The couple eventually got married. I do not know that I could have overlooked the outcome and maintained the relationship.

My experience includes managing the attraction, advances, and harassment sexuality creates. I am not referring to love; I am referring to the dance of power among men and women. I survived in my first real professional position by becoming close friends with the most powerful man in the organization after the CEO. He mentored me, protected me, taught me how to play golf on the employee team, convinced me to join the bowling league, and then seduced me. For a brief period we crossed a boundary that should have remained intact. I was very attached to him and lost sight of the politics occurring around me. A new administrator joined the staff and took the open position my friend expected to gain and a power struggle ensued.

I was biased and inadvertently opposed every new idea the administrator expressed. This was not a strategic move, given that I held the lowest position on the administrative team. Soon afterwards I reported to him and we struggled. Previously, I had reported to the CEO and had a good deal of independence. Working independently is how I work best and am always diligent about my work and accountability. But I do not like being micromanaged or have my competence questioned unfairly. It reminds me too well of my struggle in high school to be admitted to an advanced class. Sister Ann felt I was not suitable even though I met all the requirements. So exactly what are the rules?

My new supervisor wanted more control and worked hard to establish boundaries around me that I thought were unimportant. I preferred to come in later so I could get my son off to school and then I worked an hour later. He wanted me to change and I resisted. The administrator took a report I submitted as an Assistant Vice President and had a director review it. This director had applied for my job and undermined me in many situations. He had no expertise in this case to validate my work. I was very upset and confronted my supervisor, explaining the political guffaw he committed. He responded by explaining how he could not quite figure out how I do my work, and why I always had the right analysis and intuition about the projects, but without that understanding he did not trust me. The voices of other female leaders confirmed this practice of double-checking on the work they produce. I worked and communicated differently from his other past reports and he was at a loss to understand me. I did not act like a typical male administrator or female manager. This dynamic started with the blind loyalty and trust I placed in my colleague because of our intimate relationship. There was no one protecting me when he moved on.

This experience in my first job reflects the newness and lack of understanding of women assuming traditionally male leadership roles. Lugg and Tooms (2010) talk about the common intuitive perception of what a leader looks and acts like as the norm. My supervisor could not understand my behavior and results. It was not familiar to him. Other scholars point out women can be disliked and regarded as untrustworthy when they display very high levels of competence and a dominant speaking style (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Both were true in my case. I did not try to minimize the obvious dissonance by displaying a warm, congenial “ladylike” personality. In retrospect it would take that kind of turnaround to undo the damage and reduce the apprehension my supervisor so obviously felt. But it wasn’t just my lack of experience that could be blamed for the way I handled the situation. This example occurred in the early eighties during a period of change in gender construction and unfortunately as time passed the same situation occurred ten years later. I did not respond with a “ladylike” persona.

Kariuki, 2011 argues that the critical construct of social context is ignored in dominant leadership theories that continue to focus instead on the individual. My career history supports that argument even in 2013.

I actively looked for a new position. The CEO was now vested in the success of the new administrator. I was frustrated that after 3 years I was forced to prove my worth once again. My new supervisor took my secretary (a promotion for her but a loss for me). My mentor left, disappointed and angry, leaving me once again unprotected. The feelings of being the outsider that I felt in my first weeks on the job returned. I learned during my time in this organization how important it was for me to fit in and feel part of the club. To fit in, I had to become one of the boys and still wear skirts. I had to tolerate the jokes and still defend my femaleness without too much hostility. I had to be really good at my job and not need help. I had to understand that

my need to make friends was superseded by my position in the organization, resulting in most people feeling threatened by me. This type of isolation was confusing to me. I was a successful professional who did not know how to find a network. This resembles the way I feel today as a CEO. Gender offers a way of thinking about inclusions and exclusions and how these are constituted.

I decided I needed an organization that better met my need to be of service to the community. I entered the field with a service orientation. I was looking for a supervisor/mentor who would help me grow as a leader; someone who would help me understand the unwritten rules I kept breaking; someone who believed women had something to contribute. The organization I chose had potential. I wanted to learn about meeting the needs of a struggling community. I entered a landscape that was unfamiliar but the benefits seemed to outweigh the risks. Scott (2008) argued that gender is the relations between the sexes as a “primary way of social organization; that the terms of female and male identities are culturally determined; that differences between the sexes constitute and are constituted by hierarchical social structures” (p.1426); and that “gender is a primary way of signifying power relationships” (p.1423). Her theory applied to my new gendered community with intersections of race and class.

In this organization, my direct supervisor, without any warning or provocation, propositioned me. I was stunned and turned to my colleague for advice. She seemed to think I could firmly say no and that would end the pursuit. It did not work out that way. First, he blamed me for his misreading of my interest. I realized quickly I was one in a long line of women in the organization he seduced and he was not used to being turned down.

I received my lay off letter shortly after the incidents but chose to look at it as both a benefit and an affliction. I knew I could not survive in an organization that was not centered on

patient care. My supervisor who blamed me for his actions traumatized me. I was embarrassed that I left my last position for this one. In addition, financially I was at risk, so I did not share my situation with my son or any family members. I suffered through the unemployment office at a time when the economy was weak and stood in long lines with others to receive benefits, reporting in person every 2 weeks. One of my graduate school classmates contacted a colleague at one of the prestigious medical centers in the city. Because of her efforts, I was offered a unique position, part of another new organizational strategy.

The first two organizations I worked in were situated in very different communities. One would expect the cultures to be very different. However, in both cases the cultures supported the improper sexual advances. My accomplishments were diminished and my leader identity was compromised. My role models behaved unethically and silenced my voice. In later years I found the blatant sexual advances grew much more subtle and were replaced with a constant questioning of my competency.

a. Structures in gender relations and structures of domination

The scholarly conversations and voices of women leaders documented in the literature mirror the inequities and personal sacrifices I made to succeed (Blount, 1998; Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Jordan et al., 2008). Gender clearly plays a role in institutional dynamics, normative behavior, and systems of power and exploitation. Gendered work is situational, relational, and hierarchical. These structures often leave little time for family responsibilities and nonworking obligations.

In high school I had my first lesson in power and politics that continues to stay with me. In my senior year I registered for advanced biology. Admission to the class was dependent on Sister Ann's approval. Sister Ann taught me biology as a sophomore. I met the academic

requirements but was not accepted into the advanced class. Sister Ann did not feel I was serious enough in my desire to take the class. I was one of those students she always accused of not living up to my potential. I had no idea why she felt that way, because I did well in her class. Senior year I did not take a science at all. This decision was retaliatory; I was very upset. This was a very personal defeat. Sister Ann prevailed because she had more power and influence than I did. Her decision was not based on the published criteria for class admittance, but I attended a private school managed by an archdiocese where lay people had less power than the religious did. I loved biology regardless of the personality conflict with my teacher. However, I did not have any power to influence the decision. The literature explains my private school as a system that is politically bounded (P. Collins, 2009) Because of this my experience conditioned an identity rather than developing a sense of self, objectively defined by personal needs and interests. I abandoned the fight and was conditioned to abandon situations I interpret as being devoid of success, controlled by those more politically powerful than me.

My next lesson in power occurred during my first marriage. My marriage was short lived but it was a 3-year domination by my husband. I went from being a free spirit to a terrorized puppy. All the confidence and dreams I had somehow were lost. I lived an isolated life, taking care of my son. I repeated my father's story. He gave up medical school to get married and I gave up everything. I had never been exposed to physical and emotional abuse and I responded in a textbook way, and so did others around me. There was no protection.

A window of hope opened when I began college night classes. I was able to take classes because my husband took advantage of the GI Bill and enrolled in college courses. I was only allowed to enroll in the same classes he took, so I could do his classwork and mine. It was worthwhile when I started to find my former ambition and connect with people again. My

identity started to evolve positively once more. I chose not to live an abusive life and instead moved forward preparing for a career with a few adjustments. I ran away from my husband with my 2-year-old son and took back my life, but not without baggage about male power and control. It was ironic that I picked an oppressive partner at a time when women were reclaiming their individuality and independence. Transitions prove to be difficult times for me to plan and navigate.

The choices I made were to some degree normative in my community. The community was not composed of well-educated citizens. Spousal abuse, child abuse, and alcohol abuse were relegated to the family to handle. The literature speaks to these cultural patterns of oppression and the intersections of race, class, gender, and religion. If these cultural assumptions were challenged, it may have destabilized the underlying patriarchal assumptions and beliefs, as Enomoto argued (2000).

The institution of marriage I experienced was filled with patriarchal power, domination, and fear. Moving forward, my university experiences were mostly positive. My life as a single mother was daunting at times but manageable. Two significant supports were the availability of childcare at a low cost and the proximity of my brother, who was in school and living nearby. I had a close friend with a son of the same age and we supported one another. The collegiality and organizational assistance made a difference. This type of assistance ended when I completed my undergraduate degree and moved on to earn my graduate degree.

After completing graduate school, I worked for a midsized religious healthcare organization. The religious order played a significant role in creating a new position and filling it with a woman. I competed for the job with a man I was dating, who politely implied he let me have it, when he took another position out of state. I do not think he realized that they had

planned to hire a woman. I uprooted my son and relocated, as requested, to live in the hospital's service community. I took a risk and accepted a newly created position. Even more significant, I was the first woman hired in the senior leadership circle besides the nursing administrator, a traditionally female filled role. Each day I was acutely aware of my gender and my commensurate unique position in the organizational culture.

The position was unique because it was new, not well defined, and I was a gender-specific hire. The organizational culture was unprepared for the change and the response was unwelcoming. I was not embraced by the nursing leaders or the hospital-operations leaders because I bypassed working my way through the hierarchy as a department director, and in their mind jumped ahead to a senior-leadership role. Unbeknownst to me, I did not follow the informally accepted path to a leadership position. My entry as the first female administrator created much tension and power dynamics.

Although not unusual for this period, my immediate colleagues were all married white men with female secretaries. As a young single female administrator, I felt less than full support from the secretarial staff and was viewed with constant suspicion by my colleagues' wives. I stood alone in what seemed unfamiliar territory, blazing a career path I hoped would be successful, regardless of my gender, but very much aware of its impact.

On my first day, I wanted to make a good impression and arrived early. Unfortunately, no one, including security, expected me. The administrative team did not arrive until midmorning. It seems the annual golf outing was held the day before and it was a late start for everyone. The administrator set my arrival date and I had to hustle to find childcare because my regular childcare provider was out of town. It was not an ideal situation. I certainly did not feel welcomed when I joined the staff that first day, but I tried to put those feelings aside and forget

the oversight. My office was located just outside the administrative suite and had not been furnished. This second oversight and my physical location further announced my difference from the other male administrators. It was apparent I had not yet been let into the club. When I was promoted to a line position from my staff position, I gained entry into the management suite.

My next experience as an outsider was lunch. Everyone ate in the cafeteria with an already established group. No one invited me to go to lunch, so I went and felt a sea of regret as I tried to find a place to sit anywhere but alone. I knew few people and there were no tables to join, so I sat alone. I was in a quandary because others divided into groups by status and gender. I belonged to the all-male administrator group, which did not attempt to help me assimilate. A few powerful male managers ate with the administrators. As time went on, I came to know a female manager (and single mom) who belonged to a clique of all women department heads. The men viewed these women as less important managers. Moreover, these women viewed me suspiciously because I had broken rank and entered the male domain. Consequently, for a while I went home for lunch because I did not enjoy the feeling of being an outsider. I had a strong personality and felt different from most women. After a while, the women I felt closest to were the secretaries. I was oblivious to what my position meant or the power it carried with it, if any. As Hoff & Mitchell (2008) argued gender discrimination was present because my new role clearly lacked insider status, support systems and was immersed in patriarchy despite the feminine ownership

There was no orientation or training; I learned what I needed to in order to be successful. One rite of passage was that if a position opened I had to ask the CEO to be considered for a promotion and present a solid case. This is the antithesis of how I thought things worked. Even now, I do not know if that was one more detour I had to navigate to prove I could assert myself.

Along the way, there were other types of special insights that I needed in order to keep up with the men in the club and be culturally knowledgeable.

My status as a single mother had to remain invisible. When required to travel, I had to obtain competent childcare quickly and received no reimbursement for the expense. I challenged this by submitting my expense reimbursement request with the cost of babysitting, since all my colleagues had stay-at-home wives; it did not apply to them. I made my case, but it was denied. There were times I placed my child second to my job for two reasons: I am very ambitious and wanted to keep up, and, I felt I had no choice. I would not do the same today.

Repeatedly, I am attracted to opportunities to be innovative and take a risk to change the status quo. My personal drive resides in making a difference. I was very tired of the politics and power issues involved in working for men. I thought working for an accomplished woman had to be different and of course better. My decision making focused on who I would be reporting to and not as much on the organizational history, hierarchy, and culture as the literature now suggests.

Changing the organizational structure of any healthcare facility requires an understanding and belief that one can do things in a better way and get better results. Yet nurses, doctors, and administrators function much the same way since nurses declared their independence and moved their training out of the hospital. Uprooting the status quo is like moving a plant with very long and deep roots. A hospital has been organized one way since its inception. Physicians admit and manage the patients; departments are organized by function with each technical area requiring special training. There are managers who manage support services, professional services, patient care, and staff functions like accounting, legal, planning, and marketing. There is little integration of leadership. However, I was trained in a center that had a

unique management structure, a matrix system. A matrix system groups employees by function and by product line. The organization helped align the clinical departments with the functional and the academic. Thus, I was familiar with the concept and comfortable working in a nontraditional structure.

This would be my third leadership position and each new position was new to the organization too. I never stepped back and thought about this. I was always attracted to the opportunity. I did not have a plan for my career or a list of progressively responsible positions I needed to have to get to a top-leadership position. I looked for opportunity with work that would make a difference. The challenges associated with new additions to traditional organizational structures can be significant.

A new leader introduced a new structure and strategy and rolled it out over 2 years. I functioned as a liaison among the medical and surgical specialty physicians, the nursing floor staff, and the professional departments like radiology, testing laboratories, and surgery. I had no formal authority over anything unless I managed an affiliated department. The departments, in most cases, retained their functional leader. The organizational goal was to organize care around the patient to make the experience cohesive, seamless, and efficient. My role served as spokesperson, advocating for the changes that needed to be made to make this happen. My closest accountability lay with the physician leaders representing the clinical areas. However, the physicians lived within a different management structure: some were in private practice and others were part of the faculty responsible for the teaching programs.

My supervisor was promoted shortly after I began. The impact of that promotion on me in my new position was significant: I had quite limited access to her; getting oriented and figuring out priorities happened in a vacuum. I managed the smallest program area but one that

had just lost a very popular physician; another department had a chair who was a researcher first; and another department was a division within a bigger division that continually compromised plans and priorities. I also had responsibility for directly managing a testing department with a new Canadian physician overseeing it. Decisions about a permanent office location or support staff (secretary) never occurred. I had no colleagues except the other administrators physically located all over the organization. The situation was isolating, ambiguous, and at times hostile.

I had no idea how to manage my priorities or even what they were. Therefore, without guidance from my supervisor I focused on managing the testing laboratory, because I knew how to do that. Nothing was a hindrance unique to itself, but the combination of no access to my supervisor, deeply suspicious physicians and hospital staff, and still recovering from the trauma of my last position, I was terrified and destined to fail. One of the most significant challenges to women in leadership is the lack of support and mentoring. I assumed a woman would be a different type of supervisor, intuitively knowing what I needed and capable of providing it. But again the culture determines the concept of leadership. There was nothing to dislodge the masculine model of leadership. Therefore, the literature supports my understanding of why a female supervisor did not make a difference (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Carli & Eagly, 2000; Brunner, 2000).

The CEO called me personally one day to ask me to complete a report for the former CEO to use at a leadership retreat. The report I prepared was not good and I completed it so late that my supervisor had one day to review it before it went to the former CEO. I had no support staff assigned to help me prepare the report. One of my colleagues helped by sharing her staff. I was no one's priority and it showed. I do not mind taking ownership for my mistakes, but there was no opportunity; I received no feedback from my supervisor or former CEO for whom I

prepared the report. Months later, I did receive an impromptu remark from the CEO, and I sensed I burned a bridge there, but never knew why. I obviously did not understand the subtleties of communication or the intolerance for failure. That intolerance for failure by women is part of the masculine model of leadership.

Two more significant incidents occurred that I knew went poorly, but my supervisor was never willing to make time to discuss the issue, even at my request. I walked around in constant fear and apprehension. In my first year performance review, I was told it was not working out and that my supervisor did not have time to focus on me. My biggest fear came true. I was offered human resource assistance, career counseling, and time to find a new position. Once the secret was disclosed, I relaxed and performed my job quite well, but only after my division was transferred to another manager.

I helped recruit a new physician leader and he liked working with me. This fact and my amended performance saved my job. Six months after being asked to leave, I was asked to stay. Life was good for the next 4 years. During my 4th year, I remarried, after 16 years of raising my son alone. I expanded my family by two, a widower and 3-year-old son. However, life was not rosy and the transition for my 16-year-old son was tumultuous. I find I have very little control over making events go well.

The institution of marriage challenges me from a feminist worldview. My generation was the first to experience more freedom of opportunity. That cultural change meant change in the expectation of women by men. My husband and I both had models of marriage we previously experienced with negative impediments. Our life together over the next 20 years involved a tremendous amount of change: a new blended family, multiple job changes, and ongoing shifts in our earning power and responsibility. As my career blossomed, my husband's moved lower in

status. He came to resent my status but liked the money I made and enjoyed his low-stress job. He was jealous of my relationship with my son and completely unfamiliar with raising a teenager. I was immersed in my career out of passion and necessity. We were able to shift our roles into less of a traditional division of power. On the surface that may work; underneath, neither one of us was happy. That ongoing lack of fulfillment had to affect my career in ways I still cannot see. After 20 years, I stopped waiting for happiness and left the marriage. I have no regrets. Again, it is not an institution in which I do well.

A common theme among other female leaders is the impact leadership has on one's personal life. One's career takes precedence. Many delay the rise to leadership until their children are older or they have no children. We work harder and produce more to stay in the club.

Over the years I discovered that my very strong intuitive talents to observe and analyze the world around me in a deeper way than most people shut down when I am under heavy stress. When I remarried in the nineties, I found my new marriage clouded my capacity to notice events taking place at work that would eventually cost me my job. I did not notice when I was asked to complete something that I had been asked previously. I missed complete conversations. I operated in a high-anxiety state, which made it impossible to be present at all times. The day I had my 5th-year performance review, it was a complete shock that my supervisor told me my position was being eliminated; and in the next sentence told me that I must have really angered someone along the way. He was unable to protect me and was told to make this happen; he never fought for me either. This time I knew there was no second chance because I was producing good work. In retrospect, I realize I did not pick up all the foreshadowing clues and I was distant from my colleagues because of my home distractions. Nobody had sounded an alarm; especially

not my supervisor. There is an ongoing debate in the literature around meritocracy (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Some would like to believe that high performance trumps gender in the workplace. I will be rewarded and valued if I earn my place in the organization. My experience contradicts this concept.

I was done with healthcare after so many instances of not understanding the rules. I took a part time position in a science museum working with other science museums around the country on the AIDS crisis. The museum world was the place I healed the open wounds that multiplied in each new healthcare organization. I healed because the staff were very bright, highly educated people passionate about what they were doing. Most of the staff I worked with were creative scientists, designers, and educators; not administrators. The decision-making was less hierarchical. The production of exhibits was relational, requiring teamwork, so people naturally adapted to an informal matrix accountability system. Men and women at the senior level were powerful. From the outside it was a traditional division: the president was male, the vice president a male administrator, fundraising and finance both had women administrators. However, the uplifting reality of this organization was the ability for individuals to grow into new opportunities. I started as a grants manager and moved into community liaison for an exhibit, to label writer, to exhibit developer, to exhibit project manager to director of education over 10 years. Opportunity grew from success and less from specific credentials, as healthcare does. The organization for the most part ran by meritocracy and not personality.

I learned about different industries and the science that supports the work. My capacity for understanding complex processes grew as I traveled underground into a real coal mine, flew into the Gulf of Mexico to visit an oil rig, and saw the inside of an oil refinery; in addition to many more hands-on immersive experiences. I met dignitaries when they came for private

showings and had dinner with President Obama and Michele before most people knew them. I worked with amazing scientists and laboratory researchers. These adventures helped us design innovative and understandable ways to communicate science to the general public. My ability to participate and contribute value was never questioned because of my gender.

I revisit my high school days, where I gave up on science because I was blocked from advanced biology. Here I was working for a prestigious institution, helping others become excited and knowledgeable about science in creative informal ways. I was able to transfer my knowledge and connections gained in healthcare to my work in the museum. Working in a museum brought instant respect; most people I knew did not know much about how museums work or know someone who works in one, so I was a bit of a novelty. I was not a first. The roles I performed had well-worn paths; I was grateful for that. Like so many women in the literature, failure did not derail me (Brunner, 2000). I changed direction but I never relinquished finding fulfillment in my career.

I developed a strong and complementary working relationship with my supervisor. What he lacked in management and people skills, I had, and what I lacked in science knowledge, he had; so he was not threatened by me. I provided the data people needed to account for what he was spending and why. I empathized with the many stakeholders in the community so we could produce an exhibit free of controversy. The museum leadership valued our teamwork and appreciated my ability to work with what most felt was a difficult person. I never found him difficult because he trusted me and I trusted him. Knowing I was valued and trusted allowed my fear of failure to diminish. It allowed me once again to try new ways of working, to take risks, and to make a difference in other people's lives. My identity as a leader strengthened significantly during the ten years at the museum because as Dillabough (Dillabough, in Skelton,

Francis, Smulyan (eds), 2006) argues if a system is politically motivated like my previous organizations than my identity is conditioned rather than developing an identity based on my personal needs and interests. I should point out that men dominated the management structure but because of the manner in which work was created within teams the patriarchy did not feel as oppressive. This began to shift when a new leader was hired eight years into my tenure.

A specific situation developed regarding a grant and the finance director. I kept the books for the grant and worked with the director to resolve the problem. In the past the director and I had a relationship based on suspicion, but working on this problem together created a trust and friendship. I modeled a commitment to my work that she did not expect, a reflection of the predominant culture in her division. I did not abandon the problem until it was resolved. I knew how detailed my supervisor kept notes; when we were not able to track down the numbers, I went to my supervisor's calendar and found the answer late one evening. A year later the director left and I had to start over with a new director. We got to know one another during my time as a project manager dealing with a very sticky situation with a contractor. It is always perplexing to me that I was assumed not to know what I was doing by the new director, rather than assuming I did. This is a gendered behavior common in organizations. This example supports the literature that suggests I was defined by the organizational culture using stereotypic gender roles rather than defined by my background and the actual work performed (Lugg & Tooms, 2010; Blount, 1998, 2000).

I spent 10 years at the museum. Those were difficult years in my personal life where my identity vacillated because of gender and family stereotypes. My career identity as an innovative creative leader blossomed. For the first time in my career, I experienced contentment, fulfillment, and happiness. I expected these emotions much earlier.

The contentment I felt was disrupted when a new president was appointed resulting in a new set of organizational priorities and ways of doing business. The board chose a person politically connected with strong business skills. Most of his work life took place in hierarchical, hegemonic public service organizations. One of his interests was education and the interface with the public schools. Shortly after his arrival, my supervisor reorganized his division and my project management work was ending. He recommended I pursue a spot in education or fundraising.

My role in the organization up to this point aligned with the role of a pinch hitter in baseball. I was flexible, talented, and adapted easily to new situations. I played an important role when one of the more experienced managers served as acting chief financial officer and acting President. When both positions filled, his place back in the department was protected and mine was not. I responded with resilience knowing my work was respected, I was in the middle of a critical exhibit project, and confident other opportunities would present themselves.

I had a very good relationship with fundraising because I could persuasively describe exhibits in a manner that brought donors to commitment. However, my real interest was in education. The director had recently left. The new manager underestimated the time it took to oversee a larger department and the type of management it required. He was not committed to it, so he abandoned it. I took advantage of the gap in leadership and suggested to the new president that I would be a good education leader. I got the job.

As one would expect, the vast difference in background of the former president and the new president showed in his management style and expectations. Some of the senior staff survived and others chose to move on. My biggest ally chose to leave and left me with a parting suggestion: learn to ask for help. This was the first time I heard this and was taken aback; I

thought I was supposed to handle things. Nobody had suggested another way. I struggle with the idea of asking for help; to me it meant you have a deficit, a negative, instead of looking for clarity and support. This continues to challenge me. The literature suggests that women are expected to know what to do and are provided with little guidance (Brunner, 2000).

I was thrust into a direct reporting relationship with the new president, a person I did not know. Previously, I was able to work very independently, a comfortable working style for me, but one that requires trust and confidence in me. My new supervisor liked to check in frequently and I was not prepared to handle unexpected phone calls from him. I wanted to make a good impression but was overwhelmed by the amount of work that had not been done by the previous manager. The education staff was in desperate need of attention and direction. Two managers resigned shortly after I took over and left me with little time to learn the landscape. One lesson I learned late in my career is to always manage up: I always focus on the staff reporting to me who need direction; a better approach is to clarify the priorities of my supervisor before setting my own priorities; a more hierarchical than relational approach. The literature reports that inside a more traditional masculine leadership model and political organization, boundaries, control, masculine leadership traits are important and incentivized (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Connell in Skelton, Francis, Smulyan (eds.) 2006 Blount, 1998; Lugg, 2003).

Reporting to the president and joining the leadership council placed me in a strange relationship with the other leaders. I was there because I was the only voice representing education, a new organizational priority. In the past, the other departments carried more weight. I was in a lower hierarchical position in the organization and so the imbalance of power was clear during the meetings. I learned that the group did all their business prior to the meeting so there was an appearance of harmony and agreement. The president liked a harmonious meeting. I

barely had time to get my regular work done, so doing a round robin with the other administrators in advance and then sitting through a meeting seemed unnecessary to me. My resistance to politically driven agendas was naïve. Nevertheless, without a mentor I continued to follow my own instincts.

A search for a new senior leader to replace my supervisor and to hire a new Vice President of Education was completed. This was the first significant new team member brought on by the new president. During one of our leadership meetings, the new leader made a presentation recommending a new development process. There was no mention of education. I was surprised, knowing the organizational priorities; I pointed out the discrepancy before everyone voted on it. I watched the new leader and my president's reaction and knew I had committed a major mistake. I broke the unwritten rule, no public display of conflict such that the president had to take sides. There was no healthy sharing of ideas or discussion.

The new Vice President and I did not connect or work well together. He chose young managers to advise him. In the meantime, the search for a senior leader of education was ineffective and I could see that a compromise was coming; education would not stand alone after all but instead be absorbed under another department in the same way it had been previously structured. I preemptively addressed the situation and offered my loyalty to the senior leader. I proudly prioritized the museum's best interests over my status and made the shift in accountability

This selflessness proved problematic. I am motivated by a drive to make a difference therefore I need to be situated in a successful organization to bring my vision to fruition. My actions in this situation clearly ignore the political implications, the power dynamics among me, the new President and the new vice president and my identity as part of the former regime. The

literature speaks to the complexity created by the intersectionality of the culture, history, and structure and the bias that creates (Collins, 2009). However, it falls short addressing the situation where a leader like me loses sight of the difference between their own priorities and the priorities of the organization's leadership, particularly during times of transition.

Unfortunately, I was not successful at creating a healthy working relationship with my new manager. That realization came to a head when I was told I would not be managing one of the biggest innovations in our education department, even though I successfully developed a critical partnership, program, and funding. My supervisor joined the staff just in time to be placed as principal investigator on the grant because he had a PhD. Again, putting the project first, I agreed because it increased our chances of receiving the grant. I did not think I would lose the opportunity to implement the grant. The president wanted this program and I made it happen.

Once more, I missed the organizational cues that told me change was in the air. I lost my joy of working at the museum during my last year. The organization became an overtly political machine and I became one of those naysayers, putting ideas down without listening. My supervisor shut me out because I threatened him. Finally, I figured it out and told him I understood and negotiated a comfortable exit strategy.

Besides my first job after graduate school, I never left a position but instead am asked to leave. I am not one of those long-term employees people come to rely on. I felt valued as a hard worker, excellent communicator, highly intelligent colleague with vision. I have never felt valued as important to the organization. The literature addresses this partially (Langland, 2012; Dillabough, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006) through the discussions involving female leadership as defined by traits and behaviors unrelated to the work, rather than on merit. My experience suggests that merit-based performance rarely protects one from power and bias.

After I left the museum, I ventured into the academy. Research about the academic community explains the organization as a large bureaucracy that allows some limited access to its power while at all times maintaining strict control of the entry gates (Dillabough, as cited in Skelton et al., 2006; Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 1996, Tallerico, 2000). Women are not of equal stature in all departments. I moved into an organization with stricter boundaries. However, I gained entry through a grant funded position outside the management structure. I saw firsthand how the incentives and expectations of the organization place faculty in competitive relationships rather than collegial ones. I came in an outsider and remained an outsider.

I am an impatient person and working slowly challenges me. My presence in the academy was not always understood because my role was funded through a grant, but I had direct access to the leadership. I found that even if I conducted myself openly and honestly, it did not always have the effect I intended. I was an anomaly who did not fit into the current structure, so I could be dismissed easily or worried about constantly. The work I was doing required collaboration between two different colleges under the direction of two different leaders. I lived within the politics as we worked to change the status quo. Talents I thought I had—writing, communicating, and planning—were called into question. I enrolled in a doctoral program to learn more about leadership, educational policy, and writing. My identity as both a student and employee bridged the gap for some of the faculty who came to know me. When my grant research ended I accepted a staff position in the college. It was a permanent position offering more stability, but it placed me in two divisions, where culturally each spoke different languages and operated under different priorities. My professional strengths were only a partial fit. In

retrospect, I came to value this experience because it added to the credentials necessary for my next position.

I noticed changes in my relationship with my manager when I accepted the new position. Until that moment, I was dependent on her assignments of work and was available to help in any way. I often worked evenings and weekends, and she did too. When things got complicated at home, I confided with her about my unhappiness so she would be aware of a situation that was affecting my work. In my new position, I had other responsibilities as a member of another department that was not directly related to education. I was training for my new role, which was far more complex than it appeared, and I made friends with my new colleagues. Balancing my time so that it did not appear to favor one division over another was problematic. Sharing accountability for my performance within a hierarchical competitive environment does not work. The cultures, politics and priorities are very different. That difference made it impossible to be successful. During this same time period, I took on other jobs to support my family that affected my ability to work late in the college. Looking back, I realize I became less visible. I did not understand how much connection I made with my dean in those off hours; I also did not understand how much paranoia lives in the academy.

Shortly after I began my new position, my manager and others launched some other interesting projects directly related to teaching and teacher preparation in the college. I was disappointed I was not chosen to work on them. I recognized my manager's intent was to provide me with some stability by giving me a permanent position, but I was comfortable working on "soft" support. The kind of work I was doing mattered most to me. Over time I became jealous of every new person working on the grants and very angry at my situation. I did not know how to handle that jealousy and I did not know why I was not considered for more relevant work.

I had two masters at work, took graduate classes, and had to take on two extra jobs to make ends meet at home. In one of the jobs, I taught a museum education class as adjunct faculty; in the other, I functioned as a cashier. Each work environment was different and I experienced a bit of culture shock each time I moved in and out of them. I traveled in completely different worlds to accomplish this work and eventually it took its toll on me. I did not know what my professional identity looked like anymore. I never felt a sense of accomplishment moving in and out of different cultures, interfacing with different clients, meeting different expectations. The most stressful element was managing the power dynamics associated with each role; none were in comparable positions across the different domains.

One conceptual understanding of identity in the literature suggests (Jones, 1997; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones, and McEwen, 2007) my identity develops from my family background, my professional experience, my social situation, through which I understand and filter the politics of power including privilege and oppression. My challenge was managing the intersectionality of four different organizations or departments. These changing contexts suggest an overloaded identity creating a significant capacity for resistance.

Bourdieu (2001) on the other hand sees the construction of this large social space as an opportunity to gather power through all this capital. Bourdieu would expect this situation to legitimize my different position in the social space.

My reality produced a great deal of role dissonance. I started to forget whole conversations with my manager. Another colleague was accusing me of treating her poorly. Ironically though, I did not know I was missing things. I knew I was having trouble remembering words when I spoke, but did not think I was missing big chunks. More changes occurred in the division; a new leader joined the team. My manager stopped including me in projects and

meetings where I had been included in the past. I could not remember if we discussed it. Her new assistant became the indispensable assistant; I felt abandoned but I did not know why. There was no direct communication, guidance, or criticism; just silence. Silence was the same tactic my female supervisor used in my healthcare position.

The lack of access created even more dissonance and reminded me of my earlier experience in a major health care facility, Both times I reported to a female manager. I was losing respect for a woman I greatly admired. Why would a woman in her position not work to resolve the situation? Was our relationship not valued? Why was I being relegated to less important work? I had experienced this so many times but really believed this manager was different, or maybe I was different? The resolution was a transfer to another division. Another woman leader rescued me and helped me feel valuable those last few months.

Was this a situation created by conflict avoidance? Was it a passive-aggressive strategy to bring such discomfort it forces action by the other person? Was my stress and anxiety level so heightened that my ability to pick up cues was again compromised? Are academicians, regardless of gender, prepared to manage? Or have we chosen to promote our best specialists out of their comfort and expertise zone? If a college of education is not able to manage conflict and change, than how can it guide change in the school systems?

If one looks back at healthcare and how hospitals were first managed, they can draw comparisons to universities. Historically, hospitals were run by caregivers—physicians or a religious order. During the 1970s that changed, and professional managers were trained and hired, many former veterans. These managers did not change the way management was structured as much as reinforced the status quo and accumulation of power. They were better because they were academically prepared to run a hospital.

Universities were the last bastion where male educators placed themselves in a higher status than public school teachers. This power situation has not changed significantly in academic departments. It is quite subtle. For example, my own dissertation committee is comprised of a majority of men, even though I am addressing gender and identity development; very enlightened men, but men nonetheless. My department has added women very slowly and while taking classes, the only female professor I had left the university. I have had few, if any, role models. Male authors write the books I am assigned. Would this not bias the education I am receiving? The literature answers few of these questions.

My story takes place in hierarchical, male dominated institutions. The behavior of my supervisors in these types of organizations are similar and governed by their structures. Meritocracy is replaced with power dynamics. The clarity of expectations change or go undefined. The dissonance brings about a response in me characterized by high anxiety and fear. The anxiety and fear present as my inability to perform rather than a slow shut down of my senses and ability to understand my supervisor or the organization. The culture, structure and discourse are gendered. The next section suggests the impact of gendered discourse on identity development..

b. Gendered discourses

In college, I balanced my aspirations with my restraints. I was a student, a mother, and head of a household. During my undergraduate years in the 1970s, I became active in the local women's group, an intellectual healing activity. I volunteered to staff the rape and abuse hotline. The training I received brought the pain I experienced in my marriage years earlier to the surface. This community of women embraced me and gave me space to begin healing while I provided that same healing opportunity to others through the hotline. I began to see the world

through a feminist lens. My feminism empowered my leadership and I launched a student chapter of the Women's Collective.

My work on campus disrupted another group of women. A lesbian organization felt they were already doing the work I was attempting to start. The two groups came together to discuss their views. As history tells, the second wave of feminism promoted a unified woman persona, which also served to alienate some women. The issues to address did not align for the two campus women's groups. There was no meeting of the minds or merger talks. I learned the important lesson that divided feminists: there is no singular definition for "woman."

The feminist movement throughout history contested gendered discourses and advocated for change (Blount, 1998; Skelton, Francis, Smulyan, 2006; Miller, 2005). Women continue to fight for parity in the workplace. In the 1970s, the resistance came from a fear of losing an identity as the "softer" sex, of being lumped together with other women unlike themselves, and a frustration of not addressing the reality of women with children living in poverty. The literature speaks (Collins, 2009; Evans, 2003) to the need for change, but the challenge becomes finding the necessary disruption to make people notice and incentive to want to change. Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001) argue that economic change triggers action. Women constantly negotiate their gendered identities through discourses of femininity and other categories of social difference (Aapola et al., 2005).

The literature (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002) refers to the challenge women have leading other women. Women commit to the masculine model of leadership. The community defines the credibility of a leader. Early in my career, an incident took place that caused me to think once again back to my senior year in high school when Sister Ann formed an opinion about me that blocked my advancement in science. In my first job after graduate school

a manager and representative of the religious order who owned the organization, Sister Jill, put in motion a rumor about me that was extremely unflattering. Over a weekend I went out dancing at a popular club with a man I had just met. My date was a little aggressive on the dance floor, which I handled, but someone who worked at my organization reported a different story to Sister Jill. It looked like Sister Jill tried to ruin my “reputation,” the first woman hired into administration. Sister Jill’s manager stopped the distasteful story. I never understood why another woman would behave in such an unprofessional manner. I particularly did not understand what I had done to deserve that treatment. Sister Jill sat on the administrative council with me and my presence must have somehow threatened her superior position. Most religious women I know are strong supporters of women’s rights. Nevertheless, this was not the first or the last time I experienced sabotage from other women.

Another example of the subtleties of gendered discourse occurred when one of my former graduate-school instructors recruited me for a position in my home state. I was considering the advantages of moving closer to my parents because my father was ill. I knew ahead of time that the open position was one-step beyond my next move in the traditional career ladder. The standard career path looked like the following: first, one manages support services and then one manages professional services. I was offered the vice presidency of support services, the one for which I did not interview, but for which I was better suited. The competing candidate received the professional-services offer. This was a difficult decision because of the emotions involved in going back home, uprooting my son, and not “winning” the original job offer. My male mentor suggested I might feel like second best, which may interfere with my success. I did my homework and knew the CEO was doing well and worked professionally with women, and I was flattered with the invitation to apply. He had evaluated my skill set accurately. Instead of

following my instincts to move forward with the opportunity and reject my mentor's advice, I turned the job down. The nature of my mentor's concern had overtones of male competitiveness combined with a weakness on my part to see the bigger picture rather than the defeat. The analysis and advice was gendered. It was unfortunate that I bought into this discourse.

Instead, I followed the advice of another colleague and went to work for a former for-profit business executive at a healthcare organization located in an under resourced minority community. I accepted an administrative position, excited to work in a community where I could make a difference, and to gain experience managing the fast-growing area of quality assurance. Family and friends expressed concern about the safety of the neighborhood, but I was not fearful. As it turned out, I had much to fear; just not my safety.

Prior to this position, I worked in well-resourced institutions. I took a lot for granted. In my new organization, there were out-of-date computer systems, a low census, and no financial reports or budgets. The institution capitalized on back pain, mental health, and substance-abuse patients. The vast majority of employees in management did not reflect the racial composition of the community. There were a few committed physicians and a newly hired nursing administrator who mentored me. I was still a very novice administrator.

I soon surmised the organization was a hotbed of politics, power struggles, racism, and rumors. I knew I made a mistake but tried to make the best of it. The owners maintained control of everything, not the CEO, my supervisor. My office was located inside a suite with most of the staff who reported to me. Once again, I was placed outside the administrative suite where the men were located. However, in this situation, my office was ready and waiting for my arrival: furnished with a desk, couch, and two chairs. A couch in my office made me uncomfortable, so I had it removed as soon as possible, much to the dismay of my supervisor. The CEO, a married

black man, had little power, so he chose to manipulate others in ways that gave him power. One of my direct reports had a hard time adjusting to the shift from reporting to the CEO to reporting to me. It felt like a demotion to her. The CEO tried to resolve her tension by placing us both on equal planes to talk out our differences, as if we were two girls who could not get along. I had difficulty telling my supervisor that the strategy was disrupting the balance of power in a way that was gendered and politically charged. I would soon learn that his interest in women was far from professional or in the best interests of the organization. This situation reinforced the complex nature of an organization where the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, class, disability, and other markers of difference establish a culture of politics. The literature (Collins, 2009; Walkerdine et al, 2001; Aapola et al., 2005; Walkerdine & Ringrose, in Skelton, Francis, Smulyan (eds.), 2006) on intersectionality aligns perfectly with the culture of the organization; a culture where power and control are dictating the behavior of the management and employees rather than the needs of the patients.

The other significant discourse occurred with my attempt to complete a project assigned to me by one of the owners. The owner asked me personally to develop a plan whereby all patient data could be collected and housed in one patient record, a new trend in hospital management. My staff included experts in the areas needed to complete the project. Because two key departments involved in the project reported to me, I thought it would come together easily. I was mistaken. One manager submitted a report to me that the owner previously rejected and she did not feel the need to update it. The other department manager lost her job in a recent lay off and the woman who took her place had no understanding of this issue. An established process for storing records in a computer database supports the computerization of records, a fundamental building block for the project. This database did not exist, nor was it likely the hospital could

afford that investment. Time spent undertaking an analysis that would never come to fruition appeared to be a waste of time. I am sure that was why my staff resisted, too.

Secretarial support became another hurdle to jump before completing the report. Only secretaries had computers/typewriters; therefore, I relied on staff to type the report. Although I did not initially have a secretary assigned to me, a director reporting to me did, and I allocated half her time to support me. The director was on vacation during the period that I needed to complete the report. I requested the report be prepared by the end of the week. The report was not ready on time. During our discussion about the missed deadline, she informed me that she did not work for me, even though her boss reported to me. The conversation ended in the secretary's dismissal. However, the secretary showed up for work the next day, again refusing to acknowledge my authority. I did not know that the director and secretary were related and because I did not hire her, I could not fire her. Staff refusal to comply with my direction, happened throughout my career regardless of my position in the organization. I consider this a gendered response that would play out differently with a male manager. I do wonder if a woman with a less masculine management demeanor would have more cooperation. The literature (Connell in Skelton, Francis, Smulyan (eds.), 2006; Blount, 1998; Lugg, 2003; Lugg & Tooms, 2010) touches on this a bit but also clearly argues that, the community defines the credibility of a leader.

The other overriding feature of the organizational culture was the distribution of Black and White workers and the palpable uneasiness with one another. I managed an all-female division with significant racial tension among the group. The owner clearly held power and rationed it out to whomever he deemed worthy. Moreover, everybody knew that and behaved in ways that reinforced it. Clearly, the literature discussions around gender norms, patriarchal

history, and structural gender bias applied (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Bourdieu, 2001, Dillabough, in Skelton, Francis, Smulyan (eds), 2006).

I may have continued in my position if I thought I could make changes to help the community. I was well compensated, but given the financial situation of the hospital, I felt guilty about it. In 9 months, I became disillusioned, questioned my usually perceptive intuitive skills, and realized I was not prepared for this type of environment.

My exit stirred up an emotional response I never addressed because there was no time; I had to find a new job. I investigated suing my employer for sexual harassment but knew that was risky and most likely would harm my career rather than help it. I also like to exit with dignity and professionalism. Healthcare management was still a man's world and going public with what happened would have no positive outcome for me. I kept moving forward in survival mode with no support systems in place. I was depressed, insecure, and lacked confidence when I accepted my next position.

In my new job I did not ask for help; I kept thinking I would figure it out, terrified that I would make another mistake. It did not seem to matter what the organization was—poor urban hospital versus prestigious medical center—I continued to feel like an outsider looking in through the window wondering if I would see the secret pathway to success. Could I find the code that would make my experience smooth and crisis free? What I sought was someone to guide me through the political waters of leadership.

Finding that guidance is tricky for a woman; after my earlier experiences, I was afraid to have a male mentor and I did not trust male supervisors. I did not know this consciously but the opportunity to have a female supervisor in my new position felt like a relief. My new supervisor was just as ambitious as I was, and prioritized her own success over helping me with mine.

Moreover, I was one of five new women in new positions. My area was somewhat small compared to those of my colleagues. My new leader broke the barrier between nursing and lay administrators with the help of a male mentor who demanded nothing but perfection. She was always fighting, waiting for failure. I admired her and resented her at the same time.

In graduate school no one talked about the process of leadership development. Student mentoring was automatic because we were taught and worked for practitioners. However, in only a few instances did female students have female mentors. I wanted to think that I needed only myself to succeed. As the oldest of six with two working parents, I thought that was the only way. I was exposed to many successful women during my student years, but once I graduated, the world proved to be a different place. I intellectually understood gender and racial discrimination and what it looked like, but I never learned how to recover from the experience.

After my work in hospitals and the museum ended, I decided to continue working in education. It was where I felt most at home and I felt passionate about integrating informal education into formal educational institutions. In this way, I thought I could capture so many of the disenfranchised children, so many who need to learn in a different way. I wanted to understand how teachers were educated and based on my experience why as professionals they functioned differently than other professionals. I wanted to understand how to improve educational systems so all children could learn using nontraditional strategies.

I met an educational leader who took a chance and hired me to conduct research on innovative ways to educate teachers in mathematics and science. I was excited to be in the hub of where teachers learn their craft, to be in a college that cared about all children and worked diligently to find new ways to improve education. This was my last stop in preparation for my current position as CEO of a not-for-profit health-education organization.

In my mind, I saw the academy as an open collaborative learning center for new ideas. I had once visualized what life might be like on a university campus. I pictured it as a stress-free community unburdened by status; a place where radical ideas could be explored and students' minds would be challenged. Growing up in the 1960s, I saw universities as places where societal wrongs could be righted and expression unencumbered.

When I joined a public university as an employee, the world was very different and I was very different. I was frustrated about not being able to settle into an organization and fulfill my dream of being a leader who makes a difference. I did not have a traditional 5-year plan mapping out my career path. I was an opportunist who needed constant intellectual stimulation. My risk-taking behaviors were always present but covered with a growing insecurity in my competence and capacity for fitting in with organizations and their culture. Change had become part of my life path.

I looked for my next position with established criteria and a desire to stay put for a while. My criteria included the following:

- Close to home: no more long commutes
- Small: no more large bureaucratic organizations
- Executive director level in a community organization
- Education was my passion

It took 9 months, but I was hired as the CEO of an education center governed by a not-for-profit board of directors. My disjointed experience fit perfectly into my new role, an amazing fete. I accepted the role of CEO of a 50-year-old organization that works in partnership with school systems. Helping children manage risk is the goal: the same risky behaviors I found myself caught in when I was an adolescent. I was going to make a difference after all.

My predecessor had left his mark on the organization after 30 years. I was brought in to start a new innovative chapter and rejuvenate the organization. My challenges and opportunities were many. One involved the promises made by the former president as to who would follow in his footsteps. A promise made too many. One staff member successfully built a new product line singlehandedly and he expected the promotion but all his experience came from only one organization. The other full-time man received bonus pay for caring for the building in addition to teaching. He took his place in line for the promotion. An administrative assistant applied for the job, thinking it was a logical move. She had neither a college degree nor experience. Another full-time female educator believed that her name should be considered. In reality, none of these individuals were considered by the board of directors. Ongoing communication to the staff about the search for his replacement happened sporadically. The CEO cut back to part-time hours, resulting in even less communication between administration and staff. The staff operated independently, as if they were in charge. The organizational culture lacked teamwork, collegiality, and problem solving; even more apparent was the obvious favoring of male members of the staff.

Shortly after joining the organization I discovered one of my staff chose not to read my e-mails. When I checked in he stated he did not believe in electronic mail and did not check it. I made it clear that I communicated via e-mail and that he would need to adapt to me. He chose to pretend I did not exist. As this pattern continued, I called him in on a Saturday morning and asked him to choose whether he was going to remain on staff and change his habits and attitude. His lack of respect for me was apparent and needed to change because I was not leaving and perhaps he had something to learn from me. He stayed on for a few more years. Nevertheless, it

was apparent that he was uninterested in socializing and that the admiration the staff had for him came from his knowledge and not his leadership.

I was surprised to find an organization in the twenty-first century operating within a blatantly gender biased culture. The power structure reflected a feminized institution where the women work and the men manage. As it turns out the retiring CEO was a former school superintendent. The literature proves (Blount, 1998; Leach, 1990; Goodall, 2000; Scott, 1999; hooks, 1984/2000; Johnson, 2005; Enomoto, 1999) school systems are steeped in gender bias and continue to maintain patterns of oppression because norms are hard to influence. I faced an organization with a deeply embedded patriarchal system starting with the board of directors.

The former leader led the board of directors. When I started there were only four female board members out of 38. Two of the four women had inherited their seats because of the death of their husbands. The other two were recruited and were younger and closer to my age than the other two. I held the respect of most of the board members except the two older women. One, Mrs. M, felt I was too assertive and took an opportunity to challenge a letter I wrote to the newspaper in response to an article about a young woman promoting an education program. My letter challenged the way the newspaper positioned the article around this young woman when in fact it was writing about a different issue all together. Mrs. M read the letter and started a campaign against my ability to submit a letter to the press without the board's permission. She accused me of attacking the young woman in the article and denounced the premise of my argument. She made many telephone calls that Sunday morning, instigating other board members and the women's board. Mrs. M never called me directly; my chair did. I was never given an opportunity to discuss the issue with the board. Instead, they went into closed session to discuss it. The outcome was that I was not allowed to issue any public statements without the chair's

permission. I felt like a child punished for speaking out of turn. I felt I tried and sentenced with no representation, except a supportive chair. However, most of all I felt my professional expertise and credibility did not count.

Soon after that, the board called for a complete evaluation of me. I was making many changes in the organization and many people were unhappy. Staff still went directly to board members to complain. I expected the board who had hired me with a charge to bring about rapid change would support my efforts. That was not the case when the women on the board objected. I passed the evaluation without question, but it taught me a hard lesson about whom one can trust and why. I was a different kind of CEO. I was a bright, innovative leader who was not afraid of change. I had strong communication skills and worked to be transparent about the direction I was taking the organization. I received 2 years of outstanding reviews and with one incident it was compromised. I felt betrayed. I was not acting feminine enough for the older women. I was not going to be allowed to be a strong woman. Aapola et al., (2005) explain this behavior as women negotiating their gendered identities through different discourses of femininity and social differences.

My position as CEO placed the responsibility for management of the organizational resources in my hands. Each time I made a staff change, I was assumed guilty of making that person leave rather than relegating the change to the staff member's reluctance to adapt to change or poor performance. My interpersonal skills were charged as the culprit. I was downgraded on my performance for staff turnover. I challenged my chair on this issue. I pointed out that personnel changes were not something that should involve the board unless it had a negative impact on the organization or my actions were illegal, neither of which were the case. I tried to establish boundaries. Assuming turnover costs were greater than employing an

unproductive employee was false. Our staff was so lean that one person not completing their responsibilities or undermining me and the direction of the organization was much more costly. Additionally, it's not unusual for young employees to change jobs frequently. I argued that the longevity of my staff and the board were barriers to organizational success. Although taken aback at first, my chair came to agree with me and understand how important it was for the board to stay out of the details. I took a risk responding to the problem in a forthright way, but I knew it was lack of board experience that was working against our relationship. Although it started out as a personal issue, I was able to move it away from my personality and into real performance measures.

As I recount other examples of board challenges, you will notice women initiate them. The literature demonstrates that the persistent cultural image of leadership as masculine and organized around dominance or expertise proves challenging for some women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elliot and Mandell, 1998; Rusch, 2004). Each time my behavior appeared to be too strong there was a negative response from a few board members. When I did my self-evaluation each year for my review, I ranked myself high based on my accomplishments. Again, Mrs. M challenged that as arrogance rather than confidence. Clearly, in her eyes I maintained an unfeminine way of managing; the literature (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elliot and Mandell, 1998; Rusch, 2004) describes how unacceptable this can be to other women.

I was working with an external accounting consultant who was insisting on a meeting to discuss work I was requesting. I did not have time to meet at the time she requested. In response she went to a female member of the board. Rather than the board member sending her back to me or contacting me directly to find out what was going on, they met. It was fortuitous that my performance review was scheduled for the same morning, after her meeting. I was meeting with

the executive committee and a board member who was supportive arrived late. This was unusual, as she was a close ally. That day events changed and she joined the meeting upset and could not concentrate. Instead, she turned to me exclaiming her anger, frustration, and disappointment in me for not managing the accountant better. I was taken aback and shocked at her harsh words and the idea that she had met with the consultant alone. Rather than sulk and take the criticism silently, I refuted her assumptions that the consultant was right and I was wrong. I challenged the actions she took without consulting me. The two male board members watched the exchange. When it was over, my chair remarked that now that the “catfight” was over, we could get on with business. That remark suggested to me that the exchange was what captured his attention and not the subject. It was a poor entre into an annual review discussion. I felt vulnerable, mistrusted, and very angry. The close relationship I had shared with the board member was never the same after that. I do not know if she believed my side of the story.

I would like to think that more of these types of challenges occurred with the board I inherited and that once I recruited a new board I would see more confidence in my decision making. However, it was not until I added experienced business women to the board that I started to see growth in this area. Because I have a strong record of accomplishments, I believe the bias is gender. Do I lead in a way that is not reinforcing of my expertise? Could I communicate in a way that clarifies the doubt?

Earlier my staff challenged my leadership. They liked performing independently. I discovered in a number of instances that decisions I made were not implemented. Employees who had responsibility over payroll, for example, were power brokers. There was no team support; only undermining. I have spent the last 8 years changing that culture. Employees who fit into the culture are hired; but occasionally, it is ineffective.

After strengthening the foundation of our staff—educators and fundraising—I brought on a senior team. This team would enable me to expand my focus. With a small leadership team, I envisioned a closely knit innovative group visioning the future with me. When making these hires I was upfront about my hard-driving style and control issues. The keys to their success were communication and results. My high expectations are part of me and how I operate. When I joined the organization, projects were accomplished slowly and often did not come to fruition. The culture was changing, but I wanted to make sure my senior team served as role models and committed to a fast-paced environment. Those high expectations and need for accountability can be intimidating.

As an introvert by nature, I can be a bit aloof. I reward and praise retrospectively in personal ways. I communicate the outcomes I am seeking and not always the way to get them. I use laughter to break tension. Yet knowing all these things in advance, some managers do not work well in this situation. One manager was relieved when I told him we needed to make a change. He was young enough to boast about his experience and capacity, but not old enough to actually have the skills to do the work. I handled the situation with the utmost professionalism, realizing it was a bad match. Nevertheless, losing a senior leader changed the balance of power and in response, I watched as the two female leaders aligned. Once again, I witnessed employees believing *they* had the best answers and conducted business accordingly.

Inside, I believe I am a great leader, able to move an organization forward. My weakness is in the manner in which people perceive me as a person, my personality, my warmth, my caring and protection. My senior team wants me to be a mother and tell them everything is going to be ok. As I discussed earlier I am not a leader who manages in ways that reflect what the literature has defined as traditional feminine traits that seem to be expected by more of my female

managers. This type of gendered expectation creates internal friction as it proves to be outside the culture I am working to create. It is interesting to ponder about the earlier patriarchy, is it so embedded in the culture that it may prove irreplaceable?

When I am challenged as a leader I feel defensive and do not respond well. I become that high school girl who is still trying to prove herself worthy of advanced-biology-class admission. I wonder if my training by male managers developed a leadership profile some have called masculine. I resent the double standard and built in assumptions of how a female leader acts. I hired someone more like me to help balance the extroverts. However, when does it become my staff's problem to manage me the way I am? Do people expect us to adapt and change because we are women? As a leader I know I am charged with motivating and moving my team forward, and in my current organization I have been quite successful at it. We are at a precipice where we can move to scale and make a deeper educational and wider geographical influence. Is it the anticipation of my leaving the nest for more external work that is causing a revolt in my leaders? Do staff express the fear about me or about ongoing change?

Or is there a deep level of fear that I live with every day that infiltrates everything I do; fear that developed from my first attempts of forming a career identity; fear that developed when my work proved not to be good enough or not worth protecting me? Do I move quickly to avoid it? Have there been enough barriers in my life for me to not see the resentment if another one arises? Is it possible to not be who you are inside on the outside? These are questions I haven't found answers for in the literature.

2. Life outside work

I am a lifelong learner. I am not a person of routine looking for stability and constancy. I have moved 11 times. I have balanced family, work, and school for 4 decades. Over the years I

challenged myself personally, academically, and physically. After my son was born I took up ballet, I became a runner and aerobics follower in the 1980s; in the 1990s I walked and lifted weights, and now I am a ballroom dancer. I do these things to improve my physical condition. Nevertheless, there is always an emotional connection made with pushing my boundaries physically.

My new adventure as a ballroom dancer pushes me to learn choreography, to follow my male partner, to express emotion in my dance, and to be completely outside my comfort zone. I took these challenges on to keep my body and brain young and to participate in a new social environment. The additional benefit turns out to be the strength I am building as a person and leader. I am very happy with my life as it has evolved, and now dance is helping me work through some of the remaining demons: those demons that steal my confidence, my worthiness, my specialness, my kindness that can be left outside the door to the studio or can be battled doing the tango, waltz, and rumba.

My second marriage lasted 20 years. It ebbed and flowed with happiness and sadness and in the end I was unhappy more than not. Both of my marriages perpetuated my insecurity of not being good enough. I was not able to celebrate success without my partner feeling insecure, neglected and critical. Somehow, I became the main provider and responsible adult in the family. Our blended family never connected and I seemed to be the only one who cared. This was not my idea of a partnership. I am finally separating from my children and it has not been easy. My oldest child and his wife are struggling and recovering from some bad choices. I want to make everything better and cannot. My only choice is to let go. I am practicing this personally and in my work in ways that are quite connected.

My growth as a person and a leader occurred during some very politically challenging times. The second women's movement taught me that I can have access to my dreams of making a difference in my career. It taught me to know myself physically and emotionally. It taught me that I was vulnerable and not to believe everybody had my best interests at heart. The Viet Nam War and every war thereafter taught me to fear conflict and question violence as an answer to power struggles. It taught me to teach my sons to be nonviolent and not depend on weapons. It taught me about the physical and emotional harm war can reap on a person. It taught me not to impose my beliefs on other cultures.

Government and politics were ugly growing up. Catholics could not run for office and win. Then Kennedy was elected and shot. Kennedy disrespected his family as a womanizer. Nixon lied and broke the law. Power belongs to wealthy privileged people like the Bush family. Moreover, power is used to take advantage of women, as President Clinton showed us. Women take the blame or the high road.

I was raised as government service agencies and not-for-profit organizations proliferated, picking up the gaps in our successful world by ensuring those least able to take care of themselves are sustained. Charity and charitable behavior were valued. The pendulum has swung to the opposite pole, such that everyone is to care for themselves, regardless of access to jobs, housing, or transportation. Schools build new modern buildings but never change inside. The bureaucracy that the educational system functions under is oppressive. It lacks the flexibility that children and teachers need to make a difference. The economy, urban and rural communities, and universities all depend on the successful education of the population.

I choose to support educating children in a different way outside the large bureaucracies. I choose to be an educational leader outside the systems that get bogged down in protocol. And

yet, I interface daily with school systems that are governed by people who are threatened by the subjects teachers teach. I work every day with teachers who dispute evidence in favor of what they believe about their own teaching. But I also work with innovators and those who push boundaries to help children. I work with adaptable organizations helping schools and families educate children. I work with agencies that believe jail is not an effective place to turn a child away from drugs and violence. These are the reasons I do not become complacent and settle for being a compliant maternal leader; instead, I continue to fight for the right to be the female leader I am, regardless of whether it fits into anyone's picture of "the right way to lead." And yes, I am impatient!

Throughout this narrative I describe my lived experience of developing my identity as a leader. My identity begins to form early through my family and is influenced in my social world each time I make connections with people. My identity as a leader grew through my education, my experiences and my generative responses to those experiences. My responses formed internally and reflected my interface with organizational cultures embedded in patriarchy and a gendered discourse. My leadership is constantly challenged. Most of the literature effectively describes the experiences I encounter but still does not address the dissonance it creates within me. However, Lopez-Mulnix, Wolverton, and Zaki (2011) challenge tradition and organizational norms to argue that effective leaders, male or female, have similar beliefs about leadership, and behave in similar ways in leadership roles (Lopez-Mulnix, Wolverton, and Zaki, 2011). If we start to unpack that, I believe it will prove more satisfying than the current discourse,

V. DISCUSSION

A. Implications of Analysis

This autoethnography documents the development of my leadership identity while working primarily in feminized professions in a gendered environment. The study brought forth the relevant research relating to construction of identity in relationship to the activities, organizations, and cultural representations of the period and juxtaposed it with my experience. My personal narrative identified the systems of power that marked my experience in both healthcare and education. This discussion addresses the findings of the analysis, the critical learnings, and the implications for the preparation of school leaders. Three significant factors influenced my leadership development as previously identified in the literature. These factors are role models and mentors; organizational culture; and academic preparation for leadership.

My analysis and the feminist leadership literature both suggest the importance of leadership models and mentors. In the biographies of other female leaders, I found an occasional reference to early influencers like parents but it is sparse. Most mentor references appear during a person's professional years. In my self-analysis, I began to see patterns that developed early in my childhood. My first leadership model was my mother. My earliest leadership role was as a surrogate parent. I spent 18 years learning my role as the oldest of six children, all born within a 10-year span. My mother worked in a traditional field for women, nursing. Our middle class family was a two-income household long before most. My identity as a leader grew out of my childhood role as a responsible person. My leadership identity planted its roots very early, and evolved as I progressed in my education and professional positions. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, one's leadership identity is well underway as we grow into adults. Second, the family, school and community experiences shape that identity. For example,

characterizations of girls' personalities as responsible or bossy, quiet or loud, assertive or aggressive influences their perception of leadership depending on how they view those descriptors. We know this from the research analyzing the drop off in girls' interest in science and math in middle school. Language, role models, experience and reward systems matter.

The third reason for understanding the leadership models that influence each individual's identity development rests in the acceptance of leadership as a masculine construct. Leadership as a masculine construct applies to all industries and not just feminized professions. However, acceptance of the construct functions as a major barrier in organizations dominated by women. It is easy to dismiss there is a problem by overlooking the ratio of workers to leaders when there is a dominant majority. Yet the dominant majority of employees do not hold the power to influence the culture. Scott (1991), G. Collins (2009), Blount (1998) and others make a solid case that our dominant culture's masculine values produce a gendered construction of leadership. I suggest that the leadership qualities deemed masculine might just be a representation of solid leadership. That is hard to analyze if leaders are primarily men and if we assume women are adopting a masculine style. Separating the intersection of culture, social structures, and numbers makes it challenging to remove the attachment of gender to leader behaviors. The role models we choose to emulate are successful people and demonstrate the predominant cultural values. For example, my mother was a model of leadership as head of the household and in her career. I observed more of her at home where both my mother and father financially supported my family but the home and children remained the responsibility of my mother.

Early historical and cultural influences are significant factors in understanding the qualities of an organization's culture. For example, I grew up during the second wave of feminism and that framed my future expectations of leaders. I believed women had no barriers to

success. My story reflects a different reality. Jackie Blount's historical account of education clearly reveals the same patterns of power that exist today. My feminist foundation ran counter to the reality I experienced throughout my career. Policy changes brought about by the 2nd wave women's movement and the civil rights movement were slow to be accepted. The broader cultural conversations remained isolated from practice. However, both the literature and my experience confirms the resistance to change came from men and women. Women uncomfortable with a masculine style of leadership in a woman undermine successful leaders. For example, Phyllis Schlafly shut down passage of the Equal Rights Amendment with rhetoric of fear. Fear that all women would be forced into a man's world and femininity left behind. Schlafly convinced other women that freedoms would be lost rather than gained. Unrest in the feminist movement about the lack of relevance to all women weakened the possibility of a counter argument. This type of cultural debate stirred fear in men and women; men were losing positions of power and women were becoming manly. That same belief exists today.

Langland (2012) and others point out one of the confusing issues in the literature and in practice is the working definition of leadership. Management and leadership are used interchangeably but are not the same concept. Managing addresses hierarchy, organizational charts and job descriptions, a structural orientation where merit counts. Leadership is a process of influence intended to bring a vision to fruition. Individuals seek leadership opportunities through increasing management responsibility. Eagly and Carli (2007) exposed the fallacy of a common path to the top of an organization. For example, women in education saw opportunity in curriculum development and bypassed vice-principal positions, the traditional path to a top spot in education. In some instances, this may exclude women from consideration because her credentials are different. The top leadership positions today remain steeped in power, stereotypic

dispositions, and relationships. My academic preparation focused on building my management capacity. There were no references to the distinctions between management and leadership. Coincidentally, the administrative priorities during the period I went to school were grounded in concepts of efficiency and systems thinking.

Acknowledging the gendered reality of the landscape and developing strategies to manage it may strengthen our future leaders. Until I read Jackie Blount's (1998) book, *Destined to rule the schools: Women and the superintendency, 1873–1995*, I had no understanding of the gendered history of my profession and its implications in my practice. My capacity for leadership bloomed early but my preparation for leadership left me with gaps in knowledge, cultural understanding, and support systems. I experienced little academic preparation addressing the implications of working in professions historically, politically, and culturally gendered. The pathway to a successful future in education becomes less treacherous when one can read the road signs. I argue that leadership practice move from a defensive position into a forward position with capacity to lead change.

As the literature reveals the social practices in schools may benefit one gender over another (Blount, 1998, Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Tallerico, 2000; Brunner, 2000; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Pathways to leadership, long workdays, board meetings, evening and weekend special events allow little personal time. Raising a family serves as a detractor from consideration as a school leader. Education is not a family friendly environment. Schools exist to educate children and yet by design do not support the best interests of the child. These patterns of practice are the same practices Jackie Blount documented in the 1800's. Individual and organizational capacities for change take time to develop and resistance to change is well entrenched. . Leadership preparation programs have the opportunity to develop leaders who

understand the entrenched resistance and focus on students becoming leaders, not managers. Gender norms are learned behaviors and difficult to distinguish. These norms in turn shape leadership development. The normative behavior I found present in hospitals and educational institutions harms those who challenge the standard practices. Challenging the status quo destabilizes the patriarchal and hierarchical structures that exist. Until those in power find a beneficial reason to change the leadership patterns it is unlikely to occur.

Equitable representation of women is long overdue. The impetus for change needs to come from the individuals in university preparation programs. As Gail Collins (2009) argued, growing into the role of a leader is a socially constructed experience. It is time to construct an experience that is not gendered. The lack of conversation, research, and practice around changing the incentives and rewards supporting gendered practices surprised me. Some of that research is dismissed as “feminist”. The literature review in this study draws upon outstanding scholars of education that address the gendered construction of leadership and other bias within feminized organizations. All professors in leadership programs would benefit from reading the literature that addresses the counter argument to the male construct of leadership. The literature has yet to map out a strategy that dismantles the hierarchies and patriarchy that create the resistance to change.

The emotional and professional roller coaster ride one goes through during a career deserves more transparency within our leadership programs. I recommend increasing the number of female scholars represented in the department and the collection of text and articles used in the curriculum preparing teachers and educational leaders. This addresses both the visibility of female voices and the improved understanding of the cultural context of school systems. Include both undergraduate and graduate level seminars in the critical analysis of feminized professions.

This will bring to the forefront the importance of addressing the gendered inequities in education. As my study suggests role models, organizational culture and accepted models of leadership require better understanding in preparation for a career in a feminized profession.

B. Limitations

This research is limited due to the inherent weaknesses of autoethnography. Yet, the autoethnography was critical for the creation of knowledge. The individual story supports a feminist methodology and becomes relevant as readers intersect their own experiences with the story. While at the same time, it is limited by its presentation as only one lived experience. My journey brought to the surface different interpretations of factors previously discussed by scholars. However, it only initiated the discovery process. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010) describe this type of study as small-scale knowledge that is useful for specific problems in specific situations. It is contextual information but my findings are supported in the literature. My research provides a detailed discussion and analysis that is useful to leadership preparation programs.

C. Research Gaps

This study initiates the discovery of new knowledge relevant in developing a leadership identity in a gendered environment. It is provocative while acknowledging more research is needed to claim space in the scholarly discourse. Readers of the story will add additional interpretations and thus improve its relevancy and credibility. The idea that the hierarchical organization, patriarchal culture and male construct of leadership narrows access and success for women is significant to the design of leadership preparation programs. For too long administrative certification was required to obtain a leadership position. The literature and my study suggest that the process of certification is not an adequate preparation for a leader in

education. Leaders motivate and move people toward a vision. The male construct of leadership is more important to understand if it is a gendered construct or a model of leadership for all. The rejection of women who demonstrate a masculine model by other women is problematic. The solutions suggest behaviors that are more personable, I argue the focus for change shift to those who fear women in masculine roles. Additionally, if more women were in these roles a clearer less threatening picture of leadership would emerge.

As we search for strategies to improve the academic outcome for children, we should not ignore the resistance to change that embedded patriarchy in school organizations and leadership present. The literature does not adequately address the historical, cultural and gendered design of school systems as a barrier to school improvement. The school culture will support or hinder change. The political structures impede women in leadership opportunities and may be hindering school improvement. Equipping our teachers and leaders with all the elements affecting their success starts to fill in the knowledge gaps.

Another gap in the literature is an analysis of the impact on students educated in an organization that models men as leaders and women as workers. We do not know much about the lessons youth learn growing up in feminized institutions. As I discussed earlier my home and school community influenced my identity as a leader. Have we studied the impact of those political lessons on the search for ways to motivate youth to excel in science and math to become leaders in our world economy? Do we watch closely the gendering that starts young and grows in influence on a child's choices?

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