Seeing herself as a leader: An examination of gender-leadership frames in women's leader identity development

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SEEING HERSELF AS A LEADER: AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER-LEADERSHIP FRAMES IN WOMEN'S LEADER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

by

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DISSERTATION

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I dedicate this dissertation to my parents,
Mitch & Judy Kroner,
who showed me the value of learning from a very young age,
and continue to support me in this journey!

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ABSTRACT

Building from existing theory and research on gender and work and leader identity development, this dissertation informs our understanding of professional women's experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders as they move along the leadership path in organizations. Given limited work that considers variation among women at a similar point in their development, I introduce the construct of a gender-leadership frame to capture the various ways in which women construct their gender as relevant to their leadership. I consider how these constructions are both shaped by the organizational context and have implications for leader identity development. I conducted a qualitative, inductive field study of women developing as leaders (n=55) in a large, global bank to explore these ideas. I found that women hold different constructions of gender and leadership (gender-leadership frames) and that various elements of the organizational context prompt women to shift their frames, feel conflicted in their frames, or remain within one reinforcing frame. Further, I found that these different frame experiences orient women toward certain types of self-questioning and enactment of their leader identities. Together, these findings demonstrate that different ways of thinking about one's gender in relation to one's leadership may help explain women's different choices, aspirations, and development on the leadership path. Coming to see oneself as a leader does not happen in a vacuum, but rather is a complex process in which non-work identities (here, gender) play a role in one's understanding of who she is and can be as a leader. Not only does gender play a role in women's self-views as leaders, but scholars and organizations must appreciate women's different experiences and perspectives which have tangible implications for their motivations to pursue leadership opportunities and growth within their organizations.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Becoming a leader requires individuals to develop new skills and test new approaches to work as they navigate key transitions within organizations. As such, much scholarly and practitioner attention focuses on understanding how individuals develop as leaders and how organizations can support them in doing so. Recent scholarship recognizes the importance of identity to individuals' experiences on this leadership path. This work linking identity and leadership development proposes that coming to see oneself as a leader – developing a "leader identity" – is a crucial component to advancing and succeeding as a leader because it influences one's motivation to pursue leadership roles and gain leadership experience (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005).

While this identity-based perspective provides a useful lens for considering how individuals develop as leaders, existing work is primarily conceptual and thus tends to map out a general phenomenon of leader identity development. Yet, we know that not all leaders' experiences are the same. For example, women remain vastly underrepresented in organizational leadership positions (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007), and a wealth of literature demonstrates that women leaders face particular cultural, structural, and attitudinal challenges in advancing to top leadership roles (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ely & Rhode, 2010; Ridgeway, 2001). Even though the literature recognizes that gender matters for leadership in these ways, we know much less about how women come to see themselves as leaders, or develop a leader identity, given this broader context that women leaders navigate.

Much of the existing conceptual work on leader identity development acknowledges that coming to see oneself as a leader may in fact be different for women (e.g., DeRue, Ashford & Cotton, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005; Ibarra, Snook & Guillen, 2010) because the subtle cultural,

structural, and attitudinal barriers to women's advancement may "interfere in women's ability to see themselves as leaders" and "obstruct the identity work necessary to take up leadership roles" (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011: 475). Accordingly, scholars contend that we need to understand more about how women perceive themselves as leaders and what they must do to succeed (Ely & Rhode, 2010; Ely et al, 2011; Hogue & Lord, 2007). Beyond these conceptual suggestions, however, our understanding of how and in what ways gender may play a role the development of a leader identity for women is limited. Through this dissertation, I argue that we know little about whether and how women experience their gender as relevant to their developing selves as leaders, and what implications this has for their leader identities. Such a focus is important, particularly for women who are moving into more significant leadership roles, because their identities as leaders (who I am, how I think about myself, who I aspire to be) may be important drivers to the developmental situations they place themselves in, the opportunities they envision for themselves, who they reach out to, and ultimately the choices they make as they navigate the path to greater leadership.

The purpose of this dissertation is to gain a deeper understanding of professional women's experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders as they move along the leadership path. Specifically, I develop the concept of a gender-leadership frame, which I define as the various ways in which women construct their gender in relation to their leadership and think about what it means to be a woman leader. My research, then, examines how these frames may have implications for how women come to see themselves as leader. I also examine how work and personal contexts play a role in shaping women's constructions of gender and leadership. I build from theorizing of gender as a culturally and socially generated frame (Ridgeway, 2009, 2011), and I incorporate theoretical insights which see frames as individual

orientations that guide and organize perceptions and interpretation of experience (Goffman, 1974), to explore these connections among context, gender-leadership frames, and women's leader identity development.

Research Questions & Approach

Some social psychological theories demonstrate that individuals draw self-meanings from broader representations of their group (Ashmore, Deaux & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004); yet, in the context of women's leadership, there is ambiguity and conflict with respect to how women leaders are represented (Ely & Rhode, 2010). Therefore, we may expect that not all women think about and experience themselves as women leaders in the same way. However, limited work focuses directly on understanding the various perspectives that women may hold about how, if at all, their gender is relevant to their leadership; and, further, how these perspectives may act as frames through which women perceive and interpret their work-based experiences. Therefore, this research was first guided by the question: (**RQ1**) How, if at all, do women on the path to leadership construct/see/experience their gender as relevant to their leadership – that is, what gender-leadership frames do women adopt?

If women construct their gender in relation to their leadership in different ways, then it remains to be answered how these various constructions are generated in women's experience. In other words, why do some women think about what it means to be a women leader in particular ways, while others draw different meanings around themselves as "woman leaders"? Therefore, I also consider how gender-leadership frames may be generated through, or shaped by, the contexts in which women work and live. Organizational scholars have called for research to better attend to the connections between elements of context and individual's gendered selves at work (Ely & Padavic, 2007), and broader gender research and theory emphasizes that mutually

reinforcing processes at macro and micro levels create and maintain gendered constructions/meanings (Ridgeway, 2009). Together, this suggests that contextual factors and processes are important to how women understand the role of gender in their workplace experiences. In the present study, I draw from perspectives offered in the research on "doing gender" (e.g., Martin, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and theorizing around situated cognitions in organizations (Elsbach, Barr & Hargadon, 2005) to support a specific focus on elements of the local, socio-psychological organizational context that may lead women to adopt particular gender-leadership frames. Further, drawing on recent organizational research on the experience of non-work identities in the context of work (Ladge, Clair & Greenberg, 2012; Humberd, Ladge & Harrington, Forthcoming), I also consider elements of women's personal contexts that may be important in shaping the way they see their gender in relation to their leadership. Therefore, the second question guiding this study is: (**RQ2**) How do women's personal and organizational contexts play a role in shaping these gender-leadership frames?

Finally, through the lens of new theory on leader identity development, I consider what implications these gender-leadership frames may have for women's experiences on the leadership path. I examine whether and how women's constructions of gender and leadership may act a frame through which they come to see themselves as leaders and develop their leader identity. I build beyond a small body of work which has mainly considered leader identity importance and salience (e.g., Lord & Hall, 2005; Guillen & Korotov, 2011), to explore how these frames may have implications for other dimensions of women's leader identity development, such as subjective certainty and identity aspirations as leaders, as well as their perceived credibility, efficacy, and authenticity as developing leaders. Therefore, the final

question guiding this research was: (**RQ3**) How do gender-leadership frames play a role in women's leader identity development?

I approach these questions from an interpretive perspective, which assumes that identities are socially and symbolically constructed within (and outside of) organizations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). I also embrace assumptions from feminist social psychology, to the extent that I explore gender as an ongoing social construction that varies in meaning, significance, and consequence across individuals and settings. Doing so allows me to capture the various perspectives among women, and allows the potential influence of contexts to be revealed (Ely & Padavic, 2007). Further, I focus on the content dimensions of identity (e.g., What does it mean to me to be a woman leader?) because I am interested in understanding how women experience themselves as "women leaders". This is in contrast to a more typical focus on the categorization of identities (e.g., am I a leader or not?) and the structure of identities (e.g., is *woman* or *leader* more important to who I am?) (Ashmore et al, 2004).

Study Significance

Through this study, my goal is to address three primary areas that are lacking in the literature, as well as to offer practical insight for individuals and organizations.

First, while much literature explores women's experiences as leaders, the focus is more on the external environment shaping women's advancement and success as leaders, and less on the intra-individual and identity-based dynamics of women's experiences on the leadership path. Existing literature offers important and crucial insight into the organizational challenges and barriers to advancement that exist for women, the ways in which others' perceptions and evaluations impact women as leaders, and the potential differences in the leadership styles of men and women as observed by others (e.g., Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996; Eagly, Makhijani,

& Klonsky, 1992; Eagly & Johannssen-Schmidt, 2001; Johnson et al, 2008; Reinhold, 2005; Rudman & Kilianski, 2007). However, this prior research is predominated by a perspective that is external to the women herself, leaving us with limited insight into how women subjectively experience the path to greater leadership in their organizations, in light of this broader context that they navigate. Some specific quantitative studies consider women's beliefs about glass ceilings (e.g., Jackson, 2001; Smith, Crittenden, & Caputi, 2012) and different explanations of gender inequality among women (e.g., Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010), but such work focuses on women's broader beliefs about inequality, and thus tells us little about their own self-views and identities as they move along the leadership path. Recent conceptual work acknowledges the importance of these intra-individual processes in women's development as leaders (e.g., Ely & Rhode, 2010; Ely et al, 2011; Hogue & Lord, 2007), yet we have little empirical evidence for explaining the ways in which gender may have implications in this development of a leader identity. Therefore, I extend existing work, which has primarily focused on the structural and interpersonal challenges women leaders may face, by taking an intrapersonal perspective to study how women come to see themselves as leaders and construct their gender as relevant to their leadership. In doing so, this dissertation offers insight into how women experience themselves as developing as leaders and sheds light on the choices that women make as they move along the path to greater leadership, as well as how the organizational context may be shaping their identities as leaders.

Secondly, this dissertation is significant for the growing stream of literature on leader identity development. Much is known about leadership development in general, but only recently have scholars delved deeply into an identity-based perspective on leadership development (e.g., DeRue et al, 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra et al, 2010; Lord & Hall,

2005), which is distinct from prior perspectives that focus on individuals' development of surface level leadership skills and the attainment of leadership expertise (Lord & Hall, 2005). Although conceptually it is acknowledged that leader identity development may not be the same for everyone, this existing literature does not examine in depth how one's leader identity may be intertwined with other non-work identities, such as gender. This dissertation sheds light on how coming to see oneself as a leader also involves making sense of how other aspects of oneself (in this case, gender) are important and relevant to one's leadership. Relatedly, this dissertation is significant for broader conversations on identity construction in organizations because it offers insight into how non-work demographic identities and work-related identities are intertwined in individuals' experiences. As Foldy (2012) suggests: "Perhaps, at least for some employees, 'work-related' identity includes demographic facets of identity, in that their sense of these identities has been shaped by – and is relevant to – their work…More work is needed to explore how demographic facets of identity interact with other, more obviously work-related identities (Hatmaker, 2007; Watkins-Hayes, 2010)" (p.20). Considering these ideas with respect to one's gender and leadership is especially important given that we know that certain work-related roles, such as that of leader, are already imbued with status distinctions derived from non-work demographic identities, such as gender (Ridgeway, 2001). Further, while recent work is opening up this conversation on non-work identities in the context of work, there is much more to understand about how everyday life in organizations plays a role in individuals' experiences of the intersection between non-work identities and work. Through an in-depth field study in one organization, this dissertation offers new insight into the role the organization may play in shaping these experiences.

Finally, a great deal of the literature on gender and leadership generalizes women's experiences in order to compare them to men's experiences, arguably at the expense of understanding the variance of experience and perspectives among women. While revealing differences between men and women is important, if we solely focus on telling this story in studies of gender and leadership, we run the risk of sophisticated stereotyping in our own research (e.g., Osland, Birch, Delano & Jacob, 2000). Therefore, placing the gender-leadership frames that women bring to their roles as leaders at the center of my inquiry brings to fore an interest in explicating the variance among a group of developing women leaders; that is, I directly and explicitly reveal the intra-group variance among these women with respect to what it means to be a woman leader. Doing so is important not only to representing the diversity of women's identities (McCall, 2005), but also to understanding how the broader context may differently shape how women come to see themselves as leaders. Diverse empirical observations from the literature suggest that women have different views about the relevance of their gender in the workplace. However, this existing work does not comprehensively conceptualize the various, and perhaps disparate, ways that women construct their gender in relation to their leadership, or how these constructions have implications as women move along the leadership path. Further, by considering how organizational context may differently shape women's experiences and identities as developing leaders, I offer a richer story about the differences that exist among a population of similar women with respect to their constructions of gender and leadership, and their overall leader identity development.

In addition to contributing to the scholarly literature in these ways, understanding leader identity is of practical concern for individuals and organizations because identity is "a source of motivational and directional forces that determine the extent to which the leader voluntarily puts

himself or herself in developmental situations" (Lord & Hall, 2005: 592). In order to develop women leaders, we need to understand how they experience the path to leadership, and how this shapes their leader identities and motivation to pursue leadership opportunities.

Practically speaking, highlighting gender-leadership frames could help individual women uncover the assumptions and taken-for-granted meanings they ascribe to themselves as women leaders so they can better appreciate how these views may be shaping the leadership situations they place themselves in or the leadership opportunities they envision in their future. Emphasizing this variance in perspectives among a group of similar woman also has important implications for how individuals and managers think about mentorship among women and broader support mechanisms focused on women's leadership development. Recognizing that not all women think about themselves as women leaders in the same way suggests that if programming for women is going to really be useful, it should be tailored to respect and account for these various perspectives. Similarly, individual women may need to take care in assuming that other women experience themselves in the same way as they do, or that the dominant perspective in their organization aligns with their own perspective on gender and leadership.

For managers and organizations, understanding how the organizational context plays a role in shaping women's own self-views as leaders may suggest interventions focused on the broader cultural understanding of what it means to be a woman leader in that particular context. In the past, organizations that have implemented successful interventions around gender have raised managers' awareness about the differences between women and men's workplace experiences (Ramarajan, McGinn & Kolb, 2014). This dissertation suggests that differences extend beyond those between men and women, such that organizations and managers need to consider how lived experiences *between* women vary, as they consist of a complex intersection

of personal and professional contexts. Organizations can undertake a number of strategies to better anticipate and attend to transition points, motivations, and choices in women's careers. Finally, as recent research suggests that that effective leadership development programs create the space for identity exploration and transformation (Kets De Vries & Korotov, 2007; Korotov, 2005), this study has the potential to inform the design and content of leadership development programs for women, so such programs can be more effective in addressing the specific identity concerns and transitions that women advancing on the leadership path may experience (c.f. Ely et al, 2011).

Construct Definitions

Although I delve into these constructs in greater depth throughout the dissertation, I offer initial definitions here to act as a map for moving forward. Importantly, some of these constructs emerged from my research; therefore, in defining each construct, I build from both existing literature as well as my own findings, where relevant.

Developing women leaders. I define *developing women leaders* as women who are on the formal organizational leadership path. In my research site, these are women in mid-to-upper level leadership roles that are organizationally endorsed as being on the path to greater leadership. While I appreciate recent formulations which contend that leaders need not be individuals that hold a formal organizational role (e.g., Raelin, 2005), I focus on individuals in formal roles in order to align with the problem at the heart of the women's leadership literature: that women are underrepresented in formal leadership roles.

Gender-leadership frames. I define *gender-leadership frames* as the various ways in which women construct their gender in relation to their leadership and think about what it means to be a "woman leader." In my research, I find four primary dimensions that underlie these

frames – relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs. I suggest that the content of an individual's frame is comprised of the various points at which she falls on each of these dimensions at a particular point in time. I refer to women's lived experience of these frames as a *frame experience*, a concept emerging from my findings. The frame experience reflects a more dynamic view of women's constructions of gender and leadership, capturing how women's frames move among or within the primary dimensions mentioned above.

Leader Identity Development. I take an identity-based perspective on leadership development, which suggests that part of developing and succeeding as a leader involves coming to see oneself as a leader (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue et al, 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra et al, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). Thus, *leader identity development* refers to how an individual comes to see him- or her-self as a leader; and *leader identity* is defined as one's self-view as a leader. In my research, I uncover two components of leader identity development, which I refer to as self-questioning and enactment. *Self-questioning* captures the concerns individuals have in coming to see themselves as leaders. *Enactment* refers to the ways in which an individual approaches and acts on his/her development as a leader at a point in time.

Socio-psychological Context. In this dissertation, I focus primarily on perceptions of the *socio-psychological context*. As Ashmore et al (2004) discuss, each context has material, social structural, and socio-psychological components. Material is based on the physical context and social structural context includes the formal positions, representation, and rules/procedures. Socio-psychological components include patterns of interpersonal behavior, shared beliefs, and informal rules and norms characterizing a context (Ashmore et al, 2004). Therefore, my focus on socio-psychological context captures these more subjective and perceptual-based elements of the context.

Non-work identity. Within this dissertation, I often refer to gender as a *non-work identity*. The literature on identities at work acknowledges that people have multiple identities derived from different sources (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Nkomo & Cox, 1996) and organizational research recognizes that non-work identities (e.g., race, gender, parent) can shape individuals' experiences and influence their attitudes and behaviors at work (e.g., Ely, 1995; Foldy, 2012; Ladge et al, 2012; Roberts, 2005). Thus, discussing gender as a non-work identity aligns with recent organizational research which also considers how work-related and non-work identities may be intertwined in individual's experiences (e.g., Foldy, 2012; Ladge et al, 2012). By highlighting this distinction, I am able to directly attend to how the experience of gender (a non-work identity) may be intertwined with one's leader identity (a work identity).

Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 reviews theory and literature that provide the foundation for my study of leader identity development among professional women on path to organizational leadership. The chapter begins by introducing recent theory and conceptual developments in the area of leader identity development. This work, which suggests that a central component of developing as a leader involves constructing an identity as a leader, provides the theoretical lens for examining women's self-views and identities as they move along the leadership path. I move next to review the existing literature on women's leadership, highlighting the primary themes in this area of study, which have focused in-depth attention on the structural and interpersonal environment that women face with respect to their advancement and success on the leadership path, with less consideration of how women understand their own advancement and experiences as they navigate this broader environment. Then, I bring these areas together and introduce the scholarly conversation that is building at the intersection of

women, leadership, and identity, and emphasize that we need to deepen our understanding of the ways in which gender matters for leader identity development. Finally, to specify in depth the particular focus of my dissertation, I conclude Chapter 2 with the conceptual framework guiding my study, developing each research question from relevant literature and theory.

Chapter 3 details my methodology. First, I introduce my inductive, grounded theory based approach, and explain why it is appropriate given my focus on how women experience and understand themselves as women leaders and how this may frame their leader identity development. Then, I give an overview of the pilot study I conducted, which provided the initial insight into women's gender-leadership frames. Next, I describe my research setting in-depth and give details on the participants and sampling approach. I then discuss my data collection process, in which I relied primarily on semi-structured interviews with participants, supplemented with informal observations and archival data. Finally, I present the analytical techniques I used to build theory about professional women's gender-leadership frames and leader identity development.

Chapter 4 focuses on findings that address the first research question – how do women construct their gender a relevant to their leadership, if at all? In this chapter, I revisit the gender-leadership frame concept, building from the data to unearth the primary ways in which women's constructions of gender and leadership vary. I consider the four primary dimensions underlying gender-leadership frames – relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs – and offer a figure summarizing these dimensions which comprise the content of women's frames.

Chapter 5 focuses on findings that consider how the organizational context may play a role in shaping women's gender-leadership frames (the second research question). I delve deeply into women's lived experience of the frames in the particular site that I studied, finding

three dynamic experiences of gender-leadership frame – shifting frame, ambivalent frame, and reinforcing frame – at least in how women recount their own constructions of gender and leadership. I then consider how these frame experiences are related, at least in part, to some aspects of these women's personal and organizational contexts. While I focus in particular on socio-psychological elements of context (Ashmore et al, 2004), I conclude the chapter by theorizing how more objective contextual factors, such as lines of business in the firm, may relate to the frame experiences.

Chapter 6 focuses on the final research question, to consider if/how gender-leadership frames may have implications for women's leader identity development. Drawing on holistic cases of particular participants, I illustrate that an individual's particular frame experience is linked with specific forms of self-questioning and the enactment of the leader identity.

In Chapter 7, I present a discussion of the findings in connection to broader literature and theory. I begin the chapter with a summary and integration of the key findings from the previous three chapters. Then, I consider the broader contributions arising from this discussion to the domains of scholarship on gender and work and leader identity development, followed by a discussion of the study's limitations and directions for future research. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the practical implications of this work for individuals, managers, and organizations.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY & LITERATURE INFORMING THIS STUDY

Theoretical Grounding: Leader Identity Development

Recognizing the importance of leadership to individual, work group, and organizational success, a great deal of attention and resources in organizations are devoted to leadership development (O'Leonard, 2009), and relatedly, organizational scholars are responding to calls for more work on leadership development (DeRue & Workman, 2011). Yet, research and theory in this area continues to be criticized for lack of conceptual clarity and theorizing that fails to capture the true experience of leader development[1] (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue & Workman, 2011; Ibarra et al, 2010). Toward addressing these concerns, while existing work on leadership development tended to focus on individuals' development of surface level leadership skills and the attainment of leadership expertise (Lord & Hall, 2005), recent work emphasizes the identity-based dimensions of leadership development. Collectively, this work suggests that beyond skill development, an individual developing as a leader must also experience deeper changes in coming to see him or herself as a leader; that is, developing and succeeding as a leader involves constructing a leader identity (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; DeRue et al, 2009; Ibarra, et al, 2010; Hall, 2004; Lord & Hall, 2005).

A leader identity refers to how one thinks of oneself as a leader (Day & Harrison, 2007) or one's self-view as a leader (DeRue et al, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005). Constructing a leader identity is important because it influences one's motivation to pursue leadership roles and to gain leadership experience (Day & Harrison, 2007), and it facilitates the development of the deep cognitive structures associated with leadership expertise (Lord & Hall, 2005). Scholars suggest

[1] While some scholars make the distinction between *leader* development and *leadership* development (e.g. Day, 2000 – with the former referring specifically to individual-based knowledge and skill development and the latter focusing on broader development of social and relational commitments among members of a community), such a distinction is not relevant to the scope of the present study, so I use both terms interchangeably (similar to Lord & Hall, 2005 and Ibarra et al, 2010).

that one's leader identity is a key predictor of effective leadership development and career development (Day & Harrison, 2007; Hall, 2004).

While this identity-based view is emerging as a sound basis for conceptualizing leadership development (Day & Harrison, 2007; Ibarra et al, 2010), existing work discusses leader identity development at a relatively general level, offering limited empirical evidence for what leader identity looks like within individual's experience, on the ground in organizations. Yet, nearly all of the primary conceptual pieces on leader identity development acknowledge that gender is likely is likely to have important implications for one's leader identity. For example, Lord & Hall (2005) suggest that women may find it more difficult to develop self-views as leaders because their leadership attempts may be less accepted by others. Similarly, DeRue et al (2009) and DeRue & Ashford (2010) cite individual difference and social stratification explanations as rationale for why the leadership identity construction process might be different for women. Further, the women's leadership literature makes it quite evident that gender matters for women's leadership advancement and success more broadly, but we still have limited understanding of how and in what ways gender may be relevant for women's experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders, or developing a leader identity.

The literature on identities at work recognizes that people have multiple identities derived from different sources (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Nkomo & Cox, 1996), including non-work demographic identities, such as gender, that can shape individuals' experiences and influence their attitudes and behaviors in their work roles (c.f., Ely, 1995; Roberts, 2005). Yet, it is not simply about being a member of a certain demographic category (are you a woman or a man?), but rather the experience of one's non-work demographic identity (who am I as a woman or man?) within the context of the work role, which has the power to shape one's broader

workplace experiences (c.f., Ely & Padavic, 2007; Ely, 1995; Foldy, 2012). Despite the development of these ideas in the identities at work literature at large, surprisingly little work links this theorizing with the study of leadership and the development of a leader identity specifically. I turn now to review the primary themes in the existing women's leadership literature, and illustrate how my focus on women's leader identity development is an important, and under-explored, area of this literature.

Scholarly Conversation on Women's Leadership

The scholarly conversation on women's leadership is motivated by the social concern that women continue to remain vastly underrepresented in leadership positions. Although some recent evidence suggests that strides are being made toward gender equality in organizations at large, the latest statistics reveal that women occupy top leadership roles in only 14.6% percent of Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2013), and similar statistics plague industries and fields outside the corporate arena (e.g., law, medicine, etc.). Following this, much of the women's leadership literature focuses on mapping the factors that shape whether and how women make it to leadership positions in the first place and how others perceive women once they are "there" (acting as leaders). In so doing, existing work provides us with in-depth theoretical and empirical insight into the structural and interpersonal factors that shape women's advancement and success on the leadership path, and the perceived similarities and differences in women and men's leadership styles.

While there are vast literatures relevant to the study of gender, work, and organizations that are useful, I restrict my review and discussion here to articles and books that focus primarily on professional women and their movement through and into organizational leadership. As illustrated by the Venn diagram in Figure 2.1, many literatures inform and intersect with my

more defined focus. At the foundation, is the large body of psychological and sociological research on gender differences and bias, which provides the basis for and greatly informs the related body of scholarship on gender, work, and organizations. Within this are more specific bodies of work that examine women's careers, and work-family issues, all of which have relevance to the women and leadership conversation. I draw from and consider work from these other areas to the extent that they inform or speak to professional women's path through and into organizational leadership, but I do not conduct an in-depth review of all work in these domains.

A body of research considers the structural and organizational factors relevant to women's leadership advancement. For example, drawing on theories of the ideal worker, studies illustrate that cultural norms which expect employees to work long hours, be available on nights and weekends, and travel extensively, are less reflective of women's lives and experiences (Acker, 1990; Bailyn, 2006; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002). This work suggests that the general structure and practice of work and organizational policies reinforce traditional gender roles and favor traditionally masculine notions of work (Acker, 1990; Bailyn, 2006) making it difficult for women to advance along the traditional leadership path. Further, social capital and network theories reveal that men's domination in positions of power in organizations offers them access to information and opportunity primarily through informal organizational networks that are vastly instrumental to career success and advancement, from which women are oft-excluded (e.g., Ibarra, 1992; Podolny & Baron, 1997; Ragins, 1998). Such gender imbalance at the top of organizations offers women little access to female role models and mentors in top leadership roles to assist in their own career development (Eagly & Carli, 2007; McGinn & Milkman, 2012; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007).

Women's leadership research taking an interpersonal lens (also referred to as the "attitudinal" perspective – see Ely & Rhode, 2010) considers how others' perceptions and attitudes shape women's leadership advancement and success in leadership roles. Drawing most heavily from theory and literature on stereotypes, this work demonstrates that men and women alike still associate effective leadership with predominantly male characteristics and that traditional gender stereotypes continue to impact evaluations of women leaders (e.g., Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie & Reichard, 2008; Powell et al, 2002). Role congruity theory suggests that women leaders are at a disadvantage because of the perceived incongruence (by both men and women) between masculine notions of the prototypical leader (e.g., agentic) and the prototypical traits associated with the female gender role (e.g., communality) (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995; Eagly et al, 1992; Heilman, 2001). Similarly, expectations states theory suggests that gender status beliefs shape expectations and evaluations of women leaders, because widely held cultural beliefs link particular status assumptions with women and with leaders (Ridgeway, 2001).

Much of this existing work on women's leadership generalizes women's experiences, behaviors, and attitudes as leaders in order to compare them to men's. For example, a wealth of research compares men and women as leaders, considering similarities and differences in areas such as leadership styles, leadership effectiveness, leadership emergence in small groups (e.g., Bass et al, 1996; Eagly & Johannssen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly et al, 1995). More recently, a body of work lauding the "female leadership advantage", argues that women may lead in ways that are more effective in today's organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2003) because women leaders tend to exhibit the hallmarks of a transformational

leadership style more so than men (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Antonakis et al., 2003). However, meta-analyses of studies comparing the leadership styles of men and women ultimately find neutral or minimal differences (see, for example, Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

Collectively, these core themes and patterns of study in the existing scholarly literature on women's leadership tell us a lot about the external environment that women face on the leadership path, both structurally and interpersonally, as well as about the generalized styles of women leaders in comparison to their male counterparts. This work provides us with a robust picture of the environment that women navigate, revealing how masculine notions of leadership remain deep-rooted in organizational policies and practices and well as in individual views of what and who leaders should be. However, in comparison to this externally-focused work, much less work focuses intra-individually on the women who are navigating this broader environment, even though women's own identities and self-views are likely to be quite important to their advancement through and into leadership. I turn now to consider why this potential intersection is important, and I review the work that has begun to consider, or informs the study of, women's leader identity development.

Women and Leader Identity Development

Taking the theoretical lens of leader identity suggests there is another important area to study with respect to women's leadership (c.f. Ely & Rhode, 2010): how women understand their own advancement and come to see themselves as leaders, amidst this broader environment they navigate. In particular, while existing literature demonstrates that everyone else (society, organizations, other men and other women) sees women's gender as relevant to their leadership, we know little about how, if at all, women see their own gender as relevant to their leadership –

that is, what it means to them to be "women" leaders – and how this has implications for their development of a leader identity. Such a focus is important, because identity is "a source of motivational and directional forces that determine the extent to which [a] leader voluntarily puts himself or herself in developmental situations" (Lord & Hall, 2005: 592). How women see and understand themselves as leaders is likely to have important implications for how they enact their leadership, what they aspire to, how certain they feel, who they reach out to, and ultimately the choices they make as they move along the path to greater organizational leadership.

Theoretically speaking, existing literature tells us that gender can be meaningfully interconnected with individuals' work-based selves (e.g., Foldy, 2012; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Ely, 1994; Kyriakdou, 2012), and that it is not simply the categorization of gender (am I a man or a woman?) but rather the experience of one's gender (how do I see/experience myself as a man or a woman, in this context?) that can powerfully shape work-related experiences, attitudes and behaviors (c.f., Ely , 1995; Ladge et al, 2012; Roberts, 2005). Yet even though these ideas suggest that how women experience their gender in relation to their leadership is likely to have important implications for their how they see themselves as leaders, limited empirical research has been centrally focused on understanding women's own self-perceptions about their gender and leadership identity.

Some specific studies consider women's perceptions of and beliefs about the "glass ceiling" (e.g., Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen & Webster, 2009; Jackson, 2001; Smith, Crittenden, & Caputi, 2012; Wrigley, 2002) or gender inequality in professional advancement (e.g., Cech & Blair-Loy, 2010), yet the focus of this work is really on women's views about leadership advancement of women at large, in an objective sense. Other work, categorized by Broadbridge & Simpson (2011) as the "women's voice literature", attends more directly to women's

subjectivity and inner experiences of management and leadership by studying "women's accounts of their gendered experiences in management and the processes that facilitate and limit their career opportunities" (Broadbridge & Sampson, 2011: p.473; see, for example Billing, 2011; Corby & Stanworth, 2009; Priola & Brannen, 2009), yet such studies primarily report descriptive themes from women's experiences, without taking the next step to develop an understanding of the meaning of these experiences. In so doing, we are left with little theorizing to understand how professional women on the path to leadership in their organization experience their gender in concert with their developing leader identities – a focus which is important if we are going to truly appreciate and understand the choices women make along the leadership path.

In recent work, scholars similarly recognize the importance of attending to this particular intersection of women, leadership, and identity. For example, in their multi-level framework of gender bias in leadership, Hogue & Lord (2007), appreciate that constraints both external and internal to the leader may shape women's own behaviors and development as leaders. Similar to existing work, they theorize organizational and interpersonal level sources of bias toward women leaders, but they also make the explicit assumption that bias in the leadership process can also play out as an intra-individual, cognitive phenomena and they highlight that leadership is a proactive process that requires a self-view as a potential leader. In so doing, they suggest that "a particularly important component of gender bias in leadership operates through the self-perceptions of females and the limiting effects of self-perceptions on their own leadership activities" " (p.381). While my focus is not on explicitly on the construct of bias, this work is important because of its recognition that intra-individual factors, like women's own self-views, are also an important (albeit under-explored) part of the story of what shapes women's

experiences on the leadership path. My study builds on this notion further by revealing the various ways in which women's own self-views play a role in their leadership development.

Ely & Rhode (2010) acknowledge that structural and attitudinal barriers to women's advancement may limit women's capacity to develop a viable self-view as a leader, and they emphasize that "we need to focus more attention on how to develop women's leadership goals and skills" (390). They suggest that a woman's transitions in and through leadership might need to develop differently than a man's. In a related piece, Ely et al (2011) use this framing to explore how leadership development programs for women should be revised to attend to the particular identity work of women leaders. They suggest that existing cultural and organizational biases that favor men are likely to "impede the identity work of talented, ambitious, women in, or aspiring to, leadership roles" (p.479). Importantly, they acknowledge that the notion of developing a leader identity as a critical element of leadership development "has not been linked to theory and research on the gender dynamics associated with leader identity development (for an exception, see Hogue & Lord, 2007)" (p.489).

Beyond these conceptual pieces, a recent working paper by Karalaia and Guillen (2012) builds some empirical insight relevant to the consideration of women's gender and leader identities. Their study quantitatively examines women's identity interference, which they define as women leaders' perceived conflict between their roles as both women and leaders. They consider antecedents (gender demographics of the organization and prior leadership experience) and consequences (well-being and motivation to lead) to women leaders' identity conflict, and they find that a more positive gender identity reduced the identity conflict experienced by women leaders.

While this work together builds a foundation for my inquiry, conversations about women and leadership identity are just beginning. Conceptually, the argument is built that gender is likely to matter to women's leader identity. Scholars are calling for more research to better understand gender dynamics in leadership identity development (see Ely & Rhode, 2010; Ely et al, 2011; Hogue & Lord, 2007), yet to date, little empirical research has been conducted, and little, if any, in-depth attention has been given to the variance of perspectives among women with respect to how they see their gender as relevant to their leadership, if at all. Further emerging theory on leader identity tells us that how individuals see themselves as leaders is an important component of leadership development; yet, we know little about whether and how the experience of non-work identities, such as gender, may be important and relevant to these self-views as a leader. Thus, the question remains as to how and in what ways gender matters to women's internal experiences with coming to see themselves as a leader in the context of their organizations. With this theoretical and empirical foundation, I conclude with the specific framework and research questions focused on developing the concept of gender-leadership frames in an organizational setting.

Gender-Leadership Frames in Organizations

In this final section, I integrate the theory and literature underpinning my specific framework of research questions. A conceptual framework explains "the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts, or variables – and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 18). As such, below I consider the main areas considered in this dissertation – gender-leadership frames, the organizational context, and leader identity development – building each specific research question from relevant literature.

Gender-Leadership Frame

Various theories and constructs from across the social psychological literature suggest that individuals draw self-meanings from broader cultural beliefs and representations of one's group (Ashmore et al, 2004; see also, Breakwell, 2001, Duveen, 2001). For example, the stereotype threat literature demonstrates that wider stereotypes about women can impact women's own self-concepts, behaviors, and life decisions (Spencer, Steele & Quinn 1999; Schmader 2002; Shih, Pittinsky & Ambady, 1999). In another vein, work on internalized oppression theorizes that cultural views of a marginalized identity can be internalized in one's own sense of self (e.g., Lipsky, 1987). Yet, people are likely to vary in the extent to which they define themselves in terms of the stereotypic representations of their group (Ashmore et al, 2004), and in the context of women's leadership specifically, there is quite a bit of ambiguity and contradiction around how women leaders are represented (e.g., is being a woman leader an advantage or a disadvantage?) (Ely & Rhode, 2010). From this, we can expect that not all women think about and experience themselves as "women leaders" in the same way; yet, limited empirical work studies women leaders in a way that would allow these differences to surface.

Diverse empirical observations from the literature do suggest that women have different perspectives about the relevance of their gender in the workplace. For example, Ibarra & Petriglieri's (2007) study of the image and identity strategies of male and female consultants, suggests that that how women perceive their gender as impacting their client interactions has implications for their broader professional identity construction. In another vein, Ely's (1995) work on women's experiences in sex-integrated and male-dominated law firms revealed different gender identity profiles for professional women, suggesting that not all women, even in the same organizational context, will interpret their gender and its relevance to their work in the same

way. Still, this work does not comprehensively consider the varying constructions of gender and leadership among a similar group of developing women leaders. As Ashmore et al (2004) emphasize, when focusing on meaning/content elements of the self, variations within group (e.g., differences among women leaders) become more important than comparisons between groups (e.g., differences between men and women leaders); yet, the literature on women's leadership tends to focus on the latter.

In the research put forth here, I focus directly and centrally on the various perspectives that may exist among women in terms of how they construct their gender in relation to their leadership. To do so, I develop the concept of "gender-leadership frame", which captures how women think about themselves as "women" leaders (e.g., what does it mean to me to be a woman leader? How, and in what ways, do I see my gender as relevant to my leadership, if at all?). The term *frame,* as used here, builds from Ridgeway's (2009) discussion of gender as a cultural frame that acts as a "background identity that biases, in gendered directions, the performance of behaviors undertaken in the name of organizational roles and identities" (p.1). In the present study, I consider whether and how a woman's construction of her gender in relation to her leadership may have important implications for how she takes on, and sees herself within, the organizational leadership role. While Ridgeway (2009) recognizes that "the gender frame acts through the sense-making of individuals" (p.157), her emphasis is on the external and social creation of the gender frame. To draw forth the internal experience of these frames, I also incorporate notions from Goffman's original treatment of frames (1974) to the extent that I theorize the gender-leadership frame as an individual woman's guiding orientation of who she is as a woman leader that organizes perceptions and interpretations of her own experience. Recent work in organizational studies suggests that the concept of frames "provides a theoretical link

between individual experience and social context" (Mazmanian, 2013:1228). While this particular work is rooted in the study of technology practice adoption, it focuses squarely on the individual's usage and interpretation of the frame as a way of considering how and why different groups within an organization might come to different understandings. Therefore, I see an important basis for extending the frame construct into understanding how different women may frame their gender in relation to their leadership, and in particular, how this intersects with the broader organizational context in which they sit.

While recent work offers initial evidence that women on the leadership path have different perspectives about whether and how their gender is relevant to their leadership (Humberd, 2011), our understanding of the content of these various perspectives, underlying theoretical dimensions, and the relative stability of these perspectives across various situations and interactions in a woman's organizational experience, is still quite limited. Therefore, I propose the following research question:

> **RQ1:** How, if at all, do women on the path to leadership construct/see/experience their gender as relevant to their leadership – that is, what gender-leadership frames do women adopt?

Personal & Work Context

Much management research focuses on understanding the interplay between contextual features and individual experience and identity. More specific to gender research, Ely & Padavic (2007) urge scholars to attend to the links between elements of the organizational context and individual gender identity to enrich the study of gender, work, and organizations. The recognition that gender is "a multilevel structure, system, or institution of social practices that involves mutually reinforcing processes at the macro-structural/institutional level, the interactional level, and the individual level (Acker 1990; Lorber 1994; Ridgeway and Smith-

Lovin 1999; Risman 1998, 2004)" (Ridgeway, 2009; p.146), underscores the importance of considering how features of the organizational context impart gendered meanings to the self. As such, in the present study, I consider whether and how women's gender-leadership frames may be generated through, or shaped by, contextual factors and processes – that is, I examine what drives some women to construct their gender as relevant to their leadership in one way, while other women adopt and enact different constructions of their gender and leadership. In particular, I focus on aspects of women's personal and work contexts that may influence the gender-leadership frames they construct.

With respect to work context, many studies examine the effect of the demographic social structure in an organization on women's experiences in the workplace (e.g., Ely, 1994; Kanter, 1977), and it is well-demonstrated in the literature that gendered cultural norms in the organization's policies and practices shape women's experiences at work. In general, however, less attention has been paid to understanding how the local organizational context and the processes associated with it– that is, where an individual is situated on a daily basis, his/her interactions, relationships, and experience of the culture on the ground in daily work – may also have important influences on women's understanding of their gender at work. Ashmore et al (2004) refer to these components as the socio-psychological context.

Such a focus is important given gender research and theory which emphasizes that gender is manifested, created, and practiced through interactional processes (e.g., Martin, 2003; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999; West & Zimmerman, 1987). As Ridgeway (2009) underscores, the extent to which we frame (and are framed by) gender depends greatly on what is going on in the situation around us. Further, organizational scholars recognize that cognition is necessarily situated at the intersection of individual's internal perceptions and their situational context (e.g.,

Elsbach et al, 2005). Taken together, these insights support a focus on the local organizational context (e.g., interactions with peers, superiors, clients; local gendered norms surrounding broader organizational practices; relationships with men and women, etc.) and its relationship to women's gender-leadership frames. Further, attending to these local and situational dynamics will allow the relative stability or variability of the frames that individual women adopt to be examined (e.g., do women always adopt the same frame in the same situations, or do different frames guide different aspects of their experiences as developing leaders?).

While the local organizational context is likely to play a role in how women see their gender and leadership, individuals also come into organizations with a personal history related to gender and leadership that may contribute to their experiences as woman leaders. Therefore, I build from recent work, which demonstrates that individuals' personal contexts can also be important to how individuals' experience non-work identities in the context of work, (e.g., Ladge et al, 2012; Humberd et al, Forthcoming). In so doing, I explore how aspects of women's personal context, such as their upbringing, role models, leadership history, involvement in women's causes, etc. may shape the gender-leadership frame that they adopt on their path to leadership.

From this, I propose the following research question:

RQ2: How do women's personal and organizational contexts play a role in shaping gender-leadership frames?

Leader Identity Development

Leader identity development captures how an individual comes to see him or herself as a leader (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue et al, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005). Work in this area is relatively new, so few papers specifically define the leader identity construct, and those that do, tend to conceptualize it as the centrality or salience of one's leader identity – that is, how central

is the leader identity in an individual's overall identity structure, or how strongly is the leadership role internalized in one's sense of self (e.g., Lord & Hall, 2005; Guillen & Korotov, 2011). In the context of women leaders, Karaliea & Guillen's (2012) working paper considers the relative salience of women's leader identity and gender identity. Yet, as Ashmore et al (2004) emphasize, identity is a multidimensional concept with many features and elements subsumed under the label "identity" and as such, we must take care in defining the particular features of identity most relevant to our study's particular focus.

As emphasized previously, studying women's subjective experiences as developing leaders is important if we wish to better appreciate the choices they make, the aspirations they have, and the opportunities they envision for themselves as they move along the path to greater leadership. Therefore, to align with these core interests and claims, I move beyond salience and importance elements of identity, to consider the following dimensions of women's leader identity that are most relevant and important to the present study's focus: subjective certainty, identity aspirations, and their perceived credibility, efficacy, and authenticity as developing leaders.

Subjective certainty, a self-categorizing element of identity, considers how sure an individual is of a particular identity (Ashmore et al, 2004; Mohr & Festinger, 2000). In the context of women's leader identity development, this captures whether and how a particular gender-leadership frame may have implications for how certain a woman is of seeing herself as a leader (how (un)certain am I that I am a leader?). Aspirational dimensions of identity are derived from the literature on possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), which emphasizes that how we see ourselves with respect to a particular identity is at least partially derived from visions of who we would like to be, and the extent to which we feel like we are able to meet those

desires. In the present framework, identity aspirations capture women's envisioned future self and aspirations in coming to see themselves as leaders; that is, what do I aspire to, and to be, as a leader of any kind?

Finally, building on initial findings from a pilot study (Humberd, 2011), I explore elements of women's leader identity development that capture their perceived credibility, efficacy, and authenticity as developing leaders. Credibility is considered essential "because a person's identity claims must be honored by others in a given context (Alvesson & Billing, 1998; Bartel & Dutton, 2001; Baumeister, 1999; Foldy, 2003; Goffman, 1959)" (Roberts, 2005: 699). Perceived credibility in the present research captures how women perceive others to be viewing them as a developing leader ("do others view me as a credible leader?"). While credibility concerns are more externally-focused, efficacy captures an individual's belief in his/her own internal capabilities (Bandura, 1994) – that is, in the context of women's leader identity development, how capable she feels as a leader. Finally, authenticity refers to the extent to which an individual acts in accord with his/her true self (Harter, 2002; Roberts, 2005), capturing the extent to which women feel like they are, or can be, their "true selves" as leaders. In sum, the framework presented here considers how women's construction of their gender in relation to their leadership may act as a frame through which they come to see themselves as leaders, in terms of relevant dimensions of her leader identity, such as those defined here. Therefore, I propose the following research question:

RQ3: How do gender-leadership frames shape, or play a role in, women's leader identity development?

I turn now to detail the methodology that allowed me to examine these questions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

I conducted an inductive qualitative study to understand how women experience and understand themselves as women leaders and how this shapes their development of a leader identity. Such an approach is appropriate for many reasons. At a basic level, qualitative methods are appropriate when studying such "how" questions to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). More particularly, qualitative methods are useful for understanding both the meanings of events and activities to the people involved in them and the influence of social context on these meanings and events (Maxwell, 2008). This aligns directly with my core interest in the meanings that women construct about their experiences and identities as women leaders, how these meanings around gender and leadership play a role in their development as leaders, and how their personal and work contexts shape these meanings. My goal was also to understand how gender is constructed as relevant to leadership from the perspective of the women themselves, rather than explaining generalities about women leaders from an outside vantage point. Therefore, as Denzin & Lincoln (2008) suggest, "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (4).

While qualitative methodologies can take many forms, I took an inductive, grounded theory based approach. Such an approach was appropriate and important as I aimed to move beyond mere description, to develop an "abstract theoretical undersanding of the studied experience" (Charmaz, 2006: 4). That is, my goal was to build and elaborate theory about professional women's leader identity development, in terms of how they see their gender as relevant to their leadership, and to understand the process through which participants' particular personal and work context express themselves in her leadership identity. As I describe in more

detail below, the data analysis techniques of a grounded theory approach allow the researcher to learn about participants lived experiences, and then move to provide a "conceptual handle on the studied experience" (Charmaz, 2006: 3), which supports my goal of moving beyond existing qualitative studies of women's leadership that seem to stop at the level of description. Finally, Langley (1999) suggests that a grounded-theory approach is particularly effective for exploring "the interpretations and emotions of different individuals or groups living through the same processes" (Langley, 1999: 700), which aligns with my aim of focusing directly on the varied frames among this similar group of developing women leaders.

I offer more details on my methods in the following sections, beginning with an overview of the pilot study that formed the foundation for this dissertation. Then, I describe the research setting and sampling strategy. Finally, I discuss the data collection and data analysis methods I employed.

OVERVIEW OF PILOT STUDY

I conducted a pilot study with the broad aim of understanding how women on the path to leadership in organizations actually see and understand themselves as leaders, given what we know about the context women leaders navigate more broadly. In the summer and fall of 2010, I interviewed 23 professional women who assumed a mid-to-upper level leadership role in their organization within the past two years. The transition to a new role was either within the same organization or in a new organization, and for all participants, the new role encompassed more significant leadership responsibility and authority than the position the participant held prior to this transition[2]. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each participant, and I followed an iterative process among data collection, analysis, and emerging theoretical concepts

[2] I conducted 4 initial interviews to determine these parameters that allowed for an examination of the phenomena of interest.

(Miles and Huberman, 1994). My analysis focused on building insight into how women think about themselves as leaders, and what this may mean for their experiences, and sense of self as leaders, as they transition to a new leadership role.

In this pilot, I found that participants had different perspectives about whether and how their gender as a woman mattered to their leadership, which I now refer to here as "gender-leadership frames". These frames were the different meanings they ascribed to being a "woman leader", which I categorized into four types: self-reliance, deficiency, opportunity, and responsibility. In turn, I found that these frames were differently associated with the form that their leader identity concerns took; that is, the way they saw/expressed credibility, efficacy, and authenticity concerns. Overall, the pilot study findings begin to suggest that how women construct their gender as relevant to their leadership has implications for how they see themselves as leaders, in terms of their own perceived efficacy, credibility, and authenticity in their new leadership roles.

Although I did not initially set out to explore specifically these gender-leadership frames, this interesting finding and the association of these frames to women's leader identity led me to focus my dissertation on expanding on these ideas. Thus, these initial findings and apparent gaps in the literature led me to formulate the research questions described above, as I extend beyond this pilot study to elaborate theory about the relationship between gender-leadership frames and women's leader identity development through the following methods.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH SETTING & SAMPLING

In my pilot study, I sampled professional women from various industries, organizations, and functions. Sampling widely and broadly was useful at that early stage of my inquiry, but in order to develop a richer story about women's constructions of gender and leadership, I focused

my dissertation in one field setting. In this case, being in one organization had certain advantages, especially with my interest in drawing out the particular contextual elements that shape women's understanding of their gender and leadership. Because I was interested in how women's experiences in the local organizational context may have implications for their gender-leadership frames and leader identities, being in one organization allowed me to keep the broader organizational context consistent (in areas that have previously been studied around demography, policies, etc. and their influence on women's gendered experiences at work) to focus more particularly on these nuanced and local contextual elements. Therefore, I developed the following criteria, both theoretically and pragmatically driven, for seeking the research setting for my dissertation.

First, the organization had to have enough women that are considered to be "on the path to leadership". In my pilot study, I conducted four initial interviews with women who were in their first supervisory role, and found that this was not sufficient criteria for getting at my interest in leadership identity. While these women had management responsibilities in some sense, they were not all necessarily seen as, or interested in self-defining as, developing leaders in their organizations. In my pilot, I adjusted the criteria to ensure that I was talking to women who actually saw themselves as "on the path to leadership" in their organizations, and this proved much more useful for getting at my interest in women's leader identity development. Drawing on these insights from the pilot, in the present study, I defined *developing women leaders* as women who hold mid-to-upper level leadership roles in their organization and see themselves as on the formal organizational leadership path (versus serving in a lower-level managerial/supervisory role, without any acknowledgement of being on the path to greater leadership). Additionally, I focused on women identified as "high potential" or "emerging

leaders" by their organization, which ensures these developing women leaders are also organizationally endorsed as being on the path to greater leadership. Thus, my research setting had to be an organization which had enough women who fit this definition.

Secondly, the research setting had to be an organization that is in a male-dominated industry or profession. Ample research evidence suggests that women face the greatest challenges in reaching leadership positions in male-dominated environments (Ely & Rhode, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Since my primary interest was in how women come to see themselves as leaders amidst the broader environment of structural and attitudinal challenges they may negotiate, a setting that ensures such an environment exists was appropriate. This is an appropriate approach with qualitative research, and particularly with purposeful sampling, in which the researcher must be strategic about where she chooses to conduct her research so it aligns with the study's objectives (Maxwell, 2008; Patton, 1990).

Thirdly, I wanted to ensure that the organization had theoretically interesting points of contrast within it, with respect to the local and informal context that the developing women leaders may experience. For example, I wanted there to be different sub-departments or locations that the developing women leaders work in, or more informally, that the women were interacting with different clients, peers, superiors, on a frequent basis.

Finally, pragmatically speaking, the setting had to be feasible for me to conduct research in. This meant I needed to find an organization that was a willing partner in this research and would allow me to be on-site at the organization to collect my data, and that had enough women who were interested in participating in my study. I, thus, secured access to an organization that fit these criteria, as I describe below.

Description of Organization

CDH Markets [a pseudonym] is one of the three major operating groups of a large global bank with headquarters in Canada and the United States. CDH Markets has approximately 2,300 employees and provides capital raising, investing, advisory, treasury and research services for corporate, government and institutional clients. CDH Markets operates in 29 locations across the world, but my research took place in three primary locations of the organization – one in Northeastern United States, one in Midwestern United States, and one in Canada. The operating group rolls up to the broader organization – CDH Financial Group – which was established in 1812. The CDH Markets operating group that I studied was officially launched in 2006, but was formed via a series of acquisitions by CDH Financial Group dating back to the early 1900s.

Employees of CDH Markets work across five main hierarchical levels in the firm: Analyst, Associate, Vice President (VP), Director (D), Managing Director (MD). The first two levels – analyst and associate – are considered junior level employees; then, once individuals reach the VP, D, and MD levels, they are considered to be on the leadership path in the firm. Beyond the MD level, there are fewer higher-level leadership roles as group-heads and ultimately executive level leaders. As described below, this study focuses primarily on individuals at the Vice President, Director, and Managing Director levels.

CDH Markets is comprised of three primary divisions: investment banking, trading, and internal consulting. The *investment banking division* operates much like a traditional investment bank, focusing on advisory and execution services within selected industry sectors. Employees assist with deals, primarily for clients who need to raise capital through equity, debt and/or loans. Within equity deals, for example, employees may work on originating, structuring, and executing a new initial public offering (IPO) transaction for a client. Sub-groups within the division are primarily focused around particular industry sectors, but some individuals work in specific sub-

groups offering advisory services for clients engaging in merger and acquisition transactions, or in international financing transactions. Participants working in this division describe their days as primarily a combination of analysis and meetings. They gather information and conduct analyses in support of the particular deal(s) they are working on. Internal meetings gather each deal team together to share information and plan for client meetings. External client meetings involve face-to-face or teleconferenced interactions with clients where CDH employees share analysis and work relevant to the particular deal. Typically, the VP level employees are focused on managing the deal internally, which includes running some of these internal meetings, coordinating the preparation of materials for external client meetings, and often dealing with scheduling and staffing of junior level employees on particular deals. The Director and MD-level employees are focused more so on managing the deal externally, engaging in communication with clients, as well as planning for and leading the client-facing interactions and formal meetings. Individuals describe that the pace of each day varies based on where each deal is at in the process, but like most investment banks, this division is characterized by a "long hours culture". Individuals often work upwards of 12 hours a day, especially when there is a deal that is near closing. As individuals move up in levels, they spend less "late nights in the office"; however, more senior employees that are leading the deal teams are still expected to be available via phone/email at all hours of the day and night to support the junior employees who are in the office late into the evening pulling together slide decks and presentation materials.

The *trading division* focuses on exchange-traded and over-the-counter financial markets, offering execution and advisory services to clients. Clients are issuers and investors from across the globe who come to CDH markets for assistance in managing risk associated with foreign exchange, interest rates, and equity and commodity prices. Participants distinguished between

"front office" roles, in which individuals work on the trading floor executing fast paced buy/sell transactions (often referred to as the "traders" or "relationship managers"), and "back office" roles that support the product knowledge and deal structuring for these transactions. In contrast to investment banking, the hours employees work in the trading division are driven by the hours of the financial markets. Individuals arrive early, usually by 7-7:30am, in order to prepare for their day by reading newspapers and joining a morning call in which market updates are presented. Once the markets open at 9:30am, traders describe their days as nonstop interacting with clients, talking on the phone, sending emails, executing trades electronically and working together with front and back office colleagues to facilitate the buying and selling of client orders. The market officially closes at 4:00pm, and then employees are expected to say until about 5:00pm to wrap up their work for the day. The day is a fast paced ten hour day, but has a more bounded beginning and ending time than in the investment banking division. In this division, distinctions in the work across levels of VP, Director, and Managing Director levels are based primarily around the size of their books of business, such that individuals at higher levels are responsible for managing larger clients and more revenue than lower level leaders.

Finally, the *internal consulting division* supports the other client-facing groups in the firm with professional services and guidance. They truly operate as "consultants" for the other internal divisions in the firm, with many of the individuals working in this group coming from backgrounds in strategy consulting. The day-to-day work of employees in this division varies based on the groups they are supporting. For example, an employee working with a particular trading group may be assisting them in improving a particular internal process that facilitates the execution of trading across multiple constituents, while an employee working with a specific investment banking team may be assisting them with managing a new technology platform at

one of their clients. Their primary point of contact in the other divisions are the high-level group heads, so employees in this division have great exposure to senior leaders in the firm; yet, they often discuss that part of their job involves finding appropriate ways to show the "value-add" of the support they can provide to the busy team members working within these other divisions. In other words, even if they have the support from the highest level leaders, they must work on process improvements with employees within other groups who are very busy focusing on their daily responsibilities. The day-to-day work day is more predictable in this division, since internal consulting employees are not usually tied to particular deals or market timing as those in the client-facing groups of investment banking and trading. Rather, their work is generally tied to specific projects they are assisting with in different groups. As noted below, this group has the highest percentage of women in it, which some suggest is because the hours are more predictable and reasonable than in the other two divisions.

The financial services industry has traditionally been a male-dominated industry both in terms of demographics (Catalyst, 2014) and cultural norms of masculinity (McDowell, 1997). In terms of demographic representation, CDH markets is male-dominated, especially as individuals advance through the firm's ranks. For example, at the Analyst level (most junior level in the firm), there are roughly 40% women, but this drops significantly as the levels progress. Table 3.1 provides the percentage of females by division and level . Like many financial services firm, CDH Markets offers some programming to support women's development in the firm, such as a piloted sponsorship program where some women are paired with executive level leaders, as well as some development programs and networking events offered to women in the organization. However, such programs are not offered consistently across all firm locations.

Participants & Sampling

In qualitative research, several forms of sampling are appropriate at various stages of the study. Typically, the researcher begins a study with a general target population based on experiential relevance to the phenomena of interest, and continues to sample from that group (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, I began by using purposive sampling, a strategy which is appropriate when seeking participants that are representative of a particular case (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Patton, 1990). I initially sought professional women who were on the path to leadership in their organization. From this, my sampling became more defined as I learned more about CDH Markets. In this organization, they defined the leadership path as individuals at the Vice President (VP), Director (D), and Managing Director (MD) levels, and so they see individuals at these levels as the "developing leaders" in the firm. The Vice President level is the most junior level leader in the firm, while the Managing Director level is considered the highest level leader on this developmental path. When individuals reach the MD level in the firm, there is some recognition that they have made it to this highest level on the developing leaders pathway. The next step in the leadership trajectory is to become a group-head, of which only a few positions exist. Within these levels, the executive leadership team of CDH Markets identifies each year individuals that are seen as high potential, which they refer to as "emerging leaders." Some, but not all, of the women identified as "emerging leaders" were also assigned a formal sponsor – an executive level leader who was paired with the women in a sponsorship relationship.

Based on these distinctions, as well as the three lines of business, I worked with the organization to fill in a sampling matrix, in which I sought to capture participants that were relatively representative across lines of business, levels, and the emerging leader designation.

Additionally, participants came primarily from the three major locations noted above. An HR representative at the organization generated a random list of female employees that fit the criteria of this matrix. In order to recruit these participants to participate in the study, the CEO of CDH Markets sent an introductory email to prospective participants explaining the study. I then followed up with interested participants to introduce them to the process and schedule their interview if they were willing. The initial email from the CEO went out to 70 individuals, and the final sample consisted of 55 participants (n=55), for a response rate of roughly 79%. Table 3.2 provides a description of the final sample based on each of these dimensions of context: level, line of business, location, and high-potential designation. Participants ranged in age from 28-58 years with a mean age of 39.6. The mean organizational tenure of participants was 10 years, with a minimum of two years and a maximum of 39 years. Finally, almost two-thirds of the sample had one or more children. These participant demographics are also included in Table 3.2.

As the study progressed, my sampling moved to be more theoretical in nature; that is, the matrix was filled in based on the core questions at the heart of my study. For example, as the table illustrates, the sample was weighted more to the MD level, which was important as I learned about the distinctions within these levels of VP, D, and MD. The MD level is really the level at which individuals are fully recognized as leaders in the firm, since it is the highest point on the developing leaders pathway. Additionally, the table illustrates that a higher percentage of the sample was drawn from the trading and investment banking groups, which was also purposeful, given that these groups are the most male-dominated numerically. As the study progressed, the tenets of theoretical sampling, which aims to help elaborate and refine categories in the emerging data (Charmaz, 206), led me to seek additional participants for interviews. For

example, as I saw that perceived definitions of leadership appeared important to the story that was emerging, I thought it would be useful to speak to the executive level leaders in the firm. Additionally, I also decided to speak with a handful of male emerging leaders in the firm, in order to confirm my sense that gender-leadership frames was a concept primarily salient and applicable to women. Thus, as discussed below, as the study progressed, I sampled a subset of executive leaders (n=6) and male developing leaders (n=9) as part of my study.

DATA COLLECTION

My primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with participants. I also conducted informal observations while on site and gathered some archival data from the organization as secondary sources of evidence for my field study. I detail each of these below.

Semi-structured interviews

My primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with participants. Interviews are a common method for studying individual identity in the field of organization studies (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008), and they serve as a context within which individuals construct their own identities through the narrative exchange of the interview. Interviews allow researchers to elicit participants' interpretation of their own experience, drawing out reflections from participants that rarely occur in their everyday lives (Charmaz, 2006). Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to be flexible in following emerging themes and probing for deeper understanding of core interests, which fits well with a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006).

With respect to gender in particular, Aaltio (2002) notes that interviews are an important method for studying women's gendered experiences at work, as the "gendered self is processed in the interaction between the researcher and the interviewed (p.213). Aaltio (2002) notes that

through an interview exchange, "the interviewees reach far beyond the question of whether they are telling the truth or hiding something, and, in fact, speak out their cultural frames from within the organizational, interorganizational and even institutional realities they inhabit" which allows what may be potentially "hidden gendered talk' in interviews" to be revealed and analyzed by the researcher (215). Thus, interviews were an appropriate and effective method for getting at my core interest in how women construct their gender in relation to their leadership.

I conducted interviews with participants in-person and via phone (65% conducted in-person). Each interview with the women developing leaders (n=55) lasted between 50 and 90 minutes and was tape recorded with the participant's permission. Broadly speaking, the interview focused on understanding participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to the study's major areas of interest. This included gathering their reflections on relevant aspects of their personal background and upbringing, perceptions of and experiences within their particular organizational context, their self-views as leaders and perceived leadership development, and their conscious reflections on the relevance of their gender to their experiences as leaders. I established an interview protocol prior to the start of the interviews to guide the discussion, but in the spirit of the iterative process, I adjusted the questions along the way as the interviews progressed in order to focus in on emerging themes and theoretical concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Locke, 2001). (A sample interview protocol is included in the Appendix.)

In addition to interviews with women, I also conducted interviews with executive level leaders (n=6). As the study progressed, I noticed much variation in how women perceived definitions of leadership and success in the firm, as well as in how they interpreted the firm's gender narrative. I wanted to understand if/how such ideas were understood and framed by executive leaders of each line of business, so I conducted interviews with members of the

leadership team. These interviews lasted approximately 30-40 minutes each, and were helpful in rounding out my understanding of the context in which these women understood their own leadership and gender.

While this dissertation is purposefully framed around an interest in women's experiences developing as leaders, and particularly in understanding the variation among women in terms of their constructions of gender and leadership, as a comparative point, I conducted interviews with a handful of men (n=9) at a similar point in the developing leaders trajectory. In particular, I expected that men would likely not hold varying constructions of gender and leadership in the same way that women do, and these interviews largely confirmed that. Men were largely unable to consider what their gender means to their leadership, at least not in the same way the women participants were. Most men experienced a sort of "unconscious" masculinity that – upon further probing – masked discomfort with discussing gender. When asked questions about their experience of their gender in relation to leadership, many seemed taken aback or talked about women in the organization. While interesting fodder for future work, such notions were vastly differently from my primary focus on women's gender-leadership frames and leader identity development.

Finally, I held a number of informational meetings (primarily via phone) with the sponsors of my project, both who are executive level leaders in the organization I studied. Throughout the course of the project, we had a total of six meetings lasting approximately one hour each. These informational interviews gave me a necessary understanding of the promotion and compensation processes in the firm, and in particular, how these were related to the high potential designations of employees. These conversations also helped me understand more about

the organizational culture, as well as the firm's gender narrative and approach to supporting women's development in the firm.

Archival Organizational Data

As a supplementary source of data, I gathered an array of archival data from, and about, the organization in order to gain a richer sense of the research setting I was studying and to enhance the overall richness of the qualitative data I gathered (Charmaz, 2006). I gathered organizational materials and information on activities and programs that are relevant to leadership, in order to give me a general sense of the organization in terms of leadership. I found some of this on the company website and was also provided with information by my project sponsors, particularly on some of the firm's initiatives for women leaders. Prior to entering the field, I used these materials and information to gain a sense of how leadership was represented and talked about in formal materials, and to understand the programming that the firm had already been offering to its developing women leaders. Project sponsors also provided me with some general results from a previous organizational survey they had conducted, which asked relevant questions around culture, diversity, and gender. This helped me understand some of the work that had already been done in the firm with regard to women's leadership; however, I learned from this information that such initiatives were rather new and inconsistent across the firm's locations (and this was largely confirmed via participants in interviews). For the most part, these materials allowed me to go into interviews with informed background information on the firm's existing discussions around gender and leadership; and in some cases, helped me develop themes in the data (such as the contextual theme around the firm's gender narrative, which is detailed in the findings below).

I also gathered more specific demographic data relevant to the study. For example, project sponsors provided me with the percentage of females within each line of business and at each of the levels I studied. The firm also provided me with relevant archival data on each participant, including individual's specific positional titles and sub-groups, as well as if the participant was designated as a high potential in the previous year, the current year, and if she had been assigned a formal sponsor. Importantly, I did not access information about each participant's high potential status until after I had conducted their interview. I also obtained organizational charts and firm materials that allowed me to better understand the overall structure of the organization. Before entering the field, this helped me understand the primary lines of business; and I referenced it often while in the field and talking to participants to better understand the sub-groups and executive leadership reporting within which each participant sat.

Informal Observations

I gathered additional information via informal observations during field visits when I was onsite at the various locations of the organization to meet with participants and project sponsors. Observations help to deepen the richness of the data collected by providing a more complete, descriptive picture of a social setting (Maxwell, 2008; Becker, 1970). Initially, upon arrival at each site, I took note of various aspects of the organization, such as the physical layout and general feel of formality as I walked through. This helped me to get to know the organizational environment more broadly so that I personally had a better sense of the context and culture in which participants conduct their daily work. Informal observations also gave me a sense of the similarities and differences across the organizational locations. For example, the headquarters office appeared much more formal than the other locations in terms of design and layout. Relatedly, the way the floors and elevators were designed, it was quite possible that individuals

in this office may run into the CEO and other executives at any time. While such distinctions did not appear to play a major role in shaping the questions at the heart of my study, it was useful information for me to observe as I conducted interviews with participants. Knowing the context within which they work allowed me to cater questions and expectations accordingly (e.g., it was not surprising to me when traders in one office seemed more connected and familiar with their investment banking colleagues based on the layout of the departments, as compared to another office that had divisions separated by floors). While data gathered via observations was not directly incorporated into the findings presented below, these informal observations allowed me to enter interviews with a more informed sense of the specific location, and provided a richness of having my own personal experience of the organization as I was coding the data.

DATA ANALYSIS

A professional transcriptionist transcribed verbatim all interviews into text. I kept detailed contact summary forms and field notes throughout my data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I completed a *contact summary form* for each field contact as a way of summarizing the main points in each interview, and within a day of conducting each interview, I wrote detailed *field notes* to capture my reflections and commentary on themes that emerged during the interviews conducted on that day. The contact summary forms and field notes served as important sources of data, particularly as I moved through the iterative process described below.

I followed an inductive, iterative data analysis approach built from basic guidelines for qualitative research in Miles and Huberman (1994). I used the qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti to facilitate this process, although much analysis occurred during data collection through the use of field notes and preliminary modeling of ideas and themes. Broadly, my analysis

technique involved moving iteratively between data collection, analysis, the literature, and my own emergent theoretical ideas as captured in my detailed field notes and from my pilot study, in order to ultimately depict my findings in a coherent theoretical picture (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Locke, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). For ease of explanation, I describe my detailed analysis steps below in a rather linear fashion; yet, in practice, the process was very cyclical and iterative in nature, with analysis, data collection, and further analysis, taking place concurrently throughout the study.

Coding Stages

Coding involves assigning a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" to excerpts of data (Saldana, 2009: p.3). In my coding, the excerpts of data ranged from short phrases to longer portions covering multiple lines, depending on the text relevant to a particular idea. My coding process followed a series of stages, which I detail below.

Provisional/First-Order Coding. In the first stage of my coding, I focused on understanding my data at a basic level. This involved creating provisional categories and first order coding that told the basic story of my data. I focused on capturing the perceptions and views of my participants to understand whether and how they construct their gender as relevant to their leadership and see themselves as leaders in this particular organization. The coding stayed close to the voice of participants and was primarily descriptive in nature (Locke, 2001), often using the words of participants as the initial codes (e.g. "gender_doesn't matter" or "gender_challenge to overcome"). At this point, one segment of data may have many different codes. As I gathered more data and engaged in further coding, these initial first order codes were reworded and integrated along the way so similar data fragments shared similar codes (Charmaz, 2006). I did this by comparing the different fragments of data within and across interviews to

determine which codes were most relevant for each data fragment (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Locke, 2001).

While I remained open to explore whatever ideas emerged from the data, I had a preliminary sense of some of the concepts of interest from my pilot study. For example, in the pilot study, four initial gender-leadership frames emerged, which I referred to as self-reliance, deficiency, opportunity, and responsibility. While I did not go into my coding looking *only* for these frames, I did look for evidence of these dimensions, among others, that characterized how women think about themselves as women leaders. Similarly, the leader identity dimensions of credibility, efficacy, and authenticity, are particular concerns I found in my pilot study, but that are also grounded in the literature on identity construction at work; so these also served as guiding initial categories of interest. As my findings reveal, I remained open to additional and new dimensions that deepened my understanding of how women experience their development of a leader identity. Overall, in this first round of coding, I stayed close to the data and remained open to any deviations from these previous codes. It was through this stage of provisional coding that I saw initial evidence of the dynamic lived experiences of the frames, which suggested that individuals' constructions of gender and leadership did not fall into pure "types" as I had found in my pilot study. Rather here, I saw participants discussing, for example, how they view their gender now as compared to a previous view. This became important as I moved into the next stage of coding.

Axial/Second-Order Coding. In the next stage of coding, I focused on getting to know my data in more detail through axial coding (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I moved from primarily descriptive first-order codes to coding that allowed me to understand the data at a higher level of abstraction. This involved creating second-order codes that are more conceptual

in nature and consolidated first-order codes into broader theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). For example, through axial coding I honed in on the underlying dimensions of the frames and the experiences of shifting, ambivalent, and reinforcing frames that I discuss below. As an illustration, the first-order codes mentioned above ("gender_challenge to overcome" and "gender_negative") became part of an axial code of one dimension: "Valence_Negative."

I also compared the conceptual codes induced here with those in the pilot, where relevant (e.g., do the four frames of self-reliance, deficiency, opportunity, and responsibility still apply here – or are there new frames, deeper underlying dimensions, etc. that become apparent from this new data?). This allowed me to see that participants discussed the frames in a more dynamic way than the codes from my pilot suggested. For example, elucidating the valence dimension allowed me to better understand and make sense of the movement within the positive and negative shifting frame experiences I saw in the data. I could then move into the final stage of coding with a sense that the dimensions may serve as a way of understanding this movement in frame experiences.

Aggregated Theoretical Story. In the final stage, I considered theoretical categories together in order to understand how concepts relate to one another. Then, I used these theoretical dimensions as the basis for telling a broader theoretical story of the data (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process involved creating a tentative story, then revisiting the data to see how it aligns with the theoretical story created (Locke, 2001). I used the conceptual categories from the second stage and underlying dimensions to consider the relationships among the dimensions. For example, as I had coded different enactments of leader identity, I was able to focus on how these enactments may be related to different frame experiences. I had also coded various organizational themes in the previous lower level codes, and used this stage to better

understand how these themes may interrelate with the frame experiences. Such connecting across conceptual categories was facilitated via the strategies discussed in the next section.

Coding Strategies

While the previous section detailed the coding stages and the particular steps I went through to aggregate initial data into higher level themes, here I focus on the particular coding strategies I took within those stages. In other words, beyond stages in the process, I describe here what my coding actually focused on. As previously described, there are three primary research questions guiding my study. The first research question aims at finding commonalities and differences across participants in terms of their gender-leadership frames. This lends itself to coding focused on "categorizing", which involves fracturing and rearranging the data to facilitate comparisons within and across categories (Strauss, 1987). However, as Maxwell (2008) notes, focusing solely on such comparative coding aimed at categorizing commonalities and differences in the data, "can lead to the neglect of contextual relationships among these data, relationships based on contiguity rather than similarity (Maxwell & Miller, 2008)" (237). Thus, coding must also focus on "connecting" to understand the data in context and identify relationships among different elements (Maxwell, 2008).

This is an important point when considering that my second and third research questions ask how these frames are shaped by the personal and work context (RQ2) and how these frames influence women's leader identity (RQ3). These questions seek to understand how aspects of these women's experiences and identities are connected in context. Therefore, I approached my data and the analytic stages described above with both categorizing and connecting strategies, which ensured that I was able to address all of the research questions guiding my study. To facilitate this comparison and connection across categories of data, I used memos and displays

(Miles & Huberman, 1994) that allowed me to play with different relationship and associations in the coded data. For example, I used a large excel spreadsheet with each of the participants down the left side, and each of the primary conceptual categories across the top (e.g., perceived images of leadership, perceptions of firm gender narratives, felt support, frame experience, leader identity certainty, etc.). Concurrent with coding the data, I also began to fill in this matrix so I could see what, if any connections, existed among the context, frame experiences, and leader identity. Use of such a display allowed me to play with some relationships, go back into the data, refine my coding and subsequently refine the categories, ultimately leading me to truly understand the connections across the theoretical dimensions of interest. Relatedly, interim modeling of the data in terms of frameworks and boxes and arrows helped draw me to the final findings and conclusions I present below.

Theoretical Saturation

With inductive, qualitative research, the goal is to continue sampling and collecting data until theoretical saturation is reached. Although traditionally defined as a point at which no new relevant data is discovered, I recognize that "true saturation" can never really occur since each new participant likely brings some new perspective to their experience (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, I stopped sampling and gathering data when I felt that all relevant categories were developed and validated in my data.

CHAPTER 4:
GENDER-LEADERSHIP FRAMES: CONTENT & DIMENSIONS

This chapter addresses the first research question: How do women construct their gender as relevant to their leadership, if at all? As I outlined in previous chapters, research has primarily focused on comparisons across women and men as leaders, which gives limited insight into variations within women leaders themselves. Even though the current literature implies that women have varying perspectives about how their gender may matter to their leadership, these differences have yet to be systematically examined and conceptualized. Recent work recognizes that individuals may vary in the extent to which they include or exclude a non-work identity in their work (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Beyond inclusion-exclusion, however, this tells us little about how varying meanings may arise when a particular non-work identity (here, gender) comes together with a particular work role (here, leader). This seems especially important for gender and leadership, because these two domains are already linked via the cultural narrative that exists around women as leaders; yet we know little about what, if anything, this category of definition – "being a woman leader" – means to the women defined by it. While we know that non-work identities may intersect with work, and that individuals draw self- meanings from broader representations of their group (Ashmore et al, 2004; Duveen, 2001), our understanding of how these meanings are comprised when the "group" is based on separate work and non-work roles that are linked via the cultural narrative can be expanded. Specifically, in the present context, we have a limited understanding of how and in what (varied) ways women construct their gender in relation to their leadership, if at all.

In my interviews, women expressed different and varying views of what it means to be a woman leader, and how, if at all, their gender is experienced as relevant to their leadership. As

defined previously, I use the concept of gender-leadership frames to capture these varying constructions of gender in relation to their leadership. For example, for some, being a woman leader means having to work harder, while for others, being a woman is seen as having little or no relevance to one's leadership. Given that it was quite clear that women do express various perspectives, rather than focusing extensively on *if* different frames exist, I focus here on the underlying dimensions comprising the content of these frames. These dimensions capture the primary ways in which women's constructions of gender and leadership vary, which I refer to as relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs. By dimensionalizing constructions of gender and leadership in this way, it appreciates that individual women may fall at various points on each continuum, which comes together to create the content of their unique frame. Further, a focus on underlying dimensions allowed me to better capture the lived experience of the frames, which is discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, in this chapter, I focus on the *content* comprising gender-leadership frames as derived from the underlying dimensions; and in the next chapter I focus on how these dimensions are *experienced* within an organizational context for these women. Figure 4.1 offers a summary of the dimensions presented.

Before moving forward to discuss these dimensions in depth, it is important to distinguish the concept of frame as used here from the construct of identity. My conceptualization of a gender-leadership frame builds on the notion of frames as individual orientations that guide and orient individuals perceptions of their experience (Goffman, 1974). In the present study, these individual orientations are about gender and leadership – the frame I hold about what it means to be a "woman leader" – yet are not an identity *per se*. The content of the gender-leadership frames captures an individual's orientation around how these two broader categories– women and leadership – intersect. While an individual's frame may have implications for identity, as I

demonstrate in latter chapters, the focus here is on the content of women's gender-leadership frames. This focus is of interest because, regardless of one's identity, women in leadership roles are objectively referred to as "woman leaders" because of the strong cultural narrative connecting these two domains. However, we know little about the perceptions that individual women hold about this intersection, which may orient and guide their organizational experiences and leadership development.

Relevance Dimension: Is my gender relevant to my leadership?

At a basic level, the gender-leadership frame concept captures how women construct their gender as relevant to their leadership, *if at all.* Thus, this dimension of relevance focuses on the "*if at all."* In order to understand *how and in what ways* gender is constructed as relevant, the first dimension must capture if gender is experienced as relevant at all. At one extreme on this dimension, being a woman is perceived to have little or no relevance to leadership, as evidenced by expressions such as: "there really is no gender difference for me as a leader" and "I think you are just a leader, and then you happen to be a female". In many cases, the lack of relevance is often expressed by making comparisons among men and women as leaders. For example, one participant said:

> "I don't see [being a woman] as being any different than being a male leader. Maybe that's just me, I don't know. But I don't feel like I have any advantage or disadvantage for being a woman in this leadership role." (001)

Such expressions reflect little perceived meaning to being a "woman leader" specifically; rather, individuals describe seeing themselves as leaders first, with their gender having little to no relevance to their experiences as leaders. Bluntly stated, if the question here is "what does it mean to you to be a woman leader?", then the simple answer is "nothing". At the extreme, some women even resisted the notion that their gender may be ascribed as having any relevance

whatsoever to their leadership, as illustrated by the following quotation from one participant [041]: "I would never identify myself as a woman leader, never, and would be offended to hear myself called that. Even though I am called that a lot, every time that happens, I cringe. Please follow me on this point."

While such expressions capture a perception that my gender has little to no relevance to my leadership, the relevance dimension is surely a continuum. Moving away from this end point on the continuum, gender is experienced as relevant to one's leadership in various ways. This, then, is where the "how" question comes in – if women do experience gender as relevant to their leadership, then *how and in what ways* is it constructed as relevant? This question is answered by the subsequent dimensions discussed in the remainder of this section. For example, women may see their gender as relevant in terms of leadership style, in terms of how others' treat them and perceive them as leaders, in terms of the barriers and opportunities they face, or in terms of their advancement potential. I unpack and coalesce these ideas based on the dimensions below, as part of an overall experience of gender as relevant to leadership. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, experiencing one's gender as not relevant to one's leadership is a base level categorization; such that if gender is not seen as relevant at all, the other dimensions become unnecessary.

Before moving to discuss the other dimensions comprising women's gender-leadership frames, it is important to distinguish the present discussion of relevance from considerations of identity importance, centrality, or strength, which focus on "the degree of importance of a particular group membership to the individual's overall self-concept" (Ashmore et al, 2004: p.83). These constructs capture, for example, the relative importance of multiple identities in one's overall self-concept (e.g., the hierarchical arrangement of individuals multiple selves (McCall & Simmons, 1978)), the salience of a particular identity in a given situation (e.g., the

likelihood that a particular identity will be brought into play in a given situation (Stryker & Serpe, 1982), or the cognitive centrality of a particular identity (e.g., how often one thinks about themselves in terms of a particular identity in everyday life (Gurin & Townsend, 1986)). In the present study, the focus is not on the importance of being a woman to one's overall self-concept, but rather the experienced relevance of my gender for my own leadership as an overarching frame. Surely, there may be an empirical relationship between gender centrality (as an individual difference) and where one falls on the relevance dimension of the gender-leadership frame, but that is not the core interest in the present work, nor did I conduct any quantitative measurements in the present study that would allow me to capture strength of identification with the leader or the gender role as distinct constructs. Here, the emphasis is on the varying expressions among women, in terms of in what ways gender may be seen as relevant to leadership. The relevance dimension could alternatively be conceptualized as a continuum from low to high relevance, where "high" is a greater degree of perceived relevance between gender and leadership; yet such variations in strength tell us little about the meanings and constructions underlying women's gender-leadership frames. Therefore, in the present study, I move from this point of "no relevance" to consider the various ways in which gender is seen as relevant to leadership. The following dimensions capture these variations and the meanings that comprise one's sense of being a "woman leader".

Valence Dimension: Is my gender positively or negatively relevant for my leadership?

Another primary way in which women's expressions of gender and leadership varied was in terms of how positively or negatively they constructed their gender in relation to their leadership. For example, some expressions capture a sense that being a woman leader means having disadvantages, in which case gender is experienced as negative for one's leadership. On

the other extreme, being a woman leader may mean having certain advantages and opportunities afforded to oneself, capturing a more positive experience of gender in relation to one's leadership. I refer to this variation in women's constructions of gender and leadership as the valence dimension, which considers variance in the perceived value placed on being a woman leader. In other words, do participants' expressions reflect a more positive or more negative construction of gender in relation to leadership? The negative construction reflects notions that being a woman creates challenges for one's leadership, an idea echoed in much of the literature on role congruity theory and leadership prototypes, as discussed below. A more positive construction reflects a sense that being a woman can create positive advantages for one's leadership, as echoed in work on the female leadership advantage. I elaborate on these ideas below.

On the negative side, participants express that their gender as a woman creates challenges for their leadership, such that being a woman is experienced as a disadvantage for their leadership. Participants reflect this negative valence with expressions such as: "I think that it's really tough being a woman leader" and "I just think it's easier for men because leadership is male, right? You know what they say." Negative expressions often included a sense that being a woman leader means having to work harder and overcompensate for one's gender. For example, one participant [013] stated: "In some cases that means you have to be better than the man. I know that sounds very cliché but I do believe that's true. So that's the one thing I struggle with."

This negative intersection of gender and leadership may be expressed as relevant in various ways; for example, as negative for my leadership style, for my advancement potential, or in terms of others' treatment of me. The following participant reflects this negative relevance in

terms of leadership style, by discussing how, in her perception, women are less aggressive than men and this makes it more difficult for women to be effective as leaders. She says:

> "I actually think my boss is one of the best bankers I have ever seen and he is 100% the most aggressive person I've ever met. I think being aggressive in your advice even when you're not 100% sure shows there's a level of confidence… I think that's a personality trait that isn't necessarily – this sounds sexist but I don't think women just by their nature are as aggressive as men are. So I think for women, the way we sell ideas and the way we convey ideas is a little bit of a different style. And I think to be effective as a leader, I think you just need to convey yourself a little bit differently than women tend to do." [014]

On the other hand, the following participant constructs the negative challenges based on how others view and treat her as a woman leader. She says:

> "But being a woman…I think the problem is it goes back to what we're talking in the very beginning is people make assumptions for you without talking to you. They assume because you're a mom you don't wanna do this or these are your aspirations and things like that." [012]

Such expressions of a negative intersection of one's gender and leadership reflect notions at the heart of role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory suggests that women are at a disadvantage as leaders because of the perceived incongruence (by both men and women) between masculine notions of the prototypical leader and the prototypical traits associated with the female gender role (Eagly & Karau, 1991, 2002; Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995; Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992; Heilman, 2001). The theory purports that these perceived differences create disadvantages for women leaders. In a sense, participants expressing more negative valence have internalized to some extent these notions of role incongruity and disadvantage into their own frame around gender and leadership.

At the other extreme on the valence dimension, individuals' expressions reflect an experience of gender as an advantage for one's leadership; that is, being a woman is positive for my leadership. Participants reflect this positive valence with comments such as: "I think being a

woman in this role is a benefit" and "I think [my gender] is a huge advantage right now". In opposition to the above expressions of disadvantage, at this end of the continuum, being a woman leader means having opportunities and advantages. For some, this positive intersection of gender and leadership is based on stylistic advantages they feel being a woman creates for their leadership. Participants discuss how women's interpersonal strengths and consideration of others is an advantage for leadership, for example, as one participant stated:

> "I think that I have very, very strong EQ and tremendous sense of intuition. I think it's my ability to work and deal with people and conflict, and I don't struggle with stubbornness. I don't need to be right. It's not to say that that's a gender thing, but I feel as though it's partially gender. I feel as though my gift is somebody who is more open-minded and listens and is intuitive and observant. That's the woman side. That's the side that I can influence when I'm sitting in a board room with ten men." [063]

This participant constructs her gender as positive for her leadership because it affords her a unique style that is an advantage for her a leader. Similarly another participant [028] said: "I feel like women have particular skills that can be very effective … in general there are certain skills being a woman that you can bring out and that women are better for…We're pleasant. We tend to think of the details. We are in tuned to others, etcetera…"

These unique style advantages participants express reflect core elements of the literature lauding the "female leadership advantage", which argues that women may lead in ways that are more effective in today's organizations than the typical ways in which men may lead (Eagly & Carli, 2003) Participants expressing these positive advantages within their own frames seem to internalize these notions that women do have a different and advantageous leadership style, and thus, they experience themselves as women leaders through this lens.

Beyond stylistic advantages, gender is also constructed as positive for one's leadership in terms of the practical opportunities that can arise from being a woman leader, such as more

visibility for promotions, avoiding layoffs, receiving recognition or being noticed more in meetings. For example, one participant expresses:

> "I think in a lot of ways if you're a strong woman [this] is sort of an interesting place because I think I have an inherent advantage when I walk into a room that a lot of people don't. First of all, I'm blonde. People assume I might be ditzy and I'm not going to disabuse them of that notion until I need to because that's useful. Secondly, if I'm sitting -- if we're making a pitch and I sit in a room and every seat at the table is filled with a bunch of dopy White boys, sometimes there's an advantage to that and I think [women] need to use that." [039]

In this case, being a women leader means having advantages because of how others view her as a leader. Another participant remarked: "I think [my gender] gives me a little bit of advantage that you can get noticed and if you're smart and driven you get noticed for the right thing." Other participants talked about being given a potential "one up" in promotion decisions from being a women, or being asked to join a certain client meeting because they "needed more women at the table."

In these cases, participants experience advantages for their leadership, arising from more practical opportunities afforded to them, as opposed to innate stylistic differences that women hold. These expressions echo ideas from the broader literature on individuals with marginalized identities, which suggests that difference can be used to ones benefit or to gain preferential treatment (Clair, Beatty & MacLean, 2005), a phenomenon referred to as "secondary gain" by Strauss (1975). In the present study, participants reflect this potential secondary gain, such that they see being a women leader as an opportunity because of the functional advantages it affords them, even if they are largely underrepresented in this context.

Together, the valence dimension captures variance in how positively or negatively relevant individual women see their gender in relation to their leadership, echoing varying

meanings of being a "woman leader". Next, I consider a dimension that intersects with valence: self-other construal.

Self-Other Construal: Is my gender relevant for the self-as-leader, or for others' perceptions of me as a leader?

As evident throughout some of the previous quotations, gender may be discussed as relevant to one's leadership style, to how one is treated, to one's advancement potential, etc. For example, one participant above discussed gender as negative in terms of her leadership style, when she said "And I think to be effective as a leader, I think you just need to convey yourself a little bit differently than women tend to do." Yet, another participant expressed gender as negative in terms of others' views of her, when she said: "They assume because you're a mom you don't wanna do this or these are your aspirations and things like that." This dimension captures variance in these different targets of relevance, which I categorize around self and other. More specifically, self-other construal describes if gender is constructed as relevant for aspects of the self-as-leader and/or as relevant for others' views of me as a leader. This distinction is illustrated by some of the previous quotes on the valence dimension, for example, when positive valence may be discussed as based on a unique advantages about the self as leader (e.g., as a woman I have "a very strong EQ and tremendous sense of intuition"), or as based on unique advantages in terms of others treatment of me (e.g., I have an "inherent advantage" when I walk into a room and get noticed amongst a bunch of "dopey white guys."). Thus, self-focused construal means individuals see gender as relevant to areas such as leadership style, while other-focused construal means individuals see gender as relevant to how others treat me as a leader.

As implied by my forgoing discussion, I consider self-other construal to be an orthogonal dimension to the valence dimension. In other words, self-other construal and valence are two

continua that intersect to create various constructions of gender in relation to leadership. As Figure 4.1 illustrates, the 2x2 that is created when combining these two dimensions captures the extent to which gender is constructed as positive or negative for gender in terms of one's self or in terms of others views. In the top left box, for example, gender is experienced as negative for leadership in terms of the self, such that being a woman leader means having disadvantages in leadership style; while in the bottom right box, gender is experienced as positive for leadership in terms of others, such that being a women leader means having advantages in terms of how others treat me. The intersection of these dimensions is important, particularly as I move to discuss the varying frame experiences in the next chapter, which in some cases, capture a tension between the valence based on views of self-as-leader versus valence based on others' views of me as a leader. For example, gender may at the same time be experienced as positive for my leadership style (self) but negative in terms of how others treat women in leadership roles (other) (see discussion of ambivalent frame experience below).

Collectivity Beliefs

The final dimension that underlies women's gender-leadership frames is variation in, what I refer to as, collectivity beliefs. This dimension captures the extent to which women see themselves as connected to and desire to be involved with, the collective of "women leaders". Perhaps because gender is already linked to leadership – in terms of our cultural discussions around women leaders and the particular focus on women's initiatives in this firm – this dimension arose as a primary dimension of variance among women, regardless of how relevant, or how positive or negative they see their own gender as relevant to their leadership. I saw evidence of this variance in collectivity beliefs in the data primarily from the behavioral involvement women seem to express with the collective of women leaders. Constructions of

gender in relation to leadership varied in the extent to which being a woman leader means being involved in activities, causes, supports, etc. for women leaders, reflective of varying collectivity beliefs.

On one end of the continuum, constructions reflect lower collectivity beliefs, such that being a "women leader" means little for my connection to the broader group of women leaders, and therefore, behaviorally, I do not associate much with this collective. As one participant expressed:

> "I participate [in the women's events] if I think it will do me good and help me with my networks. Generally, I find that they don't. I believe that they work for some people. Some of the general networking and career leadership kind of events that they put on, I'll get a lot out of that. But at the specific women's events, not so much. I need to talk to men and women to further my career. Hanging out with just women isn't going to do me much good." [001]

On the other end of the continuum, constructions of gender and leadership reflect a higher sense of collectivity, such that being a woman leader means connecting with "women leaders" as a collective group. Participants made comments such as: "I think having at least a stronger network mass between the women is a good thing to have" and "…it's nice to have some areas for women, kind of, to know how other women have defined their careers and progressed." As reflected in these quotations, there was much variance in how involved women were in some of the firm-sponsored initiatives designed to support women, and this involvement seems reflective of collectivity beliefs. Individuals with higher collectivity beliefs found programs and events for women important for their leadership, while others with lower collectivity beliefs did not find such programming as useful and important to their leadership. While there may be some connection between experiencing no relevance and low collectivity

beliefs, for the purposes of Figure 4.1, I consider this dimension to be independent of the previous dimensions discussed.

Ideas related to this variance in collectivity beliefs are echoed within work on social movements and gender. For example, in their work on gender consciousness, Gurin & Townsend (1986) invoke the social movement construct of collective action to capture the degree to which an individual believes that collective action is required to realize the group's interests. Relatedly, there seems to be an underlying assumption in the literature on mentoring, role modeling, and networking (e.g., Ibarra, 1992; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1993), which presumes that women's shared gender identity and out-group status within a male-oriented organization will serve as a basis for common in-group bonding. Yet, as evidenced by the dimension discussed here, women vary in the extent to which they believe they are (or should be) connected to or involved with the collective of "women leaders", and this seems related to their level of action or involvement with women leaders as a collective group.

Summary

Figure 4.1 offers an overall framework of the primary dimensions discussed here. As depicted in the figure, women's gender-leadership frames differ based on dimensions of relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs. This framework depicts the content of women's gender-leadership frames, such that an individual women constructs her gender in relation to leadership based on different points on the continua of relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs. Although the pilot study I conducted suggested that individual women were likely to hold a predominant frame drawn from various points on each of these continuums (Humberd, 2011), as discussed in the following chapter, the lived experience of gender-leadership frames sees participants moving at various points among these dimensions,

often shifting from one end to another, experiencing tension among dimensions, or perpetually reinforcing a particular frame. It is these dynamic experiences of the frames, then, that have implications for leader identity development, as discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5:
FRAMES IN CONTEXT: LIVED EXPERIENCE OF GENDER-LEADERSHIP FRAMES WITHIN AN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

A core interest in the present study was to understand how the perceived organizational context may play a role in shaping women's gender-leadership frames. Thus, this chapter addresses the research question: How may organizations shape particular constructions of gender and leadership? Through this in-depth examination in one field setting, I found that women do not necessarily possess a static construction of gender and leadership. Instead, analysis revealed three primary lived experiences of the frames: a *shifting frame experience*, an *ambivalent frame experience*, and a *reinforcing frame experience*. Each of these frame experiences moves among the dimensions of relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs described above, offering a more nuanced and dynamic view of women's constructions of gender and leadership. The shifting frames reflect an experience of gender in relation to leadership that has changed over time (at least in how the participants recount it), an ambivalent frame reflects an experienced tension in the relationship between one's gender and leadership, and the reinforcing frames are a circular experience of gender as either continually not relevant to one's leadership or gender as a continual disadvantage for one's leadership. While the previous chapter explained the content that comprises women's frames, this chapter details these more dynamic lived experiences of the frames. A summary of each frame experience and the number of participants within each category is offered in Table 5.1. As noted within each description below, these frame experiences are based on movement on underlying dimensions. Therefore, they reflect diversity even within each experience (e.g., a positive shifting frame may include movement from a more negative to a more positive valence; or from "not relevant" to a more positive

valence). Thus, conceptualizing the frame experiences in these ways allowed me to capture the diversity of individuals' movement along dimensions, even within these broader categorizations.

Further, these frame experiences are related, at least in part, to some aspects of women's personal and organizational contexts. A number of common contextual themes arose from my analysis, which capture how women view the organization with respect to structures, practices, and policies relevant to gender and/or leadership (e.g., perceived images of leadership, certainty of career pathways, felt support, firm's gender narrative, and definitions of success). These social-psychological components of context came together in different ways to shape the three frame experiences. The experience of a shifting frame is driven by some change in participants' context – personal, professional, or interactional – that shifted their perception of these themes (e.g., having a child highlighted that I do not fit images of leadership here). The ambivalent frame experience, on the other hand, is primarily related to uncertainty in the context driven by the firm's gender narrative and the lack of developmental roadmaps. Finally, the experience of reinforcing frames interacts with elements of the context (e.g., definitions of success, firm's gender narrative, images of leadership) in ways that further sustain the views of one's gender as a perpetual disadvantage, or perpetually not relevant to one's leadership. In the sections that follow, I first define a particular frame experience, and then I follow it with a discussion of the contextual themes that are associated with it.

Shifting Frame Experience: Defining

The shifting frame captures an experience of gender as relevant to leadership that has shifted over time, at least in how the individual women describe their experiences. I found that shifts occurred in two primary ways, which I refer to as a *negative shifting* or a *positive shifting*

frame experience. As detailed below, these shifts move among dimensions of relevance and valence in various ways, and often have a concurrent shift in collectivity beliefs, as well.

Negative Shifting Frame. The negative shifting frame experience captures expressions in which participants have come to realize the challenges their gender creates to their leadership. Participants discuss a move from feeling like gender was not relevant to gender being relevant for their leadership in a negative way. For example, participants echoed ideas such as: "I used to think gender didn't matter, but now it does" and "I used to try to make [being a woman] not matter, but I can't do that anymore." Dimensionally speaking, this is a move from not relevant to more negative valance in the experienced intersection of gender and leadership. Importantly, these shifts are captured in terms of participants' retrospective accounts of their own frames. As one participant expressed:

> "Instinctually, I'm a woman leader, but remember I told you there was a shift at some point? I think that's where the shift is going. That's the best way to summarize the shift. It used to be, 'I am a leader. I happen to be a woman.' That's always my thing because everyone's like, 'Wow, banker. There're not that many women.' I'm like, 'Whatever, Yeah, I'm a banker but I'm a woman.' That was always my approach to it but it has totally shifted that I feel like now 'I am a woman leader' just because I think, as I said earlier, I need someone who can help me navigate these challenges unique to women; in terms of how to be better perceived, get my point across, in a way that is okay for a woman to do." [045]

In reflecting on this negative shift, a number of participants discussed how they initially felt they could just rely on themselves and their own hard work to succeed, and that their gender was not really relevant to that; however, more recently, they've come to realize that this is not enough, particularly for women. For example, one participant expressed:

> "It's interesting because I used to think it was -- first of all you have to have the capabilities. You have to have the intellect. You have to have the work ethic. I think you have to be positioned properly. You think that if you work really hard and you're successful and you have proven results that you will get recognized….It's only now that I've been kind of more engaged in what I've been shunning my entire career. That I

> realized that the things that I think that have held me back are very common to women. That's been really kind of eye-opening for me.... I realized it is different [for women], and it's harder." [036]

While the primary movement with this frame experience is toward a more negatively valenced experience of gender in relation to leadership, for some participants, the shift was also tied to a shift in collectivity beliefs. The same participant quoted above reflects such a shift in collectivity beliefs concurrent with the realization of challenges facing her as a woman leader:

> "…I always avoided women's groups. I never wanted to participate in the women's groups. Because I felt like, 'You know what? I don't want to single myself out as a female. My performance should speak for itself.' [This event I attended], there were, I don't know, more than 40 women in the room asking questions. It was fascinating. A lot of the similar themes came back. That is for women, they were focusing too much on our own performance and not realizing the challenges we faced and the relationships we needed to help us." [036]

In this case, two shifts may be occurring. On the one hand, the shift in collectivity beliefs illustrated in the above quote may have prompted the shift toward experiencing her gender as more negatively related to her leadership. Alternatively, as she realized the challenges she was facing as a women leader (shifting toward negative valence), she also shifted to higher collectivity beliefs because she perceived what was holding her back to be common among women. Either way, the negative shifting frame captures an experience in which participants now see their gender as more negative for their leadership than they had in the past, often tied to a shift toward higher collectivity beliefs.

While the core of this frame experience is a realization that this shift has already occurred, some participants expressed an *anticipated* negative shifting frame. Such anticipation came primarily from individuals in more junior-level leadership roles, who had just embarked on the leadership path in the firm (those at the VP level). Most often, they anticipated the negative

shift to occur as they tried to advance while also having a family, which they expect to be difficult in their current roles/firm. For example one VP level participant expressed:

> "I think when you're younger and you come into this business as a woman, you don't have a family, you don't necessarily have a significant other at that point in time or anything like that, so you're happy to work all day, all night, all weekend. I think as you start to get older … the demands of work plus home life can become a little bit overwhelming … So, in terms of the things that are difficult for women advancing to leadership, if you decide that you're gonna have kids and you want to be on mat leave for x period of time… I think that transition is difficult. I haven't really thought much about it or come to that juncture yet but at some point in time, you know it's something on the radar in terms of how is that going to work and how can I advance as a leader in that case." [011].

In this case, participants that have just embarked on the firm's leadership path express for now a primary self-reliance frame (discussed below), but anticipate a negative shift in terms of the challenge that their gender will create as they further develop in their leadership and seek to advance.

Positive shifting frame. The positive shifting frame captures the alternative experience, in which participants express a more positive move in their perceptions of gender and leadership. The experience of a positive shifting frame occurred in two primary ways in the data: (1) from negative valence to not relevant (e.g., gender used to hold me back as a leader, but now it does not) or (2) from not relevant to more positive valence (e.g., I used to think my gender did not matter, but now I experience it as an advantage for my leadership). Again, these shifts are evident in terms of how participants' recount and reflect on their own experiences and perspectives on the intersection of their gender and leadership over time.

For some participants, the positive shift was a move from experiencing their gender as more of a disadvantage to now feeling like it is less relevant to their leadership. As one participant expressed:

> "I don't think of [my gender] anymore. I'm used to being the only woman in the board room or whatever that is like I don't see it anymore…I'm just a leader in what I do and I know there's no one else whose done more [of this type of] business than I have so it's like I'm a leader. It doesn't matter that I'm a woman so this is what I've done. [...] It doesn't matter anymore because I'm less focused on it. I kind of realized it is what it is. I'm just leader in what I'm doing and it just happens that I'm a woman and it's extremely rare and so what? I am now able to just shrug that off." [017].

This form of positive shift echoes a sense of working strategically to make my gender not matter and moving beyond it. This participant discussed the challenges her gender created for her in the past (e.g., having to give up some of her feminine passions and interests in order to be taken seriously, and changing the way she dressed in order to fit in); yet as reflected above, she has learned to shrug these off and construct her gender as not so relevant. In some ways, this shift echoes a coping mechanism, such that these women discuss working hard to make their gender not matter for their leadership (at least in how they perceive and experience it, cognitively). Such ideas are similarly reflected in the following quote from a participant, who discussed the importance of making her gender not matter:

> "I'm 100% unapologetic for anything that I do that is specific to being a woman now. I used to be apologetic for my feminine ways there early on in my career and life because I was the thing that wasn't like the others, Sesame Street training. So I conformed and promoted conformity. I'm not doing that anymore. I'm going to define success for me and I feel very comfortable doing that. Turns out, it's made me a better leader because I can focus on what matters for doing this role well" [039]

While these participants are not necessarily discussing their gender as an advantage in and of itself, I categorize this as a positive shift because they reflect movement from a point where they experienced their gender as negative for their leadership to a point where they now experience their gender as less (negatively) relevant to their leadership. In other words, the movement is in a positive direction, and for some, toward irrelevance.

The other positive shift echoed by participants ends at a point of even greater positivity about their gender and leadership. In this case, their starting point was lower relevance (my

gender is not relevant to my leadership) yet they now experience their gender as positive for their leadership, realizing that being a woman can have positive advantages and create opportunities for their leadership. For example, one participant expressed:

> "I think [being a woman] is a huge benefit right now. I wouldn't say that that was how it has always been; especially when I was at [my prior company]…. You do have a lot of egos on the trading floor so it's a lot of that male testosterone you deal with, like 'rah, rah look at me pounding the table.' But generally right now, if you're a woman and you're competent and you can do the job, if something were to come up…you do have that one up." [008]

This participant is reflecting the functional advantages discussed above as part of the positive valenced view of one's gender in relation to one's leadership. Another participant experiencing a positive shift reflected how she moved from a point of trying to make her gender not relevant to realizing it as an opportunity:

> "There's always a lot of chatter when women get promoted. They get promoted because they were a woman, and I never wanted to be tarred with that and so I think I was always really defensive to make sure that that never happened or could happen. I think I'm at the point now where I'm confident that I would be doing well whether I was a female or a male. So I guess I worry about it less and I welcome the opportunities that come with being a woman leader. And I also welcome the opportunities to fight for changes that I think are so important at the analyst and associate level that we just haven't made. I can't change much but if I can get my two cents on something I think we could be doing better and I think that's beneficial for everybody." [043]

Here, we also see evidence of a concurrent shift in collectivity beliefs, such that for this participant, the positive shift she experienced also prompted a movement toward greater involvement with seeking change for and helping other women. She realized the opportunities herself and is motivated to "fight for changes" for other women, as well.

Together, the shifting frame captures an experience in which women's orientation around their gender and leadership has moved, in a negative or positive direction, often with a

concurrent shift in collectivity beliefs. Next, I consider the contextual factors that contribute to these shifts.

Contextual Themes Associated with Shifting Frame Experiences

The shifting frame experience is driven, at least in part, by aspects of participants' organizational and personal contexts. As evident in some of the above quotations, in expressing the shifts, participants often discussed various changes in their contexts that prompted them to experience their gender in relation to their leadership in a different way than they previously had. These changes can occur in their personal contexts, work contexts, or an interaction between the two. As I discuss below, most of these contextual themes were related to *either* the experience of a negative shifting frame *or* the experience of a positive shifting frame; yet, where relevant, I also consider how a particular theme could, in theory, also be related to the alternative shift, even if not evident from the current analysis.

Shift in personal context intersects with images of leadership (negative shift). In this case, a shift in participants' personal context highlights that they may not fit the firm images of leadership, and this is associated with a negative shifting frame experience. For example, participants expressed that their gender started mattering more once they had children because most of the leaders in the firm are "men with traditional views and stay at home wives." In this case, the organizational context did not change, but a shift in personal context for these women (e.g., having a child) drew more attention to the fact that they did not fit this image (e.g., "I didn't realize that until I had kids."). One participant experiencing a negative shifting frame discusses these intersections in personal context and perceptions of leadership in the firm:

> "When you look at the male leaders, by the time they get to a certain point, a certain age, they got wives, they got kids…it's just easier for a guy to still manage this crazy job and still have a personal life. For a woman…once you've had the kids, what does it mean coming back to work? Do you have to take time off? So what are the sacrifices you have

> to make there? As I was saying before, this job, the expectation is that you are available 24/7. So I find that for myself it's just that challenge of trying to get back in and having people feel comfortable that you are still available; that you are focused on your career; that you are doing all this stuff because they make their own assumptions about who the leaders are….So I think that from beginning to now throughout the process, I have realized that every stage is a lot of more challenging for [women]." [025]

The negative shift is related, at least in part, to the recognition of who the firm's leaders are, and the ways in which one's personal context (usually having children) makes her misaligned with this firm image of leadership. Relatedly, a participant who expressed an anticipated negative shift, echoed similar sentiments about firm images of leadership being misaligned with women's experiences. She said:

> "I think being the head of the group or being a senior MD takes a lot of personal time from you. I think a lot of men within the organization don't have an appreciation for that because quite truthfully, most men who work in this organization have wives that stay at home. They make enough money like you don't need to have 2 people working. So they don't really get. I don't feel they get it. They don't understand the demands of being a woman in a relationship to be frank, because they go home and like oh, kids are in bed, the house is clean, their life is like organized and all they have to do is go to work and come home from work. … I just think there probably needs to be a bit of a change in mindset at the senior level and I think having more women in that role would help in terms of retaining more junior women to move up within the organization. I'm not saying all men are insensitive to it but it is just a culture here in general." [011]

Together, these quotations illustrate how a shift in one's personal context (or an anticipated shift) intersects with firm images of leadership to create negative views of one's gender in relation to leadership. In a more general sense, this theme captures the intersection of a more societal/familial level set of norms and the realities of work. A shift in personal context highlights the societal expectations that exist for women in terms of holding primary responsibility for the home-front, and an organizational reality which continues to be based around notions of an ideal worker who is unencumbered by outside responsibilities (Williams, 2010). In this way, having children prompts a negative shift because these conflicting

expectations for women, particularly as they seek to advance to greater leadership, become more salient and apparent.

While not evident in the present data, it is possible that this same theme – intersection of personal context and firm images of leadership – could also relate to the experience of a positive shifting frame. For example, when a woman is older and her children go off to college, her personal context changes and she now better fits the perceived firm image of leadership as an individual that can be fully dedicated to work without outside obligations. Similarly, some women in the sample had husbands who made a shift out of the work force to be the primary parent at home. In theory, such shifts in personal context may enable an individual woman to feel more aligned with these firm images of leadership; nonetheless, the extent to which these personal changes would relate to a positive shift in one's gender-leadership frame is unclear, and was not prevalent in the current analysis.

Advancement highlights unique challenges for women (negative shift). In this case, changes in the work context – advancing further along in the structured organizational leadership path –highlights for some participants that their gender is a challenge, relating to a negative shifting frame experience. For example, a participant experiencing a negative shifting frame, discussed how getting to a certain level made her realize the challenges that were unique to women. She realized she needed a female role model/mentor to help her navigate the unique challenges she was facing as she came into the leadership role. She explains:

> "I began to crave women mentors because I looked at the way men speak and just little nuances like, I've realized my voice wasn't being heard in meetings… and there are women in the firm that I could see they were being cut off too but yet they were still coming around and making a point. It was for those little nuances that I started noticing, well, maybe [these women] have better ways, because they had at one time or another sat in the seat where they're kind of like, 'What do I do?' Up until now having male mentors have been great because it was more like, "What position do I take? Which role do I move into How do I talk to a client?" Those are generic spiels but then developing your

> own style, that I think I needed a woman's help with that because [what I was doing] was not working for me. As I started to have more of a leadership management role, I needed to start to thinking about the style and issues as being unique to women." [045].

In this case, she felt that having male mentors and advisors was fine when her role was more task focused; yet, when her role shifted from being more about leading and less about executing, she began to feel like her gender mattered more and in a negative way because she needed a role model that could speak to the particular challenges she was facing as a woman leader. Another participant experiencing a negative shift discussed how as she advanced, she realized the challenges she was facing as a woman and the lack of role models. She explains:

> "And then I got a little bit more senior and I just started to get confused because...I was just singing the same tune with everybody else and it wasn't working. So I started to get quieter and …I had really stopped speaking out to some degree. It was about finding the right way to communicate what I wanted to say and find my own voice. But it's very, very difficult to grow up as a woman and confidently speak on very complicated topics…in a way that is palatable and receptive to a 65 year old man. That's a very difficult thing to learn and there's just no role models. Yeah, not seeing anybody doing what I was doing so I didn't know." [031]

In this case, shifts in one's work context, in the form of advancement, highlighted the unique gendered challenges for women that became more salient as they reached higher levels.

Lack of advancement highlights uncertainty in career paths (negative shift). In addition to advancement calling attention to gendered challenges, some women discussed how stalled advancement and uncertainty in paths to leadership in the firm prompted a negative shift in their frame. They used to think their gender was not relevant to their leadership, but as they struggled to advance and feel unsure about what it takes to get to the next level, they wonder if their gender is the reason they are not ascending to greater leadership, prompting a negative shifting frame experience. For example, one participant explains:

> "I don't ever feel incompetent but quite a few times I've even gone into my reviews and straight up asked: 'Why haven't I been promoted yet?' No one can ever give me an

> answer. I know it wasn't me because if you looked at the numbers, my numbers were higher than everyone else's. So it wasn't that. I always felt it was the woman thing. There were older women in other departments getting promoted but then I wondered, maybe they have enough women managing directors. I don't know." [021]

In this quote, the participant reflects her realization that being a woman may have been the reason she was not advancing, prompting her shift to a more negative view of gender in relation to leadership. While many participants similarly discussed that the firm lacks clarity in developmental roadmaps and pathways to leadership within the firm, here, participants felt their lack of advancement and uncertainty in development may be related to their gender. For example, another participant reflected on how most of the men in the firm are connected to more senior men who help navigate the firm for them. She says:

> "I think to be successful, you have to have a godfather kind of person. I think that that is unfortunate reality that it's all about being plugged into the right circle, having the right backing of people who have some kind of power. And the people here with power, are the men."

She begins to make sense of her lack of advancement in relation to this necessary leadership support that she feels she is lacking:

> "I have been in the same role here for much too long. So just trying to get out of that has been sort of a hurdle. I could get discouraged and walk away or I could just keep trying to figure out how to crack the code and just kind of keep at it…. But moving along and moving up in the organization has been a challenge….. As I was saying before, you just got to have the right backing [from senior leaders]. What has happened to me is I felt that at every single year there's always been another person. And then when you stay behind, there is always going to be another person, and then just being able to be the one that someone finally says, "Okay, now it's your turn." [019].

Together we see how her sense of success as having a "godfather" and "the right backing", which most of the men at her level seem to have, complicates her thinking about why she may not be advancing. She reflects that "there's always another person" and wonders if it will ever be her turn, in light of the advantage that the men seem to have via their relationships with more

senior men. It makes sense then, how such reflections are associated with her experience of a negative shifting frame, in which she has come to see her gender as more of a challenge to her leadership.

Advancement and positive support overcomes gendered concerns (Positive Shift). On the other hand, women experiencing a positive shift often discussed how advancement in the organization allowed them to realize the value of being a women leader. While they first felt their gender created challenges or was not relevant, as they've advanced and received positive support, they recognized the positive relationship that can exist between their gender and leadership. For example, one participant talked about how she used to hold back her emotions early on and she strategically never took a sick day to be with her children for fear of how others would view her as a women; but now that she has advanced to a higher level, she says: "I've been able to bring more of my femininity into the role" and be more of herself as a woman in a way that allows her to feel like it is less of a constraint on her leadership. Another participant talked about initially disliking the attention her gender brought onto her, but as she's advanced, she appreciates the advantages her gender has given her:

> "I was really sensitive to the topic just because I've read so much and working in the male-dominated group for so long. I definitely never wanted to receive either accolades or criticisms solely because of my gender…But, it's funny, as I've advanced, I've been really fortunate because I've had a really strong personal independent support… If anything, I've had female clients. They've really gotten my back for me which has really helpful, obviously, from a progression perspective." [043].

What, then, differentiates those women that see shifts in their work context – primarily via advancement – as highlighting gender challenges (relating to a negative shift) versus relating to a positive shift? Further analysis revealed that most women expressing this intersection of context and a positive shifting frame experience discussed having extremely supportive

managers and leaders above them that pushed them along the way. For example, the same participant above discussed:

> "My boss really gave me a lot of high profile opportunities, and exposure to a lot of senior people inside the bank. Then [some] senior people forced me to do a rotation in [specific group]. I used "forced" lightly there, but that was a good opportunity and one that I might not have done if they did not push. But in hindsight, I guess from a developmental perspective, they really had the foresight and they cared about my career development to make me do something in the short run that I didn't necessarily want to do but that would help me develop and move up internally."

Similarly, another participant [008] experiencing a positive shifting frame commented: "I feel very supported in general so I just feel that I can go to my seniors and take them to a room and have a conversation with them about anything. So, I really feel that they give all the support that I need. I never come in to contact with a situation where I just feel helpless here. It's a good thing."

Thus, it appears that strong felt support in the context plays a role in how work context changes via advancement relate to a more positive or more negative shift in one's gender-leadership frame. Pragmatically speaking, this highlights the importance of organizational support and clarity in developmental paths for potentially shifting women's gender-leadership frames in a more positive direction.

Changing organizations shifts norms and images of leadership (positive shift). For some participants, a shift in the organizational context (most often from changing organizations) related to a positive shift in their frame. Some individuals contrasted the images of leadership in their prior firms as more gendered than in their current firm, thus prompting a positive shift in their gender frame. For example, one participant explained the situation at her former company, where images of leadership were quite gendered. She says:

> "[My former boss at a prior company] would say 'Well, you're really good at your job but you're not a leader.' He just took a very traditional view of leadership which is about how many meetings I've had and how much I can boss people around and how much golf I can play and how many drinks I can handle in the bar. I mean that was the boss I had [at my prior company]. It was really unbelievable… I was the only female business leader….He'd be the first one to admit that I did the best job in terms of managing the group and managing the P&L. But he just wanted me to act more like a guy and go out to drink and go out to dinner and go golfing and be a guy. He would take the guys on my team out for drinks and not invite me." [046]

This participant clearly experienced her gender as a disadvantage to her leadership with her former boss; yet in contrast, she talks about feeling quite different in this current organization where she can be herself and succeed as a leader based on what she does well, and this shift, she says, has allowed her to "feel less like a women leader here". Thus, the positive shift in her frame is associated with this shift in work contexts.

For others, changing organizational contexts allowed them to see the advantages that can come from different cultural norms around gender and support for women leaders. For example, the following participant reflected a positive shift in her frame as she notes the opportunities that have been afforded to her as a woman leader in this current organization compared to her prior firm:

> "[This firm] has a lot of great programs that they've been working on. I actually think this is a fabulous time in this industry to be a woman. I did come from [another firm], although I've been here for some time. [At my prior firm], not once had I been to an onsite or a program where it's specifically meant to develop woman leaders in the organization. So, just over the years at [this firm], there has been so many opportunities that the bank has given me in that respects." [008]

While the change in work contexts illustrated here all prompted a shift in the positive direction, it is possible that a change in cultural norms/organizations could also prompt a negative shift. If an individual moved from an organization in which they felt supported as a women leader to one in which little support existed, it is possible that a negative shift in one's gender-leadership frame

would occur. While such contextual shifts in that direction were not evident in the current data, some women discussed shifts in the culture within this organization over time, as new leadership has been brought on and the goals of the organization have changed. Nonetheless, while cultural shifts within the organization were mentioned by participants, they did not appear to relate to a change in one's experience of gender in relation to leadership that would prompt the experience of a negative shifting gender-leadership frame.

As these themes and quotations illustrate, participants often came to understand the intersection of their gender and leadership as shifting – in a more negative direction or a more positive direction – as a function of some change in their contexts relevant to gender and/or leadership.

Ambivalent Frame Experience: Defining

The ambivalent frame experience captures tension within how participants' construct their gender as relevant to their leadership. Ambivalence is defined as having simultaneously positive and negative orientations toward something or someone and is characterized by mixed feelings and conflicting ideas (Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt, & Pradies, Forthcoming). In the present study, participants experiencing an ambivalent frame often directly and explicitly expressed the tension they were experiencing around what it means to be a woman leader. For example, one participant said:

> "Being a woman leader…it's two-fold. On one hand you're like, 'Uhhhh, do we have to push the woman part again' like you're hearing so much about that, blah, blah, blah, you know. But I'm also not kidding myself. I'm sure when I was up for promotion, it helped that I was a woman. But on the other hand, it's like, the gentlemen that started in my group after me in the bank, they have been [at this level] for five years. Whereas, I had to ask my boss what I had to do to get there….I know that [the men] didn't have to do that. So, it's two-fold, ya know, I'm torn…. Yes, all of our management is men….but you know what, I've never had a situation that I can point to that said I'm at a disadvantage because I'm a woman. But, all of my clients, Beth, are 50 year old men. So, if you are trying to build a business or replicate your client base, then we should probably have a 50

> year old man doing my job, right? So, you know…I get it but at the same time I'm like 'Don't overdo it on the gender thing' because you want someone who is going to do the job. So, yeah I'm totally torn in how I think about it." [006]

It is quite evident that this participant is experiencing mixed feelings and conflicting ideas about what her gender means for her leadership. We see evidence of experienced tension in terms of if gender matters (relevance), how positive or negative being a woman is for her leadership (valence), and if/how she should be supported as a woman (collectivity beliefs). Echoing similar tensions, another participant expresses:

> "I struggle a lot with the whole you wanna get somewhere because you're good not because you're a woman. I would never ever wanna get somewhere because I was a woman. …So that's the one thing I struggle with. …I hope that if I do get anywhere or whatever that it's on merit and not on sex….you wanna be that leader because you're effective. Because you're good, not because you're a woman. …On the other hand…women just have not been given the opportunity. So you wanna give them that extra push that might help them get up there to try and be equal." [013]

In this case, the tensions arise from a belief that gender should not matter (no relevance), while at the same time recognizing the disadvantages that comes with being a woman leader (negative valence). While the above examples illustrate the explicit expression of tension, in some cases, the ambivalence was evident through concurrent expressions at opposing ends of particular dimensions of the frames. These participants believed that gender simultaneously helped *and* hindered their leadership (e.g., my gender is positive for my interpersonal style, but negative in terms of how others see me), or that it was irrelevant in some ways, but negative in other ways. For example, one participant discussed:

> "In my day to day work, I don't feel so much like my gender matters. I just do my role the best I can and try to build the relationships to be successful in what I do, no matter my characteristics. …But, it that frustrates me is that there is a belief that I'm in this role because I'm a mother. I'm not in the role because I'm a mother. I like it coz it gives me flexibility. I like it because …there is a whole host of things I'm learning. But this role is not necessarily seen as a progressive role … [in terms of] 'how do we think about the next level leader?' [016].

In this case, she does not feel her gender matters in her day to do work and to how she conducts herself, but it matters in a negative way for how others treat her and view her leadership potential as a mother in this role. In another example, a participant expressed "being a woman does not impact my decisions or what I do at work; but it creates challenges back because of non-work responsibilities" [057]. In such cases, I coded the frame experience as ambivalent because conflicting dimensions of the frames are expressed, even if the tension is not as explicitly expressed as in some of the above quotations. Relatedly, existing literature suggests that individuals may not always be conscious of their ambivalence, but it can still affect them (e.g., Ashforth et al, Forthcoming; Meyerson & Scully, 1995).

Contextual Themes Associated with Ambivalent Frame Experiences

Two combined elements of context contributed to this ambivalent frame experience by creating uncertainty in the relationship between gender and leadership for these participants: the firm's gender narrative and lack of clarity in career pathways in the firm. Individuals' interpretations and perceptions of these two contextual elements together open up uncertainty around what it means to be a woman in this firm, and more specifically what advancement of women as leaders means, contributing to participants' ambivalent frame experiences.

As evidenced in some of the previous quotations, participants experiencing ambivalent frames often expressed tensions in terms of how they perceive the *firm's gender narrative* –the firm's approach to and rhetoric around supporting women in the firm. Many participants interpreted the firm's gender narrative as being about increasing the number of women in senior roles in the firm, with comments such as: "So [the organization] has a quota for how many women they wanna hire in a year" and discussed programming and support for women as being about "increasing the number of women we have at higher levels." In interviews with executive

leaders, many quoted for me off-hand the ways in which their numbers of women had increased in the past few years, illustrating how salient the numerical narrative is at all levels of the firm. Yet, for participants experiencing an ambivalent frame, this interpretation of the firm's gender narrative led them to feel uncertain about what advancement of women in the firm is actually about. On the one hand, participants' echoed an appreciation for the attention given to women's initiatives in the organization and felt the focus was important. On the other hand, they worried that the emphasis throughout the firm (and a particular focus on simply hiring/promoting a certain percentage of women) may actually be undermining their qualifications. The below quote from a participant aptly reflects the connections between interpretation of the firm's gender narrative and her own ambivalent frame experience:

> "I think it's [gender stuff] important. Depending on how it's dealt with. I think it's – we've just gotten panda bears in the zoo [here]. And they're an endangered species and I said, 'I always feel like a panda bear because I'm a female [at this level]' and it's like 'oh let's take her', right? So I think and it's always in the back of my mind, 'Did I get that promotion because I'm a female or because I'm a female and they wanted to promote me?' You know what I'm absolutely positive that that came into play but I don't think that's the sole reason. I don't think that somebody puts you in a job that you – I don't think that they sit there and say, 'Oh, she's going to be awful at it but let's just do it anyway.' [004].

Another participant experiencing an ambivalent frame commented that the initiatives to promote women "feel like just a quota on paper. Okay, we hired so many women and okay we promoted women, we filled our quota, we're a great organization or something like that." [010]. She goes on to further echo ambivalence in her gender-leadership frame as tied to this interpretation of the firm's gender narrative. She says:

> "So I'm a female; I really have to work harder, I really have to go that extra mile or prove myself, I guess. I don't think men feel that way… I don't think it's as serious as within women like the [feeling that] I really have to prove myself, I have to make sure they do notice me and it's also try to separate that so its they're not noticing me because I'm a female, oh let's promote this whole diversity council stuff. But it's really because I do

> have a brain up here and I do matter and I am able to contribute something of value. So I think it's dealing with that, like you want to really give women their space but you also don't want it to be about women. Like it's that conflict. But then also I don't want it to be because I'm a woman. I want it to be because really I am capable." [010]

These mixed feeling about the firm's approach combined with a *lack of clarity in career pathway in the firm* to contribute to the broader ambivalence participants expressed around what it means to be a woman leader. Many participants experiencing an ambivalent frame felt quite unclear about broader developmental pathways in the firm. In the absence of an extremely supportive direct manager, they had little understanding of how and where they could advance to greater leadership; or, if they had advanced to a more senior level already (MD), they were unsure of why they got where they did (such as the reflected in the quote above from participant 004). As one participant with an ambivalent frame expressed: "No one can really talk to you about where I should go, what I should do for my next step or anything like that, so I'm trying to figure that out….there's not really any developmental discussions" [057].

A participant experiencing a positive shift – who feels very supported by her managers and clear in her pathways – echoes in the following quote how and why lack of developmental roadmaps can combine with the firm's gender narrative to create such ambivalence. She says:

> "I think it has to do with your team and your management and how much is communicated down to you. So, I think I mean my experience, there's great communication and I do feel yeah, [focusing on women] is an added benefit. So, for people that are not communicated to and they don't feel like they know the next step or their next role and then they just put into these programs [for women], then I don't think they really see the need for it or they can't see the added benefits and wonder 'why am I here, what is this going to do?'" [008]

Thus, for participants experiencing the ambivalent frames, this lack of clarity in career roadmaps within the firm combines with the above tensions in the firm's gender narrative to create

uncertainty around what is driving their advancement in the firm – their gender, or their own competence and qualifications.

Reinforcing Frame Experiences: Defining

I refer to the third frame experience as a reinforcing frame experience. While the above two experiences are either expressed as movement from one point to another (shifting), or as tension between dimensions (ambivalent), the reinforcing frame experience captures a more circular dynamic in which participants appear to remain in a perpetual loop within a particular dimension in the overall framework. In the current analysis, I find two general experiences of such reinforcement, which I call a *self-reliance* reinforcing frame experience and a *deficiency* reinforcing frame experience. I consider each below.

Self-Reliance Reinforcing Frame. This frame experience stays within the "not relevant" circle of the Figure 4.1. The reinforcing experience here captures a perpetual expression of gender as not really mattering to one's leadership. For example, participants expressed sentiments such as: "I never really identified as a woman leader; I don't really feel that push back" and "If you're good, (gender) doesn't matter." Yet beyond just perpetually seeing gender as not relevant, the core of this frame experience reflects a meritocratic ideal; that is, participants do not see their gender as having relevance for their leadership and advancement; rather, they believe if they perform well and work hard, they will succeed. Thus, I refer to this as "self-reliance". The frame experience is reinforcing because participants hold a perpetual orientation, such that they interpret what goes on around them, even if related to gender, from this perspective of self-reliance. For example, one participant expressed:

> "I don't think of myself as I'm a woman here. I've always thought of myself as an employee in the bank. I was aware that [there can be differences], but it didn't bother me. I was just aware that it was going to be different and I figured out ways to work around all of that.... Like when they wanted to do a social thing and end up being in a place

> where most men would like to go and not so much women, you went along with it…So I found that through the years that I don't feel like being a woman has been a barrier. Any of the barriers that I faced I think are my own." [002]

Here we see the strong emphasis on the self, such that even if any challenges are faced, she does not perceive them as relating to her gender, but rather any barriers she faces are her own. Another participant reflects a strong self-reliance, and even some resistant to the notion that gender may be important to her leadership at all. She says:

> "To say [I'm a woman leader] comes off to me almost as if your sole purpose is Betsy Ross and you're on a mission to just elevate women – period; that the objective there is more pro-women. Whereas to me, I do my job regardless of gender. I work really hard just like everyone else does and that should afford me the same opportunities as a man."

While a number of participants experienced a self-reliance reinforcing frame, elements of this frame experience are evident as part of some of the other frame experiences. For example, participants experiencing a negative shifting frame often expressed that at first, they felt their gender did not matter and they could just work hard (self-reliance); only to realize later on the challenges they faced (shift to negative valence). Relatedly, participants experiencing an *anticipated* negative shift in their frame, currently experience a self-reliance reinforcing frame. Nonetheless, it's important to note that the self-reliance frame experience is not only expressed by the more junior level leaders, or those at an earlier career stage. In fact, some of the higher level leaders with this frame experience were quite emphatic in their expressions of self-reliance. For example, the following participant at a more senior leadership level, emphasized that she has just made it happen on her own, despite her gender:

> "I switched over into [a group that was] very quantitative and absolutely no women were in it. Frankly, had I known what I was getting myself into, not because of the gender thing, but, had I known better, I would have realized I had no background and no credentials to do this because it was very quantitative. I didn't know what I didn't know which was interesting. It was a good thing because I just did it. I did do it and it worked, it worked really well. I look at the women now and I laugh. I tell them the stories. They can't even believe it. [They] always ask: "How did you do it?" I look at them and sort of like, 'You just do it.'" [041]

Women expressing self-reliance in these ways also reflected relatively low collectivity beliefs, such that they do not necessarily get involved with or value support and programming among women leaders specifically. For example, one participant experiencing a self-reliance reinforcing frame expressed:

> "In terms of the formal arrangement such as diversity council, I just really don't feel that they're doing much. They are really well-meaning. They're great people and truly they believe in what they're doing but I don't. I don't really participate in that….I don't really feel so close to all these initiatives, because it should not be an issue. We're focusing too much on that…We should simply approach everything as if there's nothing superior. Why do we even need to talk about it? Just act and perceive as if there's no issue. They're both just the same. Yes, there are differences in [individuals'] skill levels, but they are a different race or a different gender, it doesn't matter." [025]

Deficiency reinforcing frame. I refer to the other reinforcing frame experience as a deficiency reinforcing frame. In this case, participants experience a perpetual loop of disadvantage, such that they perceive their gender as creating disadvantages for their leadership, making it always harder to be a woman leader. These participants are stuck at the negative end of the valence dimension, reflecting a similar frame experience as the end point for the negative shifting frame above. Yet, these participants did not reflect on any shift that has taken place; rather they continually experience gender as a disadvantage for their leadership. For example, participants express: "It's harder being a woman leader" and "men will always have it easier in leadership." In many cases, participants experiencing a deficiency reinforcing frame make reference to the intersection of work and home lives as driving the deficiency. As one participant stated:

> "For me very personally … I find it difficult [being a woman] because I largely feel like the men that I work with have a different life outside of the office and I often feel -- what's the word? Just self-conscious about my priorities if I want to leave at 5:30 and go see my children and get back online at 8:30, and still dedicated and still doing what I need to do. But I want to go home and see my children before they go to bed." [034]

Here, participants perceive that it's harder to be a woman leader because women are juggling responsibilities at home that interfere with their leadership. Another participant echoed a similar perspective:

> "[Being a woman] is probably is more of a disadvantage because it leads to a certain level of uncertainty or questioning of one's decisions. The reality is…its harder [because I'm] a mother. -- I mean I work 12-hour days. I'm in by six and I leave by six, so that's been my path for the longest time I can remember, but the reality is that I'm also a mother of two children and I have to work that balance in my work life." [062].

Beyond work-life challenges, a few participants experiencing a deficiency reinforcing frame discussed the subtle discrimination they experience as woman leaders. For example:

> "Sexism still exists in this business although we've come a very long way…It's still there. I mean, I've had some ridiculous things happen to me. I'll give you an example: I had a boss say to me once, when I was out on maternity leave… 'Oh good news, your bonus wasn't prorated for you being out. Gee, I'd like to go on vacation for three months and not have my bonus prorated.' That was my boss. Just like things like that I have run into. So it's not so much sexual harassment, but it's these other things that somebody, a man, might say 'Well, you're being sensitive.' Am I really? You know what I mean? Not the blatant, like hitting on me and things like. I think it's the subtleties that continue to be a challenge as a woman leader." [034]

In these cases, gender is experienced as a disadvantage to one's leadership, based primarily on work-life constraints, as well as on how others treat women leaders. While similar to the core of the negative shifting frame experience, which ends at a point of deficiency, these participants did not recount any shift that occurred for them; rather they express a continual reinforcing frame of deficiency, at least in the context of the interview discussions.

Contextual Themes Associated with Reinforcing Frame Experiences

While each of these frame experiences are based on a reinforcing pattern in which an individual's belief about gender and leadership do not appear to shift or change, in analyzing these loops further, I find that these frame experiences are reinforced through elements of the context, particular to each type.

Participants experiencing a self-reliance reinforcing frame perceived the firm's definition of success as strongly tied to revenue generation. Even though varying definitions of success appear to exist in the firm, these participants tended to describe the most successful individuals in the firm as those who close the most deals and bring in the most revenue, commenting that "you have status when you are a person that generates the most money." In their views, revenue generation was the primary way to advance and be promoted (with little or no consideration of leadership as part of success/advancement). As one participant experiencing a self-reliance reinforcing frame expressed:

> "Success is defined by the business you bring in. Number of transactions, revenues, roles that were given in each transaction moving from the co-manager to kind of more important role on the transaction, bringing in bigger deals, more revenue…So the way these organizations work is there's fairly little recognition for what went into trying to bring the revenue. They focus only on the actual number of firms…In theory, [you need to be good] all around. But the reality is that your chance of promotion and your pay are things that are tied to the revenue number and as long as that revenue number is not great, it doesn't matter one that how great you perform during client meetings or how knowledgeable you are." [025]

Perceiving that success is based on these attainable, objective factors that are primarily in the individual's control (as opposed to more subjective factors such as "who you know") is aligned with the self-reliance frame experience in which an individual sees her own skill and hard work as mattering most for her leadership, rather than her gender. Individuals' experiencing a self-reliance reinforcing frame also appeared to disregard or diminish the firm's gender narrative and overall support for women. As one participant expressed:

> "I hate the fact that the organization spends so much time saying things like 'We want to hire more women.' I hate it. My view is why don't you want to hire more good people? Why don't you try to encourage the people that you see slipping away and figure out why that is? The fact that they happen to be women, identify why it is and keep them. Don't say, 'We need more women.' Say, 'We need more good bankers.' There's this whole class of people." [041]

While the ambivalent frame experience was related to uncertainty in the gender narrative (e.g., we don't love the focus on numbers, but recognize the need for support), individuals expressing a self-reliance frame experience disregard any need for support targeted at "women." Thus, their experience of this frame is further reinforced by these elements of context.

The firm's gender narrative also shaped participants' experiences of a deficiency reinforcing frame, yet in a different way. These participants discussed disconnects around what is espoused (changing the culture for women) and what is actually enacted (little real change in the culture). Many described this dynamic as "talking the talk, but not walking the walk" or as "just lip service." Such views reinforce for them that gender is a disadvantage for their leadership (deficiency frame experience), because they saw the firm's initiatives as enacting little real change in the culture. The following quote from a participant experiencing a deficiency reinforcing frame aptly reflects this disconnect:

> "Well I'll give you a really concrete example of the difference between what gets preached and what actually gets done in practice. So I do the staffing for the [name] group. So we'll go into these broad meetings that are [division] wide and that's where they call for great team work, work life balance, etcetera. But then you go to staff people and [higher level managers] will come up to me and say 'Why is this person only working 'til 8 o'clock? They have capacity.' Well, you know what, working 'til 8 o'clock is actually a pretty long day if you're doing it 7 days or 6 days a week even. So tell me which it is. Do you want me to give them work-life balance or do you want them to work 'til midnight? So it's funny you know that we sit around and talk about work-life balance but that's a culture we all aspire to have, but we seem unable to action it." [014]

Participants experiencing a deficiency reinforcing frame also expressed disconnects with images of leadership in firm. Similar to the experience of a negative shifting frame, images of leadership in the firm did not resonate with them, and thus further reinforced their frame experience that being a woman is a disadvantage for leadership. The following participant experiencing a deficiency frame reflects this association:

> "Yeah, I think it's maybe just very personal to me. I've never been a big self-promoter and I just do what I do. I don't try to be the loudest. I don't think four steps ahead in terms of how this is -- I mean, I certainly think multiple steps ahead because you have to. But in terms of the political side of it, I don't think four steps ahead, which I know and so I know that I didn't say the right thing in this crowd. I know how I project. I'm not as elegant in the context of meetings with other managers. I'm fluid. I'm just not that person who projects them self that way. I know that about myself so it makes me more timid, I think." [034]

Together, these examples illustrate how elements of context – definitions of success, firm's gender narrative, and images of leadership –both contribute to and reinforce participants' experiences of gender as not relevant to leadership (self-reliance) or as a perpetual disadvantage for leadership (deficiency).

Theorizing about Lines of Business

The above contextual themes and connections to frame experiences focused primarily on socio-psychological elements of context; that is, the patterns of behavior, shared beliefs, and informal norms and practices within the organizational context (Ashmore et al, 2004). Recall that my focus on these more subjective elements of context was purposeful, as I sought to understand how individuals' experiences in and perceptions of their everyday organizations may relate to the gender-leadership frame they construct. However, the firm also provided me with archival and demographic data, which reflected variation in more objective contextual factors such as participants' line of business, level, geographic location, and high-potential designation. These more objective factors – the social structural elements of context comprising "formal positions, rules and procedures" (Ashmore et al, 2004: p.103) – may underlie the socio-psychological elements of context discussed above. For the most part, the particular frame experiences seem to fall relatively evenly across these factors; yet, as illustrated by the blue shaded cells in Table 5.2, there is a potential tendency in terms of how the frame experiences are associated with each line of business. Therefore, here I offer some tentative theorizing on

associations between lines of business and the frame experiences, based on the core cultural elements within each area. While the firm is male-dominated overall (numerically at all levels, in leadership, and in terms of the industry), there is some variation in the gendered culture within each of the three lines of business, which may help explain the potential associations.

In the *trading division*, female participants and the executive leaders described gendered challenges originating in the traditional masculine culture of trading stocks. Words such as "machismo" and "male bravado" were used to characterize trading floor norms; yet, many participants claimed that this firm's trading floor felt "better than that of many other companies" in terms of its masculine cultural norms. As the table illustrates, the highest percentage of *ambivalent frame experiences* occurred in the trading division, which may be related to this undercurrent of a masculine culture in the industry at large that is possibly lessened a bit in this current organization. Therefore, participants do not feel wholly negative about their gender in relation to their leadership, but are still tentative and ambivalent about what it means. Additionally, there were also a high percentage of *positive shifting frame experiences* in the trading division, which also follows this narrative that the trading culture, while at a foundation is masculine, has possibly become more inviting to women especially in this firm.

In the *investment banking division*, participants described challenges arising from the "long hours culture." They recognized long hours as endemic to the industry (versus specific to this organization), and thus noted that it would be pretty difficult for the firm to do anything to really shift this culture. Participants in the other two divisions often pointed to the long hours culture of the investment banking division as much worse than anything they faced in their own divisions. We see that the highest percentage of *negative shifting frame experiences* occurred in the investment banking division. In a division in which the long hours are perceived as

engrained and harder for women, it makes sense that even women who came in feeling like their gender may not be relevant, experience a negative shift in their frame within this division.

Finally, as noted in the methodology chapter, the *internal consulting* division has the highest percentage of women relative to the other divisions, perhaps because of the more predictable and reasonable hours that individuals in this division work. Participants in this division reflected positively on greater representation of women, yet discussed challenges in terms of how others perceive their group as more of a "support role" primarily inhabited by women. As illustrated in the table, the highest percentage of *reinforcing frame experiences* (both self-reliance and deficiency) came from this division. This division has a lot of women in it, which for some, may foster an experience of self-reliance ("gender doesn't matter"); or for others, fosters a sense of deficiency ("gender will always be a disadvantage") because of how others in more male-dominated divisions perceive the group and what individuals within it aspire to (e.g., "they see us as the mommy track.")

While no definitive conclusions should be drawn from such preliminary analyses, I have offered some tentative theorizing which suggests that the above socio-psychological elements of context may actually be manifestations of wider social structural factors, such as the formal structure and positions within each line of business.

Summary

In this chapter, I demonstrated women's experiences of gender-leadership frames within this context are varying and dynamic. I found three primary lived experiences of gender-leadership frames– shifting, ambivalent, and reinforcing – which were associated with particular elements of the organizational context. Figure 5.1 illustrates the high level connections between context and frame experiences discussed in this chapter. While I depict the context on the left

and the frame experiences on the right, the relationship between these two are surely intertwined and possibly recursive, as evidenced by some of the quotations above. For some frame experiences, elements of context appear to prompt the frame experience – for example, with the negative shifting frame in which a participant explicitly states advancing or having children prompted a shift in how she thought about being a woman leader. However, for other frame experiences, the association appears much more intertwined, suggesting that contextual elements may drive the frame experiences, or that the broader frame orients how individuals interpret and perceive the context. For example, with the ambivalent frame experience, it is possible that uncertainty in the firm's gender narrative and development paths leads to an experience of ambivalence in terms of what it means to be a woman leader. Alternatively, it may be that individuals experience a guiding ambivalent frame, which leads them to interpret these contextual elements with a similar uncertainty. Nonetheless, the findings here suggest that the proximal context of an individual's organizational lives is associated with the ways in which they experience their gender in relation to their leadership.

While my interviews captured participants' personal contexts as it relates to gender/leadership, such themes did not appear to be systematically associated with the frame experiences in the same way as these organizational themes. One particular theme described in this chapter captures an intersection in personal and work context ("Shift in personal context intersects with images of leadership), but generally speaking, the association between the organizational context and the frame experiences was more evident. Personal contexts may have a more distal association with how women consider their gender in relation to their leadership; but the present analysis suggests that elements of the perceived organizational context had a more proximal influence on the dynamic lived experiences of the frames (e.g., the firm's gender

narrative contributing to an ambivalent frame experience). In the next chapter, I consider how these frame experiences have implications for women's leadership development.

CHAPTER 6:
SEEING MYSELF AS A LEADER: CONNECTING FRAME EXPERIENCES TO LEADER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter focuses on the final research question, to consider how constructions of gender and leadership have implications for women's leader identity development. Through my analysis, I found that each frame experience – shifting, ambivalent, and reinforcing – is interrelated with forms of leader identity development. Specifically, I saw an association among these frame experiences and two components of leader identity development, which I refer to as *self-questioning* and *enactment* of the leader identity. *Self-questioning* captures the concerns individuals have in coming to see themselves as leaders, grouped around five common themes: certainty, aspirational, credibility, efficacy, and authenticity concerns. *Enactment* captures the ways in which an individual approaches and acts on his/her development as a leader, and includes six common types: personalize, amplify, engage, disengage, gender, limit. In my data, specific types of self-questioning and enactment come together to constitute an individuals' leader identity development at a point in time – that is, how an individual is coming to see herself as a leader. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 provide definitions for the types of self-questioning and enactment and illustrative data for each. Earlier in this dissertation, I noted that few studies empirically examine leader identity development, and those that have, tend to focus on the strength or centrality of one's leader identity (e.g., how important is leader to my overall sense of self). The findings presented here expand on this by revealing the self-questioning involved in coming to see oneself as a leader and different enactments of leader identity; thus, offering two components of leader identity development that move beyond strength and centrality.

In this chapter, I present findings that demonstrate how experiencing one's gender in relation to leadership in a particular way (frame experience) is interrelated with particular types

of self-questioning and enactment of leader identity. These links became clear to me when I juxtaposed the different enactment types I found in my data with the different frame experiences, and found that certain enactment types were more common in relation to certain frame experiences. Further, I also saw that certain enactment types were inter-related with particular types of self-questioning. The following sections are organized around these associations that emerged in my data, which are summarized in Figure 6.1. As illustrated in the figure, I suggest that particular types of self-questioning act as the mechanism connecting the frame experience to the enactment individuals undertake to develop (or not) their leader identities. For example, individuals expressing a negative shifting frame engaged in self-questioning primarily around authenticity (can I be myself as a leader?) and aspirations (who/what do I aspire to be as a leader?), which is associated with a personalization of the leader identity. Importantly, however, this is not meant to suggest that participants with a certain frame experience *only* express these types of self-questioning and identity enactment (many new leaders likely express some form of certainty, credibility, efficacy, authenticity and aspirational self-questioning, for example). Yet, what I do find is that when a particular frame experience exists, it highlights certain questions within participants' developing selves as leaders which are related with certain types of enactment. This suggests a variance relationship among frames and these components of leader identity development, such that an individual expressing a particular frame experience may be more likely to focus her self-questioning and enactment of the leader identity in a certain way. Within each section below, I first define each enactment type and discuss the most common frame experience it was associated with, as well as the types of self-questioning that were inter-related. To illustrate these links, I offer representative cases of two participants whose narrative reflects the interrelationship between the frame experiences and self-questioning/enactment

depicted in Figure 6.1. Presenting the data in this way allowed me to provide a holistic picture of participants' experiences, which better illustrates the intertwining I saw in the data. Because the associations arose by arranging the enactment types and self-questioning themes in line with different frame experiences, it did not make sense to fracture and slice individuals' stories because these links would be less visible. Rather, by telling the stories of individuals who reflect each of the overall associations I saw, I am better able to illustrate the inter-relationships between particular frame experiences with self-questioning and leader identity enactment. Then, to demonstrate that these connections were prevalent in the data beyond these two cases, I also include Table 6.3, which shows that particular enactment types were most common in association with particular frame experiences. As the table illustrates, there are some deviations from the common associations I found, so following the representative cases within each section, I summarize the most common links I found and also consider any relevant deviations in the data.

Negative Shifting Frame Experience Relates to Leader Identity Personalization

The first type of leader identity enactment I discuss is leader identity personalization. In this case, individuals enact the leader identity in a way that better fits who they can be or want to be as a leader. For example, participants discussed focusing on "leading by example" or being "leaders of the culture" because of one's historical knowledge of the firm, even if such approaches do not necessarily fit broader perceived images of leadership in the firm. As Table 6.3 illustrates, I found that leader identity personalization was associated primarily with the experience of a negative shifting frame. This means participants that reflect a frame experience in which they have come to realize the challenges their gender creates for their leadership (negative shift) also enact the leader identity through personalization. Further, this association

between a negative shifting frame experience and personalizing the leader identity is related to self-questioning of authenticity and aspirations. The experience of a negative shifting frame highlighted concerns such as "can I be myself as a leader?" (authenticity) and "what do I aspire to as a leader?" (aspirations), and these concerns were inter-related with a personalization of the leader identity. Below, I use two representative cases to illustrate these links among negative shifting frame experiences, authenticity and aspirational self-questioning, and personalization of the leader identity.

Personalize Case #1: Negative Shifting Frame. In this first case, a summary of Sarah's [045] interview illustrates the connections between a negative shifting frame experience and personalizing of the leader identity, primarily through her experience of authenticity and aspirational concerns. Sarah expressed core elements of a negative shifting frame experience, reflecting that she used to think her gender did not matter, but as she's advanced, she is facing unique challenges as a women leader. She discussed that now, more than ever, she feels like she needs a female role model or mentor that can "help me navigate these challenges unique to women; in terms of how to be better perceived, get my point across, in a way that is okay for a woman to do." As Sarah thinks about being a woman leader in this way, it is not surprising that she also engages in self-questioning around authenticity in seeing herself as a leader. For example, she discussed how she has pushed herself to be more proactive in her leadership, even though that doesn't necessarily feel authentic to who she is. She explains:

> "Like everyone will say 'Okay, we're going to this meeting today….' and I'm like, 'I want to come.' Literally I had to say that and that's not like me at all. I never invite myself to brunch with friends, you know? If they invite me, I go. If they don't, I don't say, 'Hey, I'd love to join you.' But here I had to kind of conjure up the courage to have to do that, even if it doesn't feel natural. To just be more proactive. That's the only way to do it; the only way to be noticed as a leader."

Sarah is also questioning and trying to figure out who she wants to be and what she aspires to as a leader. In our interview, she wavered back and forth about what she really aspired to, reflecting aspirational self-questioning. She discussed some leadership aspirations, but she was unsure if the "grandest scale" of leadership was for her. This aspirational self-questioning is evident in the following quotation:

> "I don't need to be the person who [runs the whole desk]. It's more that [people are] coming to you because they really want to ask you, not because they're being nice in asking me. So that's one of the things I look for…. I think [what I aspire to] doesn't even have to be at the grander scale, like obviously this is a global bank so obviously a seat at the table on a higher level would require me to run the whole desk. But even locally, just like within our group, just to be a person that they come to is what I want."

In association with this aspirational self-questioning, we see evidence of Sarah personalizing the leader identity, such that she sees her development of a sense of self as a leader about having people come to her and ask questions because she has specific knowledge, not necessarily because she is a leader on the grandest scale. Thus, Sarah is not necessarily aspiring to "leadership on the grandest scale", but rather to her, being a leader is about "being the person that others come to" creating a more personalized sense of leadership that feels comfortable to her. Further evidence of this personalization is apparent as she says:

> "I like having an area of specialty, like… when people come to me and say, 'What's your view on the market?' They're coming to you because they really want with you, not because they're being nice in asking me. …Like the smaller committee meetings which senior guys probably don't even know about, just specific to our group. Every time we're evaluating a deal [in this group], I want to be the person that still has a say. …So, when I see my future I want to be one of the people who have voices that need to be heard [in those group meetings]."

Personalizing the leader identity in this way may be empowering in her own sense of being a leader in this more specific sense (e.g., "people come to me" and "I have a say…"), but may also serve to downshift her aspirations for greater advancement to higher levels of leadership in the

firm (e.g., running "the whole desk" and leadership on a "grander scale"). Thus, here we see the inter-relationship between self-questioning and enactment, which are expressed by a participant that also experiences a negative shifting frame.

Personalize Case #2: Negative Shifting Frame. Next, I use the case of Elaine [031] to illustrate similar connections among a negative shifting frame experience, self-questioning around authenticity and aspirations, and the personalization of leader identity. Elaine experienced a negative shifting frame, as she says "I'm finding that I need to appreciate more that I'm a woman doing this" and recounts that her biggest struggle has been trying to "figure out how to actually be a woman in this industry." Elaine also expresses authenticity and aspirational concerns in enacting her leader identity. Elaine reflected on how she tried to fit the perceived image of leadership in the firm, which she describes as "the asshole in the corner office." She talks about trying too hard to be aggressive and fit in and that she "won't wear [her] femininity on [her] sleeve", echoing authenticity concerns, as Elaine tries to figure out if/how she can be herself as a leader, and not just try to fit in. Further, her aspirational concerns reflect related questioning, as she says she has been struggling to figure out how she can be a leader but on her own terms (e.g., she says: "how can I achieve success in terms of how I see it?"). Elaine discussed her aspirations for greater leadership, but she has concerns about how to achieve this while also maintaining a sense of balance with her family. She says: "I need to be the breadwinner for my family, but also have time for my family."

Elaine's self-questioning around authenticity and aspirations is also interrelated with personalizing the leader identity. Given the content of her specific concerns, Elaine's development seems to focus on personalizing her sense of self as a leader to fit her personal and professional context. For her, this means possibly leaving this organization to open her own

smaller investment banking business, as she feels like this the only way to be a leader in this industry, but have some sense of balance. She says:

> "There are [others] who have left major firms like this to go do what I do in smaller shops because as I said, you're selling advice. So if I decide [this organization's] culture has too much face time to it or something, I don't wanna deal with all the bureaucracy, the administration headaches, I'm just gonna setup my own little shop. I'll do a couple of deals a year and I'll make my money for my family. That's a harder road unless you've got a good rolodex but it's the work-life balance alternative when you're in investment banking."

Such reflections from Elaine came up in the context of our interview discussion focused on who she is and wants to be as a leader. In her case, she saw opening her own investment banking "shop" as a way of being a leader in the industry, but also better fitting who she is, thus personalizing the leader identity in a way that felt right for her. Thus, we see the interrelationship between her authenticity and aspirational self-questioning and this personalization of the leader identity, again, coming from a participant that experienced a negative shifting frame.

Summary. In these two representative cases, we see participants that experienced a negative shifting frame also questioning their authenticity and aspirations as leaders and personalizing their leader identities to better fit who they feel they are and can be as leaders (as opposed to focusing on fitting broader definitions of who leaders are and should be within this firm). Given a frame experience in which being a woman leader is now seen as a challenge it makes sense that it would relate to personalizing the leader identity in a way that feels better for "me" (or perhaps for "me, as a woman").

Beyond the negative shifting frame experience, some participants experiencing a deficiency reinforcing frame also showed evidence of such personalization, which is not surprising given that the negative shifting frame experience (above) essentially "ends" at the

point of the deficiency reinforcing frame experience. For example, one participant experiencing a deficiency frame [037] echoed elements of leader identity personalization when she said:

> "…leadership for me is not necessarily leading in a business, but being a leader in the community and having some social responsibility. That's a thing that I would say that I struggle the most with as a professional now, is the fact that you can't do everything. You can't be a community leader and help solve issues that face society and be a leader in your organization, because it's not -- there's only so much time, right?"

However, as also evident in this quotation, she seems to be disengaging with her leader identity in the context of her work and this organization, as she notes that she cannot be both a community leader and a leader in her organization. So, even though there is some evidence of personalization, her primary enactment of leader identity within the work domain is more aligned with the common associations discussed below for deficiency frames. In contrast, participants personalizing their leader identities primarily did so within the context of their work domain.

Positive Shifting Frame Experiences Relates to Leader Identity Amplification

Another type of enactment I found in the data was leader identity amplification. In this case, individuals broaden their leader identity, so that their sense of who they are and can be as leaders extended to include a responsibility for "leading women" more broadly. For example, participants talked about "feeling accountable as a woman leader" and "feeling a responsibility for other women leaders." Such amplification of one's leader identity in this way was primarily associated with positive shifting frame experiences. Participants who discuss working to make their gender not matter or realizing gender is an opportunity for their leadership (positive shift) also enacted their leader identity in a way that expanded the responsibilities they saw as part of their leadership. For some, the amplification was interrelated with questioning around aspirations, considering who they want to be as leaders in a meaningful way. For others, the mechanism was certainty self-questioning, such that this positive shift highlighted for them a

stronger certainty in their leader identities, which they want to help other women similarly realize (amplify). Again, I draw on two representative cases to illustrate the links between the experience of a positive shifting frame, self-questioning around aspirations and certainty, and an amplification of the leader identity.

Amplify Case #1: Positive Shifting Frame. First, I use Leah [017] to illustrate connections between the positive shifting frame experience, leader identity certainty, and amplification of the leader identity. Recall that the positive shifting frame experience followed two primary patterns. For Leah, her shift was from experiencing gender as a disadvantage to her leadership, to now seeing her gender as less relevant. She had a strong narrative of working strategically to make her gender not matter to her leadership, and in doing so, strengthened her sense of certainty as a leader. She discusses her realization that she had to learn to manage her image internally and "play the political game" in order to advance and succeed in leadership. She admits: "I've had to change who I am to make it here" but in doing so, she says she has moved from a point where her gender used to hold her back, yet now "I worry much less [about being a woman]." Leah now finds herself with greater certainty as a leader. She discussed being a top leader in the industry she covers and she says: "I just focus on [gender] less, because I'm a leader in what I do."

Leah also echoes a sense of amplifying her leader identity. She feels responsible for helping other women come to the same understanding that she has – to this point where she can make her gender not matter and feel more certain in her leadership. Leah organized some informal networking events for women in her group and they have been well-received in the firm. When I asked her why she was moved to do this, she responded:

> "Because I never really had that [a community of support among women] or had little snipits of it earlier in my career and the reality is after doing this for [so many] years,

> women do have unique challenges. It's just that we do and to try to think that everybody's on the equal playing field is dreaming. And so I think having at least a stronger network mass between the women is a good thing to have….I'm just thinking it's another tool to help fortify any strong female candidates, just having that additional opportunity in relationship building is a good thing to have because so much of business is networking."

While in her own frame experience, she moved to now see gender as more neutral for her leadership, she realizes that she had to work to get to the point she is at now and make this positive shift. She looks back at the process she has gone through to get to this point of more certainty, and is motivated to assist other women in overcoming challenges to realize a positive sense of gender and leadership in a similar way. Together, we see the inter-relationship between certainty and amplification of the leader identity, from a participant that experienced a positive shifting frame.

Amplify Case #2: Positive Shifting Frame. Another participant, Fran [039], also illustrates connections between the experience of a positive shifting frame and an amplification of the leader identity, which for her, is inter-related with aspirational self-questioning. Fran experienced a positive shifting frame as she talks about initially feeling gender constrained her as a leader but now feeling like her gender is an advantage to her leadership. She says: "it took me a while to own my voice….to own my leadership" but now, she sees how "I have inherent advantage when I walk into a room" because she is a strong woman that gets noticed. Thus, she has overcome the disadvantages to realize the opportunity her gender creates for her leadership.

Fran's aspirational self-questioning is related to this shift because as she is considering where she wants to head and who she wants to be as a leader, it is oriented around providing more support for women. She says:

> "I do think it means that I need to spend more time making sure that the younger [women] have a mentor. I've never had a mentor…I think it's really, really important for

> women to do that for each other. I don't know that we always know the things we should know."

She reflected back on what was missing for her earlier in her career, as it took her sometime to really internalize her success. Now, having worked through this to make a positive shift, Fran is motivated to create these changes for the next generation of women. She says:

> "I don't know what it is specifically, but it's to make sure…that women are getting that same [as the men]. That they're getting the right messages about things that are important to do that aren't written in your career goals…that there are other qualitative things to be doing. And I think it's really important for senior women to make sure you help junior women understand that and help them understand they can have a life, too."

Fran amplified her leader identity in these ways, as she's taken on mentoring of junior women as part of her responsibility. She says: "I take mentoring pretty seriously…I don't know that I'm a very good mentor, but I have a couple of people who I sort of mentor, some more formally and some less formally." With Fran's case, we see how amplification and aspirational self-questioning are linked as they both relate to helping future generations of women, which is also linked to her positive shifting frame experience.

Summary. In these two representative cases, participants experiencing a positive shifting frame also amplify their leader identities to include a greater responsibility for leading and supporting women. For some, this is inter-related with certainty self-questioning, such that the positive shifting frame allowed them to feel more certain as leaders; while for others, their aspirational self-questioning also relates to finding more meaning in their leadership. Such links make sense, given that the experience of a positive shifting frame involves coming to see one's gender as irrelevant or an advantage for one's leadership, so these women see it as their responsibility to reach out and help other women come to this same realization.

Beyond the positive shifting frame experience, some other participants at the MD level, echoed a sense of feeling responsible for helping other women; however, these participants did not 'amplify' their leader identities in the same way as the women with a positive shifting frame. They mentioned in passing specific ways in which they may reach out to other women, but they did not extend their sense of selves as leaders to include this responsibility. For example, one participant with a deficiency frame experience (primarily driven by work-life responsibilities) said: "The responsibility, I feel, as a female leader is largely centered around women who are having families. I very specifically try to reach to women who are pregnant, and tell them 'use me as a resource….I can tell you the real deal." Here, she echoes a sense of responsibility, but in a very defined way that is not discussed as encompassed within her broader capacity as a leader. Relatedly, some participants experiencing an ambivalent frame mentioned reaching out to other women, but were resistant to truly "amplify" their identities in this way. They were not sure if they wanted to be a part of promoting a culture in which women are seen as requiring special treatment, nor were they certain that pushing women to advance in such an environment was the best approach. As one participant experiencing an ambivalent frame expressed: "I have problems with broad strokes….and I kind of feel like, what am I putting them into? Am I sending them into a firestorm, they're going to detest?" Thus, while supporting and feeling responsible for other women was echoed throughout the data, the true extension and amplification of leader identity was primarily evident among participants experiencing a positive shifting frame.

Ambivalent Frame Experiences Relate to Leader Identity Engagement

The next type of enactment emerging from my analysis was leader identity engagement. In this case, I saw participants working to see themselves as leaders through active commitment

to developing and furthering their leadership. For example, participants echoed ideas such as "building my brand within the firm" and "show[ing] what I can do and keep pushing and moving it forward." As table 6.3 illustrates, this type of leader identity enactment was most prevalent in individuals experiencing ambivalent frames. Participants that experienced tension around what it means to be a women leader also showed evidence of engaging their leader identity in a way that actively helped them to see themselves more as leaders (and likely less as a function of "is it just become I'm a woman?"). The ambivalent frame experiences was also associated with self-questioning of one's certainty (how sure am I that I'm a leader) and credibility (do others see me as a leader here?) in relationship to this desire to further engage their leader identities.

The active engagement in the leader identity took a different form, depending on the participants' level in the firm. For participants at the MD level, their engagement in the leader identity was more of a rationalization. While they had "made" it to this level of leadership, they engaged in the leader identity as a way of justifying for themselves why they are deserving of this level of leadership. On the other hand, for participants at the D/VP level (at earlier stages on the developing leaders trajectory) the engagement took a different form, likely because they still saw themselves as desiring to reach this higher level of leadership. For them, engaging in the leader identity was more of an active searching for ways to show their leadership and garner the support they felt they needed to continue to advance. Below, I offer two representative cases of participants at different levels to illustrate the intertwining among the ambivalent frame experience, certainty and credibility concerns, and engagement in one's leader identity.

Engage Case #1: Ambivalent Frame. In the case of Patricia [004], the links between the ambivalent frame experience, certainty and credibility self-questioning, and engagement in the leader identity are evident. Patricia experienced an ambivalent frame as illustrated earlier with

her reflections on feeling like a "panda bear being paraded around" because she is one of a few female MDs, but also hoping that she was put into the leadership role because others think she can do it well, not just because she's a woman. As evidenced in earlier quotations in Chapter 5, this uncertainty extends into Patricia's sense of self as a leader. She reached a senior level of leadership, but admits that: "I keep getting promoted, but I'm not sure why" and she often wonders: "Did I get that promotion because I'm a female or because I'm a female *and* they wanted to promote me?" Such sentiments illustrate self-questioning around how certain she is feeling in her leader identity in association with the ambivalent frame.

Patricia was also making sense of if others see her as a credible leader. She was unsure if she got to this point just because she's a woman, or because she deserved it. In line with this, she is concerned that the "right" people may not recognize who she really is and can be as a leader. She reflects such credibility concerns in the following quotation:

> "And when push comes to shove and [the top leaders] all sit around the table at the end of the year and they discuss executive compensation, I don't want people to go who the hell is that, right? I mean I know the three biggies I know the people that you need to know. But at the same time there are all these other people and I want them to know what I do, who I am, so that one day as I hope for in theory, I climb that ladder that people don't just go who?"

In association with this questioning around certainty and credibility, I saw Patricia working to actively engage in her sense of self as a leader as she discussed ways in which she was trying to prove to herself, and to others, that she deserved to be a leader. The following quote illustrates well the intertwining of her ambivalent frame and the certainty and credibility self-questioning within her leader identity:

> "I look at my progression into leadership, I always think I've kind of fallen into it ass backwards kind of thing… I never looked for it…And obviously people above me saw qualities that might be good as a leader but I never saw it. Whereas if you look at my male counterpart, he has wanted that, he's wanted it from the minute he got into this industry. And he still wants it. He still wants to be [the top guy] and I don't. Yeah I

> would like to continue up the ladder but I don't want [top guy's] job. But I have this executive coach … it's funny because she gets so mad when you know I say "It's just luck" or "I just fell into it." She says, "You didn't fall into it", people see these things. But I would say sometimes, I catch myself and go, "What am I doing here?" I've got to give a leadership [discussion] on Friday […] and I'm like how did I get here, you know I feel like a bit of a fraud sometimes. But here I am."

We see quite clearly here how Patricia is making sense of if/how her gender plays a role in her leadership, and the connection of that to the certainty and credibility she feels as she comes to see herself as a leader. Given these dynamics, the following quote reflects further the ways in which Patricia is more fully engaging in the leader identity, given this self-questioning and ambivalence:

> "So it turns out that I can do it and I think I do it pretty well. I'm still learning nuances because it's still relatively new to me, but I'm sure everybody does that. I'm learning to take a step back, to see the forest for the trees, to not panic which I think is one of the reasons that people saw something in me. I'm working on delegating. .. I want to make sure that what's going out is what we were looking for, it's what the vision is, it's on message or whatever it were if you want to use jargon. So I could say that is part of being a leader. The other thing is simply providing an outlet for those people that work under you to come to, to voice, to be a sounding board, to listen, to help grow their careers because obviously people did that for me, and to provide – will I guess, separate and yeah it can be linked in to that is being a mentor. So that's it. I'm doing it, even if I feel a bit like I just got lucky."

Thus, the interrelationship between Patricia's self-questioning and her engagement in the leader identity by rationalizing that she is doing it is evident, and she is also someone who reflected an ambivalent frame experience.

Engage Case #2: Ambivalent Frame. In another case, Allison [016] also reflects the intertwining of the ambivalent frame experience, certainty and credibility concerns, and an engagement in her leader identity. Allison's experience of an ambivalent frame was reflected by the fact that she feels her gender matters less in her day to day experiences but more so in terms of how others see her in her role, particularly because she feels like "there is a belief that I'm in

[this] role because I'm a mother but I'm not in the role because I'm a mother." Her self-questioning reflects concerns with building her credibility in terms of how others perceive her as a leader, as well as building her own certainty. She says:

> "I think here because the way the role is structured, people don't see you outside of this role. So it limits potentially what you're seen as being capable of, so it's really about convincing people that you could take that on. …Maybe it won't be too long before I feel a bit more confident about that but it's probably a little bit about the confidence to know that when I'm in a room full of senior executives, what I say matters most of the time….I do think it's showing what you know in the right appropriate way."

In this quotation, we see credibility and certainty concerns and some evidence of engaging her sense of self as a leader, as she focuses on convincing people she can take on greater leadership. In her case, she talks about further engaging her leader identity by trying to be more proactive in meetings so that people hear her and notice what she can do. She says:

> "For me I think [my development is] based in the short term on proactiveness. And figuring out, is there another way I can do it? So being a little bit reflective on myself which I would say in the last couple of years I probably wasn't as reflective [because] I was so busy trying to learn the job. Now that I've been in the job I can be more reflective and think through it….I'm really trying to build the confidence to know that when I'm in a room full of senior executives, what I say matters."

Allison went on further to talk about how she is working hard to show her leadership in her work with senior executives, especially when things do not necessarily go as she would like them to go. The following quote shows further evidence of her working to engage with her leader identity in these ways:

> "I'm just trying to, in a way, let the water roll off my back and not be frustrated and think through okay how might I approach in a different way? How can I really be consistent? … I'd say the other thing is I've been really trying to advocate for my [team] differently….and that has helped a little bit…Like, let's be engaged and let's think through it and I would say one thing I've tried to bring out in my role is be practical in our approach, so that…[we get] some bang for our buck out of it. So let's have the conversation and then afterwards let's do the engagement…let's have the right conversations and let's make sure that we are supporting each other."

Summary. Thus, with these two cases we see participants experiencing ambivalent frames, engaging the leader identity, perhaps as a way to sort through their ambivalence around gender and leadership. Engaging the leader identity and working to prove to oneself and others that "I can do this", may be a response to the tension they feel around what it means to be a woman leader here. They are working hard to engage their leader identities in spite of the uncertainties within their ambivalent frames, and the certainty and credibility self-questioning associated with that. Importantly, the ways in which these participants talk about furthering their development is in line with what they see as firm-defined leadership. They are doing what they need to do to advance to greater and more certain leadership in terms of the perceived path to success in this organization. However, as detailed below, not all participants experiencing ambivalent frames engaged in the leader identity in these ways. As discussed next, rather than fully engage and commit to developing their leader identity in a way that aligns with firm definitions of leadership, some participants experiencing an ambivalent frame end up "gendering" their sense of self as leaders. I consider this type of enactment next.

Ambivalent Frame Experiences Relate to Leader Identity "Gendering"

In some cases, I saw participants "gendering" their leader identities, such that they enact and express their leadership in ways that are stereotypically feminine. For example, women discussed focusing on the "softer skills" and being the "emotionally supportive leader" for junior employees. One woman even labeled the way that she and her male co-leader split up the roles as: "we want it to be more like mom and dad." For more junior employees, such gendering took the form of taking on administrative tasks for the group, for example, creating the schedule for the team "because that gives me something to lead." Importantly, participants themselves do not explicitly express this as a "gendering" of their leader identities, but they often made sense of

these ways they were enacting their leadership in contrast to how the men may do it (e.g., I focus on the softer side, while he focuses on leading the business). Thus, from an analytical perspective, I refer to this as "gendering" of their leader identities, such that they take on the stereotypically feminine tasks of leadership – the softer, interpersonal, or administrative tasks, which they frame as outside of the day-to-day leading of the business. While various participants made mention of such ideas, as a form of leader identity enactment, this response was by far most prominent among women experiencing ambivalent frames (as Table 6.3 depicts). In a sense, this is the alternative path to the previous engagement we saw from other women with ambivalent frame experiences. The mechanisms linking the ambivalent frame and this type of enactment are different than the above; in this case, self-questioning of one's aspirations and efficacy were interrelated with gendering their leader identities. Paradoxically, this move toward gendered leadership seems to increase ambivalence about their own leadership and gender within the firm. Below, I offer two representative cases to illustrate these connections.

Gendering Case #1, Ambivalent Frame. In the case of Anna [013], associations among an ambivalent frame experience, aspirational and efficacy self-questioning, and the gendering of her leader identity is evident. Anna's experience of an ambivalent frame was expressed with notions such as: "…you wanna get there because you're good, not because you're a women" but at the same time recognizing that "women have a long way to go....[and] that means you have to be better than the man" to make it. She was very torn on the firm's approaches to supporting women, not sure if it was good to support women in these ways or if it called attention to gender rather than merit; reflecting the varying dimensions of her ambivalent frame. In our interview, Anna questioned her aspirations for greater leadership in the firm. She discussed the

conversations she's had with her boss and other senior leaders about moving into more of an "official leadership role" (in her mind, this means managing a group of employees and leading a desk), but also questions if this is what she really wants. She says:

> "So, I have to weigh … like how much do I want a wholesale 100% change for something that's unknown on a completely different line of business? And there could be something coming up, I've been talking to some people, but it's just do you really want it or one of the questions I'm asking myself is why do I want it? My life is good. I make good money. Do I really need to make that change? … I think if I took that [role], I'd be taking it just get a management role and I don't think I'd enjoy the job as much as I do this one."

Anna sees the senior leaders as supportive of her aspirations for greater leadership, but she frames this support as having to do with her gender. She says:

> "…I've gone and talked to the senior people and they were all very supportive. They were like 'Sure, we wanna do something for you. We wanna help you. What do you wanna do?' So there's definitely a willingness to help and a willingness to want to do something because I think they recognize that they don't want to lose a senior woman because there aren't many of us. There aren't many of us also that want to do more. There's others [at my level] that I know that have no desire to do anything more than they do now. So [there's] very few of us [senior women] that want more, so I think they realize that and recognize that and don't want to lose whatever opportunity [there may be]. Having said that, nothing's really happened in a year but also the truth is nothing's really happened here."

Thus, she is really grappling with her leader identity aspirations – to what extent do I want to see myself as a leader going forward? What do I aspire to and who do I want to be as a leader here? This self-questioning and the framing of gendered support for her advancement is associated with her experience of an ambivalent frame around what it really means to be a leader here. In a sense, she is questioning her aspirations around the same uncertainty within her frame (I want to be a leader because I'm good, not because I'm a woman; if I'm being supported because I'm a woman, is that what I really want for my future self as a leader?). The ambivalent frame experience also highlights efficacy concerns within Anna's sense of self as a leader (e.g., am I

capable of being a leader?). However, her efficacy concerns are related more so to technical aspects of the leadership role. She discusses feeling quite capable and confident with the "leadership and management" side; but it's the technical knowledge that the higher leaders exhibit that concerns her. She says:

> "More the parts that scare me the most are not the personnel, not the organization. It's more the actual part of the role [around determining stock pricing]. …Weighing those two [needs of clients and the bank], determining what that price is that serves all the different constituents. So that's the part that I don't have experience at, therefore determining that price is what scares me …I mean those technical aspects. The leadership and management, no. Not that I'm over confident but I think those are kinds of things I like and understand and feel that I'm capable."

As reflected in the above quotation, Anna is splitting off her sense of being a leader and manager of the people (which she feels confident in) from the technical aspects of 'leading the business' (which she feels less effective at.) This notion connects with her gendering of her leader identity, in which she discusses her role as being the "work mama" of her group while her boss focuses on "leading the business." Below, we see evidence of this gendering:

> "I'm known as the momma on the desk. Anything from love to work or whatever. There was this NYTimes article on the weekend about your "work mother". So yeah, that's me. I'm telling them how to do things and how to approach life and if they wanna talk to the boss and tell them how they should approach it. And for some of the guys, well, I'm more their moral conscience…more like okay, do you think you should be doing that? So that would be the more soft kinda smarten up type skills."

Later in the interview, Anna goes on to further contrast this role she plays with the role her boss plays as the technical business leader. The following quotation gives further evidence of this gendering in connection with her aspirations and efficacy self-questioning. She says:

> "People on the desk are always saying to me, both younger people and some of my colleagues, 'when are you gonna be taking over [the group]?'Ya know, that question. And we joke about it because there's just some things missing [with the current group head]..... it's the smaller things. And it's a very big generalization but men just aren't necessarily as good at… [The current group head] is excellent at the technical part. He is phenomenal. At the soft part, he's not so good. **In an ideal world, I would play the soft side and he would be the technical side. So that's what I do, I pick up his slack in**

> **that way.** That's what I do. I talk and I convey messages like if you'll talk to me, I'll tell them something. He will tell me 'this is what I said to this person' and I'm like 'well, this is what he heard and this is what he thinks you said.' Somehow they're two very different things. [Q: And you like playing that role for him?] Yeah, no, I mean I like it. Not that it gets me closer anywhere, but I feel like I'm helping and I feel I'm involved and I feel I'm improving a situation so I like it."

From this case, we clearly see the intertwining of an ambivalent frame experience, self-questioning around aspirations and efficacy, and a gendering of her leader identity.

Gender Case #2: Ambivalent Frame. In this case, Nancy [015], illustrates similar connections among an ambivalent frame experience, efficacy and aspirational self-questioning, and the gendering of her leader identity. Nancy's experience of an ambivalent frame was expressed around various tensions in what her gender means for her leadership: on the one hand that being woman is not relevant and she is not treating any differently than the male leaders; yet, at the same time, she reflects concerns about how her gender may be holding her back (e.g., wondering if maybe part of her struggle is because she's a woman). Reflecting similar links as the previous case, the ambivalent frame highlights self-questioning for Nancy around who she wants to be as a leader (aspirations) and what she needs to be able to do to get herself there (efficacy concerns). Yet, Nancy is a more junior than Anna, and thus the content of these concerns is a bit different. Nancy was recently was promoted on paper, but finds that her day-to-day role is not shifting as it was supposed to include more relationship management and less operational tasks. She is questioning how to really make this shift to greater leadership happen for her:

> "I don't think it has anything to do with being a girl versus a boy, but I don't know, maybe it does. I'm finding transitioning myself out of this role that does everything for everyone into a role that I do for myself because that's my designated role, has been a challenge. I feel there's always something holding me back that has not allowed me to actually do what I wanna do…So it's frustrating because I don't know how to get to that while still doing a good job with what people are asking me to do. So that's my number one issue."

Here, we can see Nancy beginning to fill in some of the blanks with gender, wondering if the struggles she is facing to realize her aspirations and efficacy in this new role have something to do with being a female. She frames much of her struggles as structural (e.g., "we don't have a middle office to handle these issues" and "I can't say no to my boss if he's asking me to do these things"), yet at the same time recognizes that she may need to enact her leadership in a different way (e.g., "I have to wonder, is there something more I can be doing?"). The following quotation aptly reflects this struggle, and the connection to gendering her leader identity:

> "I get pulled into a lot of these issues that no one else deals with…. because no one else has the time to do so. And I just know a lot about the different issues so I'll just volunteer myself which is kind of hindering my own moving up and constantly doing things that aren't necessarily tied to my role but I would like to see things get done. So if I don't interject myself I find that a lot of things just sit idle which is not really improving the customer's experience at all. So I do things and the boys joke with me all the time and say 'well, just stop offering.' Well I just can't. It's not really in my nature."

Paradoxically, while she volunteers for these extra tasks (which include dealing with client billing issues, assisting her boss with meeting planning, and solving "back office operational issues"), she at the same time wonders if her gender is what's holding her back. She reflects:

> "So it gets always on the weighing on me that maybe I haven't been promoted to that official role yet because I am a woman. I would like to think that's not the case but I can't help but think what else can I possibly do?"

Thus again, we see how this gendering of her leader identity is further associated with the ambivalence she feels around her gender and leadership.

Summary. In these two cases, we see individuals experiencing ambivalent frames also engaging in their leader identity in a way that is stereotypically feminine – either by providing emotional and relational support to other employees (as in the case of Anna), or by volunteering for administrative and support-type tasks (as in the case of Nancy). In the previous section, participants that experienced an ambivalent frame worked to engage further in their leader

identities, while in these cases, participants experiencing an ambivalent frame are gendering their leader identities. These two groups are almost leaning toward opposite sides of their ambivalence – on the one hand, some are working hard to engage in their *leadership*, and in the other case, some are inadvertently "gendering" their leadership to be more *feminine*. Thus, the tension within their frame experiences plays out differently for their enactment of the leader identity, as driven by the different self-questioning mechanisms.

Deficiency Frame Experiences Relate to Leader Identity Disengagement

Another type of leader identity enactment I found was disengagement. In opposition to the engagement of one's leader identity, in this case, participants disengage themselves from their leader identity by actively downshifting in their sense of selves as leaders. They do not aspire to greater leadership in the firm (aspirations), and they question if/how others would ever see them as leaders (credibility). These forms of self-questioning are associated with a disengagement from seeing themselves as leaders, at least in this current context. As depicted in Table 6.3, such disengagement was primarily evident among participants experiencing deficiency reinforcing frames, which suggests a negative view of one's gender in relation to one's leadership is associated with a diminished sense of self as a leader. I detail two cases below that illustrate these connections.

Disengage Case #1: Deficiency Frame. I first consider Mary [014] to illustrate the connections among a deficiency frame experience, self-questioning of aspirations and credibility, and disengagement from the leader identity. At first, Mary struggled to even frame her gender in relation to her leadership because there are really "no women who do what I do" in her specific group within the bank. As our interview continued, she expressed core elements of a deficiency frame experience, discussing ways in which her gender creates disadvantages, for example,

because “women are just not aggressive enough” to succeed in this business. In her interview, Mary spent some time considering if she even aspires to leadership in this firm. She spoke a lot about the disconnect in terms of the firm’s espoused values around work-life balance, and the actual enactment of such values. Given this dynamic, she questioned if she even wants to be a leader here: “We preach certain things and we don’t necessarily act on those things so I don’t want to be a leader because I don’t want to officially be a part of that.” There was also evidence of self-questioning around credibility for Mary. When she got promoted, she was very concerned with others’ expectations of what she should be able to do as a leader at that level; so much so, that she tried at first to turn down the promotion. She says:

> “So when [I got promoted], my fear was that people’s expectation of what I can do and what I can run will be very different from what I actually can do. Not because I can't do it, but I just didn’t have the experience [because of the deals I had been on]….I actually asked not to be promoted because I felt I was not ready”

In association with this self-questioning around her own aspirations for leadership and concerns about how others would view her as a leader (credibility), Mary is disengaging from her sense of self as a leader. She struggled to even discuss her future desires or goals for leadership, and said quite explicitly: “I don't see myself leading [this group] or any group here. There’s nothing here that leads me to believe that I’m necessarily being groomed for that. I’m just being told I need to think that way if I want to make [it to the next level], but that’s kinda where it is. "

Thus, here we have a participant that experiences being a woman leader as having perpetual disadvantages (deficiency frame experience), and through self-questioning of her aspirations and credibility, she is also disengaging from her sense of self as a leader, with little concerted action toward further developing her leadership in this current organization.

Disengage Case #2: Deficiency Frame. I consider next the case of Jennifer [034] to illustrate connections among the deficiency frame experience and leader identity disengagement.

Jennifer expressed core elements of a deficiency frame, experiencing disadvantages as a woman leader derived from work-life responsibilities (e.g., "the men I work with have a different life outside of the office than I do"), stylistic differences that she feels less natural at (e.g., "I've never been good at navigating politics of self-promoting"), and male-oriented client activities (e.g., "they're talking about cigars and golf.") While she has made it to a senior level, there is very much a narrative of gendered disadvantage woven throughout her story; so much so that she feels like she is really only looked to as a leader because she's a woman (e.g., she says: "…because there are so few female leaders in our firm, I have no doubt I'm pointed to as a leader just because I'm a woman.")

Jennifer shows evidence of questioning around her aspirations and credibility in so far as it applies to her future leadership in this firm. She is unsure of how and where she could even further develop as a leader here, and doesn't feel supported in her development as a leader. The following quote reflects these connections:

> "I'm truly abysmal at being proactive about developing myself as a leader. I don't feel like I have a lot of options internally….I don't feel like I have a lot of places that I could go and certainly not confidentially. I don't feel like I have a lot of touch points where I could seek other opportunities…So that's why I would say, for me, [my development]t doesn't feel very good."

Relatedly, she echoes concerns about others seeing her as a leader (credibility), particularly with higher level leaders in the firm. She says:

> "I think it's [the higher level leaders] that don't see what I do. They don't understand the value that I bring, that whole thing. So I think it's really just the confidence in knowing that they've seen me in action and that they have, I guess, respect for me. That's really a big part of it."

Thus, even though formally, she has advanced to a high level of leadership in the firm, she really does not see herself as a leader. In association with these aspirational and credibility concerns

expressed above, she echoes a sense of disengaging from her leader identity, which is intertwined with the deficiency frame. She says:

> "…there are certainly other women that I know who are naturally better leaders than me. But at this particular firm, there's not a lot of them. At this particular firm, I feel like -- again, there's a title and then there's leadership, so I'm trying to distinguish between the two. I've earned my title. I don't feel like naturally I'm a great leader. But I do think that because there's not a lot of women, I'm certainly going to be pointed to as a woman leader."

In this case, her deficiency frame experience, self-questioning, and disengagement from the leader identity are so intertwined, it is difficult to pull the pieces apart, clearly reflecting the inter-relationships between her frame experience and leader identity development

Summary. In these two representative cases, we see participants that reflected a deficiency frame experience also questioning their aspirations and credibility as leaders, and disengaging from their leader identities. The deficiency reinforcing frame reflects an experience of gender as a perpetual disadvantage for their leadership; thus, it is plausible that this broader orientation highlights for these participants that leadership will be difficult for them, therefore, they disengage in any future action or development of their leader identities.

There is also some evidence of individuals experiencing a negative shifting frame similarly disengaging from their leader identities. For example, one participant [038] experiencing a negative shifting frame echoed a downshifting in her leader identity. For example, she says: "I don't see any way to move up any higher, unless there's some sort of change…I don't think there's a plan for me to advance because all of my managers are younger than me." This participant had been with the firm for almost 40 years and perceived her age as a barrier to moving further along the leadership path. Nonetheless, even with evidence of such disengagement, in line with her negative shifting frame experience, she still echoed enactments

of leader identity personalization, discussing how people call on her to join various meetings and projects because of her long tenure with the firm:

> "I'm asked all the time from all different lines of business to help them with projects, help them figure something out because…of my experience on having been through bank acquisitions, mergers, and so on, I'm always called to be part of those teams so that things will run a bit more smoothly, and people like me."

While she echoes a sense of disengagement, she continues to personalize her leader identity in this way. Together, it makes sense that some experiences of a negative shifting frame may also echo a sense of disengagement, just like some deficiency frame experiences echoed a sense of personalization (as mentioned above), since dimensionally speaking, they are both reflecting a similar content in their gender-leadership frames (e.g., being a woman leader means having disadvantages).

Self-Reliance Reinforcing Frame Experiences Relate to Leader Identity Limiting

The final type of enactment emerging from the data was leader identity limiting. In this case, participants focused narrowly on their functional responsibilities, rather than directly engaging with their future leadership. Participants are limiting their sense of selves as leaders because they focus their development on doing well in the content of their functional role (e.g., to close deals and bring in revenue), yet do little to transcend this to developing themselves as leaders, even though they may desire to advance further on the path. Thus, in contrast to the previous enactment in which participants seemed to be actively disengaging from their sense of selves as leaders; in this case, participants limiting is not so much an active disengagement, but rather is a by-product of their narrowing focus on functional effectiveness. This leader identity limiting was most evident among participants experiencing a self-reliance reinforcing frame, in which they construct that their own skills and expertise matter most for their leadership, not their gender. Participants also tended to highlight efficacy concerns (improving functional/technical

capabilities) and credibility concerns (I am working hard doing all that I can, but I'm not being recognized as a leader), in association with a limited sense of self as leaders.

Case #1: Self-Reliance Reinforcing Frame. Samantha [041]experienced a strong self-reliance reinforcing frame, commenting that "I would never identify myself as a woman leader, and would be offended to hear myself called that." She talked about her early years of "living in the old, male, traditional Wall Street" and that she just made it work ("if you're good, they'll forget [you're a woman]"). Thus, she sees working hard and performing well as being much more important and relevant than her gender.

Samantha discussed how her focus has always been on closing deals and bringing in revenue. While she has led a team for a while, she says she always thought about her team as "just an extension of my deals. So, I had a whole team of people who just worked exclusively on my stuff that I called that my group." Thus her concern was primarily around effectiveness, how she could improve functionally to bring in more deals and close more business, and use her team members toward that end. From this, however, some credibility concerns arose, in terms of if/how others see her as a leader, given this approach. She talks about others' reactions to her approach of having her team solely focus on her own deals, which even in her own admission, was at the expense of really building out her team, developing their experience and skills, and eventually letting them lead their own deals, etc. She says:

> "It took me a while to realize, to be honest – that [having my team work exclusively on my deals] is not how it's supposed to work. You're supposed to be building out the team. In fact, other senior people can come in and exponentially increase the size. To be honest, I didn't really take that responsibility very seriously. Fortunately, [my boss] wasn't here then because he would have been appalled. Even [more recently], he said, 'Samantha, you really have to build the team out. They can't just be a bunch of junior people supporting your effort. You need other senior people.'… I would never want [the new group head] or anyone else to think that I'm a lousy manager; but, I [focus on leading the team] only because I'm supposed to. Because it's my job."

Samantha admits that she really only focuses on leading her team because she's supposed to, even though her true focus continues to be on improving in her functional responsibilities and much less on actively developing herself as a leader. The following quotations illustrate such limiting of her leader identity. She says:

> "… it would be expected that someone that runs a group would spend most of his or her time running the group. I don't. I spend most of my time actually [doing the actual work] as opposed to leading the team. I prefer that….To be honest, I don't know [if I see myself as a leader] nor would I have cared about being a leader. I didn't see myself that way, didn't aspire to it. But I would say that I have a lot of confidence in myself and have strong personality…so, it's sort of hard not to be noticed. If you have success, then it's easy enough to see how those qualities would lead to a leadership position… but, it never was part of my plan to aspire to run [this] department. In fact I didn't want to run [this] department. I don't understand why anybody would. In my view, if you're successful [in your role doing the actual work], why in the world would you want to run the department and give up the opportunity to be good [at this role]? There is latitude in doing [it the way] I do, as long as it pays off for [the organization]."

Interestingly, we see Samantha discussing the limiting as a somewhat strategic enactment of her leader identity, likely because she has made it to a senior level, yet does not see herself changing to more actively engage in developing her leadership outside of bringing in deals and generating revenue.

Case #2: Self-Reliance Frame. Next, the case of Jana [025] illustrates a similar case of a self-reliance frame experience and limiting of one's leader identity through efficacy and credibility concerns, although in a different form because Jana not as senior as Samantha. Jana expressed core elements of a self-reliance reinforcing frame experience, with reflections such as: "there's been way too much focus on gender" and "why do we even need to talk about it?...people can be different in their skill levels, but whether they're a different race or gender, it doesn't matter." In thinking about her leadership development and who she is or wants to be come, this self-reliance frame experience highlights efficacy concerns for Jana. She questions how she can continue to build her knowledge and effectiveness, especially when she feels like so

much about success is tied to deal flow and revenue generation. Jana expresses: "well, [I] always have my doubts especially when the deal doesn't come through as to how effective we actually had been ultimately." In the interview, Jana told a story about a client meeting that went particularly well, but then the deal fell through. She reflects on how others reacted:

> "The immediate reaction was all positive, a lot of compliments about how I pushed on to make a speech. However, that quickly got forgotten after it was clear that they're just not going to come and the revenue is not going to fall off….Most of the time the perception of the quality of a certain person…is highly, highly influenced by the end result."

Thus, her efficacy self-questioning is also connected to credibility concerns, in terms of others primarily viewing her based on end results. She also expresses frustration with her lack of advancement to greater levels of leadership, feeling like so much of success is based on transactions. She says: "It's very hard to be successful. That's just a fact. I know what it takes to be successful, a lot of luck." From this, we see that her development is primarily focused on building, maintaining, and developing her knowledge further. She says:

> "My personal style or way of doing business has been focused on knowledge. That's not always the case. Different bankers have different styles. But from all sorts of reasons, I have thought throughout my career advancement that knowledge is the only thing that I can possibly go beyond personally as a banker. That's kind of what I do to develop myself, to stay on top of industry developments and company developments and try to attract different clienteles, new things come up either in their industry or in their company, I try to be on the phone with them with the ideas or meet with them with ideas hoping that one day that we can work it out."

Such a focus is not surprising, given the experience of a self-reliance reinforcing frame which sees one's own skills and knowledge as integral to one's leadership (far more so than gender). Together, these efficacy and credibility concerns, as well as her own developmental focus, echoes the limiting of her leader identity. While she may desire to further grow as a leader and advance, her enactment is very much tied to the content of the work, as opposed to the

development of one's leadership. These ideas, and the connection to the experience of a self-reliance reinforcing frame are illustrated in the following quotation:

> "I'd like to get promoted to the next level, but I'll essentially be doing the same work. I do have responsibilities even at this level but then I no longer execute the work for someone else for the same extent that I used to when I was VP and associate. I pretty much work for myself in trying to develop plans."

Thus, the self-reliance reinforcing frame experience – which is so tightly knit with a focus on a particular type of success – relates to a limiting of leader identity.

Summary. In these two representative cases, we see participants that experience a self-reliance reinforcing frame also questioning their credibility and efficacy as leaders and limiting their leader identities. The self-reliance reinforcing frame experience is based on a construction that one's own skills and hard work matter most for success as a leader, rather than gender. For these participants, such constructions are intertwined with a narrowing focus on their functional skill development within their area of expertise, in a way that does not transcend to the broader development of one's leadership. So, even if they are questioning their own credibility as leaders (do others see me as a leader?) and efficacy (how good am I?), their self-reliance frame experiences seem to orient them toward a limiting of their leader identities.

Summary

Figure 6.1 offers an overview of the associations in leader identity enactment associated with each frame experience discussed above. Together, these findings demonstrate that the way in which individuals experience gender as related to leadership can act as a guiding orientation through which they come to see themselves as leaders. For example, I demonstrate above that a shift toward realizing the negative relationship between gender and leadership (negative shifting frame experience) can orient an individual toward personalizing her leader identity through the questioning of authenticity and aspirational concerns as a leader. Or, an ambivalent frame

experience, in which mixed feelings are expressed around what it means to be a woman leader, can orient an individual toward gendering her leader identity through questioning of efficacy and aspirations as a leader. These associations I find – among frame experiences, self-questioning and leader identity enactment – demonstrate that gender-leadership frames can orient women's sense of who they are and can be as leaders. The concerns they have in seeing themselves as leaders and the choices they make in terms of how to develop at a point in time, vary in accordance with different constructions of gender and leadership.

These conclusions build upon frame theory, which suggests that frames orient patterns of action and are the basis of assumptions about how one should act in particular settings (e.g., Dewulf et al, 2009; Mazmanian, 2013). My findings extend this to suggest that frames can also orient an individual's sense of who she is and can be within a particular domain. Further, the interrelationships I find between self-questioning and enactment echo the "interplay of cognition and action in the acquisition and maintenance of identities" (Vignoles, et al, 2006). This adds insight to work on leader identity, by explicating the interplay of cognitive (self-questioning) and active (enactment) components in coming to see oneself as a leader. Importantly, my findings are not meant to claim a casual model from frame experiences to self-questioning to enactment of leader identity; but rather, as illustrated by the cases presented in this chapter, I demonstrate an intertwining among a particular frame experience with types of self-questioning, and leader identity enactment. Although frame theory supports that the frame experiences would come first as the guiding orientation that filters an individuals' sense of who they are and can be as leaders (implying a direction from frames to self-questioning and enactment), I theorize below how these links may also work in the alternative direction.

CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of professional women's experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders as they move along the leadership path. I conducted a qualitative, inductive study of women developing as leaders in a large, global bank to explore these interests. Building from existing theory and research on gender and work and leader identity development, this dissertation informs our understanding of how women construct their gender in relation to their leadership and develop their leader identities within a particular organizational context. I found that women do hold different constructions of gender and leadership and that their perceptions of and experiences within organizations seem to prompt women to shift their frames, feel conflicted in their frames, or remain within one reinforcing frame. Further, I found that specific experiences of these frames orient women toward certain types of self-questioning and enactment of their leader identities. Together, these findings demonstrate that different ways of thinking about one's gender in relation to one's leadership may help explain women's different choices, aspirations, and development on the leadership path. Coming to see oneself as a leader does not happen in a vacuum, but rather is a complex process in which non-work identities (here, gender) play a role in one's understanding of who she is and can be as a leader. Not only does gender play a role in women's self-views as leaders, but scholars and organizations must appreciate women's different experiences and perspectives which have tangible implications for their motivations to pursue leadership opportunities and growth within their organizations. In this chapter, I summarize these key findings from my dissertation and integrate them into a summary model depicted in Figure 7.1. I then move on to consider the contributions of this work and directions for future research.

Summary and Integration of Key Findings

In Chapter 4, I answered my first research question – how do women construct their gender as relevant to their leadership, if at all? I demonstrated that women construct their gender in relation to their leadership in various ways, such that "being a woman leader" comes to hold different meanings for different women. I found that various gender-leadership frames exist and they are comprised of four primary dimensions: relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs. An individual woman may fall at various points on each of these dimensions, experiencing gender as relevant to leadership more positively or more negatively, as relevant to the self or the other, and as holding higher or lower beliefs about collective involvement and connection to other women leaders. I suggest that the various points at which an individual woman falls comprise the content of her gender-leadership frame.

Chapter 5, then, considered how such frames are experienced in the context of organizational life. Findings in this chapter answered the second research question: How may organizations shape particular constructions of gender and leadership? Delving deeply into the field setting I studied, I found three primary lived experiences of these frames: a shifting frame experience, an ambivalent frame experience, and a reinforcing frame experience. Each of these frame experiences moves among the dimensions of relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs described above, offering a more nuanced and dynamic view of women's constructions of gender and leadership. Further, these lived experiences are driven, at least in part, by elements of the organizational context. For example, the shifting frames were associated with a perceived shift in context relevant to gender and leadership, the ambivalent frames were associated with uncertainty in the context around gender and leadership, and the reinforcing frames were associated with elements of context that reinforced the frame. These findings

suggest that the proximal context of individuals' organizations is associated with the ways in which they experience their gender in relation to their leadership.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I answered the third research question, which asked: How do gender-leadership frames have implications for leader identity development? I found that the varying experiences of frames in context have important implications for women's sense of who they are and can be as leaders. Specifically, frame experiences were associated with two components of leader identity development – self-questioning and leader identity enactment. A particular frame experience highlighted the types of concerns individuals had in seeing themselves as leaders (self-questioning), which were interrelated with the ways in which individuals undertook their development as leaders (enactment). Together, these findings demonstrate that the content of individuals' leader identity development, in terms of self-questioning and enactment, varied in terms of their lived experience of the gender-leadership.

In Figure 7.1, I present an overall summary of these connections among women's organizational lives, their constructions of gender and leadership, and their development of a leader identity. As depicted, my findings suggests that the gender-leadership frame acts as a filter through which women come to make sense of who they are and can be as leaders within this particular organizational context. While the findings presented narrate an association that moves from context, to frames, to leader identity development, in reality, the connections are likely more intertwined. As illustrated by the grey colored arrows moving back across the model, it is likely the case that there is a recursive relationship from the leader identity back to the frame and from the frame back to the organizational context. These interviews were conducted at a particular point in time, but one's leader identity – how I see myself as a leader – is evolving and dynamic, and thus a prior self-view as a leader may be a precursor to some of the frame

experiences. For example, for many of the women experiencing the negative shifting frame, the way they were previously enacting their leader identities may not have been working (e.g., I thought I just had to perform well and work hard). Therefore, they introduce gender as part of the story via a negative shifting frame. Relatedly, if the frame itself is truly an overall orientation that guides individuals' interpretations of their experiences, it may also be guiding the way in which individuals conceive of and interpret elements of the organizational context captured here (e.g., how I perceive images of leadership, etc.). Nonetheless, building from the data captured during the interviews I conducted, it is evident that at a particular point in time, an individual woman is making sense of what it means to be a woman leader based on signals from within the organizational (and perhaps broader) context, which in turn have implications for her leader identity development.

While these findings were derived within the context of women's development as leaders in a large global bank, the ideas can be conceptualized at a broader level to understand how leader identity is produced as a function of the experience of non-work identity, especially when the non-work identity is already part of the cultural narrative around leadership. At various points in an individual's organizational experience, she is considering not only how to advance, but what signals the organization is sending about what it means to be a leader and what it means to be a woman within the firm. Prior experiences in work and personal contexts likely have an influence on the way in which women experience their gender in relation to their leadership, but within a particular organization, the development of a leader identity becomes contextualized within that setting. Individuals are continually referencing themselves against firm images of leadership, relevant role models, felt support, definitions of success, etc. while also considering the relevance of a particular non-work identity to these dimensions. Thus together, these

findings illustrate how contextually intertwined seeing oneself as a leader truly is. The key findings presented give insight into an individual's consideration of "can I be a leader here (in this organization)?" and unpacks if/how a particular non-work identity (in this case, gender) is experienced as relevant to that.

While scholars have begun to theorize more directly about non-work identities in the context of work, an important difference with the present focus is that for women, gender (as a non-work identity) is already associated with leadership in terms of the broader cultural narrative around "women's leadership." The cultural narrative discusses gender as relevant to leadership in various ways; for example, in terms of women's (lack of) representation as leaders, and also in terms of the (potential) differences in men's and women's leadership styles. Therefore, models which suggest that individuals experience organizational and individual pressures to align (or not) their non-work identities with work (e.g. Ramarajan & Reid, 2013), are complicated by this larger context in which the two particular domains are already inextricably linked, particularly in a male-dominated industry such as banking. Regardless of an individual's preference for inclusion or exclusion of the non-work identity – that is, one's "own desire regarding the place of their non-work identity vis-à-vis the work identity" (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013: p.627) – gender is already tied to the leadership role, whether or not an individual prefers to include or exclude it. The importance of this dynamic is evidenced in the present study, in which we see women who construct their gender as not relevant, yet still acknowledge, recognize, and often counter against, the broader narrative that sees them as "woman leaders." This emphasizes that individuals have less latitude in how they choose to align (or not) non-work identities in the context of work, particularly when, in this case, women cannot be immune from making sense of

this particular intersection of gender and leadership given the broader narrative in which they are embedded (Martin, 2003; Ridgeway, 2011).

My findings reveal associations between perceptions of organizational context, gender-leadership frame experiences and leader identity self-questioning and enactment. I build from existing literature and theory on framing and situated cognitions in organizations to consider why these links emerged. Organizational scholarship suggests that cognition is necessarily situated at the intersection of individual's internal perceptions and their situational context (e.g., Elsbach et al, 2005). The gender-leadership frame concept developed here is primarily a cognitive construct, capturing the various ways in which women construct their gender in relation to their leadership and think about what it means to be a women leader. Thus, while much management research focuses on understanding the interplay between context and individual experience, the frame concept in particular provides a useful "theoretical link between individual experience and social context" (Mazmanian, 2013: 1228). My findings demonstrate the ways in which the specific organizational context and individual's sense of who they are and can be as leaders are associated with a particular frame experience. Even though all participants experience the same organizational context, the frame acts as a personal filter through which individuals came to marry their own understanding of what it means to be a women leader with the particulars of this organizational setting (e.g., images of leadership, gender narrative, felt support, etc.).

Frames guide interpretations and expectations (Dewulf et al, 2009). For example, negotiation scholars suggest that conflict management frames "shape the way people think about resolving or managing disputes" (Gardner & Burgess, 2003: 400). Gender-leadership frames similarly shape women's perceptions and interpretations of challenges and opportunities along the leadership path. Specifically, frames orient women toward particular concerns and

approaches to enacting their leader identity. For example, an ambivalent gender-leadership frame focused participants' concerns on their certainty and credibility as leaders. At least for women working in a male-dominated setting, the gender-leadership frames act as a guiding orientation for individuals more proximal interpretations of themselves as leaders and their own development. Social cognition theory suggests that individuals hold mental knowledge structures that guide expectations about their own and others behaviors (Fiske, 1992; Fiske & Taylor, 1984). These mental knowledge structures[3] are "mental template[s] that individuals impose on an information environment to give it form and meaning" (Walsh, 1995: p.281). These foundations of social cognition theory support that gender-leadership frames are operating as some form of a 'perceptual filter' (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988) through which individuals come to understand their own selves as leaders. Below, I bring these ideas together to consider the more specific theoretical contributions arising from this dissertation.

Theoretical Implications

Beyond the specific findings and discussion above, this dissertation makes a series of broader contributions that have implications for future research in the intersected study of gender, leadership, and identities, which I discuss in each of the sections below.

Gender and work. One of the primary anchors for this study is the literature on gender and work and the specific scholarship focused on women's leadership. This dissertation makes several contributions to these areas of research and theory. First, this study offers a more systematic and nuanced understanding of the variations among a group of women leaders in terms of how they construct their gender as relevant to their leadership. As emphasized previously, in the study of gender in organizations, much past research focuses on generalizing

[3] In social cognition theory, these knowledge structures are often referred to as schemas, yet scholars acknowledge that the constructs of schema and frames similarly refer to the "organization of experience" (e.g., Frawley, 2003). A further consideration of this distinction is beyond the scope of this paper, yet is worthy of mention.

women's experiences in order to compare them to men's. While an understanding of similarities and differences between men and women leaders is useful, if we *only* focus on generalizing each group in order to facilitate comparison, we run the risk of sophisticated stereotyping (e.g., Osland, Birch, Delano & Jacob, 2000) in our own research. Therefore, the present research importantly highlights the variance that exists within a population of women. Confirming and extending on findings from Humberd (2011), this study demonstrates that not every woman thinks of herself as a "woman leader" in the same way, and thus, different constructions of gender and leadership exist even across women at relatively similar points in their objective leadership advancement. Perhaps most important, however, is not just that these variations exist, but that the dynamic experience of these gender-leadership frames matters for women's organizational experiences and developmental outcomes. Although existing literature acknowledges that women may not all think about their gender and leadership in the same ways, this is the first study that comprehensively and systematically considers the content of these different frames, the primary dimensions underlying the variance, and the implications these variations may have on women's sense of who they are and can be as leaders.

This study builds in important ways on initial findings from my pilot study (Humberd, 2011), from which the initial idea of variations in gender-leadership frames arose. The present study offers a more complete picture of the content of these frames and how they may be shaped by aspects of the organization. In particular, the focus in Chapter 4 on the primary dimensions underlying the variance in women's frames moves beyond the "types" revealed in the pilot study. This focus on dimensions also allowed the dynamic experience of the frames to emerge, as detailed in Chapter 5. At a conceptual and phenomenological level, this dissertation reveals much more nuance in terms of how these frames are experienced and derived in organizations.

While prior work suggests that women may struggle to advance and develop as leaders, this dissertation provides focused insight on the intra-psychic experiences and cognitive dynamics going on for these women as they consider what it means to be a woman leader. These frames are by no means pure or without tension and movement; rather, much like the broader narrative around women as leaders, we see the ways in which women themselves are grappling with the positives and negatives, individuality and collectiveness, surrounding conversations of women as leaders.

Beyond the content and dimensions of the frames themselves, this dissertation also examined in-depth the interplay between the organizational context and women's gender-leadership frames. Much management research focuses on understanding the interplay between contextual features of the organization and individual experience. In the gender and work literature in particular, research tends to examine objective, and often quantitative, representations of context shaping individual's gendered experiences at work, such as the representation of women in the organization and/or at certain levels, or the existence (or not) of particular diversity initiatives meant to support women. Much less work focuses in depth on capturing the ways in which these broader dimensions of context may manifest themselves in the perceptions, interpretations, and patterns of behavior that individuals encounter and experience in the organizational context. My research demonstrates how participants' perceptions of and experiences in the organization, around factors such as images of leadership and the firm's gender narrative, are important and relevant to the frames that women experience and to their developing leader identities. Although I asked participants' extensively about their personal histories with regards to gender and leadership, I found a more proximal association between their organizational experiences and the lived experience of these frames. While early life

experiences may relate to initial frames women hold, in the context of these interviews, the lived experiences of these frames at a point in time was more clearly associated with these socio-psychological elements of the organizational context. Thus, I offer deeper insight into how/why women at similar points in their development in the same organization can in fact hold quite different gender-leadership frames. For example, I demonstrate how features of the organizational context (e.g., perceived images of leadership and lack of role models) have the power to shift women's frames toward a more disadvantaged meaning of being "women leaders"; while on the other hand, I reveal that strong managerial support can "turn around" frames as was the case with some of the positive shifts.

My focus on women's gender-leadership frames expands on Ridgeway's notion of gender as a frame. In her book, Ridgeway (2011) suggests that gender inequality has persisted despite broader societal changes largely because gender is a primary cultural frame for organizing social relations. While she recognizes that "the gender frame acts through the sense-making of individuals" (Ridgeway, 2009: 157), her emphasis is on the external and social creation of the gender frame. She explicitly acknowledges: "I will say little…about the intricacies of gender and the self" (p.16) leaving room for my research to contribute by focusing in-depth on the internal operation of this frame among individual women. Specifically, my dissertation suggests that gender framing at the individual level – at least in so far as how women frame their gender as relevant (or not) to their leadership – can operate to shape the aspirations and goals women even develop in the first place. While Ridgeway (2011) suggests that individual's may draw on and learn widely shared gender status beliefs, my study uncovers the nuances in how individual women take up, internalize, and act upon these beliefs in varying ways within their own frames. Thus, not only does the gender frame organize social relations

and lead to the persistence of gender inequality at a more macro level; I reveal how this frame is taken up in varying ways by individuals to orient the choices they make, aspirations they have, and development they focus on within their organizational lives.

In their recent conceptual work on women's leader identity development, Ely and colleagues (2010, 2011) emphasize that we need to understand more about how women's leadership goals develop. This dissertation begins to fulfill these calls by explicating the cognitive processes and identity dynamics underlying the choices women may make and opportunities they envision for themselves as they move along the path to greater leadership. The various forms of leader identity enactment I found give in-depth insight into how women may head down a particular path in terms of their aspirations and developmental goals; and further, that these choices may simultaneously serve to help them individually while making it more difficult for them to advance to greater leadership. For example, some women personalized their leader identities in a way that allowed them to feel more authentic as leaders, but simultaneously moved them further away from images of leadership in the firm. Other women amplified their leader identities in a way that was empowering for women collectively and for themselves in terms of the impact they made. At the same time, however, enacting leadership through such extra-role behaviors (e.g., volunteering for mentoring initiatives, leading informal networking events, etc.) disconnected these women from broader images of success in the firm tied to revenue generation and served to further reify images of women as incongruous with broader perceptions of leadership. Finally, many women that reached a high level of leadership in this firm (MD), still questioned how and why they got there and if they deserved to be leaders. Such behaviors are alluded to across existing literature, yet the findings offered here reveal the complex intersection of the firm's gender narrative, lack of certainty in career

pathways, and women's ambivalent frames that may lead them to such questioning. Such findings provide insight into the contextual elements and cognitive dynamics underlying the choices women are making and the aspirations they develop on the leadership path.

Leader Identity Development. This work also makes a series of contributions to the growing attention in the literature on leader identity development. Scholars doing initial theoretical work in the space of leader identity development have called for a better understanding of how underlying social structures and norms embedded in organizational contexts may have implications for seeing oneself as a leader (DeRue et al, 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Existing theorizing focuses on mapping out a general process of leader identity development, by considering, for example, how interactions ("claims and grants") contribute to an individual's sense of self as a leader (DeRue et al, 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010), or how key transitions shape leaders' identity development across a career (Ibarra et al, 2008). While useful at a general level, this work only acknowledges that contextual dynamics likely play a role in how these processes of development unfold. My findings offer a more contextualized consideration of leader identity development, both in terms of non-work identities and organizational influences on seeing oneself as a leader, as well as how these intersect. I demonstrate that underlying social structures in organizations, which inherently privilege men, can play a role in leader identity development, at least in so far as women's own understanding of how their gender may interplay with their leadership. My study also demonstrates how perceptions of informal processes and norms within organizations (e.g., images of leadership, firm's gender narrative, definitions of success) become elements of the perceived context that play into an individual's sense of who they are and can be as leaders. Thus, while some existing work theorizes about the role others may play in leader identity development at the level of

claiming and granting interactions, the present study situates such development within a broader organizational and cultural context around women and leadership. While I appreciate and acknowledge suggestions that leader identities can and do develop apart from formal leadership roles (e.g., DeRue et al 2009, DeRue & Ashford, 2010), the reality of organizational life is that much leadership status is bestowed through formal roles. Therefore, this dissertation provides an in-situ picture of such leader identity development, such that images of who leaders are, what they can do, where they can go, and who they must know, play a role in seeing oneself as a leader, especially when leadership is tied to formal roles as is the case in most organizations. In the present study, we see variation in how developing women leaders make sense of and experience these elements of context, such that for some, gender becomes a part of the story of seeing oneself as a leader via the embedded social context. Yet beyond gender, we can imagine these dynamics playing out for many individuals developing as leaders in organizations, for example, in considering what the images of leadership in the firm prescribe as compared to how I see myself, and vice versa.

Relatedly, this study demonstrated how one's gender as a woman relates to particular self-understandings as a leader, which opens up the possibility of exploring similar intersections beyond gender. My findings suggests that research needs to move beyond treating the leader's experience as generic, to better understand and appreciate whether and how particular non-work identities can shape a person's sense of themselves as leaders and how that can impact attitudes/behaviors as a leader. Especially for populations that have been historically under-represented in positions of power, how one experiences a particular non-work identity in concert with their leader identity is likely to be important. Perhaps when an individual has a demographic identity that is viewed as aprototypical for leadership, it intersects in a unique way

with seeing oneself as a leader, beyond the usual treatment of simply categorizing dichotomously whether a leader "is" or "is not" a member of a particular category (e.g., male or female; white or non-white). Particular norms/stereotypes typically attached to women in organizations are inherent in the frames, self-questioning, and enactment that emerged from this research; thus, it is possible that there may be unique intersections for other demographic identities with the leader identity.

My analysis revealed common questions within individuals' development of a leader identity: How certain am I that I am a leader? How authentic do I feel as a leader? What do I aspire to as a leader? How efficacious do I feel as a leader? How do others see me as a leader? Such self-questioning offers insight into what the experience of leader identity development actually looks like, as an individual comes to see herself as a leader. Thus, this dissertation builds empirical insight into the content of leader identity development, beyond current considerations that primarily conceptualize such development based on the strength of one's leader identity in the overall self-concept. I expand our understanding of what leader identity development actually entails by revealing what individuals are actually seeking out, doing, understanding, questioning, and enacting as they come to see themselves as leaders. The leader identity enactment types connect the self-questioning to action, suggesting how individuals, at least at a point in time, undertake the development of their leader identity by personalizing, amplifying, engaging, gendering, disengaging, and limiting their sense of selves as leaders.

Outside of the leadership domain specifically, the literature on identities at work discusses ways in which individuals construct and "work on" their work-related identities. For example, Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufman (2006) offer a model of identity customization, in which professionals change their identity *to fit work demands* by enriching, patching, or splinting their

developing identities as professionals. The leader identity enactments emerging in this dissertation actually consider a different type of customization; that is, changes in how identity is enacted to *fit the intersection of me as a leader*, which is not always about fitting work demands. For example, personalizing leader identity was about making the leader identity fit better who I am, even if it does not fit broader images of leadership in the firm. This important distinction was revealed through the present study's in-depth focus on the frame as an orientation of one's leader identity development. Without understanding the gendered dynamics intersecting with one's leader identity development, I may not have seen this important nuance in the enactments as working to fit the identity to who I am and want to be as a leader (not just to fit the work demands). This notion is reflected in Ibarra's (1999) study of professionals' experimentation with provisional selves. This research finds that some new professionals, primarily women, experiment with provisional selves by engaging in "true to self" strategies that allowed them to feel authentic in their shift toward a new role identity. My findings elaborate on this idea by demonstrating various strategies of leader identity enactment among women, some of which appear to truly echo this 'true to self' strategy in the context of leadership (e.g., personalization), but others that focus more so on strategically matching defined images of leadership within the firm. The strategies are contextualized not only to recognize variations among women, but also how leader identity enactment may be driven by intertwined perceptions of the organizational context and its demands for leadership (a la Pratt's "work demands") as well as demands for oneself (a la Ibarra's "true to self" strategy). Thus, my findings unpack further the nuances in how individuals may work to fit themselves to an identity, but also fit an identity to themselves.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research

The inductive, qualitative approach I took allowed for in-depth insight into individual's subjective experiences and the questions at the heart of this dissertation. Yet, this approach has its limitations, as all methodological choices involve trade-offs. The most common limitation of qualitative work and cross-sectional interviews are that the data is based on participants' retrospective sensemaking. Thus, it is possible that participants' in-the-moment experiences of the organization, their gender, and their developing leadership are different than they retrospectively reported them in the interviews. However, such limitations are outweighed by the benefits of this approach, particularly in relation to the core interests of this dissertation. Interviews are a common method for studying individual identity in organization studies (Alvesson et al, 2008), because part of making sense of who one is involves retrospectively reconstructing and making sense of one's experiences, often right in the interview setting. I was particularly interested in women's conscious reflections on their gender and leadership, and thus prompted them to discuss this in the interview. I did not expect that women go through their day to day organizational lives thinking consciously in the moment about how their gender may be relevant; rather, my purpose and interest in the interview was to elicit such reflections to get a sense of how they construct gender in relation to leadership. Doing so proved a fruitful approach, particularly as participants' reflections allowed me to uncover the dynamic experience of shifting, ambivalent, and reinforcing frames, at least in so far as participants reflected back on their gender-leadership frames. I took care in asking questions about their gender in relation to leadership at the end of the interview, so that all other questions about the organizational context and their own leadership development were asked prior to the eliciting of such reflections.

Another key concern of qualitative methods is around generalizability of the findings. Qualitative methods are intended to generalize to theory, rather than to other populations (Yin, 2009); nonetheless, my choice of context was purposeful as I believe the findings can be applicable to other similar settings (e.g., male-dominated industries and settings in which women are seeking to advance). This transferability of findings is referred to as analytic generalizability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), such that findings may be relevant to other settings that share similar characteristics, which in this case may be other financial services firms, investment banks, or professional services firms. While I purposefully focused on male-dominated contexts, this creates a boundary condition of my work, as I expect that the findings may be different in contexts that are not as numerically and culturally male-dominated as banking and professional services.

Finally, while focusing in-depth in one organizational field setting provided many advantages, it may also create limitations. For one, while I offered in-depth details on how various organizational features relate to women's frames, I did not capture potential differences across organizations. In my interviews, participants often contrasted the culture of this firm to other firms they had worked for or were familiar with, which suggests that the nuances in organizational dynamics shaping frames and leader identity development may be different in different settings. Thus, an important avenue for future research would be to conduct similar studies across different organizations in order to better understand these organizational-level influences. Further, as noted throughout, this firm already offers some initiatives focused on women in the organization; therefore, it is quite possible that the saliency of being a "woman leader" was heightened in this setting. Nonetheless, I am less concerned about this possible limitation because many professional services firms at this point in time have implemented some

programming and initiatives relevant to women's development (Ramarajan et al, 2014). This echoes that the existing cultural and societal narrative around "women leaders" is salient already, which makes this such an interesting intersection to study. Future research could attempt to consider similar questions in an industry or setting that has given less explicit attention to women's development; however, it may be difficult to find any organizational setting immune from such discussions at this time, particularly in the U.S.

In addition to research that would address these limitations, many directions for future research arose throughout the course of this dissertation. At the most basic level, this research emphasizes that future work also needs to better appreciate, and thus pay more attention to, the variation within women as a group. Additional research should directly and explicitly consider variations among women in the context of organizational life, as I have done in the present study by placing gender-leadership at the center of my inquiry. Not only did this allow my work to more explicitly reveal the differences among women with respect to what it means to be a woman leader, it also allowed me to better understand how the broader context may differently shape how women come to see themselves as leaders. Focusing future work directly on variation among women will deepen our understanding of how particular organizational features and processes may have different influences on different women.

More specific to the focus on gender-leadership frames, future work could fruitfully build from the foundation established here. While my findings suggests that the experience of these is dynamic (at least based on how individuals recount it), future longitudinal research should examine how gender-leadership frames actually change over time for individuals. In participants' own retrospective accounts, they discuss shifts and changes in how they experience their gender in relation to their leadership now as compared to in the past; but future work

following a cohort of women over time could add more insight into this evolution as it unfolds in-situ. A longitudinal design would provide insight into the changing constructions experienced over time within an individual, as well as how societal, political, and cultural narratives surrounding women as leaders across time may shape such constructions. Future work could focus on a cohort of young women entering the workforce to understand how they construct their gender in relation to their leadership initially, and if/how these constructions may change as they are further embedded into workplace ideals and norms. In other words, is their gender-leadership frame altered as they make sense of the dynamics of today's organizational lives for women? A longitudinal study could also employ methods, such as diaries and journaling, that allow in-the-moment sense-making to be captured. This could shed light on the particular situations and interactions that might give rise to different meanings of gender and leadership at different points in time.

In the present study, I found four primary dimensions underlying women's constructions of gender and leadership, but future work could consider more systematically if/how these dimensions are a comprehensive framework for gender-leadership frames. Quantitative methodologies could be employed to create scales for each dimension to test if these are the primary dimensions underlying women's gender-leadership frames, and whether/how these dimensions may interrelate. For example, is the 2x2 presented in this study confirmed via scale development and tests of interrelationships among the dimensions of valence and self-other construal? On the one hand, such quantification runs the risk of losing the lived experience and nuanced construction within these frames, as developed in the present research. On the other hand, systematizing these dimensions, and ultimately the construct of gender-leadership frames, would allow for a more methodical understanding of how particular organizational and personal

variables may influence women's frames. For example, a large scale survey across women of various ages, career stages, industries, and geographies could examine the personal and organizational factors associated with different frame constructions. Thus, while all methodological choices involve trade-offs, such quantitative approaches to building out the construct of gender-leadership frames offers a useful complement to the findings presented in this dissertation.

While the present work was purposefully focused in a male-dominated context, future research could fruitfully consider how gender-leadership frames may be similar or different in other contexts that are less-male dominated. I argued in this dissertation that the notion of "women leaders" is so salient in today's societal and cultural narrative, whether or not an organization is male-dominated (culturally and/or numerically) may not have a strong bearing on women's constructions of gender and leadership. However, initial evidence in this dissertation suggested that the lines of business within CDH Markets may play a role in shaping women's frames. I found that the internal consulting group, which has the highest percentage of female employees relative to the other two main lines of business, may be more likely to see self-reliance and deficiency reinforcing frame experiences than the other lines of business that are numerically more male-dominated. This offers some initial evidence that the representation in the context may play a role in how women construct their gender as relevant to their leadership. Therefore, a similar comparative study could be conducted across various industries and settings that vary in the extent to which they are male dominated to understand this further. Additionally, some existing research suggests that the representation of women at the highest ranks of the organization may be what matters most to women's experiences (e.g., Ely, 1994). Future work

could also consider comparisons across settings in which women's representation at the highest leadership levels varies.

This dissertation also offered a number of insights into leader identity development, in particular unearthing forms of self-questioning and leader identity enactment within women's development. While the present research was purposefully focused on women, future work should compare whether and how these leader identity dimensions may be similar and different across men and women. Any developing leader likely engages in some form of self-questioning, perhaps involving certainty, credibility, efficacy, authenticity, and aspirational concerns. Yet, the content of these concerns and the ways in which they are expressed might vary across men and women. For example, some of the authenticity concerns reflected in the present sample of women developing leaders reflect a concern with being one's authentic *feminine* self as a leader, echoing content of this concern that is likely to differ for men. Further, research could consider if the forms of leader identity enactment found here also apply to men. What additional or different forms of enactment may arise in a study also including male developing leaders? Focusing on these questions not only helps to elucidate any potential differences across men and women, but more importantly, would help to round out our understanding of additional dimensions within leader identity development, beyond the present focus primarily on centrality and importance.

Future work should also consider how gender-leadership frames may have the power to explain variations in other organizationally relevant outcomes, beyond leader identity development. One area of interest to consider is how these frames may have implications for the relationships women develop with other women at work. Existing research offers inconsistent depictions of women's workplace relationships (Litwin & Hallstein, 2007), sometimes holding

an underlying assumption that women will generally reach out and support one another on the leadership path; and other times, reflecting stereotypically "catty" and problematic relationships among women in the workplace. The gender-leadership frame construct may have explanatory power in elucidating these different experiences of women's relationships. How women construct their gender in relation to their leadership may have implications for how they approach, engage in, and think about their relationships with other women at work. While much future work would need to be conducted to consider this potential relationship between frames and women's workplace relationships, the present research offers some initial evidence. For example, women experiencing a positive shifting frame tended to amplify their leader identities to reach out and support other women, while some women with ambivalent frames purposefully avoided support initiatives among women. Future work could also consider how an individual's own frame influences their treatment of others that report to them. For example, if a woman holds a deficiency frame, what implications does this have for how she approaches the development of the female (and male) employees working beneath her?

Beyond outcomes associated with women's relationships, future work could also consider if certain frames are more adaptive in certain organizational contexts. For example, do women holding a positive shifting frame perform better in a certain organization than women holding a self-reliance frame? In the present research, I considered this question by using the high-potential designation as a proxy for performance; yet, there did not appear to be any systematic association between this designation and the frame types. However, in this organization, individuals do not know that they are designated as high potential. This designation is used by the managerial team to evaluate employees, but it is not shared with

individual employees. More formalized or transparent measures of performance might be more appropriate for assessing if particular frame experiences are more adaptive in certain contexts.

Finally, while the present work was purposefully focused on the intersection of gender and leader identity, future work should consider other intersections of non-work identities with the leader identity. Research could consider if the framework of frame dimensions unearthed here is applicable to other non-work identities that are typically viewed as aprototypical for leadership (e.g., race). While the particular norms and stereotypes attached to women in organizations were inherent in the content of the frames and meanings in the present research, it is possible that the framework of dimensions at a conceptual level might apply to other intersections. For example, do non-white leaders conceive of their race in relation to their leadership, primarily along dimensions of relevance, valence, self-other construal, and collectivity beliefs? What other dimensions or unique content may exist in race-leadership frames because of the unique norms and stereotypes attached to non-white leaders in organizations? These, and other questions related to other intersections of non-work identities and the leader identity are important to consider.

Implications for Organizations & Managers

Empathy is critical in managerial relationships. Managers who are curious about others get better than expected performance from their direct reports (Goleman, 2002). Too often, however, organizations attempt to take a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting and developing employees. Such approaches make generalizations about how individuals at certain levels, in particular lines of business, or with similar characteristics experience aspects of the organization and their own development. In so doing, organizations may come to understand who their employees are "on paper" in an objective sense, but lack a deeper understanding of the ways in

which employees experience the organization and their own goals, aspirations, and development within it. The research presented here illuminates such variation within women's perceptions of their organization, their gender, and their own development, even among women at similar points of career development. These different experiences and perspectives have tangible implications for women's motivations to pursue leadership opportunities and growth within the firm. In the past, organizations that have implemented successful interventions around gender have raised managers' awareness about the differences between women and men's workplace experiences (Ramarajan et al, 2014). The findings here demonstrate that differences extend beyond those between men and women, such that organizations interested in supporting female employees should consider how lived experiences *between* women vary, as they consist of a complex intersection of personal and professional contexts. Organizations and managers can undertake a number of strategies to better anticipate and attend to transition points, motivations, and choices in women's careers.

For example, organizations could work with managers to anticipate and prepare for transition points in employees' careers. A resounding theme of the shifting frame experience found in this research is that major transitions – whether personal or professional – can inadvertently become challenging points for leader identity development. Managers who pay careful attention to their employees' transitions (e.g., having children, getting promoted, joining as a lateral hire) might be able to minimize negative shifts in women's gender-leadership frames. Moreover, there may be an especially valuable opportunity for managers to "turn around" frames. Perhaps the most vocal champions among female developing leaders are those who "amplify" their leadership. These women overcame perceived challenges at work related to gender and, and as a result, feel compelled to serve as a representative voice for other women.

Guiding managers to identify these women and help improve their experiences through targeted coaching and development could yield beneficial results.

The current research highlighted the importance of clarifying an organization's gender narrative at all levels. The ambivalence some women experienced was driven by their interpretation of the firm's narrative around gender, which created uncertainty around what it means to be a woman in this firm, and more specifically what advancement of women means. Many participants recognized and appreciated the organization's efforts, but also believed the primary focus of gender programs in the firm was on increasing the percentage of women at the leadership levels in the firm. While numerical targets are an important way to measure progress, research suggests that when companies focus primarily on numerical targets, little often changes in the cultural norms and expectations of the firm (Ramarajan et al, 2014). Organizations and managers must clarify the business motivations of such initiatives, and ensure this messaging is consistently and transparently emphasized at all levels in the firm, especially because such interpretations seemed to play an important role in influencing women's constructions of gender and leadership, and subsequently, their leader identities.

Finally, understanding leader identity is of practical concern for individuals and organizations because identity is "a source of motivational and directional forces that determine the extent to which the leader voluntarily puts himself or herself in developmental situations" (Lord & Hall, 2005: 592). If we want to develop women leaders, we need to understand how they experience the path to leadership, and overall how this shapes their own internal sense of self as leaders and thus motivation to pursue leadership opportunities. The present research offers new insight into the concerns particular women might have in seeing themselves as leaders. Understanding these concerns can assist organizations not only in supporting women's

advancement, but also in understanding what images of leadership are perpetuated and promoted in their organizations.

Concluding Thoughts

This dissertation fulfills its purpose of deepening our understanding of professional women's experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders as they move along the leadership path; and in doing so, offers a more contextualized perspective on leader identity development, both in terms of non-work identities and organizational influences on seeing oneself as a leader. This study provides a foundation for much future research at the intersection of gender and leadership identity development. In particular, I hope it spurs a deeper appreciation for the varying organizational experiences and perspectives *among* women, as captured by my consideration of gender-leadership frames. As Moran (1992: 477) noted years ago in her paper on "Gender Differences in Leadership":

> "At the outset, it should be recognized that there are dangers of overgeneralization inherent in this topic. Women bring diversity to leadership, but there is also great diversity among women. […] Although research shows differences between males and females, the variations between them are fewer than is commonly believed, and the differences within each sex are greater than the differences between the sexes."

More than two decades after Moran made this point, our scholarship on gender and leadership continues to overgeneralize among women in order to compare to men. My dissertation adds renewed emphasis to this point, by demonstrating that there are many differences in how women construct and think about the relevance of gender to leadership in the first place, and these differences have important implications for their sense of who they are and can be as leaders. As one study participant put it: "…with every women, her story is going to be different."

TABLES & FIGURES

Table 3.1 Percentage of Females by Line of Business & Level

	Investment Banking	Trading	Internal Consulting
VP	25%	31%	52%
D	18%	20%	67%
MD	13%	16%	71%

Table 3.2 Description of Sample

Sample by Line of Business, Location, and High Potential Designation

	VP	D	MD	**Total (by LOB)**
Investment Banking	8	6	6	20
Trading	5	6	16	27
Internal Consulting	0	4	4	8
Total (by Level)	13	16	26	55 *(total n)*
				Total (by location)
Location 1	7	6	10	23
Location 2	3	4	8	15
Location 3	3	4	5	12
Other		2	3	5
High Potential %	62%	63%	77%	69%

Participant Demographics

	Min	Max	Mean	Median
Age (years)	28	58	39.6	39
Tenure in Org (years)	2	39	10	8

Percentage with Children	64%

Table 5.1 Summary Table of Frame Experiences

Theme	Core Elements	Representative Quotations
Shifting Frame_ Negative **(n=10)**	• Experience of gender in relation to leadership has shifted over time to be more negative; • Individuals used to see gender as having little relevance for their leadership, but have come to realize the challenges that come with being a "woman leader" (move to negative valence)	"I think up until now I would have said, 'I'm a leader who just happens to be a woman.'…But, I think even in the last couple of years being in these [higher] roles, has opened my eyes a little bit more to why there's a difference, and why it's harder. The things that I thought were unique to me are not really unique to me, are very common among women. What I was talking to you before about you put your head down and you just get your work down and you're going to be recognized. Well I thought that was me. I [now see that] it's something that's unique for women as opposed to men."
Shifting Frame_ Positive **(n=10)**	• Experience of gender in relation to leadership has shifted over time to be more positive; • Individuals used to experience gender as negative for leadership (negative valence), but now see it as less relevant • Individuals used to see gender as having little relevance for their leadership, but have come to realize the advantages that come with being a "woman leader" (move to positive valence)	"I think [being a woman] is a huge benefit right now. I wouldn't say that that was how it has always been; especially when I was at [my prior company]…. You do have a lot of egos on the trading floor so it's a lot of that male testosterone you deal with, like 'rah, rah look at me pounding the table.' But generally right now, if you're a woman and you're competent and you can do the job, if something were to come up…you do have that one up."
Ambivalent Frame **(n=13)**	• Tensions in the experience of gender in relation to leadership • Mixed feelings and conflicting ideas about what it means to be a "woman leader"	"So I'm a female; I really have to work harder, I really have to go that extra mile or prove myself. I have to make sure they do notice me. Or they're not noticing me because I'm a female, so let's promote this whole diversity council stuff. But it's really because I do have a brain up here and I do matter and I am able to contribute something of value. So I think it's dealing with that, like you want it to really give women their space but you also don't want it to be about women. Like it's that conflict. I don't want it because I'm a woman. I want it because I really am capable."
Reinforcing Frame_ Self-Reliance **(n=13)**	• Perpetual experience of gender as not relevant for leadership • Performing well and working hard matters for success, not gender	"I've never really identified with my gender-- maybe I tend not to get too flushed about going into a room where I'm the only woman in the meeting, etc….Maybe blindly so, but I've never felt pushed back by gender. I think lots of places and environments I've been in it doesn't matter…And so, I'm defining success just on its own whether and not whether it's a female or male driving it."

Reinforcing Frame_ Deficiency **(n=9)**	• Perpetual experience of gender as a disadvantage for leadership • Being a woman leader means facing challenges and always having to work harder than men	"I think it's difficult to be a woman…I think in finance it's probably one of the worst because as I said before it's a very [male]. They very much look upon the women as objects really. …The way that they talk about other women…some of the comments that come up which can be complete sexism or more just an objectification of women and stuff…With regard to working, [my male counterparts] receive mentorship [that is] miles and away different to what I received. Those are just the ways it is harder for women."

Table 5.2: Percentage of Frame Experiences by Line of Business

	POSITIVE SHIFTING	NEGATIVE SHIFTING	AMBIVALENT	SELF-RELIANCE REINFORCING	DEFICIENCY REINFORCING
Investment Banking	11% (2)	32% (6)	21% (4)	21% (4)	16% (3)
Trading	30% (8)	7% (2)	30% (8)	22% (6)	11% (3)
Internal Consulting	0% (0)	13% (1)	13% (1)	38% (3)	38% (3)

Table 6.1 Illustrative Data for Self-Questioning Codes

Theme	Core Elements	Representative Quotations
Certainty	Questions and concerns related to: *How certain am I that I am a leader?*	"I do worry, in terms of developing my leadership, I think that just having the conviction, like having those great ideas, having that vision and being able to stand by them, I think it's something that I'm not used to; ya know, I'm kind of more of an executor. Like my boss, has a great idea, and I go execute it, fine. I'm great with that, I bring it to life… it's that broader skill of being able to open your mind and look ahead of the things…. How everything in the bank or the industry, comes together and that broader knowledge that can be learned over time that I wonder if I have. I do wonder if sometimes, if it CAN be learned overtime or if it's just innate sometimes."
Aspirations	Questions and concerns related to: *Who and what do I aspire to as a leader?*	"So, I have to weigh – my life's pretty good right now in terms of – and I know it and I'm good at my job and all that and like how much do I want a wholesale 100% change for something that's unknown on a completely different line of business just…And there could be something coming up, I've been talking to some people, but it's just do you really want it or one of the questions I'm asking myself is why do I want it? My life is good. I make good money. Do I really need to make that change? But my view is in terms of this other one that kinda talking about I think if I took that one, I'd be taking it just get a management role and I don't think I'd enjoy the job as much as I do this one."
Authenticity	Questions and concerns related to: *Can I be myself as a leader?*	"And one of the things I really, really loved when I first got here was that I felt that I didn't have to change who I was in order to be successful. I could do the job and be who I was….Whenever you are starting to have to be fake or having to smile this way or saying stuff you don't believe in… I never like to be in situations like that….I think to me, when you start having to adjust your personality so often to be able to fit in [] to me that is not a good situation. I think that as [the firm] brings more people in from a lot of different places, that's something that is not who I am. That is something that I'm going to have to kind of learn to deal with….that you don't feel like your authentic self as a leader in these situations. It makes you feel ineffective as a leader if you can't be authentic."
Efficacy	Questions and concerns related to: *How effective am I as a leader?*	"When I got promoted, there was this transition to do cross-selling, that I didn't feel comfortable in it…I was very comfortable working on my own and getting deals done internally, but then I had to learn how to be more externally focused. We have situations where we're on these calls for new transactions with very senior leadership. …I'm on the line to lead the deal from a corporate banking perspective to see if they have questions there, and I think it's a great opportunity for me. I'm not always sure I'm confident in those situations yet so I think that's something I'm working

		on, and I think part of it is developing the skills and getting better at this external client selling and cross-selling. Because there are questions that come up as to what cross-sell opportunities exist on the corporate banking side… I can't always say that I'm confident in those situations when questions come up. I'm there to just deliver a presentation on how we're going to develop that client from a cross-sell perspective."
Credibility	Questions and concerns related to: *Do others see me as a credible leader?*	"In the situations where I wasn't sure, I had to act sure. Not lie, because I think that is another thing. I think a lie, people just make up answers and I'm too scared. I have a scared personality so I'm too scared to do that. At the same time if I keep saying, "I don't know," to everything, they're not going to be able to believe in you as a leader. So it was one of those things where I had to act confident, whether it meant doing a lot more work… because I felt the need to be extra sure in everything I was doing. So yeah, I think it was just giving them the right answer and when I didn't know, saying," I didn't know," but in a very confident way. "I don't know that because I haven't seen it." It was just really interesting how much the way you speak matters to how they see you."

Table 6.2 Illustrative Data for Leader Identity Enactment Types

Theme	Core Elements	Representative Quotations
Personalize	• Enacting the leader identity in a way that better fits who they can be or want to be as a leader, regardless of firm defined leadership • Most often expressed by participants with a *negative shifting frame*	"I'm still facing a lot of challenges [in advancing]. I think that there have been a lot of instances here, if I focus on how I can be a leader, where I see that something had to get done and [I say], 'Okay, this is going to be better.' Like, I'll say 'that doesn't make any sense. That's just extremely inefficient.' What I did then was I had to take it for myself to make the phone calls to vendors which had nothing to do with my job. I just wanted to talk to everyone because I was determined to change this process because it was inefficient. […] So … even if it's not my business, if I come in, something doesn't make sense, I don't care if that's going to take my weekends, my night, but I feel the need to get involved. Otherwise, there is no point in sitting around and complaining. So I try to make difference. [..] So whenever there is an opportunity to kind of step up, I never shy away from the responsibility even though there's nothing in it. There is no additional pay. There is no recognition or anything, but I felt that there was a need and somebody had to step up and do it and so I always was willing to raise my hand and say, "Okay, let me take charge of this situation and see how I could make a difference here."
Amplify	• Extending and broadening their leader identity, so that their sense of who they are and can be as leaders extends to now include a responsibility for "leading women" more broadly • Most often expressed by participants with a *positive shifting frame*	"I genuinely believe …that women executives bring concrete, distinct values to decisions and corporate culture. I go out of my way to support and mentor the women in our department, not just in my group, but in our department because there aren't too many of them, and actively seeking female candidates to bring into the firm because I do believe that it affects the decision making and the culture. …Generally speaking, I do believe men and women have different decision matrixes and rationale, and again, bring distinct skill sets to the table, so I do feel strongly about this question."
Engage	• Engaging directly in their sense of self as a leader through active commitment to developing and furthering their leadership. • Most often expressed by participants with an *ambivalent frame*	"I'm looking for more practical leadership experience. Having difficult conversations, how to coach. That stuff really interests me and I just got a taste of it [in this recent training]. I would like to do more because often times – because I don't think I have any problem on a personal, like relating to people and everything like that but just being effective with their career in order to you know for advancement and have difficult conversations and being articulate and clear and everything like that. I think, that's right, I definitely am looking for help with that."
Gender	• Enacting and expressing one's sense of self as a leader in ways that are stereotypically feminine • Most often expressed by participants with an *ambivalent frame*	"And, so Bob and I sat down, we said, 'Okay, this is how we'd like to run. We want it to be more like mom and dad.' You know if – that we should both be informed of each other's roles and that we were both constantly talking. So we kind of nailed what's going on and off at all times, we

		check, so that, when one's away we have to look after, and anything else."
Disengage	• Lack of enactment in the leader identity evidenced by downshifting in their sense of selves as leaders. • Most often expressed by participants with a *deficiency frame*	"When it comes to leadership I kind of -- I always said I wanted to be a manager. I want to have people report into me….I did see success as someone who had, who sat at the top of the hierarchy. Whereas now I don't feel like I want that so much I think because I see what that actually entails, as well as understand that success isn't necessarily a function as your place on the hierarchy and as well as go back to the "pick your battles" point. …So nowadays to be a leader, I don't necessarily think it's as important as I used to because I realized it comes with strings attached."
Limiting	• Enacting the leader identity by focusing narrowly on functional responsibilities, rather than directly engaging with future sense of self as leader • Most often expressed by participants with a *self-reliance frame*	"I'm not concerned that my performance, if continued, will continued to be acknowledged within the corporation because they do a good job of: These are our expectations, you met those expectations, we're going to pay you based on that and we're going to give you XYZ more responsibility because you lived up to everything…. I think [closing deals] is really the best way to increase how the people within the organization view me because it's going to get you promoted at the end of the day. …it's how much money did she add to that bottom line. And then the other aspect it's qualitatively, what is she bringing to the organization? The dollars, bottom line, that's pretty straightforward… that's really my focus."

Table 6.3 Percentage of Participants Reflecting Associations between Frame Experiences and Leader Identity Enactment Types

ENACTMENTS	FRAME EXPERIENCE: NEGATIVE SHIFTING (n = 10)	POSITIVE SHIFTING (n = 10)	AMBIVALENT (n = 13)	DEFICIENCY (n=9)	SELF-RELIANCE (n = 13)
Personalize	70% (7)	10% (1)	0% (0)	22% (2)	8% (1)
Amplify	0% (0)	90% (8)	8% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Engage	0% (0)	10% (1)	46% (6)	0% (0)	8% (1)
Gender	10% (1)	0% (0)	38% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Disengage	20% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	67% (6)	23% (3)
Limit	0% (0)	0% (0)	8% (1)	11% (1)	62% (8)

FIGURE 2.1 MAPPING THE SCHOLARLY CONVERSATION ON WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

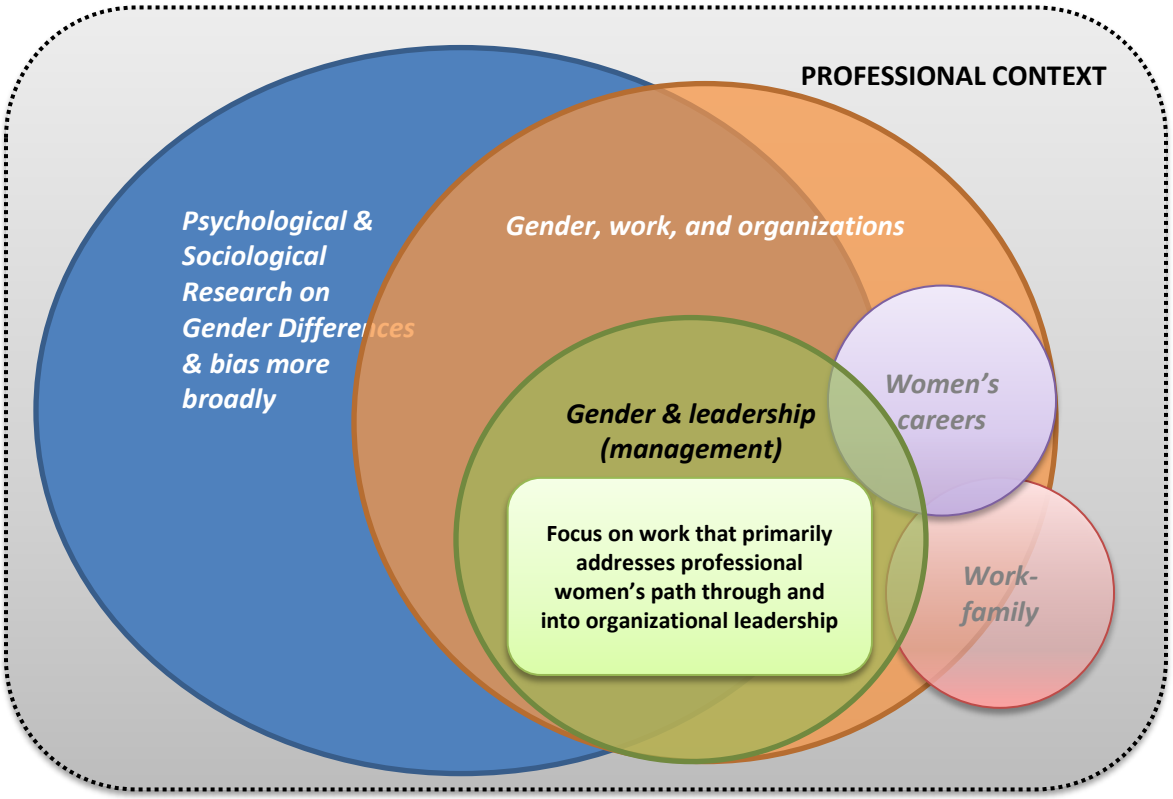


FIGURE 4.1
GENDER-LEADERSHIP FRAME DIMENSIONS

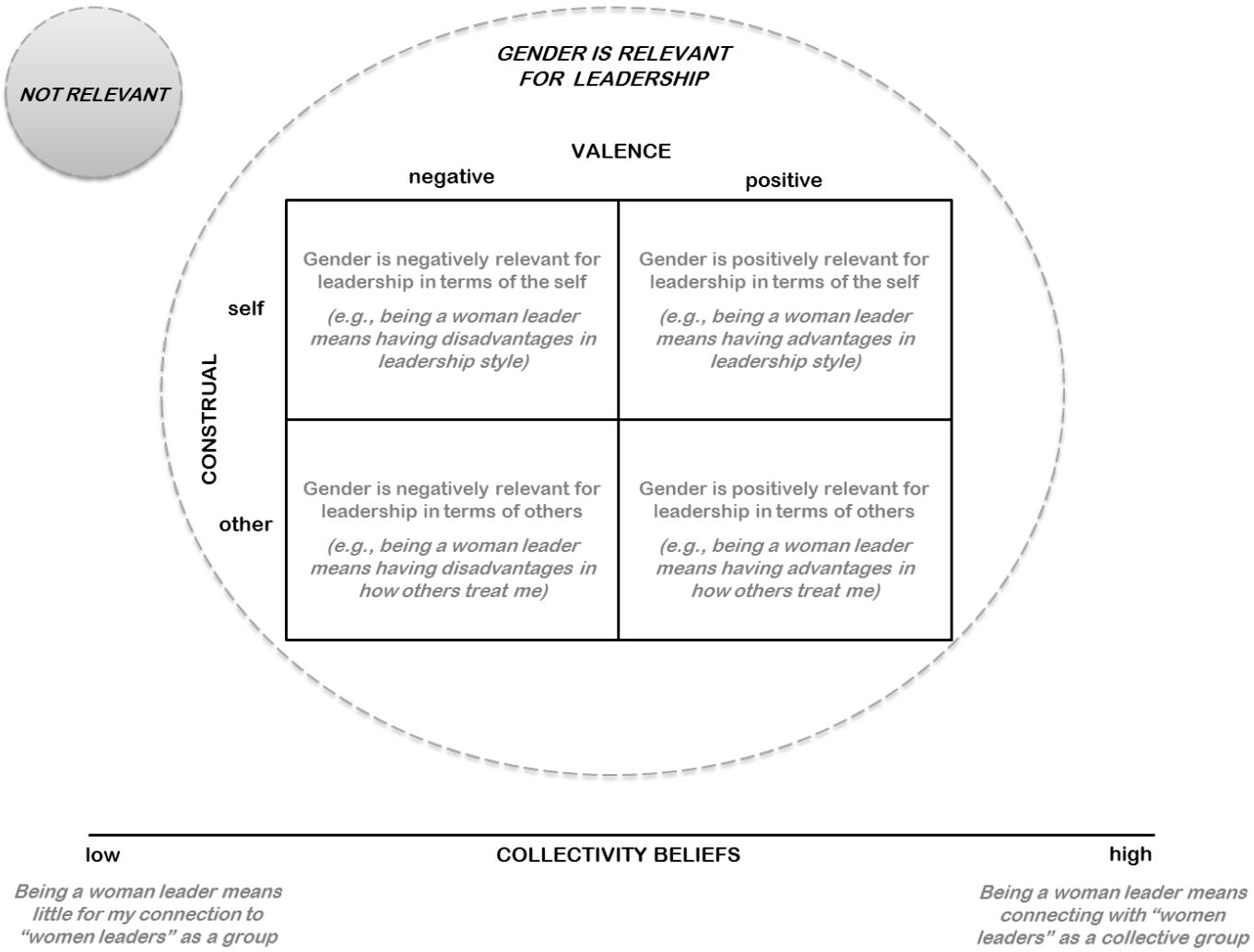


FIGURE 5.1
ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN CONTEXT AND FRAME EXPERIENCES

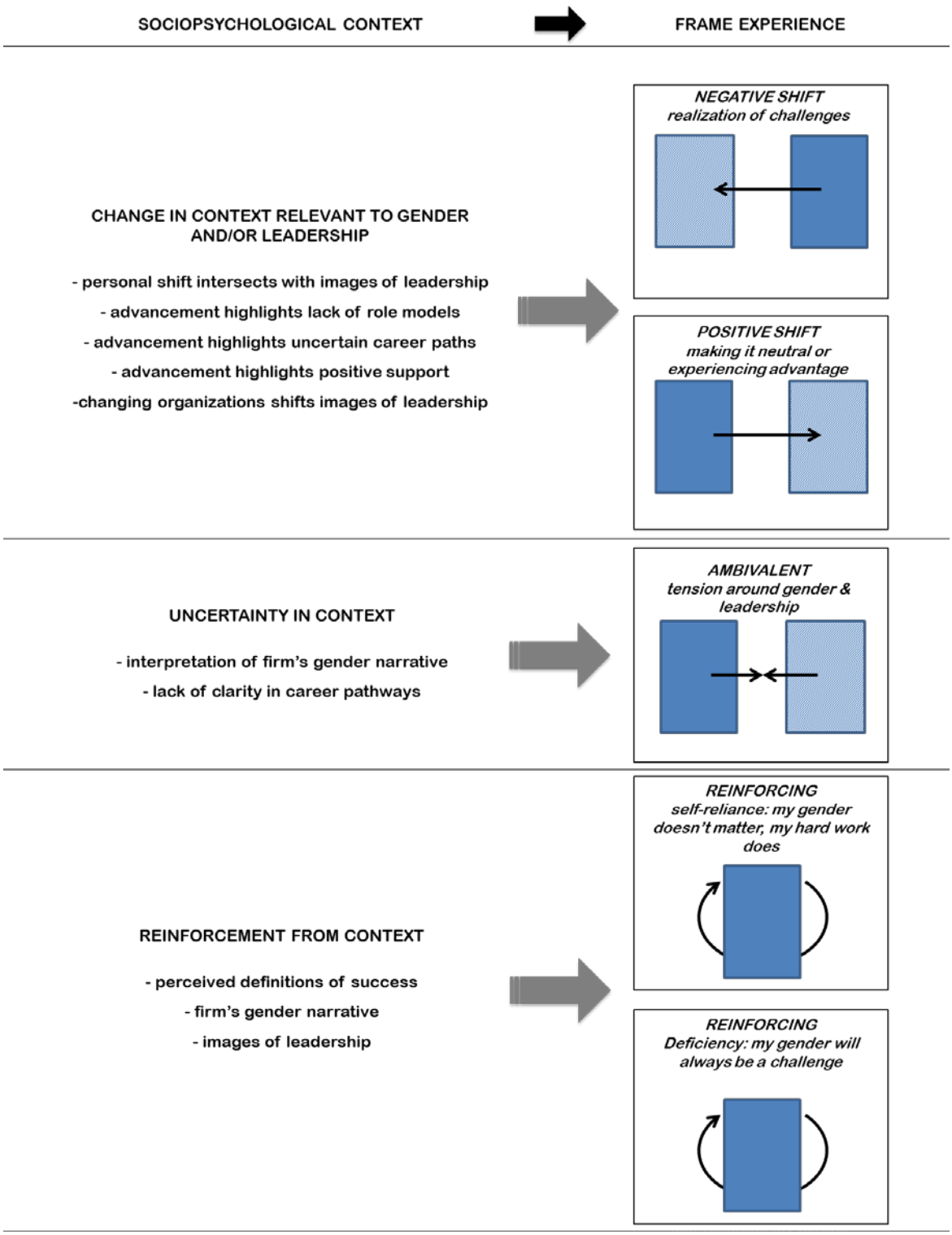


FIGURE 6.1
ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN FRAME EXPERIENCES &
LEADER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

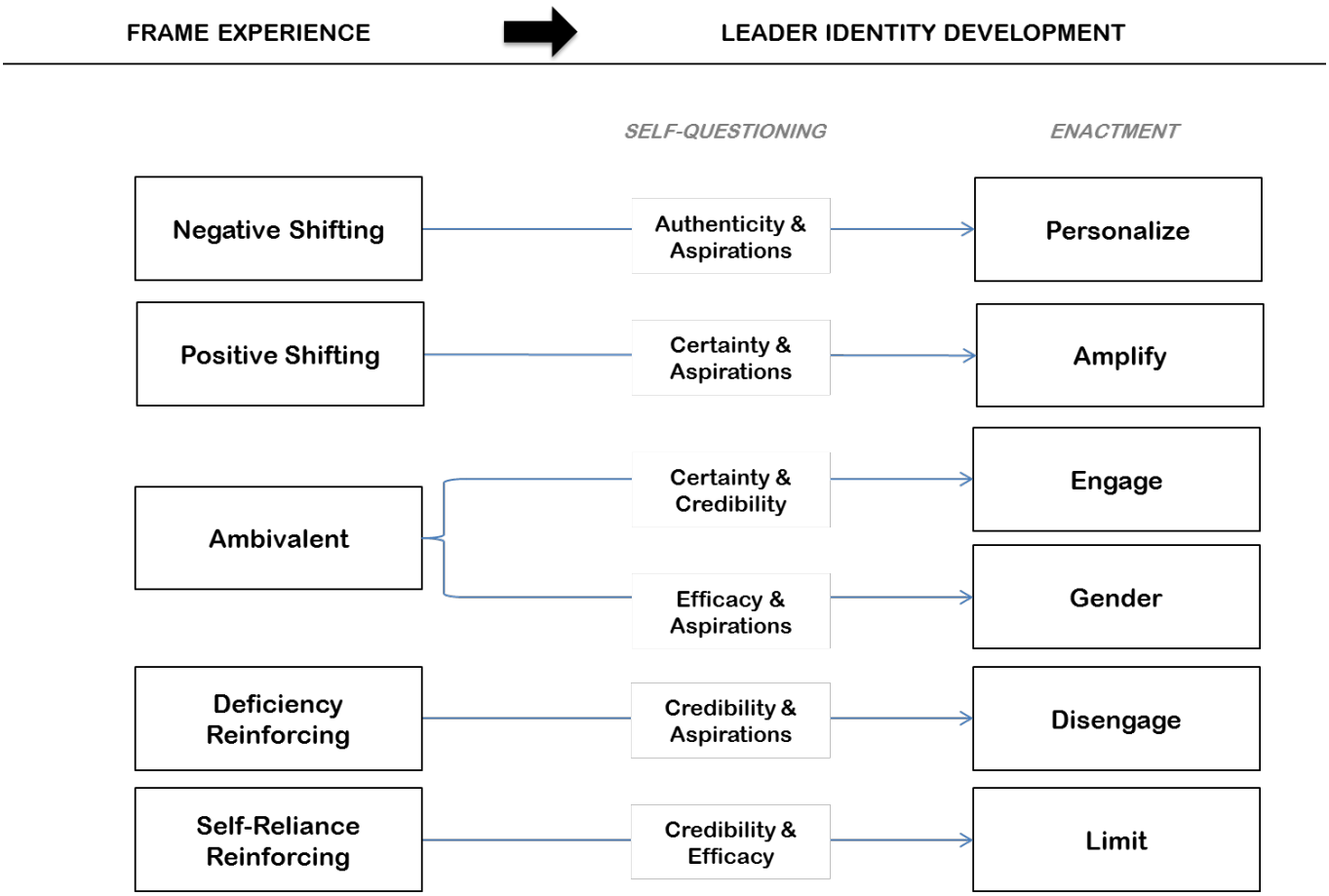
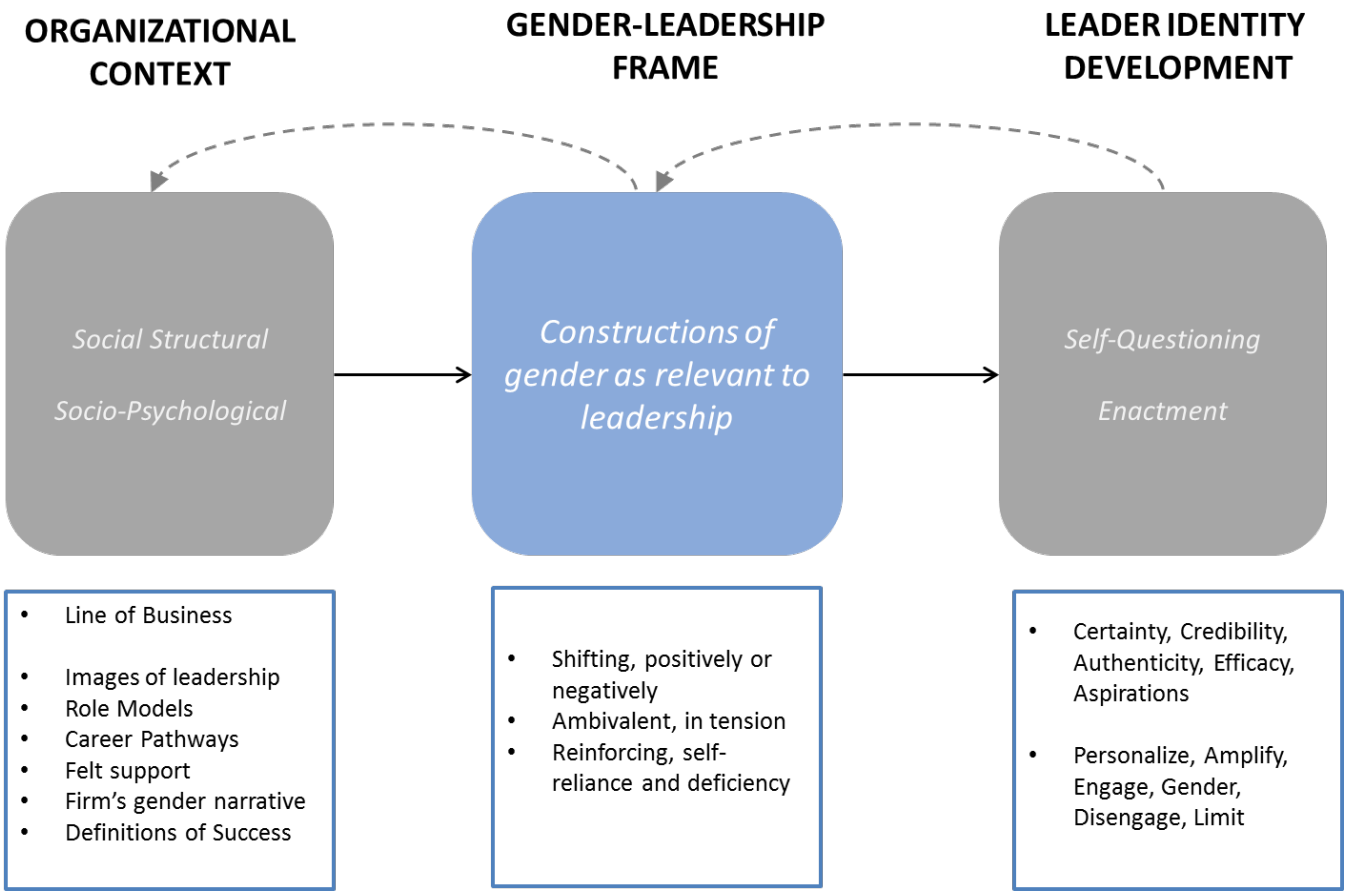


FIGURE 7.1
SUMMARY MODEL



APPENDICES

Interview Protocol
Leadership Development Study

Participant ID#: Location:
Date/Time:

Warm-Up & Job Overview (5 min)
I want to open by spending a few minutes learning about you and what you do here.

1) Briefly describe for me your current position in the organization. What do you do? Where do you fit in the reporting structure? [Gather dept. snapshot]
    - How long have you been in this role? At the organization?

2) Is there anything you'd like to share about your life outside of work? [Married? Kids?]

Personal Background & Upbringing (10 min)
I'm going to begin by asking you a few questions that ask you to reflect on your upbringing and early experiences as it relates to careers and leadership.

1) First, I want a get a sense of what values were instilled in you with respect to your career and leadership growing up. Do you recall what was expected of you or hoped for for you in terms of your career and future growing up? To what extent was leadership or being a leader part of that equation?

2) Is being a leader an important part of who you are? Has it always been this way, or is it shifting for you now at this point in your career? [do you see yourself as a leader at all?]

    - *Do any experiences stick out to you related to when you starting developing leadership aspirations, or thinking of yourself as a leader? [activities, orgs]*

Perceptions of organization and department (20 min)
Next, I want to talk in more detail about day to day experiences in this organization.

1) In general, how would you describe where you work? What adjectives or metaphors come to mind? [If you want, you can tell me a story that represents your sense of this place.]

    - *What do you like most about working here? Least?*

2) From your perspective, what does it take to be successful here?
    - *Probes: Describe a successful leader in this organization. Who are they? What do they look like? What do they do?*
3) I also want to hear a little bit about what the environment here is like for women, from your own perspective.

4) Finally, I want to get a sense of some of your relationships in the organization, particularly to understand how supported you feel as a developing leader here. Who do you turn to for support as a leader [formally, informally]? Who do you reach out to?

    - *Is there anyone you look up to as a leadership role model in the firm? Or, do you consider anyone a mentor for you? Do you see any junior employees as "mentees" of yours?*

Leadership Development (20 min)

Now I would like to talk more specifically about your development as a leader here at BMO. I'm going to ask you a broad question and then probe along the way.

1) Tell me the story of your leadership ascent here at BMO.
    - What's gone well? What's facilitated your progress?
    - What has been most challenging? What's hindered your progression?

2) Now I'm going to ask you to tell me some more recent stories that focus on your confidence and credibility as a leader.
    - Think of a time recently when you felt particularly confident about yourself as a leader. What happened? Who was involved? What felt good and why? How do you think others saw you in this situation?

    - Think of a time recently when you felt particularly bad/unconfident about yourself as a leader. What happened? Who was involved? What felt bad & why? How do you think others saw you in this situation?

3) What are you doing to develop yourself as a leader? Are you taking any proactive steps yourself? What opportunities, if any, have been presented to you (by the org or managers), in order to develop your leadership? Do you wish there were others?
    - *[Rephrase: What would help your career even more that isn't currently being provided by the organization.]*

4) Give me a picture of your future career goals and aspirations as a leader. Over the next few years, who do you want to be or become as a leader? What's important to you as you envision your future leadership? [e.g., certain level or type of leadership?]
    - *What are your barometers for figuring out where you head from here?*
    - *Do you have any concerns about your future development?*

Constructions of Gender & Leadership (MAKE SURE TO HIT THIS PART -- 20 min)

In this final section, I'm going to ask you a series of questions about how you see your gender playing a role in your experiences as a leader. I recognize that these may or may not feel relevant to you, and they may or may not be things you think about every day. Both are okay.

1) I'm going to read you two identity statements, and I want you to tell me which statement resonates more with you. Why did you choose that statement? Reflect on your choice.

   "*I am a woman leader*" OR "*I am a leader, who just happens to be a woman*"

   - *If struggling: in what ways, if any, do you see your gender as relevant to your leadership?*

Wrap-Up

In closing, I'd like to ask you some questions about yourself. Your response to these questions is voluntary and you don't have to answer them if you wish not to.

Age:
Education (highest level):

Those are all of the questions I have– given that I'm interested in your experiences as a developing leader in this organization, ***is there anything else you think I should've asked you****?*

Do you have any questions for me?

Follow-up: *With this sort of research, the themes are usually evolving, so I expect as the study progresses, that new questions may arise. Therefore, I anticipate wanting to do a follow-up interview, likely via phone. Is that okay with you?*

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME – I REALLY APPRECIATE IT!

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