

DISSERTATION

AUTHENTICITY AND FEMALE LEADERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY  
EXPLORING THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY  
ADMINISTRATORS

Submitted by

Kathy L. Thornhill

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2011

Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: Linda Kuk

Lumina Albert

Jim Banning

Tim Davies

Copyright by Kathy L. Thornhill 2011

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### AUTHENTICITY AND FEMALE LEADERS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS

Using the construct of authentic leadership, this interpretive phenomenological study explored the leadership practices of seven female university leaders. Authentic leadership involves self-awareness, balanced processing, authentic action and relational transparency. Self-awareness is a lifelong process that involves understanding one's values and priorities. Balanced processing involves reflecting on strengths and weaknesses in an honest and accurate manner and not over or under-stating one's skills. Authentic action is behaving in a manner that is consistent with one's values. Relational transparency is being open and forthcoming with information and the process by which decisions are made.

Five overarching themes emerged from the study: (1) leadership strategies, (2) leadership development, (3) meaning making, (4) developing and maintaining relationships, and (5) the larger organizational context, which included the university environment, specifically. The applicable themes were applied to the components of authentic leadership to elucidate further the phenomenon of authentic leadership.

Their understanding of self was directly evident in their leadership strategies. They used values-driven leadership and were unwilling to compromise their values, whether in decision-making, strategic planning or even the institution in which they

worked. They strove to be positive and to create an environment where people felt respected and appreciated.

They sought to improve themselves, whether by self-reflection, reading leadership literature, or taking on new challenges. They made meaning of their lives by reflecting on their achievements and future goals, as well as the difference they made in others' lives. They were committed to their family and ensured that their family was integrated with their professional responsibilities.

Relationships were important to them and they recognized the value that developing and maintaining relationships had on their personal and professional lives. They discussed the importance of mentors and they strove to empower others. They felt it was their responsibility, as leaders, to encourage and support others' development.

The university setting was important to them. These leaders saw the university as a place that changes people's lives for the better and felt honored to work at a university. The mission of the university was important to them and they were aware that their decisions impacted everyone at the university, especially the students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to have the support and encouragement from so many people. Friends, family, colleagues and professors helped me get through this process. Thank you also to my advisor and committee members.

A special thank you to my mom, who, regardless of the time, or length of the phone call, continued to give me advice and reassurance. A heartfelt thank you (you know why) to Felicia, Katya, Kendra, Michael, Ryan and Shawn. I couldn't have done this without you!

Thank you to the seven women who gave their time and shared their experiences and insight with me. I continue to be inspired by all of you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Overview.....	1
Authenticity.....	2
Authentic Leadership.....	3
Gendered Leadership Styles.....	5
Women in Higher Education.....	6
Problem Statement.....	8
Purpose Statement.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	9
Delimitations.....	10
Limitations.....	10
Significance of the Study.....	11
Researcher's Perspective.....	12
Summary.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
Authenticity.....	14
Authentic Leadership.....	15
Gender and Leadership.....	20
Gender Socialization.....	25
Social Role Expectations.....	26
Women in Higher Education.....	29
Parallels between Women Leaders and Authentic Leaders.....	30

Summary .....	31
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD .....	33
Research Design and Rationale.....	33
Participants and Site .....	34
Data Collection.....	37
Procedures .....	37
Data Analysis .....	38
Trustworthiness .....	39
Summary .....	41
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....	43
Leadership Stories .....	44
Leadership Strategies .....	46
Creating a Positive Work Environment.....	49
Dealing with difficult situations immediately .....	51
Placing the Right People in the Right Place .....	51
Strategic Planning.....	52
Leadership Development.....	55
Observing Others.....	55
Being Observed .....	56
Reading the Current Literature .....	57
Meaning Making .....	58
Family .....	60
Professional and Personal-life Alignment .....	62
Self-awareness .....	64
Developing and Maintaining Relationships .....	66
Developing trust in their relationships.....	66
Valuing contributions .....	67
Mentoring Relationships.....	68
Empowering Others .....	70
Relationships Contribute to their Success .....	71
Larger Organizational Context.....	71

University Environment .....	73
Summary .....	74
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	77
Summary of the Current Study.....	77
Discussion of Findings .....	79
Self-awareness .....	79
Balanced Processing .....	83
Authentic Action.....	85
Relational Transparency .....	88
Discussion Summary .....	89
Implications.....	90
Women’s Leadership.....	90
Authentic Leadership.....	91
Applications .....	93
Future Research.....	94
Conclusions .....	95
REFERENCES.....	98
APPENDICES .....	106
APPENDIX I: Participation Request Letter.....	107
APPENDIX II: Participant Consent Form .....	108
APPENDIX III: Interview Guide.....	111

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

In 1978, Burns made the observation that “leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomenon on earth” (p. 5). In the more than 30 years since that epic statement, a tremendous amount of research has been conducted on leadership. Over time, theorists have explored leadership traits (Great Man Theories) in which leaders were born, not made; styles; outcomes; followers; context; and the impact of gender, racial and other identities on leadership. However, only recently have scholars connected authenticity with leadership (Northouse, 2010).

Authenticity is a concept that has been discussed and researched for decades in a variety of disciplines. Philosophers contemplated authenticity in terms of living a meaningful life. Authenticity has been researched with renewed vigor in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, with several books and articles written about the necessity for leaders to be authentic and lead with integrity. This was largely due to the scandals of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century leaders and managers who were cheating, whether on their spouses, their stockholders, or their companies (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). This led to an erosion of trust in American leaders (Bolman & Deal, 2006; George, 2003; Pearce, 2003) and an explosion of research conducted on positive psychology and ethical leadership, and finally, to the development of authentic leadership as its own construct (Northouse, 2010).

Although the concept is still in development, several scholars have written articles and conducted studies in an effort to delineate authentic leadership from other forms of leadership, such as transformational, and several definitions are currently in use. Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) defined authentic leadership as “a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behavior that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting followers’ inputs” (p. 423).

The follower’s perceptions of the leader contribute to the determination of authentic leadership. If the follower perceives the leader to be acting in a true and consistent manner, then authentic leadership is facilitated (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, & Walumbwa, 2005; Shamir & Eilam).

#### Authenticity

Authenticity is defined as being true to oneself (Gardner, et.al, 2005; George, 2003) rather than acting according to others’ expectations (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Endrissat, Muller, and Kaudela-Baum (2007) further define authenticity as the “successful alignment of one’s inner values, beliefs and convictions with one’s behavior” (p. 208). To be true to oneself, one must first know oneself. Therefore, self-awareness is a critical component of authenticity (Gardner, et al., 2005; Leahy, 1994).

Self-awareness is a lifelong journey of personal exploration that helps leaders understand their values, identity, priorities, strengths and weaknesses (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). Developing and maintaining this understanding of self allows authentic leaders to act in accordance with their beliefs, even under stressful situations. “Yet, by learning who they are and what they value, authentic leaders build understanding and a

sense of self that provides a firm anchor for their decisions and actions and, we would argue a more authentic self” (Gardner, et al., 2005, p. 347). Possessing this insight allows leaders to behave consistently in a variety of situations.

Behavioral integrity, which involves acting according to one’s words (Simons, 2002), is an important component of authenticity. A person who has behavioral integrity is seen as “walking the talk.” However, behavioral integrity is more than a one-time action. It involves the follower’s perception of the leader consistently acting in the manner in which she says she will act. Behavioral integrity is a component of authenticity because authentic people act according to their beliefs. However, authenticity goes beyond behavioral integrity because it involves the core of the person—her values and beliefs.

#### Authentic Leadership

Being an authentic leader not only benefits the individual leader, but those around her, as well as the organization because authentic leadership strives to achieve worthy objectives and emphasizes follower development. “By being true to one’s core beliefs and values and exhibiting authentic behavior, the leader positively fosters the development of associates until they become leaders themselves” (Gardner, et al., 2005, p. 343).

In addition, followers can rely on the leader acting consistently. In these tumultuous times of budget cuts, global instability, and constant change, this dependability provides comfort to those with whom the leader works and engenders trust.

However, being authentic does not mean that the person acts the same way in all situations, but rather acts in a consistent manner across situations.

Because not every behavior is appropriate in every situation, it is necessary to distinguish between acting the same and acting consistently. For example, an authentic leader may engage in conversations differently, depending on the audience. It may not be appropriate for a leader to speak to a cabinet member using the same language as she uses when speaking with a peer. There are times when peers will relate informally, acting in a teasing or joking manner, whereas such behavior at a cabinet meeting would likely be seen in a non-positive light, and she would not be taken seriously as a leader. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the appropriate behavior for each situation, while staying true to one's core self.

Authenticity requires effort. Authenticity is an intentional process that goes beyond self-awareness. A fundamental component of authenticity is self-regulation (Gardner, et al., 2005). Self-regulation comprises: internal regulation, balanced processing of information, authentic behavior and relational transparency. Internal regulation is governing one's behavior based on the core self as opposed to succumbing to external pressures. Balanced processing involves reflecting on events and decisions in an honest and accurate manner and not over or under-stating one's skills. Relational transparency is being open and forthcoming with information and the process by which decisions are made. This transparency fosters trust in relationships.

Self-regulation reinforces the leader's convictions and helps the leader stay true to herself. This is necessary, especially during times of high stress, which can present

situations that challenge leaders to maintain their authenticity. George (2007) suggests “staying grounded by integrating your life” (p. 141) so as not to be led astray from one’s core self during difficult times. Integrating one’s life means not compartmentalizing the different aspects of life (i.e. job, school, home, etc). “And for individuals to reach their maximums in terms of effectiveness, performance, and productivity, they must bring their whole selves, their whole social identities, into the work environment—and they must be encouraged or at least permitted to do so by their organizational cultures” (Hoppe & Houston, 2004, p. 14).

Because women are seen as bringing their whole selves into their leadership, rather than compartmentalizing the different aspects of their lives (i.e., professional or personal responsibilities) as is typical of traditional masculine leadership styles, women leaders may be more prone to lead authentically. However, the organization’s culture may play a role in their ability to do so.

### Gendered Leadership Styles

Numerous articles have been written about the leadership styles of females and males. Some claim that there are distinct differences between how males and females lead, while others state that it is the situation that determines the best leadership style, regardless of the sex of the leader (Fine, 2009). There are others who suggest that both men and women lead similarly depending on their positions or situations.

Women’s leadership styles are seen as more transformational—more caring, nurturing, focusing on the betterment of those being led as well as the larger context (i.e., the organization, community or country) (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Fine, 2009). Masculine

leadership styles tend to be characterized as more transactional (information, power or service in exchange for cooperation or participation) or autocratic and hierarchical (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Masculine styles are considered the more traditional style and historically, many organizations were established using this top-down approach, including higher education.

The changing trend in leadership theory to more collaborative models has coincided with the increased numbers of women in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Women have brought a new style of leadership that is more relational than hierarchical to organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Regan & Brooks, 1998). “Gender is part of what informs female leaders’ values and priorities...women’s different backgrounds and commitments have made a fundamental difference in leadership positions” (O’Connor, 2007, p. xv). Female leaders are seen as being more collaborative, community-oriented and seek to empower others.

These characteristics are impacting the ways in which organizations function. Roberts (2007) suggests that “women leaders add value to organizations by strategically applying the strengths they have cultivated through their professional, gendered, and cultural experiences” (p. 333). There are many similarities between women leaders and authentic leaders, including focusing on relationships, empowering followers, and affecting greater change.

### Women in Higher Education

Although there are more women in leadership positions and on faculty of American colleges and universities, women leaders still have not achieved high numbers

in the upper administration. According to the American Council on Education's (ACE) 2006 study, only 23% of university and college presidents are women; yet women comprise over 57% of the undergraduate study body and 58% of graduate students. Although there are more women than ever teaching in higher education, they remain in the lower ranks (and numbers) than men. Of the total number of tenured faculty, 31.7% are women; of the total number of tenured full professor, 22.8% are women (US Department of Education, 2003). The fact remains that women make up a majority of students on college campuses yet the faculty and the upper administration do not reflect the demographics of the student body (DiGeorgio-Lutz, 2002; Madden, 2005).

Because the majority of students on college campuses are women, it is important to have women be involved in the decision making process on these campuses. It is essential for young women to see that they can achieve leadership roles; especially while they are in the process of self-discovery, both personally and professionally, which occurs while they are in college (Ropers-Huilman, 2003). Although there are women faculty and administrators present on college campuses, they are not readily visible in positions of high power and authority. This translates into limited role models for female students and young professionals on college campuses; which perpetuates the historical trends of males as leaders (Ropers-Huilman, 2003). Madsen (2008) cited the lack of literature and scholarly studies on this topic. "There is a need for published work (based on scholarly research) that explores the experience of high-level women leaders in developing the knowledge, skills and competencies that have helped them obtain and maintain positions of influence in higher education" (Madsen, 2008, page xvii).

The current literature on women in higher education can be compiled into ten categories: diverse perspectives (including race, sexual orientation, ability, international, and global development); equity and education; historical perspectives on women students; women professionals (deans, faculty members, managers and presidents); mentors; women in science and math; feminist pedagogy (curriculum); social policy and sexual assault and harassment.

### Problem Statement

The literature regarding women leaders in higher education is limited in scope and quantity. Many articles focus on the statistics of women on campus (students, faculty and staff). Within these, the emphasis is often on the levels at which women reach, whether as faculty members or in the administration, or on the number of qualified women leaving academe. These do not sufficiently describe the experiences of these women. In addition, how women practice leadership—their values, goals and strategies are not addressed.

Values, goals and strategies are components of authentic leadership, so exploring these for women leaders also adds to the knowledge base of authentic leadership. Because authentic leadership is a new construct there have not been many research studies conducted in this area. This study seeks to tie the concepts of authentic and women's leadership together and explore how they manifest in the context of the university setting.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomena of authenticity in the leadership practice of women administrators in higher educational settings. This study

will describe how female leaders in higher education practice leadership; specifically how values and priorities manifest in these female leaders' practice. The seven participants are from different universities, hold vastly different positions (all at high levels in their respective units), so learning how they operate will add to the knowledge base of women leaders in the context of higher education by providing a description of their experiences so that readers will have a deeper understanding of their leadership practices. Values are a fundamental component of authentic leadership. Therefore, exploring how values inform these female leaders' practice also adds to the knowledge base of authentic leadership.

This study will provide insight into the leadership practices of seven university administrators which may serve to inspire other women leaders and help them to develop their style. Furthermore, tying authenticity and women leaders to the context of higher education has not been done and is necessary for expanding the knowledge base in all three areas.

### Research Questions

This study was designed to answer the following questions:

How do female university administrators practice leadership?

How do their values, goals and strategies manifest in their leadership?

How do women administrators demonstrate or exhibit the phenomena of authenticity in their leadership?

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined as follows:

Authenticity: “The alignment of one’s behavior with one’s inner values, beliefs, convictions –be they good or bad” (Endrissat, et al., 2007, p. 208).

Leader: For the purpose of this study, a leader is considered to be a person with positional power.

Leadership: “A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2010, p. 3).

Authentic Leadership: “A pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Walumbwa, et al., 2008, p. 94)

### Delimitations

The focus of the study was to explore the phenomena of authenticity in the leadership practice of women administrators in higher educational settings. This research project studied the phenomenon of authenticity for seven female administrators at universities in the Western United States. This study explored their leadership practices, specifically how their values, goals and strategies manifest in their leadership. These components are central to authentic leadership. All of the leaders worked at the institution for at least one year.

### Limitations

The women who participated in this research study all held high-level positions at several universities in the Western United States. Because they have all reached these

high levels, there may be some aspects of their work that are similar to each other and are different than other female leaders who may not have reached such elevated status.

This study investigated the self-reported leadership behavior of women leaders in the context of the phenomena of authenticity and is based on the responses of these leaders to the interview questions. The responses were based on their perceptions of their leadership and experiences, and could not be verified by others to see if their perceptions of their leadership were in line with how others perceive them.

In addition, because these leaders were all in the same geographic region, there may have been some characteristics present that may not have been present if they were from different regions. Lastly, only leaders from four-year institutions participated in this study, so their responses were not representative of all of higher education.

The information gained from this study could contribute to the knowledge base of women leaders in higher education by providing insight into how these women experience and demonstrate authentic leadership. Because this was a qualitative study, the ability to generalize the findings was not a goal of the project. However, the institution location, sample selected and specific components explored limited the scope of the study.

### Significance of the Study

This study offered insight into the role that authenticity plays in women's leadership. Currently, there is abundant research on leadership and increasingly more on women leaders, but the role authenticity plays has not been specifically explored in relation to women. In addition, more scholarly research needs to be conducted on women

leaders and women leaders in the context of higher education (Madsen, 2008). This study helps better understand authentic leadership and women's leadership in higher education.

### Researcher's Perspective

I have worked at Colorado State University (CSU) for more than 10 years as an academic advisor in the College of Business. During this time, I have also been working on my PhD in Educational Leadership and graduate certificate in Women's Studies.

In addition, some of the roles I have held on campus include teaching (first year seminars and a social justice leadership course, as well as a teacher's assistant for the doctoral level leadership development course), serving on various committees, including the Administrative Professional Council, which represents the interests of over 4000 staff at CSU (I was Chair of this Council for 2 years); presenting at conferences (CSU Women's Conference and the National Academic Advising Association national conferences), and serving as Chapter Advisor to a professional business fraternity.

Throughout this journey, I have become increasingly reflective on my personal and professional experiences. My leadership education and experiences combined with my women's studies education led me to the topic of women's leadership in higher education. Several years ago, I was taking a leadership class in the same semester as a women's studies course. It was while learning about both topics that it seemed to me that the traits currently being lauded in the leadership scholarship were the same characteristics that have historically been attributed to women. Characteristics such as collaboration, caring, open communication were listed as desirable for leaders, however, the leadership texts did not correlate (credit) these to women's leadership styles.

My biases include the belief that women tend not to compartmentalize their lives and that this is actually beneficial. I believe if an employee gains personal satisfaction and meaning from her professional work, that it, in turn, benefits the workplace by having passionate, dedicated and satisfied employees. I also believe that authentic leadership is a positive leadership that leads to positive results, for the leader, the followers and the organization.

### Summary

This chapter explained how the late 20<sup>th</sup> century leadership scandals led to the development of authentic leadership from transformational leadership. Authentic leadership was described as consisting of self-awareness, balanced processing, authentic action and relational transparency. An overview of gendered leadership styles and women in higher education was provided. The parallels between women leaders and authentic leaders; as well as the impact of these types of leadership on followers, organizations and society were outlined.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review the development of authentic leadership as its own construct in leadership theory, as well as being distinct from other types of leadership. In addition, the literature regarding gender and leadership, which includes gender socialization and Social Role Theory, will be reviewed. The chapter will conclude by showing how authentic leadership connects to women's leadership.

### Authenticity

Philosophers sought to make the distinction between sincerity, honesty and authenticity. According to philosophers, sincerity is described as acting according to one's words; however, they do not take into account the dynamic nature of being authentic. "Sincerity which is a means to an end is inauthentic. Authenticity is an end in itself" (Leahy, 1994, p. 451). Golomb (1995) went on to explain that authenticity is, "An incessant movement of becoming, self-transcendence and self-creation" (p. 9). The existentialist philosophers were fixated on escape; escape from societal expectations, norms, morals; to be free to determine their real selves; however they wish to define themselves (Golomb, 1995). The philosophers say that the cry for authenticity stems from a crisis—a void in the social and cultural values. In the absence of society telling us what we should be doing or believing in, people search for their own meaning (Golomb, 1995).

In his 1994 article, Leahy blended philosophy and ethics to develop a concept of authenticity. He then used literary examples to illustrate authenticity and encourage the

pursuit of an authentic dialogue for educators. He purports an ethic of authenticity that is neither masculine nor feminine, but rather, integrates emotion and reason. He states that, “The dichotomy between caring as essentially feminine and autonomy as essentially masculine can be bridged by authenticity as essentially human” (Leahy, 1994, p. 454).

### Authentic Leadership

Although there are several definitions of authentic leadership currently being used, there are also several dimensions that seem to be agreed upon as necessary for authentic leadership to occur. These include self-awareness; balanced processing, authentic action and relational transparency (Gardner et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke, 2009). Several theorists also include an ethical and/or moral component to authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005; May, Hodges, Chan & Avolio, 2003).

Because there are few researchers studying authentic leadership, the following provides an overview of the studies conducted, individually. Each study adds to the development of authentic leadership.

Walumbwa, et al., (2008) proposed a comprehensive definition of authentic leadership as “a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (p. 94). This definition takes into consideration several critical dimensions of authentic leadership. These include theories and constructs from positive psychology;

ethical leadership; moral leadership, as well as the fundamental components of authenticity.

Cooper et al., (2005) caution researchers on getting too caught up in developing initiatives based on the construct of authentic leadership, before fully differentiating it from other forms of leadership. The authors are proponents of continuing to research authentic leadership, but in a “thorough and systematic” way to assure that the construct of authentic leadership is indeed different from other forms of leadership. Their article was a review of literature on authentic leadership. It provided recommendations for differentiating the construct of authentic leadership from other types of leadership, as well as designing authentic leadership development programs. These recommendations were specific and provided a multitude of questions for future research. The implications are that authentic leadership is in its nascent stage and there are numerous opportunities for research to be conducted to not only define it, but to differentiate it from other leadership constructs.

The way in which leaders make meaning of certain events and life experiences is a critical component of authentic leadership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Using life-stories can help leaders understand their interpretation of events and experiences. These narratives provide opportunities for leaders to make connections between events, behaviors, feelings and their reactions or responses to situations. By reflecting on these, leaders can further develop their sense of self by giving personal meaning to their experiences.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) developed four themes to explain leadership development. These include leadership development as a natural process, from finding a cause, out of struggle or hardship and from personal lessons learned. They contend that leaders are either born with characteristics that make her a good leader, or are inspired to take action due to experience with an identity or social cause, or the leader is faced with a difficult, or traumatic situation which forces her to become a leader or, finally, from the leader's personal experience and subsequent reflection. By reflecting on their decisions, experiences, motivations, and feelings, leaders are able to further develop their self-awareness which is vital to authentic leadership development.

Endrissat et al., (2007) sought to focus the emerging theories and research on authentic leadership. Their study helped to address their concern that most of the current efforts regarding authentic leadership have not been empirically based. In addition, by completing this study, the researchers were able to get a better understanding of authentic leadership from the practitioner's perspective.

They developed five interrelated categories with authenticity (to be oneself) as the central component. The categories were: one's own position, binding commitment (walking the talk), relationship to business and social proximity (a personal commitment to the task). They concluded that authentic leadership is distinct from other leadership constructs (i.e., transformational, ethical, moral, etc.) and should be explored more thoroughly (and across cultures) (Endrissat et al., 2007).

Eagly (2005) was concerned that the authentic leadership theories being developed were "curiously one-sided" and focused only on the characteristics and

authenticity of the leader. She suggested that any definition of authentic leadership must include the follower's perception and acknowledgement that the leader is acting authentically. She labeled this relational authenticity.

Eagly (2005) noted that leaders are not just expressing their personal values, but the values of the group with whom they are working. She described how women and other "outsiders" (people who have historically been underrepresented in leadership roles) may struggle to be seen as a spokesperson for a particular group, if the followers do not identify with the leader. She used case studies to demonstrate the challenges that women and other outsiders face when they are not representative of the group's notion of what a leader is and does (generally ascribed to masculinity). She illustrated how leaders are affected by the expectations people have of them, based solely on their gender. She found people who exemplified the organization's values were often not considered good leaders because they were not seen as following gender norms. This phenomenon is explained by Social Role Theory, which will be described later in this chapter.

However, because recent leadership theories are purporting leadership styles that are more in line with characteristics traditionally ascribed to women (democratic, collaborative, etc.), this shift in focus as to what constitutes good leadership may present opportunities for women to excel as leaders while maintaining their authenticity. However, (Eagly, 2005) cautions women against just 'being themselves' without first understanding the organizational context in which they are leading. She suggests that women may have to modify their preferred behavior in order to maintain legitimacy as a leader, based on gender expectations. She encourages employees to participate in training programs designed to address these issues. The focus of these trainings would be on

developing and valuing interpersonal relationships, with the hope that by changing the focus of the organization to value relationships, women and other outsiders would find success.

Walumbwa, et al., (2009) sought to advance the authentic leadership knowledge base by studying the impact of authentic leadership on groups, rather than just on the individual. They looked at the relationship between authentic leadership, collective psychological capital, and trust. Collective psychological capital was defined as the “group’s shared psychological state of development that is characterized by self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience” (p. 3).

Walumba, et al., (2009), conducted a quantitative study that included a series of surveys sent to employees and their supervisors (confidentially) in a large banking institution. They had five hypotheses that linked authentic leadership positively with group trust, performance outcomes and citizenship. Their analysis showed that authentic leadership is positively associated with group effectiveness; citizenship and trust. Their results also provided evidence further distinguishing authentic leadership from transformational leadership.

Terry (1993) suggested that leaders go through two steps to ensure authentic leadership. The first is to really understand the problem or situation, which includes knowing one’s true self, the organization and the larger community, and the second is to determine which action should be taken. He created the authentic action wheel to assist leaders in their process. The wheel is divided into six categories ranging from mission to structure, which includes policies and procedures. The expectation is that the leader will

determine which section of the wheel the situation occurs and then develop an appropriate course of action based upon the wheel category.

### Gender and Leadership

There has been much attention paid to the leadership styles of women and men. Leadership styles based on characteristics such as power, influence, control, aggressiveness and being task-oriented have historically been attributed to men (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001) and have been described as agentic characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Women leaders are often depicted as relational leaders (Regan & Brooks, 1990), or communal leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The characteristics associated with this type of leadership include: caring about people, seeking to create and maintain relationships, empowering others, and transforming individuals and society (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Klenke, 1996; Wilson, 2004). Women leaders are described as developing a caring, nurturing environment that fosters relationships (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt; Fine, 2009; Heim & Murphy, 2001; Klenke, 1996).

Eagly and Carli (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 94 leadership studies seeking to address the “female leadership advantage.” They concluded that female leadership tendencies are generally more effective for today’s leadership challenges. “Compared with male leaders, female leaders were more transformational...and engaged in more of the contingent reward behaviors” (page 817). They also found that men are more likely to focus on the follower’s mistakes or poor performance. In addition, males

were found to be less proactive when dealing with a problem. Instead of dealing with it right away, males tend to wait until the situation is extreme before taking action.

In 1990, Sally Helgesen published a now classic book on women's leadership titled, *The female advantage: Women's ways of leadership*. For this book, she studied four women executives from several different industries and shared their stories in her narrative. Helgesen used Mintzberg's 1968 groundbreaking study of managers (all male) as the method by which her study developed. She specifically notes that she did not model her study after Mintzberg, she used it as a basis of comparison when studying women executives.

Helgesen (1990) found several overall differences between the way her participants enacted their leadership and Mintzberg's participants. The women worked at a steady pace with a few breaks scattered throughout the day; whereas the men worked non-stop, without scheduled breaks. The women specifically tried to be accessible and viewed every interaction, whether it was scheduled or not, as an opportunity to maintain relationships; whereas the men viewed unscheduled interactions as disruptive or interruptive and often had their secretaries serve as gatekeepers, protecting the manager from unexpected visitors.

Family and friends were important priorities in the women's lives and, thus, they made time for the people in their life, outside of work. The women viewed themselves as multi-faceted and work was just one aspect of their identity; whereas the men's work was directly tied to their identity and they worked long hours and work appeared to be their

number one priority. The women made time to share information as opposed to the men who seemed to stockpile information and power.

Although Helgesen (1990) attributes some of these differences to the organizational culture of the time and age (Mintzberg's study in the 1960's while hers was in the 1990's which were two strikingly different eras), many are due to the relational nature of women who seek inclusion and win-win solutions. To do her study, Helgesen intently followed the four executives to form a thorough understanding of their day, their philosophy of leadership and how they enacted that leadership philosophy. Their stories developed into themes of women's leadership, which include collaboration, relational, communication, and an ethic of caring. These themes predominate in the women's lives, whether at home or at work and were shaped by who their values and goals.

Fine (2009) conducted a narrative research study to see if women's leadership experiences as expressed in their stories would lead to new constructions of leadership that differed from the traditional male dominated theories that essentially consider leader synonymous to male. In her study, Fine interviewed 15 women leaders who were asked three open-ended questions. She analyzed audiotape transcriptions and three themes emerged: leadership motives, behaviors, and expectations of others' behaviors. A moral purpose was prevalent in all three themes which allowed these women to have an "ethic of caring" (p. 194) when leading. The findings suggest further development of leadership theories to include an ethical component as well as "purpose and scene" (p. 200) that takes into account the organization context of leadership and supports ethical leadership.

Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) sought to understand how women make meaning in their lives. She relayed the story of five women's lives (including her own) and in doing so provide important insight into the role gender plays in US society. She examined the multifaceted nature of women's lives and showed how each aspect is interrelated, whether at work or at home. Her book is an honest portrayal of the challenges women face whether as a leader, a mom, a university president, an executive, a friend, a lover or a caretaker. But, she also offers hope in the process of redefinition to seek new solutions to old problems.

Grisoni and Beeby (2007) sought to explore how gender impacts sense-making in leadership. They used Weick's (1995) model of sense-making in leadership as a theoretical basis for their study. They described Weick's model as having seven characteristics, four of which connect to authentic leadership. These include: "identity (knowing who I am); retrospect (reflective action); enactment (making overt what is sensed); and ongoing (spread across time)" (p. 193). Although the authentic leadership literature does not specifically reference Weick, the similarities in his model shows the interdisciplinary nature of the foundations of authentic leadership.

Grisoni and Beeby (2007) conducted a mixed-methodology study that included an experimental component—they simulated decision-making settings (meetings) and a qualitative component—they observed and analyzed the transcriptions of the meetings. The study included three teams of leaders, two of which were single gender teams (one all male and one all female) and the third was a mixed gender team. The teams were given a task (labeling gender-specific leadership skills) and were observed (video-recorded) while completing the task. The researchers noted the power types used as the

groups completed the task. To do this, they used Fennell's (1999) model of power, which includes three types: power-over, power-through and power-with.

The first, "power over," is "the traditional view of power as domination, command, control, individualism and hierarchy" (Grisoni & Beeby, 2007, p. 195). The second, "power through," is facilitative power that involves enabling, negotiating, and empowering and supports the creativity and autonomy of team members when addressing complex problems" (p. 195). Lastly, "power with" involves forming close relationships with others to create the energy needed for the exercise of leadership and embodies the notions of power together, power in connection, relational power and mutual power" (p. 195). Stereotypically, men are associated with "power over" and women are associated with "power through" and "power with."

However, in the course of this study, when the groups assigned the labels to the different leadership skills, the labels did not follow the power types associated with the gender stereotypes. For example, the women's team labels covered all three types of power, however, the "power over" was more dominant than the "power with." The men's team showed "power through" as the dominant power type and also showed "power with." The mixed gender team showed "power through" and "power over," respectively. However, when Grisoni and Beeby (2007) analyzed the transcripts and videotapes, the women were observed to be acting consistently with the gender power stereotypes while the men showed the traditional leadership power type of "power over."

Grisoni and Beeby (2007) also suggested that because the context of the research was in a meeting setting, the traditional hierarchical structures seem to be the default

context in which leadership takes place. “This suggests that the behavioural legacy of male dominated command and control cultures is so deeply embedded in experienced public sector professionals that, regardless of gender relations in specific meaning-making settings, this will limit the emergence of horizontal working relationships” (p. 207). Indeed, this research has widespread implications into the ability of women to be authentic leaders in traditional settings.

### Gender Socialization

Dr. Pat Heim (1992) has researched the games that children play and how these games help girls and boys develop social and leadership skills. She asserted that because girls play dolls and other relational games, they develop interdependence and relational skills at an early age. These skills are therefore infused in women’s outlook and interactions. In these games, everyone is included and all participants have the opportunity to give their input into the direction in which the activity will progress. The way that little girls play games translates directly into their interactions with others, and ultimately affects their leadership style (Helgesen, 1990; Klenke, 1996). Women are socialized to achieve goals as a group and therefore, it is only when the group has achieved the goals that success is realized (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997).

Boys, on the other hand, grow up playing competitive games where there is a winner and a loser and there are clearly defined goals. Games such as war and team sports are just a few examples of how men are socialized to be winners at the cost of others. These lead men to have greater reliance on their own abilities. Even when playing on teams, it is still their personal effort that is rewarded, along with the team’s. Statistics

are kept for individual players; records are set and broken by individuals, not teams. The team may win the trophy, but it is the individual performance that people remember. For example, in baseball, Barry Bonds broke Hank Aaron's home run record—which many people thought would never be broken. The average baseball fan could likely state that Hank Aaron had the previous record, but not the team for which team he played.

In the United States, men are rewarded for their individual abilities and actions (Helgesen, 1990). Men are socialized to achieve goals individually which has historically correlated with traditional leadership styles in which men were most often the leaders and had the power (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). Institutions founded on these principles were set up as hierarchies with a pinnacle person (usually a white male) maintaining power and information and deciding to whom, when, and how much, to dole out (Grisoni & Beeby, 2007). This model of leadership has persisted for decades and continues to present challenges for women leaders in today's workforce (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001).

### Social Role Expectations

Psychologists have researched how the brain develops mental models to help understand the numerous facts and events experienced in people's daily lives, known as schema or schemata (Punyashloke, 2003). These schemas help people to process potentially overwhelming information subconsciously because the brain already has a "script" by which to interpret the information. In effect, these "mental constructs help individuals reduce a complex environment into a manageable set of meaningful categories" (Propp, 2006, p. 48). Schemata are developed for a variety of occurrences, including gender role and leader expectations.

Individuals develop gender schema, which include expectations for how males and females are supposed to look, feel, and behave. “Widely shared gender stereotypes are in effect the ‘genetic code’ of the gender system since they constitute the cultural rules or schemas by which people perceive and enact gender difference and inequality” (Ridgeway, 2001). These stereotypes present an additional challenge for women leaders as the characteristics associated with leadership are historically masculine (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001). A woman in a leadership role presents incongruity to these schemata. “In general, this research shows that it is easier for men to be perceived as possessing the task-relevant competence and leadership ability that are essential to emerging as a leader” (Eagly & Karau, p. 583). The brain expects women to act one way based on the gender schemata, but there is an additional schema for leader, which is potentially contrary to that of the gender schema when applied to a female leader.

For example, there are times when a leader must make a difficult decision, which is in line with expectations of leaders. However, Social Role Theory explains that people expect women to be kind and gentle, based on their sex-role. So when a female leader acts in a decisive or direct manner, it is contrary to the social role expectation of a woman and those with whom she is working may be stymied. This means she is hindered before she even has the opportunity to make a decision (Heilman, 2001). The challenge of sex-role incongruity (Ritter & Yoder, 2004) or “double-bind” (Jamieson, 1995) has persisted for women leaders into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, to be considered effective leaders, women have to overcome historical bias and prove themselves as worthy of leadership roles (Heilman, 2001; Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001; Madden, 2008; Rhode, 2003).

These roles are infused into societal expectations of how women are supposed to behave and affect the manner in which people interact (Heilman, 2001) and the value that is placed on those interactions. “In reality, when a woman is committed to asserting herself as a valuable, independent member of society, unwilling to be ignored, disrespected or dominated, she can find herself thwarted by the inflexibility of societal expectations” (Curry-Johnson, 2001, p. 54). In addition, Roth (2004) explains that “because gender is a diffuse status characteristic in which men are valued as having higher status than women, women’s competence is often evaluated more harshly than men’s...even when they exhibit equal or superior performance” (p. 193). Eagly & Karau (2002) expanded on this notion by noting that women were “devalued more strongly, relative to their male counterparts, when leadership was carried out in stereotypically masculine styles, particularly when this style was autocratic or directive” (p. 587).

In addition women are often excluded from the informal networks of organizations, which may translate to being excluded from decision making (Astin, 1991; DiGeorgio-Lutz, 2002; Klenke, 1996). This lack of being included provides another impediment to women advancing to higher positions (Eagly, 2005; Fine, 2009). Because women occupy so few positions of ultimate authority, women’s viewpoints are often not included in vital discussions. This maintains the status quo rather than finding solutions that would take into account diverse perspectives.

Furthermore, when a woman in a position of high power fails, the failure is often ascribed to her gender as opposed to the multitude of reasons that could have caused her to fail (Barnett, 2007). With all these barriers to women in leadership positions, the question of how they can be authentic leaders arises. Societal expectations of women

conflict with expectations of leaders, women leaders experience this conflict and face additional challenges to their leadership.

Feminists seek to change the systemic structures that are limiting to women (and men). “Change must be sweeping, and it won’t be easy. When it comes to women’s leadership, we live in a land of deep resistance, with structural and emotional impediments burned into the cultures of our organizations, into our society and into the psyches and expectations of both sexes” (Wilson, 2004, p. xii). Heilman (2001) suggests that reducing role ambiguity, understanding and identifying social constructs that limit the potential of women leaders will help to alleviate some of the barriers affecting the advancement of women leaders. She further states, “And even when the change seems beyond the reach of organizations, cognizance of the processes that produce gender bias may serve to temper some of its ill effects” (p. 671).

### Women in Higher Education

The literature about women leaders primarily focus on faculty members, presidents, and deans. However, there are so few women in these positions, that the literature focuses more on the “pipeline”—the large numbers of women entering college and the few numbers of women who stay and actually gain high levels in the university systems—rather than on the effectiveness of women leaders. The categories that have received attention in the higher education literature include articles written about leaks in the pipeline (Glazer-Raymo, 1999); “PhD Glut” (Glazer-Raymo, 1999); differences between male and female leaders; the chilly climate (Benokraitis, 1997) and the feminist analysis of leadership theories. However, the role of authenticity has not been included in these studies.

## Parallels between Women Leaders and Authentic Leaders

Because women have historically cared for others (families), they are expected to bring this caring attitude to work and incorporate it into their leadership style (Rhode, 2003). As people develop relationships amongst colleagues, they feel more connected, and therefore, committed to the organization which benefits everyone. “The feminized notion that one strengthens oneself by strengthening others is finding greater acceptance in traditionally male-dominated fields” (Helgesen, 1990). Developing shared values also fosters an atmosphere of employees contributing to the organization. This style leads to greater retention and skills, increased morale and ultimately, increased productivity (George, 2003; Helgesen, 1995; Klenke, 1996; Rhode, 2003).

Women leaders tend to draw on personal experience and not just think of themselves, or the bottom line, their leadership style tends to have a greater impact on the people, the organization and society (Fine, 2009; Klenke, 1996). Women leaders are credited with a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people and a concern for the wider needs of the community (Fine, 2009; Helgesen, 1990).

Systemic changes will provide opportunities for women to lead authentically, which in turn, will provide numerous benefits (Roberts, 2007). Authentic leaders have a desire to make a positive difference in the world (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) and empower their followers (George, 2003). “The modern leader must have the ability to understand the complex and varied impacts that difficult times have on people and to provide authentic and empathetic leadership that facilitates healing, revitalization, and commitment in others” (Bunker & Wakefield, 2004, p. 18). In this fast-paced, constantly changing work environment, it is important to know what the goals are and how one will

be evaluated and authentic leadership facilitates this process, which in turn promotes a healthier work environment for everyone.

Authentic leaders focus on empowering their followers which may, in turn, lead to the followers transforming into authentic leaders themselves. These same characteristics have been attributed to women leaders (Fine, 2009; Helgesen, 1990). An extended outcome is the authentic and female leaders' positive impact on society.

### Summary

This chapter has shown how authentic leadership has developed into its own construct. Authentic leadership has four main components: self-awareness, balanced processing, authentic action, and relational transparency. Self-awareness involves understanding one's core values. Balanced processing is having a realistic understanding of one's skills. Authentic action is acting according to one's values. Relational transparency includes openness and trust between people. Authentic leadership encompasses authentic relationships with followers and is characterized by transparency, openness and trust. Authentic leadership strives toward worthy objectives and places an emphasis on follower development.

In addition, the chapter has provided examples of the types of research that has been conducted on the leadership styles of men and women. Male leadership styles tend to be characterized as assertive, decisive, powerful, compartmentalized, and using influence and control. Female leadership styles are characterized as nurturing, caring, empowering and focusing on the larger context. The research illustrated how women make meaning in their lives and the interrelated nature of women's work identity and

their home identity. The gender role socialization and the effects of this on women leaders were presented. The challenges associated with gender role expectations as outlined in role congruity theory stress the importance of learning how authenticity plays out in women leadership.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

This chapter will provide information on the use of qualitative research in this study, specifically, phenomenology; the rationale for using interpretive phenomenological analysis; as well as the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data.

### Research Design and Rationale

Conger (1998) suggested that leadership is a topic that can best be explored using qualitative research, due to the nebulous nature of leadership. In addition, Conger purports that qualitative studies are methodologically the best choice for areas of research in the nascent stages of development. Because this study explored a new construct in leadership theory, authentic leadership, qualitative study was the appropriate methodology for this research study, which specifically used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis garners a fuller understanding of the participants' experience and explores their reactions and responses to these experiences and helps develop a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. According to Willig (2001), IPA "aims to produce knowledge of what and how people think about the phenomenon under investigation" (p. 66).

This type of phenomenological research seeks to understand the experience from the participant's perspective, but acknowledges that the researcher's experience and biases cannot be completely separated from the analysis process, and therefore, is an interpretation of the participants' responses (Willig, 2001).

## Participants and Site

The female leaders interviewed for this study were selected from a variety of institutions located in the Western United States. The region was selected because this is the region in which I reside. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) encourage researchers to select a location for study that is in close proximity to the researcher. Therefore, institutions were selected in the region in which I live.

To select the sample, purposive sampling was used. There are two overarching types of sampling procedures. The first is probability sampling, which seeks to generalize findings to the larger population and is often found with quantitative research studies. The second is non-probability sampling, which is ideal for qualitative research studies because the sampling is based on the characteristics of the sample, not the generalizability to the population (Merriam, 1998; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). There are two main types of non-probability sampling, purposive and theoretical. Purposive (or criterion based) sampling involves selecting participants based on criteria relevant to the topic which the researcher wishes to examine. The criteria are determined, based on the intention of the study, early in the design stage.

Theoretical sampling is a type of purposive sampling, where the main goal is to develop grounded theory. It is a highly iterative process through which the researcher can identify a sample (based on the potential contribution to theory building), study them, analyze the data and then repeat the process until saturation is reached, and no new theoretical insights can be gained. Although authentic leadership is a new construct in leadership theory, the goal of this research study is not to develop a new theory; but rather to explore and share the participants' experience in an effort to add to the

knowledge base related to the phenomena of authenticity. Therefore, this study used purposive, criterion based sampling measures.

The sample size was small because qualitative studies tend to be small. Ritchie, et al., (2003) give two reasons for this. The first is because the aim of qualitative research is not to generalize, it is not necessary to find a sample size that is statistically significant. Second, an incident only needs to appear once to be analyzed, so including more people does not necessarily add to the evidence.

Merriam (1998) suggests finding a sufficient number to obtain “reasonable coverage” (p.64) based on the purpose of the research. Three studies that have informed this research project used between 4 and 15 participants. Helgesen (1990) studied four women in her groundbreaking book on women’s leadership. Bateson (1989) studied five women in her book, *Composing a Life*. Fine (2009) studied 15 women in her narrative study on women’s leadership. Seven women were ultimately interviewed for this research. The saturation point was reached when the interviews yielded similar information and no new themes emerged.

Merriam (1998) suggests that the “crucial factor is not the number of respondents, but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon” (p. 83). Therefore, it was important to be intentional when determining the criteria used to select participants. Ritchie, et al., (2003) offered two suggestions for developing the criteria. The first was to ensure that all the germane aspects of the study are included in selection. The second was to strive for diversity among the participants, based on each criteria so that each criteria may be explored from

multiple perspectives, which will provide a clearer picture of the phenomenon being researched.

Because the goal of this study was to explore women's leadership, the first criteria, being female, was a required characteristic. Further, because the term "leader" can have multiple definitions based on individual perception, the potential to confuse or muddle what constitutes a leader is great. Therefore, for clarity in this study, the term "leader" was defined based on the position (title) held at the university. The potential pool of participants included directors, department chairs, deans, and vice presidents. By including this many positions, the pool from which a leader could be chosen was broader, and this breadth provided an additional dimension of anonymity to the respondents.

The requirement to be at their institution for at least one year was included to address issues of an organization's culture. This length of time allowed the respondents to become familiar with the organization's culture and to address questions that pertained to their ability to be an effective leader as well as their ability to lead.

A variety of methods were used to determine the sample frame. These included visiting the websites of several institutions to obtain a list of women leaders at the director or higher level; contacting colleagues seeking recommendations of potential participants; and using Snowball sampling measures, which involves asking the participants for suggestions of additional participants.

Potential participants were contacted via email, and the email contained both an explanation of the research project and a request to participate. Once agreement to participate has been received, a consent form was electronically sent which was collected at the interview.

## Data Collection

Emails were sent to 13 female leaders at several universities in the Western United States. Seven women agreed to participate and were interviewed in their offices over the course of 2 months. All interviews were audiotaped and were semi-structured. According to Merriam (1998), “this format allows researchers to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (p. 74). Each participant was initially asked to relay the story of their leadership.

An Interview Guide was created, based on the general questions and topics to be discussed, but the actual interviews progressed based on how the participant’s responses unfolded. Riessman (1993) suggests developing a guide for interviews, including broad questions that covered the topic, along with follow-up questions that delved deeper into the content, if the respondent’s answers were surface level. Therefore, the researcher developed a list of major interview questions and a second list of potential extender questions.

## Procedures

One interview, lasting approximately 1-2 hours was conducted with each leader. Each participant agreed both verbally and on the consent form to follow up interviews, if necessary. However, follow up interviews with participants for clarification or additional information was found to be unnecessary.

The additional Interview Guide questions were developed using the components of authenticity to elicit responses that would describe their leadership practices and philosophy. Follow-up questions were often used during the interviews to clarify statements and to ensure the researcher understood the intended meaning. Not all of the

questions were asked in each interview as some of the women addressed a question topic while answering a different question. In addition, the questions were not necessarily asked in the order listed as the researcher interjected questions that pertained more to what the respondent was saying rather than by a forced order.

Each interview was transcribed in its entirety by the researcher. “By transcribing at this level, interpretive categories emerge, ambiguities in language are heard on the tape, and the oral record—the way the story is told—provides clues about meaning” (Riessman, 1993, p. 58).

Field notes were used to provide the researcher with additional information regarding the feelings, impressions and other interesting occurrences, including follow-up questions that arose during the interview sessions. These included documenting non-verbal reactions of both participant and researcher; descriptions of the participants and the locations in which the interviews were conducted. “The participant’s task was to tell the story; the researcher’s task was to induce the perspective from which it was told” (Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003, p. 30). These notes also allowed the researcher to notice trends that were emerging between respondents as the interviews progressed.

### Data Analysis

Analysis was conducted throughout the research process. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher, who then reviewed each transcription, in its entirety. Willig (2001) suggested reading the transcriptions and making notes based upon initial reactions and observations that may be pursued later. Although the interview questions were developed to address the components of authentic leadership, the transcriptions were reviewed so as to let the themes emerge, regardless of whether or not

they matched an authentic leadership component. This is consistent with an interpretive phenomenological approach that seeks to offer opportunities for themes to emerge.

Further reviews connected themes and pulling sections of data into documents for each theme. A response was determined to be a theme if at least three of the participants mentioned it. Several themes related to each other in such a way that, together, they created an umbrella theme. The original themes were re-labeled sub-themes and grouped under the over-arching themes to explain women's leadership and authenticity more thoroughly.

Each interview transcription was reviewed individually, with themes emerging based on each person's responses. After these themes were noted and labeled, the themes were integrated across participants. These led to the eventual themes that are described in this study.

Conclusions were drawn using the more qualitative approach of describing the themes that emerged, rather than conducting statistical analysis. This is the best approach because the research sought to describe how authenticity is practiced in women's leadership, which is more appropriate than using statistics to analyze and describe the phenomenon.

### Trustworthiness

According to Poland (2003), trustworthiness begins with the quality of the transcriptions. He argued there are four challenges to transcription quality. These include, "problems with sentence structure, the use of quotation marks, omissions, and mistaking words or phrases for others" (p. 270). He explained that because verbal language often does not follow grammatical formats (oftentimes sentences never end), the transcriber

determines where and when to determine sentence structure, which may alter the meaning of the remark. In addition, because the tape recording does not distinguish when the responder is speaking from their personal perspective or quoting someone else, the transcriber may erroneously attribute the quote to the respondent. Third, the transcriber may neglect to include a word or phrase when she is reviewing the tape multiple times to catch all the words. Lastly, the transcriber may mistakenly hear the wrong word and transcribe the tape incorrectly.

To address these issues, field notes were reviewed to provide reminders of the details of the interview in an effort to assist the researcher in interpreting the tape accurately. There were times when, even with these measures, the researcher was unable to distinguish a word. In those instances, the researcher noted in the transcription that a word or phrase was indistinguishable. Fortunately, this was rare and only happened after the researcher had listened to the tape multiple times to no avail.

The participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts. The consent form explained this and the researcher asked each respondent if she wanted to see the transcription. Several of the respondents stated they did not want the transcriptions, but instead, would like the executive summary of the project. For those who wished to see the transcriptions, emails were sent to them and they were given the opportunity to comment on the transcriptions. No comments were received from the participants once the transcripts were sent.

In that email, the participants were reminded that the transcriptions would be changed if they felt that clarification was needed, but, that if she did not like the way she came across, that would not change. Poland (2003) reminded us that people do not

necessarily appear eloquent when the discussion is transcribed due to the conversational nature of interviews which may bounce from one thought to another.

Ensuring quality transcriptions, conducting member checks and clarifying researcher bias all contributed to the trustworthiness of this research project. Creswell (2007) recommended qualitative researchers employ at least two procedures to ensure trustworthiness.

### Summary

This chapter explained the methodology that was used for this study. In addition, the chapter defended how, for the topic of authentic leadership, the methodology chosen was the most appropriate, because authentic leadership is in the nascent stage of development. In addition, the study explored how these women leaders experience and think about their leadership practice, so interpretive phenomenological analysis was used.

The chapter explained how the participants were selected; data was collected and analyzed; and addressed the issue of trustworthiness. Seven women leaders working at different universities in the Western United States agreed to participate in the study. All of the leaders held high positions in their respective institutions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the women leaders that lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours each. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher, who then reviewed each transcription, in its entirety, seeking general themes. Although the questions were developed to address the components of authentic leadership, the transcriptions were reviewed so as to let the themes emerge, regardless of whether or not they matched an authentic leadership

component. In addition, the goal of this study was to provide a description of the phenomenon so that readers may better understand these women's leadership practices.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

To maintain anonymity, demographic information was not obtained and pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The participants all held high-level administrative positions at their respective universities and were the senior leaders of their department or division. Several of them served on their university's cabinet, so they were instrumental in the strategic direction of their institution. In addition, these women worked in a variety of disciplines, including academic as well as non-academic divisions. Although they were from different institutions, they provided insight into the inner-workings of universities from a variety of perspectives. The findings were presented based on themes, rather than by individual stories to delineate the connections between the participants.

Five overarching themes arose from the interviews: (1) leadership strategies; (2) leadership development; (3) meaning making; (4) developing and maintaining relationships; and, (5) being aware of the larger organizational context, which included the university environment.

While this study followed the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) tradition (Willig, 2001), the narrative was also used within the IPA tradition (Steeves, 1994) to gather the participants stories of leadership. Steeves (1994) referred to the narrative as representing the "world in motion" (p. 23), therefore, the first interview question was formatted in narrative form, asking for the participants story of leadership to

provide a more dynamic quality to the interview. The findings begin with these responses.

### **Leadership Stories**

When asked to tell the story of their leadership, the answers varied among the participants. Some discussed their professional career paths, others took a more lifelong chronological approach, and others discussed their leadership philosophy. Two of the participants, Donna and Sophia, explained that they did not intentionally seek leadership opportunities, but that others had encouraged them to do so. Donna described her story of leadership first as “without really having some intentional thinking about, ‘Oh, I want to be a leader or I want to aspire to leadership type positions.’”

She then went on to describe the progression of her leadership, starting with being president of the student council, as well as other leadership roles in high school. She reiterated that she felt honored that others looked to her and that she continuously strives to make a difference as a leader and as a person.

My story of leadership has been one of, when I’ve been able to be in leadership positions, whether formally or informally, I’ve been very honored by having the opportunity to do that, that other people have looked to me to do certain things. I feel somewhat humbled by that opportunity, and feel like I want to really make a difference, whatever it happens to be.

Sophia explained that her leadership “evolved over the years.” She immediately brought up her race and gender and that she grew up in the South in the Sixties. This set the context for her leadership development. The social movements of the Sixties gave voice to those who previously had been denied. She did not see herself as a leader because she compared herself to Martin Luther King, Jr. and others who were “out there” leading the charge. It was only later in her life, as she reflected back on her experiences

that she realized she was “probably always a leader, I just didn’t know it.” She considered herself more of a “consensus builder” and a “worker-bee,” rather than a leader.

So I kind of just stood in the background a lot. I would be the worker-bee. If something needed to be done, I could identify what needed to be done. I was in student groups, and I was in all kinds of student organizations. I was put in positions of leadership even though I never felt like I was a leader.

Her family life, especially her father, influenced her leadership. She shared that her father had sacrificed so much so that she could have a better life. But, as a young adult, she struggled to accept it, and would challenge her father’s choice. “I remember him saying, every time I brought it up, I do this work so that you don’t have to. That’s why you go to school, that’s why you’re gonna go to college; so that you don’t have to do this.” She infused this into her leadership. She, like her father, learned to “negotiate situations so that you get what you need without giving up who you are.”

Suzanne began her story by defining leadership as being “very broadly about who you are as a whole person.” She then went on to explain her belief that leadership is more than just one’s skills and experience. She explained that she had recently participated in a professional development program at work where the interviewer began with asking about her childhood. She explained that his unique approach was a “crystallizing moment” for her regarding her thoughts on leadership. She had been thinking about how leadership is more than just the resume.

It really doesn’t even tell half the story about whether or not a person is a strong leader or a capable leader or has the kind of leadership style appropriate to a given situation. If you try to artificially talk about leadership, just in terms of what are my education awards, recognitions, professional certifications and professional experience, you’re missing something...It’s very much about the whole person.

Candice started her story with her professional assent, but her focus was on being at a particular institution, not on a specific role that she wanted to attain. She shared that her desire to work at that university was so strong that she took a part-time position just so she could work there. She therefore had to be creative in finding additional work so she would be full-time. She took on several positions, all totaling one full-time position.

One such experience was a program designed to help women become university administrators. It was through this program that she was able to be involved in several aspects of the university and made numerous connections, some of which she still has. The varied positions that she held early in her career helped her later as she has utilized the skills gained back then throughout her career.

Karen was quick to describe herself as having “leader tendencies” rather than a “natural leader.” She explained her preferences of being in control or in charge as leader tendencies. However, she considers leadership to require “such discipline that it really isn’t a natural process.” Karen went on to explain the discipline required to be a good leader.

If you’re going to be a good leader, every single day you start back at zero. And so refining your abilities to be humble and accountable to yourself and have a degree of vulnerability and to recognize that you make mistakes. And, so I think it takes a person who is willing to do all that and I don’t think that is innate. But from the standpoint of refining and being disciplined enough to continue to always push yourself...from the standpoint of growth and being as strong a leader as you possibly can, that is where I say I don’t think it is necessarily a natural thing.

### **Leadership Strategies**

There were numerous attributes that were elements of each leader’s style. These include being responsive, positive, collaborative, creative, proactive, appreciative, and

communicative. These styles are encompassed in the leadership practices that are outlined below.

Melanie described her leadership style as being visible, collaborative, appreciative, engaging and listening.

My leadership style is an understanding that it is important to be visible, it is important to communicate with people and to appreciate people, it's extremely collaborative, and it's not collaborative because I don't feel that I have the knowledge or experience to make decisions, but it's the belief that as you engage people and you get people involved, they feel more a part of an organization. My job is not to do all the work; my job is to engage people to feel good about the work. My job is to be a cheerleader, it's to be a visionary, it's to be dependable and stable it's to provide enthusiasm of the work that we're doing. It's to listen to the people that aren't speaking and to be a voice for them. So my style is to hold people accountable to protect the community. I see that that is my style, is to be the watcher and the keeper of this powerful group of people and to protect the integrity of the group, because no one else can do that.

Donna discussed her leadership style in terms of her leadership philosophy.

To me, my philosophy is really more about trying to say to folks, 'ok, let's define the issue. Let's define the problem. Let's define what we're trying to accomplish. Let's set the parameters, now let's work together, what do you think? What's your perspective?' So, it really is truly more of a ...trying to be an engager, a facilitator... To be a good leader, you have to know what the problems you're trying to solve are.

Donna then went on to describe her leadership using the analogy of a toolbox. "In the toolbox you have to figure out how you want to lead in that particular instance or circumstance." She explained that just like during a project, sometimes a hammer is the best tool for the job and other times, one needs a screwdriver. In her leadership, she finds that different situations warrant different approaches.

One aspect of her leadership style that Sophia described as fundamental is focusing on the people.

How do you impact change? How do you get people to do what needs to be done? How do you get organizations to move? And so for me also, the fundamental key piece to anything, to my leadership skills... style is people. You have to focus on the people. Anytime I've gotten in trouble, I've not done something well it is because I've got too busy with the stuff and failed to think about the impact and the people that are being impacted and having to do the change. And I think that's really hard, because it's easy to say here is what needs to be done and just try to get there too quickly. So that to me is just key. Is how do you develop people.

Candice echoed Sophia's experience of moving too quickly and discovering the value of focusing on the process.

I made some mistakes, when I was young, you know...trying to move things too quickly. That's kind of a typical mistake people will make early on and you try to move things too quickly, it actually takes longer. So I learned about the importance of process. It's not just about the results, but it's also about how you got there. And so I learned about process from those experiences.

Kate centered her leadership style on her strong work ethic. She described herself as someone who works all the time, whether she is in the office or not, she is always "churning things" and often addresses issues, even from home. There were several characteristics that she infused into her leadership style. These include, being positive, responsive, setting a good example for her workers, and maintaining a sense of humor. She strives

to set a good example for, all of my directors and people who report to me; to model the behavior that I want to see in them is to be positive to be responsive to be solutions oriented; to maintain a decent sense of humor; and be somebody that people want to work with and have around the table when we're focusing on problems.

Suzanne was asked about her leadership style and responded by describing her personality style. For Suzanne, her personality directly correlates to her leadership.

I'm a fairly structured, linear thinker by nature. But, what has been pretty neat over my professional career is to realize that, although those are excellent skills, and I make no apology for those and I think there's real value to them. That, to

truly lead, I have to work outside of that linear approach. And specifically recognize and value and develop ways of collaboration because although I see things in a very linear and black and white order, it you know, I have such wonderful colleagues here at [university] and at other places that I have worked that are not linear and that think differently and realizing how much that brings how those different perspectives flesh out and clarify ideas in a way that continuing to only think in a linear fashion does not do.

Suzanne then explained the three main components of her leadership style, which include collaboration, encouragement and accountability.

The first one would be collaboration. Because of the value of different perspectives in producing a better product, and also about people feeling engaged. Then the second word that comes to mind is encouragement. And, being a leader, not only in a university, but also as a parent, because I think being a parent is also being a leader and I've got four sons. Learning how much better results you get with encouragement rather than criticism. But then, also accountability. So a balance between encouragement; but then also holding people accountable. You can't just be a cheerleader on the side going yay, yay, yay, good job. You also have to hold accountable for now this is what we agreed to, we didn't reach this, what happened kind of thing. So, um, leadership style, I think those are the words that come to mind, collaboration, accountability and encouragement.

Candice shared a story about how she removed someone from a leadership position because the person was not collaborative. This set the tone for the rest of her division to work together.

I think when I moved one department head out, everybody knew. It was a very hard thing. Everybody knew he was not collaborative, so the message was pretty clear.

#### Creating a Positive Work Environment

Creating a positive work environment was integral to these women's leadership strategies. They felt that since people spend a good amount of time and energy at work, it is important for them to have a positive environment, free from gossip and bickering.

Melanie sets the stage for people to be happy at work and love what they do. Even without raises, she has found morale to be up, and she attributed this to the positive work environment.

I think the greatest joy I have is that, just seeing people excited about what they do. That's what I value because I think that if you're positive, then people around you are going to be positive and it's going to make for a more positive work environment.

Kate echoed these sentiments and it was clear that creating an environment that is positive and pleasant is a high priority for her.

It's important to me that the people who work for me every day, my assistants, are happy and engaged and satisfied with their jobs and to create a workplace here, because we spend so much time together. It's pleasant, but free of gossip and negativity and things like that. It's important for me to actually have a happy place to work where people want to come to work in the morning.

Candice strives for a positive work environment and encourages departments to work together and support each other and she encourages open communication. She changed the organization's culture to one that is more collaborative rather than competitive, which it had been with her predecessor by rewarding them for collaborating.

We have all sorts of projects that are across multiple departments and multiple colleges and so that kind of important to me. I don't like a lot of internal bickering and stuff. In our meetings, they all know they can say anything they want. They can disagree with me, I don't care. But, in the end, once we make a decision, I don't want anyone to undermine it or to do those kinds of things. So, that's important. It's probably a female trait.

Sophia strives to make the best of situations and maintain a positive attitude, even in difficult times.

You'll rarely ever see me be negative about something, even when it is really bad...so even when the budget cuts and all of that, it's like, you know, it is what it is. So, what can we do to make the best of the situation? And part of that too, maybe too, is growing up poor and you have to make the best of the situation. So I think being positive is so important because you need to look at any situation and anything can always be bad. And there's lots of things that legitimately are,

but I just choose not to focus on those. I know they're there and I know there are things that we have to deal with. But I refuse to let those things dictate how I go through life.

Dealing with difficult situations immediately

Several of these leaders commented on the necessity of dealing with problems immediately. For some it came down to a personal preference, for others it was because of the impact on the department when negativity or problems festered. Candice explained

I'm a very emotional person, but I'm not a weak person. And there's a difference. So I really don't have a lot of respect for individuals who will just kind of let a difficult problem go because it's just easier than dealing with it. That's a personal value of mine. But sometimes it's easier to overlook something or to make a decision that kind of takes the easy path and it's important to me that I don't do that. I would be embarrassed and ashamed if I avoided an issue because it was difficult.

For Kate, dealing with difficult situations is something that she does not enjoy, but feels it is important to deal with them right away.

I let people know that I won't let problems fester either that I'll take care of them, personnel issues or what not that I think everyone is conflict averse but I'm not one to let problems fester, I don't have time for it. I'll go ahead and take care of things and move on

Placing the Right People in the Right Place

Most discussed the necessity and value of having "the right people in the right places." Kate discussed it in terms of her leadership style. To her, it is important to have the right people in the right places because so many people report to her, it is not realistic or necessary for her to be an expert in every field; she just needs to provide an environment for them to thrive and offer them the support and encouragement to do so. She also sets clear expectations for the division's goals as well as how she wants her directors to manage others, in terms of supporting and appreciating their employees.

I have to work on that, on how to get good relationships with all my directors that they know that I care for them that I care about them that I want to retain them, even in years like this when we've had 3 years with no salary increases. That I'll do everything I can to retain them, give them the support they need and I expect them to do that to the people that report to them as well. That's how you keep the best people and I'm all about having the best people in the right seats.

Melanie explained that she strives to hire people that will balance her strengths.

You have to lead with your own personality...focusing on your positives, focusing on your strengths and then surrounding [yourself with] people around you with those areas you're not as strong. And having the wisdom to be able to be comfortable to hire people stronger in areas that you're not. That's hard to do. I think in leadership you have to leave your ego on the table.

Candice discussed how she was appointed to different positions not because of her expertise, but because of her leadership skills. She develops strategic plans so she can see the big picture and work with people to accomplish the goals, both big and small.

And my whole thing is just to work with people to get sort of the broad, ok what do we hope to accomplish and then I just let them go. Because I don't know everything there is to know about all these different things, but I just hire really good people and then we do the general plans together. And I don't have to have weekly meetings and try to keep everybody on task because they just know here's where we're going. They come see me if they need something. They know what they're doing. They're really good. I hire really good people and I just let them go.

### Strategic Planning

Developing, implementing and reviewing strategic plans are priorities for most of these leaders. All of the leaders sought to involve their employees in the strategic planning process to help employees connect to the organization's mission and direction. Three of the women incorporated a strategic planning process soon after taking their positions and continue to re-visit, and revise, if necessary, regularly. Recognizing that, as leaders, they were ultimately responsible for the division or department, they placed limits as to how long the planning process would last before moving to implementation.

However, these three women approached the task in different ways. Candice explained that there were two initial steps to developing the strategic plan. They did a “comparator analysis,” which consisted of comparing and contrasting their department to their peers at other universities. They then established plans to address the differences. The second step involved looking to the future by reading a study which predicted what would be important to higher education in the future. They held focus groups to solicit ideas for the areas that they wanted to emphasize as a division.

The vast majority of the department participated in this process and the ideas generated became the basis for the strategic plan. Every time a new program is suggested, they re-visit the strategic plan to determine how, and if, it fits in within the plan. Candice also was unique in that she “divided the different topics to different individuals who are responsible, but each department doesn’t have one.” That was a big difference from how her predecessor managed the division.

Candice was intentional about making sure that each department contributes to the overall division’s goals, and not just their own. She also recognized that the contributions vary by department, based upon their specialty and size. She keeps the strategic plan in a folder on her desk so that it is readily available. Collaborative strategic planning is a core aspect of Candice’s leadership style.

I found that if I was just collaborative and involved people, in a real sense, not sort of fake, but if I involved a lot of people and I was collaborative, and I invited input and if you have a plan, even if they don’t like it, it’s kind of like, thank God somebody’s got a plan. You’d be surprised how little planning people do. We know where we’re going and I think that’s very helpful.

Karen brought in an outside consultant to help the department develop their values, mission statement and departmental goals. On a voluntary basis, each of the

employees was offered the opportunity to sign their plan (within a week of final development), asserting that they were in agreement of the goals and would do their part to achieve them. For those who did not want to sign, they could have a conversation with their supervisor to discuss the matter. Every employee signed the document. Karen is quick to point out that, although everyone said they are in agreement, that does not mean all problems are magically solved. She acknowledges that there is still a lot of room for improvement, but is very pleased that the entire department publicly acknowledged a willingness to try.

Melanie used a similar tactic when her division went through a re-organization. Melanie explained that she created a leadership team to ensure that a diversity of perspectives were involved when decisions were made. She made it clear that she could easily make all the decisions, but that she wanted to engage her people in the process. She believes this model creates a stronger decision and, “it enables people at this senior level to be really engaged with the direction of the division.”

She first gathered information about peer institutions and involved all of the directors in the process. She split the directors into teams and charged them to “come up with their dream organization.” The teams met several times and then presented their ideas to her leadership team, which made the final decision.

So, the new org chart is actually a hybrid of the best of each of those five things and then the leadership team looked at it and we massaged it a little bit more and then we came up with our organization and then we presented it to the directors...And I told them, ‘I didn’t have to do it this way, but I am and I just want you to know that this is the org chart and that you can give me feedback. However, this is the way we’re going. If it’s not great, we’ll change it later.’

An additional benefit of this model is that it allows for greater communication across departments. Everyone is aware of what is going on which means others can step in if anyone is unavailable. This provides freedom to take time off for vacation or any other reason, which helps her lead a more balanced life. She does not feel like she cannot leave the office or everything will fall apart, which is hard to achieve at her level.

The following table illustrates how these women like to lead as well as their leadership strategies. The strategies listed do not necessarily correspond to the characteristic listed.

### **Leadership Development**

Although these leaders have attained high levels of administrative responsibilities within their universities, they continue to reflect on their development as well as their futures. The techniques they use include observation, both of others and the awareness that others watch them, and staying current with the leadership literature.

#### **Observing Others**

When explaining how these women developed their leadership style, the topic of observing others as leaders arose several times. Some discussed how they watched others lead. They discussed their decision-making process, and the manner in which they treated people and then went on to incorporate those approaches into their leadership style.

Candice gave an account of a leader whom she strove to emulate.

I watched how he behaved all those years—never raised his voice, but still a very strong leader, but never had to threaten people, in any way...and that is how I like to [lead] ...if I ever were to get ticked off, I think back on how he was as a leader and I say, “now don’t do that.”

Suzanne explained that her leadership style is different than her supervisor's is; however, she still is able to gain insight from observing and reflecting on her leadership.

And having the opportunity to watch her and to see that proven success over that period of time really has helped me gain some insight, that just because somebody's skills and strengths and personality is different than mine, how that really adds value...Because she has different strengths, she has a different personality, different set of experiences. What works for her would not work for me. So it is much more observing and reflecting and then applying that to the specifics of who I am and what I need to do.

For some, the leaders they observed gave examples of what not to do. Kate exclaimed that sometimes "you probably learn more from bad bosses than good bosses."

Although Kate was quick to acknowledge that she has learned a great deal from good bosses, she did expand on the impact that bad bosses can have.

But I've learned from bad bosses how...awful it can be on morale to have a negative boss or one who gossips or doesn't keep things confidential, who you can't trust, that is not supportive, or who is very self-centered on themselves and I've learned a lot from them, from those people and [I] never want to fall into those categories...

Candice had a similar experience.

I could recognize the good ones and the bad ones and I could watch the behavior of the bad ones and I could say, "I don't want to be like that." You know, a lot of pounding on the table, that doesn't get them very much.

Being Observed

These women also recognized that others watch them and, potentially, model their behavior. They were extremely cognizant of the visibility of their positions and the impact their words and actions had on others. For most, this included the awareness that just showing up to an event, even for a short while, sends a message to those in attendance. Therefore, they consciously endeavor to attend functions, meetings or training sessions.

Sophia explained, “It’s important that you just show up to things and be supportive, people notice you’re at something. And I’m thinking, ‘Oh, I’m just Sophia, I’m just hanging out.’ But, no, people notice you.”

Melanie shared the same belief about the importance of understanding one’s position and the responsibility that comes with being a leader.

It’s important to have a sense that it’s an honor to be able to serve, and that not a whole lot of people get that opportunity and you can’t take it lightly. Things you do mean a whole lot more than you think they do. So if you say thank you to someone, or if you show up to a program, if you greet someone, if you send somebody an email...you have to understand that it’s really not you, it’s the position.

Karen’s department requires the staff to attend regular training sessions and re-certifications and she makes an effort to be present at these as well.

And whereas a lot of it is stuff that doesn’t directly pertain to my job, I think it shows that I’m interested in what my team is doing and that I have an investment and ownership within the organization as a whole.

#### Reading the Current Literature

These women are striving to be the best leaders they can be—for their staff, the students and the organization as a whole. One way they continue to do this is to stay current on the leadership literature. They make time to read articles and books and incorporate the knowledge and strategies into their leadership style.

Donna remarked on her philosophy about leadership development.

I never believe that I have the depth of knowledge to know it all. In that regard, I think that leaders can be more effective and more successful by hearing the stories, by hearing what people have to say...I did recently stumble across that Reframing Organizations book, and I love that book. Because it really helps then as a personal development book, that’s kind of connected to that philosophy of always learning, always understanding, making sure I’m paying attention to all

those frames. And depending on what the issue is, knowing which frame I need to maybe pay more attention to, depending on the circumstances.

Kate explained that she does read the current leadership literature and finds value in them, but that experience is a great learning tool as well.

I mean there's a lot of great books out there and I've got them all on the shelves there...the Good to Great books and you know and all of that stuff but, I think they are all really helpful to help you think about things and to focus on issues, but there's really no substitute for just experience.

### **Meaning Making**

These women were prepared to talk about leadership and what is important to them as a leader, but when asked how they make meaning, this is the question that seemed to give them the most pause. For them, meaning making included making a difference in people's lives; spending time with family; and reflecting on their lives, leadership, and accomplishments. In addition, they talked about their dreams for the future, for themselves and for those around them.

Donna described making meaning as "having that sense of you just made a difference in people's lives." She gave an example of a recent interaction with a faculty member who was grateful for a decision that she made to financially support his research. In comparison to many other financial decisions, this one was of a smaller quantity and therefore seemed minor to her. However, his reaction was so strong that she recognized the big difference it made in his life; and it was more than just financial, it was emotional as well. "You know, it was just a yes, I believe in what you are doing and this could help. Good luck and go for it."

Even what Donna considers “small stuff,” makes a big impact on others and she recognized the value of supporting others. Whether it is showing up for some event or arranging funding for a project, the impact she makes is tremendous and provides value/meaning to her day (and life). She also recognized the larger impact of “pay it forward” opportunities. She understands that projects or initiatives she started will continue on through the people with whom she works directly and what they do will impact others.

For Sophia, her meaning making comes from reflecting back on her life, her accomplishments and her dreams for the future. She shared a story of a recent trip that was outside of her comfort zone, but one that she never imagined she would actually have the opportunity to take.

So it's those kinds of things, those experiences, I'm embracing them. Embracing those moments that I feel very fortunate to be here. When I first became vice president, I used to stand in the mirror and say, are you kidding me? I'm a vice president at a research institution. I didn't even know what that was even when I was even in college—that position. It was never part of my plan. But opportunities came up and I was able to take advantage of these things. Well, meaning is looking at opportunities and chances to grow and to learn and to embrace life. I want to continue to do that. Because I think as you get older... sometimes... for some people they do more of that because it's like, ok, I'm getting ready to... I don't know when I'm going to die so all these things I want to do, like the bucket list thing--I'm going to do it.

Melanie shared a similar experience about following her dreams and that led to her current job, one that was not in her “plan.”

I don't know what my future holds, but how I make meaning is that, you have to enjoy every minute, every day, enjoy the people. Because you don't know how long you're going to be here... So I think that every little thing happens for a reason. Every person that's working for me, our paths have crossed for a reason. And I have no idea what I'm doing that might be something... several people made it so that I could be here as [VP]. Well, I don't know, I might be the conduit

for somebody else. I don't know why I'm here or why I was chosen to be here, but that's why I feel very privileged to be here and honored. I was following my passions and my dreams, and then this happened.

### Family

Family is very important to these leaders. Most of the women had children of their own, either living with them or already grown, and out of the house. For those that do not have children, they discussed the importance of their larger family (which included siblings' children as well as friends).

Kate connected her meaning-making to her children. She shared a recent experience when she had taken her daughter to a company picnic. On the way home, her daughter had commented that when she grew up, she wanted to work at the university and work as hard as her mom. For Kate, having her daughter recognize how hard she works and aspire to do the same meant the world to her. "It is meaningful to me that they [her children] see it as a positive...I think I found more meaning in my work life through my kids through how they see that and they see that it's a good thing."

Sophia linked her nurturing nature to the importance of her family.

I am the nurturer, I care about other people, I put everybody before me. I'm getting better at that as I've gotten older. But that's just me...that's the thing that I do...is being a mom. I love that more than any job I could ever have. I LOVE being a mom. And I love even more being a grandma, and being a wife. So family and those things are really important to me.

Their families are important to them and they ensure that their personal lives, while often interrupted by professional obligations, are always a top priority. Karen spoke of her struggle to stay present at home, but regardless of the situation, she has the knowledge that being a parent is the most important role she will ever have.

When I get really focused at work, it's hard for me to make this shift that the most impactful thing I can do is to raise a healthy, productive child. And I'm committed to that...But, I just can't screw that up. If I screw that up, it's not going to matter what I did here. Because, frankly, nothing else really does matter to me, than getting society a young woman who is going to be productive, who is going to make a difference, in her own way whatever that may end up being. And that's my meaning right there...But my time here is limited and she's a young lady and she's got her whole life ahead of her, so she's my hope.

Although Candice was told by numerous people that she could not have children and have a career, she was unwilling to sacrifice one for the other. Therefore, she planned her children based on the academic year.

Both my kids were born May or July so it was right in the summer. I took my temperature every day so I could get these kids right in the right spot. So I will adjust timing, but I would not give up having a family just for work. My kids, like when they were little, I had a little office, I had a nursery in my office. My kids come in here all the time, and I schedule in their soccer games on my outlook calendar and people know I'm leaving town. It hasn't affected my career, in a negative way, I don't think. But, it's very important to me.

Suzanne has developed a strategy with her son that consists of making special plans with just him. She explained that there have been times when a work obligation has forced her to reschedule with him, but she always checks in with him first to get his endorsement prior to going in to work. One such event happened just before our meeting and she recounted the situation.

I realized that I hadn't been spending any time with my son, and he had kind of brought that to my attention. So we had scheduled that [a day in the city] and I had committed to it. Well some particular things happened here at work and I was like, 'oh this is bad.' So I went back to my son and I said, 'Look, I know I committed that we would take this day off, I got some things at work. Is it ok if we do it the following Tuesday?' And that was ok with him. That to me is what I mean by a balance of I'm going to make a commitment; but there's also a bit of flexibility and if I can renegotiate it, great, that works out.

Melanie described how beneficial it is for her to spend time with family and friends who knew her before she had such a high profile position.

You're just a regular person and I think that's why, for me, my family is really important. Because they just see me as Melanie. And, I think, my good friends that knew me before I had a master's degree, before I had a PhD, before I had this big title, those friends...I really value them so much because they see me as just me.

#### Professional and Personal-life Alignment

These women have very demanding professional roles. They also have personal lives and success for them is spending time with family and accomplishing the numerous demands of their jobs. The current popular term of work-life balance does not resonate with these women. They seek to model a healthy lifestyle for those with whom they work.

Sophia was very quick to clarify that it is not balance, but instead, she calls it managing. "So I don't call it balancing because I've learned over the years that this stuff just never gets balanced. You just can't do it. It's managing." She explained the impossibility of balancing work and home life because there are times when the work encroaches on her home life, but she manages it by making sure that she is attending to her home commitments, even if they are during work hours. "The idea that you come in to work and your personal life and your professional life are completely separate, that's crazy. We can't do that and that's just stupid."

Throughout her career, she has always attended her children's events and volunteered at their schools. She explained that she did this before it was sanctioned by the university and used her vacation time to do it, when necessary. Sophia models this for her staff as well.

So those who have young kids, I'm asking are you volunteering at their school? So your kid's in a play and you're not there because it was more important to you to come and get me this report? No, not right now, because you will never have

that moment again. You could turn in that report to me tomorrow but you will never...that moment will be gone forever. So I really emphasize to people that they need to have a life. They need to have fun, and they need to have friends and I just have to work on that myself a little bit.

Kate was quick to discredit the work-life balance label.

I think it is a faulty premise when people start talking about work-life balance because when you frame it that way, it sounds like you've got your work and you've got your life and they're fighting with each other. It sounds like they're in conflict with each other always fighting over your time and it just has never been a model for me. It is total immersion to me...all of it...it's not fighting with each other, I'm working all the time; but I'm also there when one of my children has a ballet recital at 10:00 on a Tuesday morning, I'm going to that.

Karen shared the struggles she has, as she called it, compartmentalizing her life.

I would define this job as being one that's extremely difficult to shut off when you turn off your lights at 5:00 and go start up your car. And depending on how you're wired, you know you may go home and stew about things all night long. And some professions that are maybe more physically demanding, I kind of envy that in some ways, because that physical energy...you get that release and hopefully you're able to shut things off mentally and you can get a good night's sleep and come back refreshed the next day. I don't typically feel that way. I'm constantly bringing things home to work on. Either I'm just mulling them over as I'm watching TV and I'm not really there in the moment with my family like I should be. Or I'm actually on email and talking to somebody the phone or on email or doing some hardcopy type of homework or whatever. So, you know, it's not a 40-hour-a-week job and it's not a job that you can turn off very well. So, compartmentalizing becomes a challenge, for sure. One thing that I try very hard to do is to work out, physically. Generally I'm successful at working out about 6 days a week. It is absolutely critical for my mental health.

For Candice, her home life helps keep her happy at work.

I have a really happy home life and I enjoy that very much. And I think that's kept me...a lot of people burn out and I love my job. I just love it. But I also am happy when it's over because my family is just wonderful. My husband and I have been married a long time so he's very supportive and so I you know I feel good about what I've accomplished here, but I also have a balance. It's not all about work. I would have burned out a long time ago if it had only been about work. Because there are times when work is really crummy [laughed], honestly there are. It's really been helpful to me to have that because I can let it go.

## Self-awareness

For all of the women, self-awareness is a critical component of their leadership. They all focus on their self-awareness; however, they do so in a variety of ways. For Kate, knowing her strengths and what makes her happy is crucial. “I think I know myself just well enough to know that I need a very demanding, challenging job. I need a family life as well, and that I would never be happy being in just one of the other.” When asked to elaborate, she credited her demanding job which oversees several divisions as well as her role as a parent in continuing to learn about herself.

I think you learn things about yourself all of the time and I’m not done learning that. I mean I’m in a new job now that I did not foresee myself in. I thought I knew my path. But you can’t say no when opportunities arise in your path. I think they’re there for good reason and come along at the right time and you need to go for them, you can’t say no. I’m still learning about myself and what my strengths are and this job has challenged me, I think, in that. I’ve learned a lot about myself being a mom too. I mean having kids is...they’ve made me a better person. So, yeah, I think we are always learning about ourselves. Every new job that you have, every new challenge, I think, teaches you more about yourself; in what your strengths are and what your limits are. I’m always learning, always trying to get better.

Suzanne has a very comprehensive self-awareness process that she has been doing for the past 20 years, after she read Steven Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. The book suggests developing a personal mission statement and regularly reviewing it. Suzanne explained her process.

I do have a personal mission statement and over time it’s evolved and my mission statement has changed as I’ve learned more about myself and think differently about what it is that I want to do and it’s changed, and it’s expanded. So I now have um, some people might laugh heartily at this, but I have a life plan that’s about 20 pages long and it includes a written mission statement, a written vision statement a set of principles, a listing of the roles in my life, of which being a leader at [university] is obviously a part, but then there’s obviously other ones as well. I mention being a parent and so on. Annually I come up with some goals and things that I want to accomplish throughout the year. So that’s a pretty significant

period of reflection and it actually takes place in the summer and I'm actually sort of finishing that up right now. I also, on a weekly basis try, but don't always succeed—kind of depends on how busy things are, to actually open it up, skim through it and go ok, what do I need to get done this week and schedule out my week. So I have a fairly structured process I mean again, that's my personality, I'm orderly, I'm structured I feel comfortable with doing that.

Sophia attributes some of her self-reflection to her gender.

Because I think, as women, sometimes we tend to be more reflective because we've been socialized to do that. Those of us who've been socialized that way, and whether it's in your home or just socialized period by our society. We are more self-reflective and also think are also more self-critical. So if something happens, the first place I go, is what did I do wrong? Not what did you do wrong. And I definitely see that as a difference between a man and a woman. You know, I just see it's like, eventually some of them get there, if they have learned to be reflective, but initially... I'm competitive but in a very different way. I don't have to win...all the time. To me, if the process is good and I feel good about how things happen. And if I don't win, I'm ok with it. Because you're not supposed to win all the time. As opposed to men, who have been socialized that you're supposed to win all the time. I go for the big picture. What is it that we want to do? So, yes, part of it I think learning it from my parents, the patience, growing up in the era I did, my personality, all of that fits into that. But, I honestly do believe that as women, we were socialized to do that. And it's great in many ways. And then it's bad in other ways. Because we get into that self-critical piece. If something happens....Ok, did I screw up? And I feel very badly about that. And maybe I do but it is just, yeah, you screwed up, so let's fix it. As opposed to, I'm a horrible person, I can't do this job, I don't have the skills...because when I look at some of my male colleagues that screw up all the time...sometimes they don't even acknowledge that they screw up because it's always somebody else's fault. Or if they get to the point where they say it's their fault, they move on because their socialized to do that. So clearly I think that's part of it. I don't think it's ever one thing because even as women we are socialized differently.

She understands that she needs to go through the process of self-critique, but has learned, over time, not to stay there. She has developed healthy habits in regards to self-criticizing. This shows maturity and an understanding of herself and her needs as well as

the confidence to let herself do what she needs because, in the long-run, it is more effective and efficient.

### **Developing and Maintaining Relationships**

All of these women cited developing and maintaining relationships as a key component of their leadership. They attributed their success, both in getting positions as well as accomplishing tasks, to the relationships they have with others. In addition, they shared their strategies for maintaining relationships and the goals they have for others with whom they work.

Sophia discussed the importance of getting to know on a personal level those with whom she works.

I love building relationships with people. Getting to know them, getting to know what's important to them. Knowing them, knowing their families, if that's what's important to them. What their dreams are. What their hobbies are. Just having a personal connection and sharing that with them. Sharing our stories. Because we all have stories and that's what makes up who we are. And I think that's critical as a leader because if I'm trying to help other people grow and to reach their goals, I need to know what those are and I need to know who they are and what are the things that's going to keep them from being able to succeed... At the end of the day, people aren't going to remember that I got my reports in on time...that's not what I'm gonna remember when I reflect back on my career. What I'm gonna remember are the people and the stories that I created with people. And the stories that people shared with me about them and those experiences, that's what I'm gonna remember.

Developing trust in their relationships

Several of the leaders place a high priority on being honest, developing trust and leading with integrity. Donna shared that her professional goals are intertwined with her personal goals, both of which involve honesty and trust.

Because how I am as a person and my professional goals have, I think, they are all connected. They're not separate things. Because again my goals are to be,

personally, are to be an effective communicator, to have honesty and integrity and not try to manipulate people into what the end is. I've seen people who've said, well I want to get to X so I'm gonna have folks think that they're kind of calling the shots here, but really I'm just going to push them all right here so we end up where I want to be anyway. You know, I try to have a sense of being honest, even if it's hard, to be able to say well this is what we need to do, and no, we can't do that. Having honesty, integrity, treating people with respect and all those sort of intangible things of how it is, what it is and to be a leader so I feel good about what I've done in that regard. And to be, to be somebody that says you know, I trust [Donna], I may not get the answer that I want, but I know if she tells me that it's X, then I trust her that it is X, that I'm not getting some kind of a story.

For Suzanne, trust is a key component of her leadership.

The second thing that I think is fundamental for leadership is that it is built on trust and relationships.

Karen also considers trust to be foundational to building a solid team. She described a pyramid, with trust at the bottom.

Establishing trust within the organization in order to build a solid leadership team, or team concept, I think is going to be really important. At the bottom of the pyramid, we have trust. And we can't go on building a team unless the foundation is solid. So that base has to be all about trust.

Karen went on to describe different events and activities that she has incorporated into her department to provide opportunities for the staff to get to know each other better, on a personal level, in order to develop trust so that they may work better as a team.

#### Valuing contributions

All of the women discussed the necessity for the people with whom they work (or who are in their division) to be engaged in the work that is done. They sought to create an environment that would facilitate creativity, positivity, and dedication to the unit, which would transfer to the entire university.

Donna discussed the value building community and appreciating everyone, regardless of title or position.

I like to have people feel like they are part of the community... to make this place the best university it can be, it's going to take everybody. That it's not just my role, but it's the folks who come in and spend all the time making the grounds look good or making the buildings look good or stop in the hall and say hi to a student. You know, everybody can contribute and it's letting people know that as leaders, we can't do it without them. They have to be a part of what we do and what they do is important. So I do value everybody and the contribution they can make.

Sophia described the different dimensions (students, faculty, staff, research, teaching, etc.) of a university which are sometimes at odds with each other and her role in making them all successful.

And what I really enjoy is trying to see how all those pieces come together in this big puzzle to make it all work. And to make it work for everybody, as much as we can. And keep people engaged in the process, have people feel like they are an important part of that puzzle, and without their little piece, the puzzle is incomplete. And so one of my goals is that anybody in the division, when they come to work are excited about coming to work and feel like they know what the expectations are and that they're important. Because to come to something every day and to put in 8, 9, 10 or more hours every day and to feel like what you do doesn't make a difference. I can't imagine having a job like that. And at an institution of higher education, we should not have jobs like that. So, the janitor that cleans the bathrooms in the residence hall, you are happy to contribute to the success of those students in what you do, and what you do is important.

#### Mentoring Relationships

All women had mentors and credited those mentors with their personal and professional development. For some, their mentors encouraged them to apply for advanced positions. For others, mentors provide guidance and assistance with their current positions and leadership challenges.

Melanie shared stories about how her mentors have pushed her to apply for jobs for which she doubted she was ready (or qualified) to pursue.

Honestly, I've never really aspired to higher positions, I've always been content in the positions I've had, but it's other people that have said, 'Melanie, there's a

position, why don't you apply?' I don't know if I want to apply, I don't know if I'm ready for that. I would only apply because they keep nagging me.

She then relayed a story about a previous boss of hers who had given her information to a search firm which would regularly send her job openings. She asked him why he kept having positions sent to her and he replied, "Because I want you to be in the network, Melanie. I want them to know and I want you to know that these positions are available." Melanie acknowledged that, "if I didn't have those people, I probably wouldn't have been in all the positions that I've been so blessed to have."

Sophia discussed the importance of having people believe in her, sometimes more than she believed in herself and credits those people with her professional ascension.

Because I think if I had had a poor supervisor along the way, in my career, I wouldn't be where I...I just wouldn't be in this position. Because it would have been so easy to say, 'Well I can't do that. I just can't. You know, I'm not good enough. The skills I have, I'm not good enough.' But, I had people who were pushing me along who said, 'Yes you are. Yes you can be.'

Candice also credits her professional ascension to those who have helped her. She recognizes the impact they made on her career (and life). "I've had really wide a wide range of experiences in higher ed administration and it all started because [previous provost] selected me for that position...So I feel very fortunate."

Karen discussed her active pursuit of mentors, determining where she had a void and strategically selecting people to serve as mentors in those areas.

It's kind of nice to have mentors who fit a variety of categories so that you can reach into your pocket and find the category that fits and this mentor's really going to be helpful for me in this situation, but she wouldn't in this situation. I think it has really been helpful and I've tried to find some of those as well, so academically have some mentors, and jobwise, I have some mentors. And then I have some mentors who are just kind of influential on a more macro scale that help me to see big picture things.

Donna has a group of colleagues that she regularly meets with to strategically discuss personal and professional development.

I have a wonderful group of colleagues here and we sit down and we challenge ourselves and occasionally over a [coughed and smiled] beer or two. We talk about how do you get organizations to change and what do we need to be doing differently and so it's really developing a support network to think about and challenge our leadership styles and the way we think and our assumptions.

#### Empowering Others

These women recognize the significance that mentors have had on their life and they aspire to do the same for others. These women strive to be the best they can be and to empower others to do the same. Melanie described her expectation for her directors to also encourage professional development in their staff as well.

Everybody should be preparing their staff for their next position; you should be giving people opportunities to progress and to grow in their position. And I think that as leaders, we've got to challenge people, you know, we've got to challenge people to grow. We've got to give them responsibilities and that's how they can grow professionally is that if you give them things that you normally would do.

Suzanne expressed the importance of seeing others in her organization succeed.

It is important to me that I'm facilitating their success, whatever it is that they are trying to accomplish." She explained her role as a leader is to "help them to define what it is that they need to do and what their goals are...then it's important for me as a leader to do everything I can to help them be successful. Again, encouraging and supporting and removing barriers and providing resources, but also holding them accountable too.

Candice also seeks to help others succeed, and eventually move on to different positions.

So it's important to me that people be happy in their work, that they be successful. [I've] had a lot of opportunities to promote people internally so that they have a path. And to watch people leave because that's our job is to have them do well and go on to other things. So, I like them to be successful.

## Relationships Contribute to their Success

Several of the leaders discussed how having relationships with people have contributed to their success. Kate explained how developing relationships furthered her career and helped her achieve many of her goals. She kept up with relationships developed while she was an undergraduate student and called upon those people when she sought new opportunities. Those relationships opened doors for her at the university and as she continued to get to know people and they had the opportunity to witness her work, new opportunities unfolded, including her current position.

Suzanne shared a similar story in that she had worked at her current university for over ten years before applying for her position. She considers herself to have had a tremendous advantage because people knew her prior to her applying for the position.

Because although I have only been in this position for less than a year, I got like 10 years of relationships and trust established, so that folks know who I am. One of my very strong values is being reliable and also being responsive, so delivering on what I've promised and I think that level of trust has been built across the campus. Which makes it so much easier for me to be effective than somebody coming in new because even if they had greater vision, greater expertise, greater education, they can't immediately come in and lead without having established the trust.

Sophia echoed the importance and benefits of having relationships with people across campus when trying to accomplish goals.

In that job, a lot of it was building relationships because that's how you got things done. It wasn't about your title. It was about working with people and people would do things because they liked me and they cared about the students.

## **Larger Organizational Context**

They were all cognizant of the context of the university setting and discussed the desire to make a difference in people's lives. This included the employees with whom they work; but most also mentioned the students. Even those women who do not directly

work with students are aware of the impact their decisions have on the students' lives and experience at that university. Suzanne stated

It's very easy to see that as soon as we start talking about organizational goals, what we're really talking about is the impact that we have on student life. So it comes away from a focus on the organization and it comes down to a focus on people and whether you're talking about people who are your employees or people who are your students or your customers. Students have no idea who I am, but the decisions that I make and the things that I do has a bearing on their educational experience in an indirect way and so my fundamental goal is that people's experience is one where they are growing, they are improving, and that to me is sort of the basic fundamental here's what leadership is about.

One of Sophia's top goals is to "help the university be successful."

Kate is very aware of the impact (positive or negative) that she can have on the university's reputation. She strives to "be a good ambassador" and to represent the university well. She explained that she endeavors for her division to be "best in class" and continually strives to "know what the best practices are out there...to keep track of trends; to be on the lookout for new ideas, creative ideas, new ways of doing things; [and] to be always evolving." She explained that doing this will help the university be the best it can be.

It's important to me to be efficient...[to] have an ear on the ground as to what's next and what we can do better and to just be constantly improving and looking for better ways, cheaper ways, faster ways, better ways to provide service. Because, for me, if we are the best in class, that helps [the university] be best in class and one of the great institutions out there in the world and the reputation overall.

Melanie provided an example of a conversation she had with a colleague who had commented on how hard she worked and noted that her boss did not recognize the effort she expended. Melanie explained, "I don't do it to get praise; I do it for the students." This exemplified the commitment to the university and the students that all of

these women shared, whether working directly with students or not. The students were always at the core of their decision-making process.

### University Environment

It was not just that these women were aware of the larger organizational context, some went further to explain that it was a university setting that was important. Donna expressed her core belief in the value of higher education. “Because there isn’t anything better than an education. I mean education is empowering...at so many different levels.” She explained that she was a first-generation student and can see the difference in her life because of her education. She distinguished that it was not just the title or position she holds that is better, but that education has positively impacted her entire life. “My life is just better because I have an education.” Her passion for higher education reappeared later in the interview.

You see a very clear difference in the way that family members that have a college education interact with the world than those that don’t. And it’s empowering for those folks that do have a higher education...I mean, if nothing else, higher education teaches you how to be responsible and teaches you to be independent and teaches you fundamental things about how to be successful in the world. And I love higher education because it’s the place where you get to ask questions and try to answer them...We can investigate, challenge assumptions, we can look at our world in different ways, we can be exposed to people from different countries, it’s just fabulous.

For Candice, it is simple. “We all enter education to try to help people.” She explained that the mission and values of the institution in which she works is the driving force as to the type of institution she will work.

Because what I care about is access. I like trying to help people that have never...their family hasn’t gone to college, help first-generation students, trying to help diverse students. I don’t think you could ever get me to a private institution that measures success by being elite and rejecting really good students. You just won’t see that. I think it’s more challenging to try to develop a program where you have this wide range of abilities. And so, we have some students that

could go to any university in the country and then we have some students that would be rejected from a large number of these elitist institutions and we develop a program that serves them all and I feel better about that than the other option.

Kate explained her passion to help students and the university succeed.

And I really want [the university] to succeed and I want us to be the access university for the students who never thought they'd go to college and to give them that opportunity and to be here for them and that's exciting for me...it excites me to be part of the driver of the university that does that.

For Karen, working at a university has several advantages, including working with the students, training opportunities, and the activities available at a university.

I just find it an interesting age group to work with. I like being around the activity, and the resources, the energy that you find in higher education. The opportunities to find training for yourself and for your staff are often in your own backyard and often we neglect that and we think we have to go find the expert who is 50 miles [away] because that makes them an expert. But, gosh, the ability to tap resources right here is plentiful...I mean, it's just a fun place to work.

For Melanie, working in higher education is "magical."

I'm working for what I believe in. I believe in higher ed. I believe in what we're doing. I believe in staff development and student development and leadership development. I believe in this magical thing we're trying to develop in a community that works and I understand that we have our challenges, but I try to focus on the positives.

### Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the results of the interviews with seven female university administrators and delivered specific insight into the leadership practices of these leaders. Five overarching themes emerged from the study: (1) leadership strategies (2) leadership development, (3) meaning making, (4) developing and maintaining relationships, and (5) the larger organizational context, which included the university environment, specifically.

In addition to numerous attributes, these women shared several leadership strategies. These women sought to create a positive work environment. They were happy

in their positions and wanted those with whom they work to be happy too. They strove to create a place where people want to come to work every day, places free from gossip (to the extent possible), and people are recognized for their contributions. They recognized that it was impossible for them to know everything, so they often relied on the expertise of others. They involved others in the strategic planning of their units and departments, believing that if people helped create the goals and objectives they will contribute to the success of the organization.

The women all focused on their leadership development and the impact that they, as leaders, have on others. The sub-themes that emerged under leadership development included, observing others, being observed and reading the current leadership literature. Several women discussed how they observed other leaders and learned both, what to do, as well as what not to do as a leader. They recognized that others watch them to see how they operate, what decisions they make, and, even, what events they attend. They were cognizant of the impact that their words and actions have on others. They strove to be the best leaders they could be, and, therefore, stayed current with leadership literature, attended trainings and other developmental activities, and when appropriate, incorporated the learning into their leadership.

The third theme, meaning making, was a critical aspect of these women's leadership practices. These women made meaning in their lives by focusing on those around them, by looking forward at the goals they still had, but were reflective of all they had accomplished. For several of the women, their meaning-making centered on their families, for others, it was making a difference in people's lives. Self-awareness and self-

reflection were tools that assisted these women in making meaning of their roles and their lives.

Developing and maintaining relationships were fundamental to their leadership. The women relayed how important relationships have been, and continue to be, to their success. This included having mentors support and encourage them, which has led to their professional and personal development. These women strove to empower others, as mentors, or by preparing their staff for future positions. They valued the contributions of everyone at the university and recognized that each person at the university was necessary for the university to be successful.

The fifth theme showed how these leaders focused on the larger organizational context, specifically, the university environment. Several leaders discussed the value and importance of higher education. For most, the students were at the core of their decision-making; even those women who did not work directly with students were cognizant of the impact their decisions had on students. They expressed feeling honored to work at the university, calling it a privilege to be in their role.

Chapter Five will provide interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data as well as recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a summary of the current study and discusses the findings that resulted from this study. Interpretation of the data, conclusions drawn from the information gathered, implications from the study and recommendations for future research are discussed in this chapter.

### Summary of the Current Study

This interpretive phenomenological study explored the leadership practices of seven female administrators from several universities in the Western United States. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each leader that lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours. An Interview Guide was created (see Appendix III). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher, who then reviewed each transcription, in its entirety, seeking general themes.

Although the questions were developed to address the components of authentic leadership, the transcriptions were reviewed to allow the themes to emerge, regardless of whether or not they matched an authentic leadership component. A response was considered a theme if it was discussed by at least three of the participants. Several themes related to each other in such a way that, together, they created an overarching theme. Five overarching themes to explain women's leadership and authenticity more thoroughly emerged: (1) leadership strategies (2) leadership development, (3) meaning making, (4)

developing and maintaining relationships, and (5) the larger organizational context, which included the university environment, specifically.

They took their role as a leader seriously. All felt a great responsibility to the people they managed as well as the institution in which they worked. They handled difficult situations immediately and did not shy away from conflict, even though they did not enjoy it.

Their leadership was not just about getting things done, it was about the people, the process and the difference they made. They used values-driven leadership and were unwilling to compromise their values, whether in decision-making, strategic planning or even the institution in which they worked. They understood themselves—their values and priorities, which translated directly to their leadership. They strove to improve themselves, whether by self-reflection, reading leadership literature, or taking on new challenges. They had faith in themselves and their abilities and endeavored to empower others to feel the same. They had tremendous work-ethics, and were grateful for their families and the time spent with family members. They were role models, both personally and professionally, and took those roles seriously as well.

They strove to be positive and to create an environment where people felt respected and appreciated. They recognized the contributions that everyone at the university made. The university setting was important to these women. They saw the university as a place that changes people's lives for the better and felt honored to work at a university. It is in this environment that these leaders have elected to work and to lead. Indeed, they were taking an active role in the strategic direction of their divisions and

universities. The mission of the university was important to them and they were aware that their decisions impacted everyone at the university, especially the students.

### Discussion of Findings

As discussed in the literature, authentic leadership has four main components, self-awareness, balanced processing, authentic action, and relational transparency. Authentic leadership encompasses authentic relationships with followers and strives to achieve worthy objectives and places an emphasis on follower development. The women who participated in this study could be characterized as fulfilling the components of authenticity and authentic leadership; based upon their responses to the questions asked in this study. The following section will detail how the themes that emerged from this study help explain the phenomenon of authentic leadership. Each component of authenticity will be reviewed individually using the applicable theme(s).

#### Self-awareness

All five of themes that emerged from this study add to the understanding of self-awareness. In addition, their leadership stories contributed to the understanding of self-awareness. From the beginning of the interviews, the women showed their self-awareness when they described their leadership story. Whether it was by giving the chronological development of the decisions and events that led them to their current position; or the reflections they shared about their upbringing and their lack of “feeling like a leader,” the women were highly aware of themselves—their values, priorities and strategies.

### *Leadership Strategies*

Their leadership strategies reflected their self-awareness and the attention they continued to give to ensuring they understand who they are, what they stand for and the boundaries by which they operate. These women were relationship-oriented; they valued people and processes, along with results. They sought to create positive work environments, believing that if people are happy at work, then they will be better suited to achieve their goals.

The method by which they undertook strategic planning was a direct result of their self-awareness and understanding of their core values. They understood that including people in the decision-making process and engaging their employees aligned with their core values of people and processes.

### *Leadership Development*

The leadership development theme also contributed to self-awareness because these women recognized areas in which they, themselves developed as leaders, and also in areas in which they needed to continue to develop. They observed others and reflected on what they saw in other leaders—how they treated people, the actions they took and their leadership strategies. They determined elements of others' leadership that meshed with their own values and goals, and where appropriate, incorporated those into their own leadership. In other cases, they learned what not to do and ensured that they did not lead in the same manner as others.

### *Meaning-Making*

Meaning-making also contributed to the understanding of these leaders' self-awareness. For some of the women, they made meaning by understanding how important their family is to them; and the priority they placed on their children, even when work got in the way of time spent with them. They developed strategies in an effort to maintain the connections between home and work.

Some were opposed to calling it work-life balance and instead called it "managing." Regardless of the title, the women were aware of the meaning they derived from their family and strove to fulfill the responsibilities and obligations associated with both. Doing this helped them find meaning in their lives and often provided reminders to focus on their self-awareness and what was really important to them.

For example, Candice shared that she was unwilling to choose between children and career. She therefore stayed true to herself and successfully had both. Had she not had a thorough understanding of her core values and priorities, she may not have made the same decision. She reflected that she has a happy home life and that has contributed to her longevity and successful career. She acknowledged that many people, in similar situations, burn out, but her family has had a positive impact on her career. If she had not been aware of her core values, she may have made different decisions. However, throughout her career, she was aware of what was really important to her personally and made sure those played out in her profession.

The sub-theme of self-awareness transcended all of the interviews, however, the responses varied from weekly systematic efforts to a more flexible approach, only when

the leader felt it was necessary. For some of the women, as they aged and got closer to retirement, this offered an opportunity for them to reflect back on their lives and careers. They shared their desire to make the most of their positions and lives and strove to make a difference for others. They described the importance of making an impact on others and how, for them, when they retired, their legacy would continue because of the decisions and impact they made.

#### *Developing and Maintaining Relationships*

Developing and maintaining relationships is the fourth theme that related to self-awareness. Because these women understood themselves so well, they were able to develop relationships based on trust, honesty and integrity. They also used these relationships to reflect back on the leadership successes and failures they experienced. Because they established honest relationships, people (even subordinates) felt comfortable being honest with them, and, even criticizing them or their decisions. These women strove to set the expectation that they want feedback that is open, honest and constructive.

#### *Larger Organizational Context*

For these women, working at an organization that makes a difference in people's lives was a high priority for them. When they discussed working at other organizations or institutions, several of the leaders were adamant that the mission of the institution was of the utmost importance. Suzanne acknowledged that she did not have to stay in higher education, necessarily, but if she were to leave, she would only go to an organization that had a social focus on improving people's lives. Candice discussed the importance of being at a "land-grant-like" institution that emphasized access to the university. It was

important to them the organization in which they work reflected their core values. This insight was gained only by being aware of their core values, priorities and goals.

### Balanced Processing

Balanced processing relates to the realistic and accurate measurement of one's skills and abilities. This consists of not over-or under-stating strengths or weaknesses. The three themes from this study that added to our understanding of balanced processing were leadership strategies, meaning making and developing and maintain relationships.

### *Leadership Strategies*

Several of the leaders were responsible for large divisions that had a multitude of responsibilities. These women had a realistic understanding of the limits to their knowledge base within their division. Therefore they sought to ensure the right people were in the right places, which is one of the sub-themes of leadership strategies. Several of the leaders remarked that they relied on the expertise of those with whom they work, and often supervise, because it was unrealistic for them to know everything about all aspects within their division. However, they did strive to get at least a foundation in the topic area so they were able to communicate more effectively with those with whom they work.

They found a strategy that allowed them to function with the experts in those areas without having to know everything. The fact that they readily accepted the limits to how much they could (and should) know follows the tenets of balanced processing.

### *Meaning Making*

The women in this study shared mistakes they had made by “forgetting about the process” and trying to rush decisions. They learned from those mistakes; and as a result, they used those lessons learned to not repeat those mistakes. However, they acknowledged situations when they could have done things differently, without berating themselves for the mistakes they made. Sophia shared that she had, with age, experience and reflection, understood that she needed to “go there” (where she criticized herself for not handling situations as well as she could have), but she did not let herself “stay there because it did not do her any good.” She shared that she realized that just because she made a mistake, she was not a terrible person or that the one mistake did not define her. This element was common to several of the women leaders.

### *Developing and Maintaining Relationships*

Several of the leaders shared that they had mentors, spouses, friends and colleagues with whom they discussed their professional challenges and successes. These support networks helped the leaders stay in check with their reactions and responses to situations at work. Sophia shared that she talks with her husband, who has a completely different, laid-back style than Sophia, on a regular basis. These talks helped her recognize when she has gone overboard with her self-criticism.

Donna shared that she had a colleague support group and they have helped her recognize the difficult situations she has had to deal with and to understand that she did the best she could. Because these leaders had people in their lives and sought their guidance helped them to maintain an accurate reflection of their skills, strengths and areas for improvement.

## Authentic Action

Authentic action occurs when leaders act according to their values. All five themes that emerged in this study contribute to the understanding of authentic action.

## *Leadership Strategies*

All of the leaders incorporated authentic action into their leadership strategies. They led based on their values and personalities and sought to “walk the talk.” They understood their own preferences toward leadership, but also understood that even though they may prefer to lead in a certain way, there were times and situations in which their preference would not have been as effective as another. Therefore, they adjusted their style accordingly. Donna described this as her leadership toolbox. She explained that for some jobs, a hammer is the most appropriate tool to use. Although one could use a screwdriver and get the job done, it would not be as effective as using a hammer. She further explained that it was her role and responsibility to be aware of which tool is the most appropriate to use in a given situation.

## *Leadership Development*

Because they recognized that their actions and decision were observed, and often modeled, these leaders sought to act authentically, in hopes that others would follow suit. They were aware of the visibility of their positions and strove to set a good example. They attended trainings, meetings and events, if only for a short time, to demonstrate their support and develop camaraderie with their staff. They wanted to show that they were part of the team too and that what the employees were doing mattered to them.

When they made decisions about how they wanted to lead, they observed others and determined those aspects of other leaders' leadership that resonated with them and incorporated those into their leadership. It was a conscious decision they made as to which aspects would be incorporated, and a deciding factor was how it fit with their values. In a similar vein, when they read leadership books, they incorporated or discounted suggestions based on their values.

### *Meaning Making*

Authentic action was meaning making in action. For these women, leadership was personal and therefore, they led according to their values. Family was a significant priority for these women, so they prioritized their families into their professional lives. One created a nursery in her office, others scheduled time on their calendars to attend important events and activities. They encouraged and expected their employees with families to do the same.

Making a difference in others' lives was also vital to them as people, and as leaders. Therefore, they endeavored to make decisions and strategic plans that would benefit others. For some, this included working at a land-grant institution that promoted access to historically underrepresented groups.

Their self-awareness routines were also meaning making in action. Although their self-awareness strategies varied, they took the time to reflect on their accomplishments and future dreams. For those women who were getting closer to retirement age, they were more concerned with the legacy they would leave behind and their actions and decisions reflected those values.

### *Developing and Maintaining Relationships*

For these women, developing and maintaining relationships built on trust and open communication was vital to their leadership. These relationships were another example of the women leading authentically. Donna explained the importance of people trusting her word and believing what she said, even if they did not like it. It is because these women took an active and dedicated approach to being open and honest that they were able to develop and maintain relationships. Their actions and the encouragement they provided to their staff were representative of their values.

They sought to engage employees in the decision-making and valued the contributions their staff made. They recognized the importance of “negotiating situations so that you get what you need without giving up who you are.” This was achieved because of the relationships they made and the authentic action they consistently took.

### *Larger Organizational Context*

The university setting provided the context of their authentic action. Many considered the university a place that makes a difference in people’s lives, which was a core value for these women. They considered it an honor to work on campus and recognized the impact of their decisions on others, even those with whom they did not work directly, i.e. the students. They were aware of the impact they could have on the university’s reputation and strove to ensure that their actions and decisions only served to enhance the reputation of the university and the experience of the students.

They also recognized that there were often competing interests at the university, i.e. what may be best for the faculty may not be best for the students, etc. However, they

attempted to make decisions that would benefit the greater good. They made these decisions based upon their values. Their actions reflected the mission, vision and values of the institution, which were aligned with their personal ones.

### Relational Transparency

Relational transparency is characterized by openness and trust. Trust is developed when the leader acts in a consistent and open manner. The themes that contributed to the understanding of relational transparency were leadership strategies, leadership development, meaning making and developing and maintaining relationships.

#### *Leadership Strategies*

Their leadership strategies reflected relational transparency, whether it was their insistence on dealing with difficult situations immediately, creating a positive work environment or placing the right people in the right places. Their styles were open, honest and communicative. These leaders were clear about their expectations, of individuals, of departments, and, of the division. They were willing to take the necessary steps to ensure these expectations were being met, including regularly meeting with their employees, reviewing the strategic plan, and rewarding appropriate behavior (i.e. collaboration).

#### *Leadership Development*

Being observed is an integral component of relational transparency. These leaders understood that the actions they took impacted others and they endeavored to maintain consistency in their decisions and actions. It was important to them that their employees trusted them, both in word and deed.

### *Meaning Making*

These women stated that they made meaning through their families and making a difference in the lives of those around them. They prioritized their families, even when the demands of the job encroached on the time they were able to spend with them. They sought to empower others, believing that their responsibility was to help their staff move on to more advanced positions.

### *Developing and Maintaining Relationships*

For these leaders, relational transparency was an outcome of their leadership and fostered strong relationships. They endeavored to develop trust by being open, honest and consistent. They openly valued the contributions of the staff and encouraged active participation in decisions. They recognized the impact their mentors had on them, both personally and professionally, and strove to impact their employees in a similar manner. They encouraged their staff to take on additional responsibilities and participate in trainings designed to help progress their careers.

## Discussion Summary

The previous sections outlined how the five themes that emerged from this study related to the four components of authentic leadership. All five themes associated with self-awareness and authentic action. Four of the themes, leadership style, leadership development, self-awareness and developing and maintaining relationships related to relational transparency. Three of the themes, leadership strategies, meaning making and developing and maintaining relationships related to the component of balanced processing.

The questions posed in the interviews were created based upon the tenets of authenticity, but did not mention the word authenticity or authentic leadership (although it was mentioned in the participation request). It was interesting that the vast majority of responses were positive—these women sought to create positive work environments, they acknowledged challenges, frustrations and disappointments in their careers, but they all maintained a positive outlook about these. They either learned from the mistakes they made and tried to improve themselves, or they recognized the limits to what they could control (i.e. poor economy leads to no pay raises, etc.). Regardless of the situation, they seemed to maintain a positive attitude when discussing and dealing with these situations.

### Implications

This findings from this study support several aspects of previous literature, for both women's leadership and authentic leadership. These will be outlined in the next section.

#### Women's Leadership

Many of the leadership characteristics described in this study support previous research about women's leadership. Female leaders are seen as being more collaborative; communicative; relationship-oriented; seek to empower others; and address difficult situations immediately (Eagly & Carli, 2003). In addition, this study supported Helgesen's (1990) findings that family and friends were important aspects of female leaders' lives, in addition to their career. These leaders integrated their different roles (personal and professional) and did not compartmentalize their lives.

In addition, this study supported the notion that women leaders share information and power and encourage active participation in decisions and strategic planning. The leaders in this study perceived themselves to utilize the “power-with” and “power-through” models of power, in which they enable, encourage and empower followers as well as developing and maintaining trusting relationships.

Madsen (2008) found that the women in her study did not seek leadership positions, but rather, they were very good at their jobs and were sought out by others because of their work and work ethic. Several of the women in this study had similar experiences. Two of them explicitly stated that they originally did not see themselves as leaders. Two other women stated that they were sought out for their positions because of their work-ethic and ability to handle large amounts of varied work.

These are important to note because too often women are not confident in their leadership abilities and are constrained by the societal limitations that appear to be placed on women (glass ceiling, etc.) (Madsen, 2008). However, as more women are encouraged to take on advanced roles and are seen in these higher positions, this could translate to more women being confident taking on leadership positions (Ropers-Huilman, 2003).

### Authentic Leadership

The findings from this study are consistent with what is currently known about authentic leadership and also provided additional insights into the practice of authentic leadership.

Authentic leaders demonstrate five basic characteristics (George, 2003). These include using values based leadership, developing trusting relationships, understanding

themselves, and seeking to make a difference in others' lives. The themes that emerged from this study reinforce George's (2003) assertion and provide further support of the tenets of authentic leadership.

The positive aspects of authentic leadership have not been fully explored (Northouse, 2010). The women in this study sought to remain positive, even during difficult times. When they had to fire or lay-off someone, they acknowledged it was a difficult process they had to go through. However, they kept the mission and vision of the institution in mind, and felt that the decisions they made were for the "greater good." This could be one example of a positive outcome of authentic leadership. Even in difficult situations, the leader maintains a positive attitude and focuses on the big picture.

The strategies that these women employed in their leadership could serve as models for other leaders or in leadership development programs. For example, these women were aware of the impact their attendance at events or trainings had on their employees. Their attendance fostered community building and a sense of camaraderie. Although the authentic leadership literature focuses on empowering others and relational transparency, this specific strategy has not been mentioned in the authentic leadership literature.

In addition, the strategic planning process these leaders engage in is not specifically mentioned in the authentic leadership literature. This study provided insight into practical applications of authentic leadership.

## Applications

Northouse (2010) stated that one benefit of authentic leadership is the ability to develop authentic leadership training programs. Because authentic leadership involves lifelong learning about oneself, strategies can be implemented to assist emerging (or current) leaders with developing their authenticity. These include leadership development programs, which could be in an educational setting, such as in a classroom at a university, or in a business training program. The four components of authentic leadership could be outlined and activities could be developed that help participants understand and begin (or continue) their authentic leadership development.

Leadership development programs could have a foundational component that focuses on self-awareness. Participants could participate in a values discovery activity that encouraged leaders to prioritize their values and realize what is truly important to them as human beings. They could then apply this to their leadership and determine how well these are aligned. They could participate in a similar activity that encourages balanced processing of their strengths and weaknesses.

They could also be given opportunities to engage in self-reflection activities (such as journals, personal and professional mission statements and strategic plans). They could also engage in case study activities that would require them to make difficult decisions depending on the situation at hand and then check their responses and decisions against their values in an effort to provide participants opportunities to practice authentic action.

Eagly and Carli (2003) suggested training programs that focus on valuing relationships. This study found that the leaders actively develop and maintain

relationships as a central component of their leadership. However, having a formalized program that provides insight into the benefits and strategies to develop relationships could be useful.

### Future Research

Four suggestions for future research emerged from this study. The first is to design and conduct a study that, in addition to interviewing the women leaders, would incorporate interviews of people with whom they work into the study. The second suggestion is to study the context of the university setting to ascertain what it is about the university that attracted these women to work there. In addition, studying the authentic leadership of men would help further explain the phenomenon of authentic leadership. The final recommendation is to conduct a similar study in different regions to address the different values and influences associated with different geographic locations.

Although these women could be characterized as authentic leaders based upon their interview responses, caution should be used when making this conclusion. These women were asked questions about their leadership style, values, goals and strategies. They answered according to their perceptions of these and their experience. Their perceptions were not verified by others to see if the way they think they behave is the way that others interpret their behavior. A future research study could be conducted that interviewed people with whom the leaders work and see how their responses compare with the self-perceptions of the leaders.

In addition, although all of these women work at a university, the context of the university setting could be further researched to answer the question of “why higher

education?” What is it about the higher education setting that draws people to work there? For several of the women, their profession is not directly associated with the university and they could work in a multitude of industries and locations. But, they chose to work at a university. Could this have something to do with authentic leadership? It would be worth exploring.

This study focused only on women leaders; however, conducting a similar study with men as the participants would yield additional insight into the phenomenon of authentic leadership.

The final recommendation is to look at different regions in the United States, as well as internationally. This study was conducted in the Western United States. Different regions of the country, and the world, may be influenced differently by political, social and cultural factors or values. For example, the attitudes, values and lifestyles are different in the west than they are on the East Coast, New England, or internationally. Institutions are likely structured differently and the context of leadership may be affected by these different structures. Conducting a similar research study in different regions may yield different results. This would enhance the knowledge base of authentic leadership.

### **Conclusions**

The evidence garnered from this study supported the current research on authentic leadership and women’s leadership. In addition, similarities between women’s leadership and authentic leadership were found.

The findings from this study related to many of the components associated with women’s leadership. The leaders appeared to have a solid understanding of themselves,

related to their values and priorities. They indicated that they continued to engage in leadership development and self-exploration. They were relationship-oriented and they stated that they strove to enable others to develop and, hopefully, move on to greater challenges and responsibilities. They sought to be communicative, collaborative and genuinely cared about the workers, the students and the institution in which they worked.

The five themes that emerged from this study contributed to an understanding of the phenomenon of authentic leadership and the self-perceived results were consistent with what is currently known about authentic leadership. The four components of authentic leadership, self-awareness; balanced processing; authentic action; and relational transparency were present for all of these leaders, to some degree.

However, because authentic leadership is still in its nascent stage of development, more research needs to be conducted to develop a more in-depth understanding of the components of authentic leadership, the situations or context in which it is most effective, and who benefits from authentic leadership.

There were several parallels found in this study between components of women's leadership and authentic leadership. Both of these types of leadership include a focus on the followers and endeavor to empower others. Both are relationship-oriented. They also share an open and honest communication style that leads to trust between the followers and the leaders. The leadership strategies are based on the leaders' values.

The following chart summarizes some of these parallels:

<b>Women's Leadership</b>	<b>Authentic Leadership</b>
Empowering others	Focus on the follower's development
"Power-with" "power-through"	Relational Transparency
Ethic of Caring	Moral Purpose
Integration of work and home life	Self-awareness
Dealing with difficult situations	Authentic Action
Focus on the "greater good"	Strives for "worthy objectives"

Although authentic leadership is still in the development stage, the findings of this study showed several parallels to authentic and women's leadership. Both types of leadership have been mentioned in the literature as appropriate for today's leadership challenges. They both have positive components that may benefit both followers and organizations. Continuing to explore these connections would be a worthwhile endeavor.

## REFERENCES

- American Council on Education, Center for Policy Analysis. (2006). *Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006*. Washington, DC.
- Astin, H. S. (1991). *Women of influence, women of vision: A cross-generational study of leaders and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Avolio, B. J., Walumba, F. O., & Weber, T. J. (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 421-49.
- Barnett, R. C. (2007). Women, leadership and the natural order. In Kellerman, B., & Rhodes, D. L. (Eds.). *Women & leadership: The state of play and strategies for change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bateson, M. C. (1989). *Composing a life*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1997). *Women's ways of knowing: The Development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: Basic Books.
- Benokraitis, N. V. (1997). *Subtle Sexism*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2006). *The wizard and the warrior: Leading with passion and power*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Bunker, K. A., & Wakefield, M. (2005). *Leading with authenticity in times of transition*. Greensboro, NC: CCL Press.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Conger, J. (1998). Qualitative research as the cornerstone methodology for understanding leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 107-121.
- Cooper, C. D. (2005). Looking forward but learning from our past: Potential challenges to developing authentic leadership theory and authentic leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 475-493.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Curry-Johnson, S. D. (2001). Weaving an identity tapestry. In Findlen, B. (Ed). *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (pp. 51-58). Emeryville, CA: Seal Press.
- DiGeorgio-Lutz, J. (Ed.). (2002). *Women in higher education: Empowering change*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing.
- Eagly, A. H., & Johannsen-Schmidt, M. C. (2001). The leadership styles of women and men. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57 (4), 781-797.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109 (3), 573-598.

- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *14*, 807-834.
- Eagly, A. H. (2005). Achieving relational authenticity in leadership: Does gender matter? *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 459-474.
- Endrissat, N. M., & Muller, W. R. (2007). En route to an empirically-based understanding of authentic leadership. *European Management Journal*, *25* (3), 207-220.
- Fine, M. G. (2009). Women leaders' discursive constructions of leadership. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 180-202.
- Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2005). "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 343-372.
- George, B. (2003). *Authentic leadership: Rediscovering the secrets to creating lasting value*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- George, B. (2007). *True north: Discover your authentic leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Glazer-Raymo, J. (1999). *Shattering the myths: Women in academe*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Golomb, J. (1995). *In search of authenticity: From Kierkegaard to Camus*. London: Routledge.

- Grisoni, L., & Beeby, M. (2007). Leadership, gender and sense-making. *Gender, work and organization*, 14 (3), 191-209.
- Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of Social Issues*, 657-674.
- Heim, P. (1992). *Hardball for women: Winning at the game of business*. Los Angeles: Lowell House.
- Heim, P., & Murphy, S. (2001). *In the Company of Women: Turning Workplace Conflict into Powerful Alliances*. New York: Putnam.
- Helgesen, S. (1990). *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Helgesen, S. (1995). *The web of inclusion*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hoppe, M. E., & Houston, G. (2004). A question of leadership: How much of themselves should leaders bring to their work? *Leadership in Action*, 24 (3), 13-14.
- Ilies, R., Morgeson, F. P., & Nahrgang, J. D. (2005). Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understanding leader-follower outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 373-394.
- Jamieson, K. H. (1995). *Beyond the double bind: Women and leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Josselson, R., Lieblich, A., & McAdams, D. P., (Eds.). (2003). *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- O'Connor, S. D. (2007). Foreword. Kellerman, B., & Rhode, D. L., (Eds.). *Women & leadership: The state of play and strategies for change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Klenke, K. (1996). *Women and leadership: A contextual perspective*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Leahy, R. (1994). Authenticity: From philosophic concept to literary character. *Educational Theory*, 44 (4), 447-461.
- Madden, M. E. (2005). 2004 Division 35 Presidential Address: Gender and Leadership in Higher Education. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 29, 3-14.
- Madsen, S. R. (2008). *On becoming a woman leader*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- May, D. R., Hodges, T. D., Chan, A. Y.L., & Avolio, B. J. (2003). Developing the moral component of authentic leadership. *Organizational Dynamics*, 32 (3), 247-260.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research & case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nidiffer, J., & Bashaw, C. T., (Eds.). (2001). *Women administrator's in higher education: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. Albany: State University Press.

- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Pearce, T. (2003). *Leading Out Loud: Inspiring Change Through Authentic Communication*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Poland, B. D. (2003). Transcription quality. In Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (Eds.). *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (p. 267-287). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Propp, K. M. (2006). Informing, apprising, guiding, and mentoring: Constructs underlying upperclassmen expectations for advising. *NACADA Journal*, 26 (1), 46-55.
- Punyashloke, M., & Brewer, W. F. (2003). Theories as a form of mental representation and their role in the recall of text information. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 28 (3), 277-303.
- Regan, H. B., & Brooks, G. H. (1998). *Out of women's experience: Creating relational leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Rhode, D. L. (2003). *The difference "difference" makes*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Ridgeway, C. L. (2001). Gender, status and leadership. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57 (4), 637-655.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. & Elam, G. (2003). Designing and selecting samples. In Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (Eds). *Qualitative Research Practice* (pp. 77-109). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ritter, B. A., & Yoder, J. D. (2004). Gender differences in leader emergence persist even for dominant women: An updated confirmation of role congruity theory. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 187-193.
- Roberts, L. (2007). Bringing your whole self to work: Lessons in authentic engagement from women leaders. In Kellerman, B., & Rhodes, D. L. (Eds), *Women & Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ropers-Huilman, B. (Ed). (2003). *Gendered futures in higher education: Critical perspectives for change*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Roth, L. M. (2004). The social psychology of tokenism: Status and homophily processes on Wall Street. *Sociological Perspectives*, 47 (2), 189-214.
- Shamir, B., & Eilam, G. (2005). "What's your story?" A life-stories approach to authentic leadership development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 395-417.
- Simons, T. (2002). Behavioral integrity: The perceived alignment between managers' words and deeds as a research focus. *Organization Science*, 13 (1), 18-35.
- Steeves, H. P. (1994). Phenomenology and the Possibility of Narrative. *Clio*, 24 (1) 21.  
Retrieved online February 27, 2011, from  
<http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5001711444>

Terry, R. W. (1993). *Authentic leadership: Courage in action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B.J., & Gardner, W. L. (2008). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34 (1), 89-126.

Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., Avey, J.B., & Oke, A. (2009). Authentically leading groups: The mediating role of collective psychological capital and trust. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. Published online 1 September 2009 in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com) DOI: 10.1002/job.653.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Wilson, M. C. (2004). *Closing the leadership gap: Why women can and must help run the world*. New York: Viking.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Participation Request Letter

CSU letterhead

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Kathy Thornhill and I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University in the School of Education. I am conducting a research study on authentic leadership. The title of my research is *Authenticity and Women Leaders: Exploring the Possibilities*.

I am inquiring if you would be willing to participate in my research. I am conducting a narrative study, which means I will be interviewing women leaders in higher education. These interviews could be done at your office or in a mutually agreed upon place. Each interview will take approximately 1-2 hours. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

To maintain confidentiality, I will state that interviews were conducted at a large research university in Northern Colorado with women leaders at the Director level or above. In addition, I will provide you with an alias as well as describe your position in a manner that will in no way link you to the interview results. I will be transcribing all interviews myself, so no one else will have access to the interviews.

While there are no direct benefits to you, I hope to gain more knowledge on the role that authenticity plays in women's leadership.

It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but I have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

If you have any questions, please contact me by email at: [Kathy.thornhill@colostate.edu](mailto:Kathy.thornhill@colostate.edu) or by phone at 970-227-4666. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655.

Sincerely,

Kathy Thornhill

APPENDIX II: Participant Consent Form

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Colorado State University**

**TITLE OF STUDY:** Authenticity and Women Leaders: Exploring the Possibilities.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Linda Kuk linda.kuk@colostate.edu

**CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Kathy Thornhill kathy.thornhill@colostate.edu

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?** As a woman leader on a college or university campus, your experience may provide valuable insight into women's leadership in higher education.

**WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?** Kathy Thornhill, a doctoral student at Colorado State University, under the guidance of Dr. Linda Kuk, Professor in the School of Education at Colorado State University.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?** The purpose of this study is to explore the authenticity for women leaders in higher education. This study will increase the knowledge base about leadership and women leaders express their authenticity.

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?** The study will be conducted in the summer/fall 2010 and your participation will last up to two hours at your office or in a mutually agreed upon place.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

You will be asked to participate in one 1-2 hour interview. You will be asked to share your leadership philosophy and experience. If necessary, you may be asked some follow-up questions. You will be contacted by phone or email within two months if follow-up questions are necessary. If the questions are simple clarification, it may not be necessary to meet again in person. However, it may be necessary to have a follow-up interview in person.

**ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Unless you don't want to share your experience as a leader, there is no reason not to participate.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

The interview questions relate to your professional work experience and leadership style. If any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable, you are not required to answer them. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

**ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** There are no direct benefits to participating in the study, but we hope this information will help us better understand the experience of women leaders.

**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?** Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE?** There is no cost to participate.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?**

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. The audiotapes will be erased once transcribed.

**WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** No.

**WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?** The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Kathy Thornhill at 970-491-5474. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

“This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on (Approval Date).”

**WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?**

Please check off each activity and initial each step you agree to.

The interviews will be audiotaped. All tapes will only be heard by the investigator and transcribed.

Field notes will also be taken to provide the researcher more information regarding the feelings, impressions and other interesting occurrences that may arise during our interview sessions.

I will have the opportunity to review the interview transcriptions, but not make changes that alter the meaning of the statements.

Yes, you may contact me if follow-up questions are necessary.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person providing information to participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Staff

### APPENDIX III: Interview Guide

An interview guide was created using components of authentic leadership, but questions were broad enough to ensure the participants flexibility to answer according to their experience and perspective. Nine questions comprised the interview guide:

1. Tell me the story of your leadership.
2. How would you describe your leadership style?
3. What events/people have influenced your leadership?
4. What is important to you in being a leader?
5. What are your goals as a leader?
6. How do you make meaning of your world?
7. How, and how often, do you focus on your self-awareness?
8. As a woman, what is the professional environment like?
9. How does the organizational culture facilitate or hinder your leadership?