

**AN ONTOLOGICAL/PHENOMENOLOGICAL MODEL OF LEADERSHIP:
IGNITING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE TRANSFORMATION AND
CATALYZING EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

An Ontological/Phenomenological Model of Leadership: Igniting Individual and Collective Transformation and Catalyzing Educational Reform

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Colleges and universities are being challenged to prepare students to become empowered leaders who know themselves as engaged, active participants in the creation of a future for society. Unfortunately some students are graduating from of our higher education institutions without having acquired the critical skills needed to navigate life with power. Some students are not getting sufficient opportunities for critical thinking, self-agency, and social action in the classroom. Without engaged and empowered learners, the future of education and society is at risk.

This research inquires into the ontological/phenomenological course “Being a Leader and The Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model”, how it might inform the transformational possibilities of individuals who engage in it, and how those individuals are creating futures for themselves and others that would not otherwise happen. This research positions this leadership course as an example of a pedagogical approach that might ignite transformational outcomes and reform American higher education. Employing autoethnography, participatory action research, and interviews, this study explores how the course contributes to the personal transformation, social action and institutional reform that the participants, including

myself, pursue. It illuminates the transformational possibilities of this course from three perspectives: from my lived experience as both participant and observer, through a group of diverse women leaders (Women Leading Group), and through members of a learning community of college and university faculty (LECOLE: Learning Community for Ontological/Phenomenological Leadership).

This study documents the possibilities that emerge when participants engage in an ontological leadership course that invites them to create futures that call for their leadership. This study postulates that the implementation of an ontological model in the classroom can be one key contribution to the development of students and educators and the reformation of American education. When educators and students are invited to examine who we are being as leaders in the classroom and the world, we are then better equipped to engage as citizens and agents of change. Collectively, we can renovate education and empower individuals from all walks of life who may then inform and create the future of American education and society.

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You have always been my number one cheerleader. My life would not have been filled with as much joy, love, and laughter without you. To my children, your unwavering joy and freedom inspire me every day to look at life with awe and wonder. I live to see you smile. Your daily hugs and kisses gave me the strength to push forward, even in the hardest of times. I am so blessed to be your mommy.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all the fearless educators who dare to be a contribution to the world and who inspire their students to do the same.

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.
- Nelson Mandela

PROLOGUE

As a Student Affairs professional who is committed to fostering learning beyond the classroom, I want everyone to have access to transformative education. More importantly, everyone should have access to learning that invites them to contribute to the world. I am a Nigerian-American woman whose parents realized the American dream through higher education. My father was born and raised in Nigeria where he completed his primary and secondary education before coming to the United States. Once here, he attended Cornell University and then completed medical school at the University of Pennsylvania. He went on to start his own private medical practice, build a fully functional hospital in his village back home, and author several books. His brother, my uncle, earned his Ph.D. from Harvard. Collectively, they were the first from their village to leave Nigeria, earn Ivy-league degrees, and inspire others to do the same. Growing up, education was constantly emphasized as an avenue to realizing the American dream. From an early age, I had a passion for education. I witnessed what it was able to do for a poor man from Africa, his family, and his village back home. For that reason, I am drawn to education and believe deeply in its power. My belief in education is coupled with my desire that every student have access to an education that empowers them to be agents of change, much like my father and uncle.

This passion for education led me to the Urban Systems Doctoral Program at Rutgers University. The coursework provided a new context for American education. That is, I encountered new conversational domains regarding issues of access, the gap in educational outcomes for different racial groups and the historical context related to

current issues in education and policy. These conversations opened my eyes to this “road to the American Dream” that I had believed in my whole life. I became more aware of the personal, social, and political barriers that keep students from experiencing the sort of learning that transforms them. Professionally, my passion for education guides my decision to remain in higher education and work with students. I remember job-searching a few years ago and looking for an institution that aligned with my values and beliefs about higher education. I ultimately chose my current institution, a mid-sized public university, because its core values resonated with me. One of those core values is a commitment to the journey of learning. I recall perusing the university website and reading that the chancellor was challenging the campus to “invent the future” by embracing a culture of innovation. I read that the institution valued powerful academic experiences that stimulated creative inquiry, critical thinking, thoughtful expression and responsible citizenship. I knew that this was the place for me and accepted the position as the Associate Director for Residence Life.

In my role, I assume primary responsibility for the development, implementation and evaluation of our Residence Life program. I also provide leadership and supervision for one Assistant Director, eight Professional Residence Coordinators, eight Graduate Assistants and over 100 student staff members. I oversee the training and leadership development opportunities for the professional, graduate, and student staff members. It is in my role as a Student Affairs administrator that I see the ways in which higher education leaves much to be desired for our students. I often work with students who struggle to navigate their way through basic decision making, who are unable to make

meaning of their college experience, and who have not been challenged to think about the role they might play in creating the change they want to see in the world. Even the student leaders that I work with are often more focused on the accolades rather than seeking to make the sort of impact that might be expected of a campus leader. The allure, luster and belief I once had in higher education began to weaken. I became jaded and disillusioned.

In March of 2013 I attended a Student Affairs conference, one that I typically attend every year. However, this year was different because I had two encounters that would shape the way I viewed my purpose within higher education. I recall one conversation with a gentleman about the current state of higher education and the national dialogue about the effectiveness of a Liberal Arts education. He started to tell me about his wife's frustration with teaching elementary school and the challenge she has educating her students in an impactful way while utilizing the "teach to the test" model that she is required to implement. What about the journey and process of learning and the joy of discovery? It seems that the focus had been shifted to measurable outcomes and not immeasurable, transformative experiences. This conversation left me thinking even more deeply about the state of education and what that might mean for our future educators and leaders.

It was also at that conference that I had a conversation with a woman that would change the way I looked at my purpose and calling forever. One of my colleagues introduced me to her mentor, a woman who had made a career out of helping people find their "shine". We started to talk about the importance of people identifying their God-

given passions and talents to then using them to inform their work. I was intrigued and I asked her: “How do you know when you have reached your full potential?” I will always remember her response. She thought for a while and then said, “There is no such thing.” I did not understand. She replied, “Yes, there is no such thing. You will never reach your full potential because there will always be opportunities for growth. However, while you can’t reach your full potential, you can be at peace. Being at peace is truly about finding that God-given, innate gift and using that to inform your world. When you know you are doing your life’s work, then you will be at peace.”

Later that night, I found myself looking up into the night sky and praying that God would reveal to me my life’s purpose. I realized I had been living a destination-focused life. That is, I spent much of my life planning for the next professional and personal step. It was like a constant internal challenge to land a better job, find a better home, or to be a better me. However, I was placing all my energy on the end goal. I would reach that goal and then seek out my next challenge. I was destination focused, not journey focused. And as a result, I was not at peace. How was this any different than the “teach to the test” pedagogy that left me so frustrated with the state of education? It was the same notion of reaching an end goal without an emphasis on the experience, without learning through discovery, and without a commitment to purpose, agency, and action. This interaction prepared me for my next life-changing interaction.

A few weeks later, I had a conversation with a faculty member who was inquiring about the progress of my dissertation. I started to describe my current research to her. At the time, my research was a project that focused on cultural capital, academic

achievement and African immigrants. Our conversation then turned to a discussion about my academic work, my professional work, and my passion. I spoke of my passion for working with students and getting them to see their potential to make a difference. What I enjoy most about my work is the leadership, guidance, and mentorship I provide students and seeing those students succeed beyond what they imagined for themselves. She then challenged me to think about everything I just told her and ask myself if it matched the research I was doing. I then realized that I had been working on a project that did not reflect what I really cared about. I thought back to all the reasons I chose to work at my current institution. Clearly, there was a dissonance between my passions and the action I was taking.

She told me about an innovative leadership course that promises to leave people transformed and exercising leadership effectively as their natural self-expression. She said that this course is designed to leave participants equipped for personal, institutional, and social change. She asked if I was willing to take a risk. Without hesitation I said “yes” before even thinking about what I was agreeing to. She challenged me to take the course and see what it could do for me. I started thinking about how I could incorporate this into my dissertation work. But doing so would also mean that I would have to completely change the course of my research. The more she spoke the more afraid, excited, and unsure I was about the possibilities that this course could afford me. I felt like I was falling off a cliff and yet in some strange, out-of-character way, it felt liberating and exciting. I began to see that this opportunity was right in line with where I was in my life. I had been looking for a sense of purpose and a life-changing opportunity.

I was seeking to have greater impact in my professional and personal life. I was ready to let go of whatever it was that was holding me back from realizing and embracing my purpose. With the potential for transformation, purpose and actionable change in mind, I prepared myself to take the leadership course, “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological and Phenomenological Model”.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

American higher education is currently under careful examination and scrutiny. Colleges and universities are challenged to produce graduates who are critical thinkers, problem-solvers, change-agents, and future leaders. With rising tuition costs, post-secondary institutions are being challenged to justify their educational value, purpose and outcomes. As Mitch Daniels, President of Purdue University, noted in a 2013 open letter, “college costs too much and delivers too little. Students are leaving, when they graduate at all, with loads of debt but without evidence that they grew much in either knowledge or critical thinking” (Janschik, 2013, para. 3).

While Daniels’ remarks are consistently echoed among other critics of higher education, the real issue goes beyond lack of access and underwhelming outcomes in critical thinking. When explored deeper, there are larger issues of jaded pedagogical practices, disengagement of the educator and learner, and an absence of empowered leaders and educators who can then shape society and the world. Additionally, educators are increasingly working in silos that do not inspire or demand a collective approach to the reformation of American higher education. As Nancy Cantor (2012) observes, it is essential that educators and students “turn knowledge into action to effect social change”. She explains:

We as anchor institutions need to move from our familiar role as “experts” who define the “problems” for others to one of “partners” who collaborate to understand the challenges and opportunities by re-engaging the art of listening to others. As educational researchers [we are facing a] distance

between the academy and schools, between researchers and teachers, between faculty and students (p.5).

Here Cantor points to detachment within higher education. Institutions are detaching themselves from the responsibility of cultivating the next generation of leaders. Educators are detaching themselves from the task of challenging students to think critically beyond the scope of simply earning a degree for the purpose of employment and capital gain. Students are detaching from the possibility that education can provide for actionable access to becoming agents of change. However, the reality is that education cannot be transformed in the absence of transformed leaders, educators, and learners. It is critical that we seek interventions that impart the sort of transformation needed to serve as a catalyst for reform. Failure to provide individuals with actionable access to transformation puts at stake the future of education and ultimately society.

Research Purpose

This dissertation inquires into the leadership course, “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological and Phenomenological Model” as an example of the type of intervention that may catalyze the transformation of American higher education. This research highlights ways in which the course may contribute to and inform how we engage students in the classroom. Employing an ontological model for leadership, this course invites learners to consider themselves beyond the limits of the way “they wound up”. Therefore, learners have the opportunity to access limitless possibilities for personal transformation and the creation of futures that call for their leadership. The course’s contribution to this research is in revealing the possibilities

associated with an ontological leadership course, how it might inform the transformational possibilities of individuals who engage in it, and how those individuals are creating futures for themselves and others that would not otherwise happen.

Key Research Questions:

1. How are course participants living into the futures they created in the "Being a Leader" course?
2. How has LECOLE (Learning Community for Ontological/Phenomenological Leadership) supported participants in having the course offered at national and international post-secondary institutions and how are they conducting research about the course?
3. How do participants experience leading and being led in the course as compared with other learning experiences?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Current State of American Higher Education

In 2006, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education (the Spellings Commission), released their report on post-secondary education and highlighted the shortcomings in higher education. The report, “A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education”, put a spotlight on the shortcomings of higher education. While the commission did note that there were some aspects of post-secondary education to be applauded, they also cautioned that “we must not be blind to the less than inspiring realities of postsecondary education in our country” (p.vi). These less than inspiring realities included a decline in post-secondary access due to the rising costs of education, lack of accountability in ensuring student success, and an overall decline in student achievement. While student access and affordability was a major focus in this report, there was also a clear concern about the inadequacies present within classrooms for those who were afforded access to post-secondary education. The commission noted that less than 40 percent of Americans were proficient in literacy. Of more significance was the lack of acquired basic skills required for graduates to navigate the working world with power. The 2006 commission noted:

Employers report repeatedly that many new graduates they hire are not prepared to work, lacking the critical thinking, writing and problem-solving skills needed in today’s workplaces. In addition, business and government leaders have repeatedly and urgently called for workers at all stages of life to continually upgrade their academic and practical skills (p. 19).

As a recommendation, the commission urged stakeholders to consider “the fundamental issues of how academic programs and institutions must be transformed to serve the changing needs of a knowledge economy” (p. 24). It was recommended that post-secondary institutions increase their focus on meaningful student outcomes. There was a call for colleges and universities to “embrace a culture of continuous innovation and quality improvement by developing new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning” (p.24). Ultimately, the issue is that college graduates are not leaving better educated, enlightened, engaged, or prepared to impact the world around them. Unfortunately, it has become increasingly clear that higher education is not fulfilling its promise to educate students to become our future leaders. This concern is not simply about what is happening in the classroom, but more importantly, what is not happening in the classroom to leave students experiencing themselves as critical thinkers, engaged citizens, and empowered leaders.

Critics of higher education curriculum point to a lack of learning opportunities for students to gain the skills needed to be impactful post-graduation. The reality is that college graduates are entering the workforce ill-prepared to navigate the complexities of a changing world. Keeling (2011) writes:

Our colleges and universities are failing to deliver true higher learning—learning that prepares graduates to meet and excel at the challenges of life, work and citizenship. The truth is painful but must be heard: we’re not developing the full human and intellectual capacity of today’s college students because they’re not learning enough and because the learning that does occur is haphazard and of poor quality. Too many of our college graduates are not prepared to think critically and creatively, speak and write cogently and clearly, solve problems, comprehend complex issues,

accept responsibility and accountability, take the perspective of others, or meet the expectations of employers. Metaphorically speaking, we are losing our minds (p. 11).

Part of the issue, as Arum and Roksa (2011) see it is the lack of academic and practical rigor in college classrooms. This lack of investment and commitment to learning in the classroom is a responsibility shared by both the educator and the learner. Arum and Roksa reference researcher George Kuh's position that there is a sort of "disengagement compact" between faculty and students in the classroom. This unspoken compact requires that the teacher asks very little from the student and provides minimal rigor in the classroom. In return, the student provides minimal challenge to the teacher, remains "well-behaved" and offers good reviews on the faculty member. Arum and Roksa (2011) write:

"I'll leave you alone if you leave me alone". That is, I won't make you work too hard (read a lot, write a lot) so that I won't have to grade as many papers or explain why you are not performing well. The existence of this bargain is suggested by the fact that at a relatively low level of effort, many students get decent grades-B's and sometimes better. There seems to be a breakdown of shared responsibility for learning-on the part of faculty members who allow students to get by with far less than maximum effort, and on the part of the students who are not taking full advantage of the resources institutions provide (p. 5).

This "disengagement compact" points to a lack of engagement that leaves the educator without impact inside the classroom and the learner without impact beyond the classroom. The consequences of this are staggering. Some researchers link higher educational outcomes to a threat to American democracy, economy and advancement. This focus on "getting by" without purpose or impact will continue to compromise the

future of education and ultimately the future of society. Thatcher (2013) references Henry Giroux, a founding theorist of critical pedagogy, and writes:

Pedagogy should not mimic economic models with their reductionist worship of method, stripped of any sense of morality or social context. Instead, pedagogy should provide the conditions for students to invest in robust and critical forms of self and social agency. Pedagogy is not a neutral method, but a deeply political practice that is always connected to the acquisition of agency, a practice that demands that educators be vigilant about what identities are being produced under what conditions and for what purposes (Thatcher, 2013, par. 39).

Giroux advocates for an “educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action” (Giroux, 2010, para. 1). He writes that “under such circumstances, knowledge is not simply received by students, but actively transformed, as they learn how to engage others in critical dialogue and be held accountable for their own views” (Giroux, 2010, para.7). What Giroux (2013) is calling for here is a connection between scholarship and commitment. That is, higher education should serve as a mechanism to meaningfully engage students who will then contribute to meaningful social change post-graduation. Giroux (2013) writes:

There is a need to invent modes of communication that connect learning to social change and foster modes of critical agency through which people assume responsibility for each other. This is not merely about skill sharing or democratizing education and politics; it is about generating a new vision of democracy and a radical project in which people can recognize themselves, a vision that connects with and speaks to the American public’s desires, dreams, and hopes (p. 19).

Ultimately, higher education institutions need curriculum and pedagogical approaches that empower students to graduate as engaged participants in the creation of a better future for society. Unfortunately, as the 2006 Spelling Commission pointed out, our post-

secondary institutions often miss the mark in providing the sort of preparation needed to cultivate such leaders.

The shortcomings in higher education institutions then beg the questions of what the purpose of higher education is and ultimately what value it has for those who are able to access it. In a 2011 convocation address, Richard Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, offered what he believed to be the purposes of higher education. Affording equal access and providing the tools needed to interact with diverse people were two answers. Additionally, and more poignantly, helping students find their passion, educating leaders and advancing knowledge by giving students the opportunity to broaden their minds were all noted as areas for which higher education was responsible but often fell short. That is, the bigger purpose of higher education is providing students with tools for personal agency and effective leadership so that they can impact and transform the world.

Considering the bigger purpose of higher education, liberal arts education has long been seen as critical for engaging students in an active civic life. Although modern liberal arts curriculums include a number of subjects, the core aim of the liberal arts curricula is to develop well-rounded individuals with general knowledge of a wide range of subjects and with mastery of a variety of transferable skills. Liberal arts education aims to develop students as global citizens with the capacity to pursue lifelong learning and become valuable members of their communities (Haidar, 2014). Schneider, (2004) writes:

Liberal education has always been concerned with important educational aims: cultivating intellectual and ethical judgment, helping students comprehend and negotiate their relationship to the larger world, and preparing graduates for lives of civic responsibility and leadership (para. 1).

As Barker (2000) writes:

The goal of an undergraduate liberal arts education is to provide students with knowledge, values and skills that will prepare them for active and effective participation in society. Drawing on this prototype, undergraduate colleges in the U.S. have sought, with varying degrees of commitment and success, to endow students with the capacity to learn, to reason, and to communicate with proficiency. This ideal of liberal arts education, tracing its history to ancient Greece, historically responded to the challenge of creating a self-governing nation from many peoples living on a vast continent that cradled a vital, multi-leveled and ever-changing civilization (p.2).

Despite the aims and benefits of liberal arts education, there are those who question its value. That is, there are those who question the practicality of a liberal arts education in the post-graduate employment sector. Schneider (2004) notes:

Many analysts and policy leaders declare without apology that liberal education is already being consigned to the dustbin of history. Markets, they sniff, are keyed to short-term outcomes and have no patience for forms of learning that pay off over a lifetime. Practical studies will sell; the rest will just wither away. First generation, low-income, and adult learners in particular, such observers contend, need job training rather than intellectual development. Other observers, more critical of the academy itself, believe that liberal education is falling victim to its own rigidity. The liberal arts, these critics suggest, are so ensconced in disciplinary silos and so resistant to the practical needs of the wider society, that they will surely go the way of the classics, moving inexorably from centrality to subsidized marginality (para 4).

Some critics cite the high cost of a liberal arts education and question if the cost is worth the post-graduation benefits. Fueling this critique is the state of the American economy

and need for graduates to secure well-paying jobs right after college. Thus, critics like Bennett and Wilezol (2013) argue that a liberal arts education cost too much and yet yields little financial gain after college. They caution students to consider their employment prospects when choosing a liberal arts education.

Perhaps the issue is not a question of the value of liberal education but rather a question of how it is being taught and studied in our classrooms. That is, perhaps there might be some consideration given to new and innovative ways to engage our students within the scope of a liberal arts education. As Schneider (2004) notes, there is still hope for twenty-first century liberal education. She writes:

The truth is that liberal education at the start of the twenty-first century is anything but a moribund tradition. Historically, the practice of liberal education has changed radically over the centuries, and it is in the midst of far-reaching—if largely unreported—change today. I can see plainly that the nation’s campuses are dotted with a vibrant new generation of innovative programs and pedagogies. The majority of these innovations are indisputably re-inventions of a more traditional liberal education for this new global era and for today’s newly diverse population of students (para. 5-6).

Barker (2000) recommends the integration of multiple disciplines within liberal arts as a way to rethink the way we engage our students in liberal education. Specifically, Barker recommends the inclusion of scientific thinking in liberal education. Barker writes:

Scientific thinking and the products of science pervade our culture and are reshaping the world. Scientists are exploring the fundamental questions — the origins of the universe and our place in it, the nature and creation of life, the nature of consciousness and the relationship of mind and body — that have been central to humanistic learning, and the results they produce will demand our best ethical and political responses. Science must be an integral part of any future conception of the liberal arts and liberal learning. Ways must be found to engage a continuing conversation across

the major domains of learning and knowledge and to prepare students to be informed participants in it (Barker, 2000, p. 9).

Barker (2000) argues a need for contemporary curriculum to bridge the arts and sciences and the professional disciplines in order to connect the “past to future and theory to experience, providing the basis for conversation across cultural differences and professional specialization, and developing the capacity for critical inquiry and understanding” (p.7). Barker (2000) maintains that higher education has a responsibility to provide “graduates with the capacity to manage change and shape their own futures and that of human society consistent with enduring and shared values” (p.7). Nancy Cantor (2003) also speaks directly to this appeal to higher education:

We must attend to the public purposes of higher education too, including the cultivation of social and civic skills and proclivities to work together to make a difference in our highly challenged world. If we want our graduates to thrive so they can help us engage these challenges, they’ll have to be analytical, imaginative, and resourceful, capable of really seeing, hearing, and collaborating with others and comprehending that life is not a zero-sum game. Their education should not be just about them (p.3).

Cantor argues that higher education should transform students who may then transform the world. She challenges educators to also view education as not only being about them. That is, she urges higher education providers to seek ways to collaborate with others who have a stake in higher education. She calls for “comprehensive teams with ‘experts’ of all kinds, from legal and health to classroom teachers, the mayor and county executives, corporate leaders, residents across the district, faith leaders in the community, and more” (Cantor, 2013, p.16) to work together to transform education.

What she is pointing to here is that higher education has a greater responsibility to bring folks together and collaborate towards meaningful change. Cantor argues that through collaborative efforts, these experts can set the stage and provide an example for the “next generation college-going students” to hone in on “the much-needed skills of civic engagement, leadership, and collaborative problem-solving” (Cantor, 2013, p.17) needed for them to go on and transform education and the world. Keeling (2011) also argues the need for collaborative reform:

The need for systemic institutional change—not just by one college, and not just in a few exemplary academic programs—is pressing. Nothing short of a national discussion, involving not only leaders, faculty, and students from colleges and universities, but also elected officials, education and workforce policy-makers, employers, parents, and the media, will generate enough energy and influence to restore learning as the first and highest priority in our colleges and universities (p. viii).

The underlying message here is an urgent plea for effective, impactful, collaborative and purposeful leadership from individuals from all sectors and all walks of life. It is a call for education to fulfill its promise to cultivate the leaders of tomorrow. When those leaders are cultivated, they can then continue to advance education and influence policies and practices that can contribute to the creation of a future that transforms the world. The question then becomes, from where can educators look for insight into fostering the sort of leadership capacities in our students needed for the creation and transformation of a future for society and the world?

Leadership: Theories and Applications

Identifying what constitutes an effective leader and leadership has been long debated. The definition varies greatly depending on what theory one uses and the situation one is dealing with. There is no universal theory of leadership. The result is a number of variations in leadership approaches and theories. Generally speaking, leadership theories are classified into four categories: trait theories, behavioral theories, contingency theories, and power and influence theories. Trait theories identify core characteristics of a leader. Examples of such characteristic are motivation, achievement drive, self-confidence, emotional maturity, and honesty. However, while these qualities are certainly admirable, they do not guarantee that the person possessing them would be a good leader. Germain (2012) writes:

In essence, the trait approach is concerned with what traits exhibit and who has those traits. It does not lay out a set of hypotheses or principles about what kind of leader is needed in a certain situation or what a leader should do given a particular set of circumstances. Rather, this approach emphasizes that having a leader with a certain set of traits is crucial to having effective leadership. It is the leader and her or his personality that are central to the leadership process (p. 2).

Essentially, trait theories highlight a variety of unique characteristics that an individual embodies. Trait theorists then make conclusions about how the combination and interaction of those characteristics impact leadership outcomes. Also associated with trait theories is the debate about whether leadership is actually a trait or a skill. There are

those who believe that being a leader is something you either are or not born with and that some attributes cannot be learned or taught. For example, qualities like ambition or drive are seen as inherent. Conversely, there are those who argue that leadership is something that can be taught and even though some individuals may be better equipped to assume leadership roles, leadership training can enhance their abilities (Germain, 2012). The leadership course, “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model” offers neither and postulates that being a leader and exercising leadership effectively is something that can be accessed by anyone. Said differently, leadership is not taught nor inherited, it is accessible and can be naturally self-expressed by anyone. Additionally, there are no specific set of traits that define effective leadership. Rather, any way of being can serve to create positive leadership outcomes depending on what is needed at the moment.

While trait theorists focus on characteristics, behavior theories approach leadership on the basis of what good leaders typically do. They suggest that there are behaviors that are typical of good leaders and they can be learned through teaching and observation. One such behavior model comes from a 1939 study conducted by social psychologist Kirk Lewin’s. In this study, schoolchildren were assigned to work on projects with team leaders who had different leadership styles (Adelman, 1993, p. 7). From this study, Lewin developed a leadership framework that categorizes organizational management styles into three distinct leadership behaviors: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. These behaviors are framed within Lewin’s belief that what determines one’s leadership style is the way one responds when it comes time to make decisions. The

autocratic leader is one that makes decisions without consulting the team first. The democratic leader consults the team before making decisions and the laissez-faire leader typically leaves decision-making up to the team members. Lewin suggests that there are advantages and disadvantages of all three, depending on what type of team one is working with. One weakness in this approach is that it limits leadership to decision-making. It does not consider other arenas or situations in the exercising of leadership. Finally, behavior theories offer no access to one's naturally self-expressed leadership as it assumes that leadership qualities can only be learned or taught, rather than naturally and uniquely occurring within each individual.

Another distinct category of leadership theories are contingency theories. Developed by Fred Fielder, contingency leadership theories offer that one's leadership approach depends on circumstances and deals with leadership from an adaptive perspective. Unlike trait and behavioral theories, contingency theories assert that there is no single best approach to leadership. Rather, leadership success is based on the interaction of two factors: leadership style and situational favorableness. In Fielder's model, leadership effectiveness is the result of the interaction between the style of the leader and the characteristics of the environment in which the leader works (Gray, 1988). This approach suggests that for leadership to be effective, an appropriate setting must be present to match one's leadership style. To determine the circumstances that one would find most conducive for effective leadership, Fielder designed the "least-preferred co-worker scale" (LPC). Using this scale, the leader identifies the type of coworker that may or may not work well with their leadership style. The resulting scores propose whether

one is more task-oriented or human relations oriented. In application, one should then determine if they are more effective when performing tasks or when they are building relationships. Fielder postulates that anyone can be a leader if the situation one is dealing with is appropriate for their leadership style (Seyranian, 2009). Additionally, one can improve upon their leadership if they continue to tailor the environment to fit their leadership style. Thus, if one is more effective when performing tasks, one should build in more opportunities to do so in their environment. Similarly, if one is most effective when building relationships then one should create more opportunities to do so in order to increase their effectiveness as a leader.

While this model does acknowledge that there is no single best method for effective leadership, contingency theories fall into the same pitfalls as trait and behavioral approaches to leadership. By quantifying and compartmentalizing elements of successful leadership, contingency theories limit one's possibility for effective leadership. That is, contingency theorists postulate that leadership success is based on the presence of an ideal environment that matches one's leadership style. This leaves individuals with little power for effectiveness and agency. It does not provide one with actionable access to being a leader when a situation is less than ideal. If in order to be effective, one must have ideal circumstances, then presumably one cannot be effective in less than ideal situations. Arguably, effective leaders are called to create change in less than ideal professional and social climates. Therefore, we might caution against teaching leaders that they can only lead in environments that fit their leadership style. Ultimately, in application, contingency theories leave individuals with little personal agency and power.

Approaching leadership from a different angle, power and influence theories look at ways in which leaders use power and influence to get things done. Pioneered by John French and Bertram Raven, this model defines social influence as the change in the belief, attitude, or behavior of a person (target of influence) which results from the action of another person (an influencing agent). In this model, French and Raven identify five bases of power: reward, legitimate, expert, referent, and coercive (Burns, 2004). Reward power refers to one's ability to influence others with the use of incentives. Incentives such as raises, praise or recognition, with the caveat that they are valued by the target of influence, are utilized by the influencing agent to produce effective results. Legitimate power refers to one's ability to influence others based on the position they hold. This sort of power is also referred to as position power because it is directly connected to the position one holds. Expert power is based on one's knowledge, skills or abilities and not necessarily on one's position, though both may overlap. When one has expert power, others are more inclined to listen to them. Physicians, accountants, or attorneys may possess expert power without having to hold a certain position within an organization. Contrasting legitimate and expert power is referent power. This sort of power is obtained simply by having the respect and admiration from the target of influence. Referent power develops out of the admiration and desire to be like that person (Lunenburg, 2012). One who holds referent power may not be an expert or in a position of power, however they would still have influence based on the premise that they are liked. Finally, coercive power, unlike the other forms of power, can be viewed as negative and counterproductive. This form of power is gained from fear. That is, one with coercive

power is followed only as a result of the fear of undesirable outcomes or punishment.

French and Raven (1959), caution against the use of such power in leadership.

French and Raven associate each of the five bases of power to certain outcomes. However, used on its own, this theory can be limiting for leaders. Suppose one does not have the ability to offer rewards? What if one is not in a position of leadership or is not an expert in a certain specialty? Suppose one is not admired by others? The issue with this theory, like others, is that it places limits and constraints on what is needed for effective leadership. Additionally, like other theories, leadership is typically limited to a work place environment. This assumes that one would not necessarily display leadership in arenas beyond a place of work. Finally, a clear issue with all of these theories is the application thereof. That is, once taught and learned, how can one consistently, naturally, and effectively apply the appropriate theory? Rosch and Anthony (2012) note:

One of the key reasons for leadership failure is that the leader in question, even when possessing adequate knowledge and a requisite attitude, is not sure what to do when under pressure to act in real time (p. 39).

The disconnection between theory and practice is evidenced through the ongoing quest for experts to identify the one theory that would guarantee effective leadership. Also of evidence is the lack of effective leaders produced despite the plethora of theories that do exist. Even with the vast amount of literature and research about leadership, there is still a disconnection to actual practice. Middlehurst (2008) highlights the vast expansions in the study of leadership within the last forty years and the lack of effective outcomes. She notes:

Founded in 1970, the Centre for Creative Leadership has grown its operating revenue from \$0.8 million in 1970–1971 to \$59.1 million in

2000–2001 and \$81.9 million in 2006–2007. The organization has also grown from its US base to centers in Europe, Singapore and India. By 2006–2007, its annual report noted that more than 20,000 individuals had participated in its programs from 120 countries. Yet despite all this activity and pressure to find ‘the magic bullet’, challenges remain, as Bolden (2004, p. 3) has suggested: ‘There is [still] no widely accepted definition of leadership, no common consensus on how best to develop leadership and leaders, and remarkably little evidence of the impact of leadership or leadership development on performance and productivity’ (p.323).

Remarkably, despite the effort to create more effective leaders and leadership practices, the reality is that there is no agreement on what leadership is and how it is effectively practiced. Furthermore, the greater concern is that despite the educational effort to “teach” leadership, the application and practice thereof lacks impact.

Part of what Middlehurst identifies as the issues is that the success of leadership theories and practice are dependent on time and place. Leadership theories typically reflect the language and trends of the current times. Therefore, the practice of leadership correlated with a specific theory is only impactful for the time period within which it was developed. Furthermore, when considering all of these leadership models, the variables (input) for successful leadership (output) are so varied that it leaves an inevitable gap between consistent theory and practice. Raelin (2011) offers some perspective on the disconnection between leadership theory and practice:

Leadership studies using a leadership-as-practice perspective may be able to help intersect theory and practice that have been often kept apart. When faced with a new problem or even with a crisis, we can choose one of two modes of response. We can react using our long-established, albeit usually tacit, coping skills or we can stop and reflect often relying on conscious, intentional analysis and planning of the appropriate response (Carroll et al., 2008). The challenge in these circumstances may be not so much a

matter of choosing one type over the other, but rather to link these response modes so that tacit knowledge may be surfaced or that explicit theories be made more accessible in moments when their recall may be compromised (Raelin, 2011, p. 198).

Arguably, the issue of consistency in theory and practice may be the result of the way in which leadership theories have historically been designed. Leadership theories have historically assigned specific traits and attributes to what being a leader and leadership mean. As a result, variables such as race, gender, economic status, location, position, etc. are not taken into account. Current leadership theories simply cannot account for all of those variables and produce a consistent input and output. Additionally, current theories of leadership are flawed in that they are not designed with diverse leadership experiences in mind. Consequently, the “one size fits all” approach to leadership theories leaves an inevitable gap between theory and practice. That is, such theories leave individuals with knowledge and information but without first-hand access to applying such knowledge in a way that is meaningful and effective for them and the situation they are dealing with. Part of the issue is that leadership theories are not designed to be considered from a critical perspective. Rather, current leadership theories are designed to be understood and explained, not applied. Conversely, a critical approach to leadership would be oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole. It would aim to dig beneath the surface of social life and uncover the assumptions that keep us from a fuller understanding of how the world works; the same is true for a critical approach to learning in general. As such, a critical approach to pedagogy fosters the sort of learning environment that invites students to think critically and realize a fuller potential. Thus as educators consider ways to cultivate leaders who will create the future

for society, critical approaches to pedagogy might inform some practices that can foster the sort of classroom environment needed to develop the leaders of the future.

Critical Pedagogy: Rethinking How We Teach and Learn

As educators we must seek ways to foster an educational process that can translate into social change beyond classroom. This change begins with a thoughtful examination of the way we teach and learn and a willingness to employ unconventional and innovative approaches to pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, pioneered by Paulo Freire, challenges traditional approaches to teaching and learning by redefining where knowledge is produced, who provides it and how it is validated. While traditional classroom processes identify the teacher as the authority and provider of knowledge, critical pedagogy challenges this power dynamic and empowers the learner to take ownership and authority in the learning process. In his groundbreaking book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1972) uses the analogy of the “banking model” to illustrate the ineffectiveness of traditional pedagogy. With the banking model approach, students are viewed as an empty vessel in which the teacher deposits knowledge. Freire argues that this model recreates the power dynamic of the oppressor and the oppressed. Drawing from theories of colonization, Freire asserts that such a pedagogical approach leaves students powerless and without agency.

Freire advocates for a more mutual process in the classroom where what he calls “conscientization” or critical consciousness occurs. Critical consciousness focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions. Critical consciousness also includes

taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003). Highlighting the need for and impact of critical pedagogy, Giroux (2007) notes:

The critical question here is whose future, story, and interest does the school represent. . . Critical pedagogy argues that school practices need to be informed by a public philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of student becomes the defining feature of schooling. In part, this suggests providing the conditions for students to engage in unlimited questioning and sustained dialogue so that teachers and students can experience themselves as critical agents and learn how to oppose dogmatic forms of education which not only limit critical thinking, but also close down the capacity for self-determination, agency, self-representation, and effective democracy. By viewing the classroom as a space of dialogue, critique, and translation, critical pedagogy offers educators a new language for enabling teachers and students to come to terms with their own power as individual agents and critical citizens. (Polychroniou, 2007, para.1).

In practice, critical pedagogy acknowledges intersecting identities and structures of privilege and calls for the valuing of knowledge from the learner's perspective. Critical pedagogy accomplishes this in a number of ways. First, it calls for the creation of new forms of knowledge. Thus, traditional disciplines are broken down and new interdisciplinary knowledge is created. Additionally, critical pedagogy attempts to raise questions about the relationships between the boundaries and centers of power in schools. It is concerned with how to provide a way of reading history as part of a larger project of reclaiming power and identity, particularly as these are shaped around race, gender, class, and ethnicity (Giroux, 2006). As Jenlink and Jenlink (2012) write:

A fundamental concern for social justice and democracy is at the heart of educational leaders' work in schools today...Importantly, a stance for

social justice recognizes that passive leadership practices lead to the reproduction of the existing society with its inequities; historical and structural inequities in society, and through its educational systems, that disadvantage many while benefiting a few. Equally important, a social justice stance warrants the need for a critical, active role that challenges dominant social orders, and the need for a public pedagogy that works to effect the transformation and the realization of a just, democratic society. (Jenlink et.al, 2012, p. 2).

Essentially critical pedagogy, when employed in the classroom, provides access and agency to students who might not necessarily view themselves as valued, credible agents of social change.

Giroux (2010) advocates for an educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action. He writes that “under such circumstances, knowledge is not simply received by students, but actively transformed, as they learn how to engage others in critical dialogue and be held accountable for their own views” (Giroux, 2010, para. 7). What Giroux is calling for here is a connection between scholarship and commitment. That is, education should serve as a mechanism to meaningfully engage students who will then commit to meaningful change post-graduation. However, for this to happen, students, especially those who are traditionally viewed by society as oppressed, must see themselves as valuable and affirmed contributors to knowledge and ultimately social change. Thus, institutions of learning might consider designing curriculum and pedagogical approaches that leave students transformed and equipped for social agency. Education can then serve

as a medium for students to critically examine and challenge themselves and ultimately rethink their role in the making of society.

Also asserting the need for American education to reconsider the process of teaching and learning, Parker Palmer (2010) calls for integrative education in the classroom. With integrative education, there is no single source of knowledge. That is, in the creation of knowledge any and all disciplines and personal experiences can serve as a contribution. This approach challenges the traditional hierarchical structure of knowledge acquisition and distribution. When embracing this approach to learning, constraints and limits are minimized, barriers are removed and true learning can occur. Palmer (2010) writes:

When we honor the hidden aquifer that feeds human knowing, we are more likely to develop a capacity for awe, wonder, and humility that deepens rather than diminishes our knowledge. And we are less likely to develop the kind of hubris about our knowledge that haunts the world today. So much of the violence our culture practices at home and exports abroad is rooted in an arrogance that says, "We know best, and we are ready to enforce what we know politically, culturally, economically, militarily." In contrast a mode of knowing steeped in awe, wonder, and humility is a mode of knowing that can serve the human cause, which is the whole point of integrative education (p.22).

In his discussion of integrative education, Palmer underscores the importance of humility on the part of the teacher. That is, for teachers to be effective, they too must critically reflect, practice introspection, and become comfortable being vulnerable. Palmer believes that this vulnerability allows for openness to the giving and receiving of knowledge in a way that is powerful and transformational. Palmer (2010) writes:

If we want to grow as teachers -- we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives -- risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract (p.1987).

While emotionally risky, this interdependence between teacher and student, the renegotiation of power dynamics and the elimination of hierarchy, can create a whole and authentic teacher that may then elicit wholeness from the student. Like the educator, integrative education also views the student as a whole person where mind, body, emotion and spirit are developed at the same time and integrated into the whole person (Fan, 2004). The goal of integrative education is to create a whole and contributing individual by translating knowledge into action. With integrated education, there is no division between school and society, study and human life, knowledge and goodness (Fan, 2004).

Focusing on instructional approaches to critical pedagogy, Rautins and Ibrahim (2011), advocate for what they call a critical pedagogy of imagination, humanism, and becoming. They call for educators to create “a world where the educational landscape is shifting as it attempts to grapple with global issues, and where we, as critical pedagogues, provoke global citizenship and wakefulness in our students” (p.25). Fostering such a learning environment might evoke what they call “wide-awakeness” in students. That is, students are challenged to cultivate an “awareness of what it is to be in the world” (Rautins et. al., 2011, p. 25). Rautins and Ibrahim (2011) write:

A critical pedagogy of humanism provokes *wide-awakeness* as a possible response to the question: How might one inspire a fuller humanity? What is our collective purpose in the world? What is our unfulfilled human potential? And what role does education serve in cultivating student capabilities of acting in and changing the world? (p.30).

To foster critical pedagogy of humanism, Rautins and Ibrahim (2011) call on educators to promote pluralistic dialogue in the classroom. In this manner, critical pedagogy invites the learner to see themselves differently and as essential components in the progression of society. Thus, “teachers must themselves be wide-awake and conscious of knowing, so that students are entitled to multiple voices and perspectives” (Rautins and Ibrahim, 2011, p. 31). By doing so, educators can foster a safe and caring space for students to express and receive different perspectives. “Providing an inclusive space for open and accepting dialogue is central to democratic education and fortifying belongingness and voice among students” (Rautins and Ibrahim, 2011, p. 31).

Rautins and Ibrahim (2011) go on to advocate for the awakening of praxis and agency in the classroom. Praxis is the process of engaging, applying, and practicing ideas. Thus, “by confronting praxis and agency, educators can seek to collectively transform and act on existing educational conditions to restore purpose and democracy in education” (Rautins and Ibrahim, 2011, p. 31). Awakening praxis and agency, according to Rautins and Ibrahim, requires a delicate balance between authority and freedom that moves the student from “fear to freedom” (p. 32). That is, there should be a healthy tension between the two that allows for “practice and theory, authority and freedom, ignorance and knowledge, respect for the teacher and respect for the students, and teaching and learning to work powerfully in concert with one another” (Rautins and Ibrahim, 2011, p. 31).

Rautins and Ibrahim (2011) conclude by calling for a movement towards a critical pedagogy of ‘becoming’. They contend that “a critical consciousness of hope and

becoming can transform pedagogy and awaken new beginnings for students” and that at the “heart of becoming is confronting what is possible by our capacity to teach and open ourselves and our students to imagination, curiosity, and dialogue” (p. 33). The core of critical pedagogy of becoming, according to Rautins and Ibrahim (2011), is “doing and reflecting on doing” (p. 34). That is, students and teachers must both be open to personal and social change and transformation. Therefore, Rautins and Ibrahim (2011) invite educators and students to critically ask themselves the following questions: “What is the purpose of education? What is my place in it? And how do my intentions influence my capacity to *become*?” (p. 34). A critical approach to pedagogy in the classroom allows for the sort of reflection, dialogue, and action needed to challenge educators and learners to see themselves and the roles they play in their education and society differently.

Ultimately, critical pedagogy can be an essential element in the cultivation of today’s learners and the creation of tomorrow’s leaders. It seeks to empower students to find and include their voices as part of a collective process of learning and contribution in the classroom. Empowering learners in the classroom is important for all students, especially those from traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups. In order to foster democratic, inclusive, and collaborative experiences in the classroom, it is important that all students experience themselves as important contributors to learning and the creation of society’s future. In doing so, classrooms become spaces for processes that invite all students to exercise, advocate for and create democratic possibilities beyond the classroom. Like critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy offers much for consideration in creating the sort of learning environment that invites all voices to be heard and included.

Feminist Pedagogy

Feminist pedagogy, a form of critical pedagogy, also seeks to make aware issues of power and privilege that are barriers to social change. As such, it is rooted in inclusivity, self-agency, and the validation of all experiences, specifically those of underrepresented groups. Like critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy is concerned with the process that is created in the classroom. It seeks to eliminate hierarchical practices that disengage students from the process of learning, thus transforming students from passive recipients of knowledge to active knowers and contributors. Both critical and feminist pedagogy are concerned with the individuals within the process, especially those from underrepresented groups. Thus, such individuals are given permission to be part of the process, have their voices included, and become equal contributors to the creation of knowledge. The distinctive qualities of feminist pedagogy are the tradition of focusing on gendered subjects, and the opening of taboo topics for discussion. It is, at its core, about the feminist critique (Manicom, A. 1992). That is, while critical and feminist pedagogy are concerned with the same issues of power and empowerment, feminist pedagogy is distinct in its focus on gender as it relates to such issues.

The late Bella Savitsky Abzug, a former U.S. Representative, social activist and leader of the Women's Movement once so pointedly stated that “leadership will not change the nature of women, but women will change the nature of leadership” (Sinclair, 2013, p.2). It is not only critical that women be recognized as leaders but we also need to

use our experiences to interrogate and contest received wisdom about leadership.

Feminist approaches to leadership give credence to the notion that all people, including traditionally underrepresented groups, have something to contribute to leadership and the shaping of society. That is, all individuals, regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status, or ability, can be effective leaders in their own way. As such, we ought to pay close attention to how leadership impacts and reflects power and oppression. Sinclair (2013) writes:

How leadership is defined and understood is the result of power, not truth uncovering. Any efforts to define leadership do not mark a solid and enduring line in the sand. Rather, they should be understood as efforts in asserting discursive power. There is good and bad news in this for women's leadership. The bad news is that definitions and discourses of leadership have been remarkably impervious to the efforts and accomplishments of women. A great deal of women's leadership simply has not registered in the canons of leadership knowledge. The good news is that discourses are always open to challenge and contestation. It is precisely by processes such as [these], that discursive dominance with only male voices and male experience being heard, gets undermined and perhaps overturned (p. 3, 4).

Feminist pedagogy seeks to challenge traditional notions of knowledge acquisition and power. It demands "critical reflection of what lies below the surface. Feminist pedagogists require renewed attentiveness to the construction of knowledge and the life of meaning" (Luke et al., 1992, p. x). Feminist pedagogists seek to make aware the issues of power and privilege that create barriers to social change. It calls for collaboration, contribution, and action. Crabtree (2009) writes:

Feminist pedagogy is marked by the nonhierarchical relationships among teachers and students and reflexivity about power relations, not only in society but also in the classroom...feminist pedagogy seeks not only to enhance students' conceptual learning but also to promote consciousness-raising, personal growth, and social responsibility (p. 5, 6).

Arguably, when such power dynamics are challenged, personal transformation becomes possible. Magolda (2009) argues that individual transformation must be rooted, validated and asserted in what she calls “self-authorship”. Magolda’s theory of self-authorship is defined as one’s internal ability to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations and then answer the following questions: (a) *How do I know?* (b) *Who am I?* (c) *How do I want to construct relationships with others?* (Evans et al., 2010, p.184). Hodge (2009) writes:

One must shift the source of their beliefs, identity, and social relations from the external world to the internal voice. Self-authorship—or the capacity to listen to, cultivate, and trust the internal voice to guide one’s life—represents the culmination of this shift. Self-authorship requires questioning trusted authority and leaving the safety of comfortable ways of seeing the world to explore multiple perspectives and construct one’s own beliefs, values, and vision... Engaged learning requires that we move from an *instructional paradigm* that emphasizes telling students what they need to know, to a *discovery paradigm* that encourages students to seek and discover new knowledge by exploring authentic questions and problems (p.2).

Self-authorship provides students with the space to question traditional sources of knowledge and think critically beyond prescribed theory. In order to promote self-authorship in learners, Evans (2010) encourages educators to allow students to internally define their own identity, support the discovery of new knowledge, and foster collaborative work with campus partners to create co-curricular learning opportunities. Doing so fosters lifelong learning, critical thinking, and engaged student learning. Hodge (2009) argues that when engaged learning and self-authorship occur, schools “will

produce graduates who are not only well educated, but who also have the confidence and ability to perform at high levels as lifelong learners” (p.2).

Magolda (2004) believes that these self-authored narratives, created by confident, life-learning graduates, are essential in the transformation of individuals and she invites educators to modify curriculum to foster this transformation. She argues this in her longitudinal study of over 35 young adults from post-college age through their 30’s. In this study, Magolda details their narratives and their personal journeys to self-discovery. She found that students who were able to develop an “internal voice” before graduating were better prepared to navigate the challenges of life post-college. This self-authored internal voice positioned graduates to own the choices they made as guiding principles in confident and decisive decision-making. Essential to the discovery of this internal voice is the interruption of the way they saw the world through the perspectives they acquired and the challenging of the rules about how they had come to see themselves and the world (Magolda, 2009). Magolda outlines the following process in the development of one’s internal voice and self-authorship: listening to the internal voice, cultivating the internal voice, trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments.

According to Magolda (2009), there is a critical reflection on the present emotions that shows up for an individual when listening to the internal voice. In this reflection, one is challenged to examine “their own beliefs, finding parts of themselves that were important to them, and establishing a distinction between their feelings and external expectations” (p.7). Once this internal voice is heard, it is then cultivated by “sifting out

beliefs and values that no longer worked” (p.7). The shift towards self-authorship then occurs when one begins to trust their internal voice. This trust occurs when one realizes that “what happens around them is beyond their control. At the same time, they realize that their reactions to their reality were within their control” (p. 8). In building an internal foundation, one rethinks “their attitude or behaviors that conflicted with their internal voices” (p.8). One then makes new commitments to their refined beliefs, identities, and relationships. Finally, securing internal commitments requires one to live their internal foundation in every facet of their lives (Magolda, 2009). The result of this process for learners is the ability to think critically and introspectively, a deeper understanding of one’s relationship to self and the world, and a greater ability for one to exhibit self-agency and influence social change. Magolda argues that this process of self-authorship through the discovery of one’s internal voice should become a critical part of post-secondary curriculum. In doing so, colleges and universities can be better positioned to cultivate the sort of leaders and change-agents needed to transform education and ultimately the world. When individuals are able to see themselves as powerful agents of social change, the opportunity for changing the course of history becomes possible.

For example, on October 9, 2012 an adolescent girl from Pakistan was shot in the head and neck as she rode on a school bus. This was part of an assassination attempt by a Taliban gunman. At the age of 11, this young girl, Malala Yousafzai, became a face of social change and educational reform around the world. What had this girl done that would make her a target of the extremist, fundamentalist Islamic militant group? Malala was simply guilty of writing a blog that exposed the restrictive Taliban regime that

denied girls access to education. Her blog attracted international attention and was the basis of a 2010 New York Times documentary that brought exposure to educational injustice, not just in Pakistan but around the world. Malala survived the assassination attempt and defied odds by being able to walk, talk, hear, and see again. Incredibly, despite the horrific and traumatizing event that almost killed her, Malala continued her fight for equal educational access for girls around the world. For her activism and bravery, she earned international notoriety, recognition, and support. She was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by Desmond Tutu, and she has been recognized and supported by President Barak Obama, Queen Elizabeth II, and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who petitioned for her to win the Nobel Peace Prize. In her first public speech since the attack, she spoke before a packed United Nations crowd of over 500 young education advocates and declared:

The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born ... I am not against anyone, neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I'm here to speak up for the right of education for every child (Nichols, 2013, para. 6 and 8).

As a result of her activism, women, men, and children around the world rallied with Malala and her political cause for equal educational access for girls. The "I am Malala" movement was ignited in 2012 when former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown launched a petition that demanded that no child be left out of school by 2015. This petition, signed by almost 2 million supporters, led to the ratification of Pakistan's Right to Education Bill which declared that "the State shall provide free and compulsory

education to all children of the age 5-16 in such a manner as may be determined by law” (<http://rtepakistan.org/>). How could one little girl impact educational reform in such a way that it would change the course of history in her country? Malala represents what is possible when people create a future that calls for their leadership and one that would not otherwise happen without it. Malala serves as an example of the reformative possibilities that can occur when one is positioned to view themselves beyond the way they wound up. With such possibilities, one is left to wonder what opportunities exist for education to realize its potential to cultivate leaders and creators of the future within and beyond the classroom.

Arguably, feminist pedagogy can serve to inform theories of leadership approaches within education that embrace self-agency, personal and collective empowerment, and social action. Feminist theories of leadership challenge traditional theories of leadership by employing a social justice component that is inclusive of all possibilities for leadership, regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status. Chin (2007) writes:

As the U.S. population becomes increasingly more diverse through rapidly changing demographics, individuals and organizations are attempting to address issues of diversity in a culturally competent manner. Women have embraced feminist principles of inclusion, gender equity, collaboration and social justice (p.1).

The inclusion of all leadership possibilities allows for greater opportunities for collective transformation and social change. As Barton (2006) notes:

The elements particular to a feminist leadership construction include a focus on both individual and micro-level and societal or macro-level social justice concerns, a desire to bring marginalized voices to the center of the

conversation, and a willingness to take risks as one strives to enact a transformative agenda (p. 238).

Feminists advocate for the rejection of the masculine values that situate leaders as ‘heroic’ or authoritarian. Rather, feminist favor a system of more “democratic governance involving flatter, less hierarchical and more participative decision-making structures. In this vision, leadership is a collective activity” (Kirton, 2012, p. 983). Thus, feminist theories of leadership reframe the traditional assumptions of knowledge creation and validation from a position of hierarchy to one of equality. Additionally, contrary to what some may think, feminist leadership theory empowers men as much as it does women. It not only offers access and agency for women, but it also challenges the constraining definitions of leadership that leave men with very little possibility to act beyond traditional, masculine ideas of leadership. Peggy Antrobus (2002) writes:

Patriarchy, reflected through all the structures and institutions of our world, is a system that glorifies domination, control, violence, competitiveness and greed. It dehumanizes men as much as it denies women their humanity. So we need leadership that will explore and expose these links and challenge patriarchy. The only leadership that does this is feminist leadership (p. 46-52).

In this manner, feminist leadership theory truly embodies a spirit of social justice and provides a space for equal partnerships in leadership. As Afkhami, et al. (2001) note, from a feminist leadership perspective, good leadership is

leadership that serves both women and men, poor and rich, and the powerless and powerful. It is inclusive, participatory and horizontal. [Effective] leadership should be about capitalizing on the ideas and skills of as many individuals as possible (p.1).

As feminist theory points to, the collaboration of empowered and diverse people is essential to social change. Thus the need for an inclusive and collaborative approach to leadership is one that American higher education might consider in its approach to leadership development. While feminist leadership embraces shared power and contribution from all members, it also recognizes the marginalization of women and the impact that has on the diminution of women's power. Women can be empowered to see themselves as active and valuable agents who can "resist or subvert the forces acting on [them]" (Batliwala, 2011, p.34). Undoubtedly, empowerment is critical for individuals from all walks of life. Arguably, resting on the foundations of feminist approaches, students and teachers from all walks of life can begin to see themselves differently in the classroom and the world. While distinct in its focus on gender, feminist pedagogy, like critical pedagogy, can be useful in informing practices that empower students and create transformative learning experiences in the classroom.

Transformative Learning

For educational reform to be realized, those who have a stake in it must be able to see themselves as powerful change-agents. They must be transformed. When someone or something is transformed, there is a complete or marked change in appearance, form, behavior, etc. When applied to education and learning, transformation is concerned with the process and outcome of an educational experience. Transformative learning theory is concerned with the transformation of three dimensions: psychological (changes in the understanding of self), convictional (revisions of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle) (Clark, 1991). Pioneered by Jack Mezirow (1981), transformative learning

seeks to create a learning experience that accomplishes comprehensive change for the learner. Through this comprehensive change, transformative learning has the goal to transform the world toward social justice (Harris et al., 2008, p.320). According to Mezirow (2000):

Transformative learning is about how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others—to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear thinking decision makers (p. 8).

For Mezirow, this transformative experience is centered on “meaning”. Explained further, the importance of meaning is critical for the learner in their transformational journey. Mezirow offers that one’s world-view, values, and the beliefs about one’s experience play a critical role in one’s perspective. These “meaning perspectives”, according to Mezirow, are developed during one’s childhood and ultimately serve as filters from which one perceives and experiences the world. These perspectives are interrupted and/or changed during critical, life-changing events that cause powerful and emotional responses in an individual. Therefore the key to transformation is one’s ability to reshape and redefine one’s meaning perspectives. That is, we as individuals cannot be transformed in the way we live as long as any new information fits comfortably in our currently existing frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997).

Mezirow focuses on three general aspects of the transformative learning process: one’s experiences, critical reflection, and rational discourse. One’s experiences would serve as the starting point in the transformational process. One’s experiences are used to construct knowledge about themselves, others, and society. Once established, one would then critically reflect on the meaning they have placed on their experiences. One would

examine the assumptions they have made about themselves and others based on those experiences. Finally, after those assumptions have been identified, a critical discourse must occur where those assumptions are challenged and ultimately reframed. For transformation to occur, new contexts must be developed, not simply added to old assumptions. As Stevens-Long (2012) notes:

A transformational outcome is a process of learning that is experienced by a learner, and an educational program or event designed to foster learning experiences that result in or catalyze a transformational outcome (p.183).

Dirkx (1998) offers that actualization of the person and society through liberation and freedom is central to one's understanding of transformative learning. Thus, the constraint to such actualization as a result of one's personal and socio-cultural contexts must be eliminated. He writes:

These forces (personal and socio-cultural contexts) limit or shape the ways in which we come to understand who we are as persons and communities and what might be our best interest. In effect, they constrain the degree to which we can be who or what we are. Transformative learning aims at identifying these forces and freeing us from their coercive influence through reflection, dialogue, critique, discernment, imagination, and action (p.8).

Dirkx identifies key processes needed in the relinquishing of constraints that limit one's ability to transform. Like Mezirow, he notes the importance of reflection, dialogue and critique. Thus,

transformative learning theories conceptualize experiences and processes that fundamentally challenge some aspect of our being in the world, focusing on the complex processes that are associated with these dramatic shifts in consciousness and the sense of self emerging from them (Dirkx, 2012, p.401).

For transformative learning to be realized, both teacher and student would need to share some responsibility in the process. Educators who choose to employ a transformative learning experience must first and foremost establish an environment of trust and care (Taylor, 2006). Additionally, in transformative learning, educators have a unique role in that they are instrumental in the growth and development of their students while experiencing their own personal transformational journey themselves. Therefore, it is important that educators demonstrate a willingness to transform and in doing so model that process for their students (Cranton, 1994). Imel (1998) adds that educators must exhibit certain characteristics in their approach to students. One important element is guidance. That is, educators must guide learners through the process of meaning-making and critical reflection. Complementary to this guidance is an element of “compassionate criticism” that challenges learners to question their own worldviews in a way that allows for a transformational experience.

Learners also share responsibility in the process of their transformation. They must deem what is being offered to them as meaningful, purposeful, and personally significant. Learners should be prepared to challenge their worldviews and be open to new possible ways of thinking. Certainly, doing so would prove to be risky and challenging. Mezirow (2000) writes:

Cognition has strong affective and conative dimensions; all the sensitivity and responsiveness of the person participates in the invention, discovery, interpretation, and transformation of meaning. Transformative learning, especially when it involves subjective reframing, is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions under-girding our ideas and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change (p.6-7).

Arguably, the most challenging part of transformation for the learner is seeing and experiencing oneself in a way that is completely different than they imagined. That is, in transforming, the learner must be willing to view themselves beyond the ways in which they have been conditioned to believe themselves to be. Doing so requires a complex and thought-provoking approach to the way in which one defines oneself. When one is able to redefine themselves, their boundaries for greater impact and action become expanded and can even be eliminated. As Miranda (2012) notes, when transformative learning occurs, teachers and school leaders are given multiple opportunities to revisit schemas about themselves and their learning communities, with the intent to transform practice, the school environment, and even themselves (p.78). Arguably, the reformation of higher education may depend on transformed individuals who can effectively lead others in the creation of a more socially just society. Ultimately, one may not be able to lead effectively without first being transformed. Transforming the way we teach and learn is critical if we are to cultivate the sort of leaders that can reform American education.

While critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy and transformative learning all offer important contributions to learning in the classroom, perhaps there is more that can be done to cultivate leaders who experience themselves as part of the creation of a new future for society. As recommended in *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006), universities might consider ways to “embrace a culture of continuous innovation and quality improvement by developing new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve learning” (p.24). While this research recognizes the value of critical pedagogy, transformative learning, and feminist pedagogy in the

classroom, it suggests that ontological inquiry may provide access to important transformation within higher education.

CHAPTER 3

About the Course “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model”

“Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model”, is a course that was created by Werner Erhard, an independent consultant with years of experience in developing transformational courses; Michael Jensen, economist and the Jesse Isidor Straus Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School; Steve Zaffron, CEO of the Vanto Group; and Kari Granger, a Fellow in the US Air Force Academy. The course was first offered in 2004 at the William E. Simon Graduate School of Business at the University of Rochester in New York. To date over sixty leadership courses and workshops have been delivered nationally and internationally by the course creators and course participants who have been trained to lead the course. While courses and workshops are delivered in a variety of settings, the majority are being conducted in a university setting. In addition to workshops, course leaders and participants have also presented over sixty 1-4 hour talks on various components of the leadership course (see Appendix C). The first talk was delivered in 2009 and the largest talk to date was delivered to 400 audience members.

The promise of the course is that “when mastered, [the] contexts for leader and leadership result in the circumstances of any leadership situation, and oneself in such situations, occurring or showing up so that one’s naturally correlated way of being and

acting is that of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively” (Erhard et al., 2012, p.23). The course creators are clear in their assertion that this course is distinct from any other course about leadership. The course utilizes an ontological model while pulling from other disciplines such as psychology and neuroscience. Additionally, while distinct in nature, “the ontological perspective is complementary to the findings and insights provided by the other perspectives” (Erhard et al., 2012, p. 16). All three disciplines examine the nature and function of human beings. Psychology examines the nature and function of human beings from the perspective of the mind. Thus, from a psychological perspective, the role of mental functions on human behavior is examined through concepts like perception, cognition, memory and emotion. Neuroscience is a branch of biology that studies the nervous system and examines human nature from the function of the brain (Erhard et al., 2013, p. 3). That is, neuroscience focuses on the human brain’s impact on behavior and cognitive functions such as decision-making, judgment and problem-solving.

When examining the nature and function of human beings, all three disciplines also provide insight into conditions that influence human behavior. For example, psychologist might say that “an automatic set way of being and acting” is a “response behavior” that is triggered by a stimulus (Erhard et al., 2013, p. 6). From a neuroscience perspective those same responses “could be termed amygdala hijacks” (Erhard et al., 2013, p. 6). From an ontological perspective, one’s fixed way of being or acting is termed a functional constraint. As such, all three can contribute to the understanding of the behaviors that limit one’s effectiveness in leadership. However, what makes the

ontological perspective distinct from other disciplines is the access it provides to the nature and function of human beings. For example, the psychological model deals with the nature and function of human beings from a third-person perspective while the ontological model does so from a first-person perspective (Erhard et al., 2013, p.155).

Erhard (2012) writes:

Of course, one can inquire into being a leader and the effective exercise of leadership from a number of perspectives, with each perspective providing insights not contributed by the others. ...leader and leadership can also be examined from the science of ontology. Ontology examines leader and leadership from the perspective of the nature and function of *being* as it relates to being a leader and the impact of *being* on one's effectiveness in the exercise of leadership. While the ontological perspective is less familiar for most of us than these other perspectives and therefore perhaps at first uncomfortable, the ontological perspective is uniquely powerful in providing access to the *being* of being a leader and the *actions* of the effective exercise of leadership *as one's natural self-expression* (Erhard et al., 2012, p.17).

Therefore, while other disciplines can contribute to the examination of leader and leadership, none can provide first-hand access to the experience of one being a leader as their natural self-expression. When applied specifically to the Being a Leader course, ontology is concerned with the ontology of leader and leadership. That is, ontology in the realm of leadership is concerned with the nature and function of being when being a leader, as well as the source of one's action in the exercise of leadership (Erhard, 2013). The ontology of leader and leadership examines what is perceived, felt, and thought when one is being a leader. When an ontological model is applied to leadership, the actual nature of leader and leadership is made accessible and the source of action needed for one to be an effective leader is also made available. As distinguished in the leadership course, "being" is not regarded as immutable when ontologically examined. That is, one's being is dealt

with as changeable and unfixed. Approaching “being” from this perspective allows one to see themselves in ways that are not limited. When specifically exploring leader and leadership from an ontological perspective, one is able to access and employ limitless ways of being in order to be effective. As Erhard (2013) notes:

The sole objective of this ontological approach to creating leaders is to leave students who complete a course designed to create leaders actually being leaders and exercising leadership effectively as their *natural self-expression*. In other words, the exercise of creating a leader is complete when being a leader and exercising leadership effectively has become that student’s natural self-expression. By “natural self-expression”...we mean a way of being and acting in any leadership situation that is a spontaneous and intuitive effective response to what one is dealing with (p.3).

In order to provide students with such access, the course employs phenomenology as a method. Pioneered by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology is essentially the study of “phenomena”. That is, the study of actual experiences and the ways in which things are experienced. Thus, the lived body is actually the center of experiences (Behnke, 2011). These experiences are distinct in that they are first-person, first-hand experiences for which access is achieved through the bracketing of prior knowledge, awareness, or preconceptions of self and the world. That is, the phenomenological experience is about the here and now sensations of what is heard, felt, seen and encountered, without use of prior context or meaning. Additionally, phenomenology deals with the taken-for-granted contexts, meanings, assumptions, and processes with which individuals function on a daily basis that, once bracketed, can fully allow one to experience the here and now. Thus, as a method, phenomenology is concerned with the study of an experience from the perspective of the individual, with the ‘bracketing’ of taken-for-granted assumptions and usual way of perceiving (Lester, 1999). Epistemologically, a phenomenological approach places

importance on the subjective, personal knowledge and interpretations of the individual. Lester notes that, as a methodology, phenomenology provides powerful insight into the understanding of subjective experiences, motivations, actions, and assumptions. Selvi (2008) writes:

Phenomenological learning is related to the search for meaning of self-experiences and perceptions. Students must be encouraged to describe, investigate, and explain their feelings, experiences and thoughts. They describe their experiences, consider possible meanings, and understand the essence of their experience in relation to the topic of learning. The student's self-experiences include feelings, thoughts, responses, and the relationship between self and others, which include other students, teachers, learning topics, and so on...Education should focus on these by means of its curriculum implementations. The phenomenological approach should be applied in the education system as a tool for learning (p. 39).

The phenomenological method is critical to learning as it places the learner in the very center of their own experiences. This provides them with the access they need to give these experiences language and meaning. In being able to give these as-lived, first-hand experiences language, it validates for the individual the legitimacy of what they are encountering. In partnership, ontology and phenomenology can create a powerful educational experience that leaves learners transformed as individuals who experience themselves as leaders committed to agency and action. Ontology puts learners in touch with their being and its relationship to self and the world. Once this relationship and the associated dynamics are accessed, they can be critically examined and re-contextualized. Phenomenology can then distinguish for the learner the difference between what is observed from a third-hand perspective and what is experienced from a first-hand purview. Applied specifically to pedagogy, ontology can make available to the learner who they see themselves to be, how they show up in the world and how the world shows up for them.

Once established, meaning can be made as to how perceptions and the perceived intersect with one as a leader and in exercising leadership. Perceptions and the perceived can then be critically examined, challenged, and ultimately given a new context that would allow for more effective personal and social agency.

Employing an ontological model and a phenomenological method, the course is delivered in three distinct, yet interlocking parts: The Four Foundational Factors for Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership, The Contextual Framework – Distinguishing Leader and Leadership, and The Ontological Constraints that Limit the Effective Exercise of Leadership.

Course Content Part I: The Four Foundational Factors for Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership

The foundation of this course is built on four fundamental elements that are understood to be critical for being a leader and exercising leadership effectively. The first of the four elements is integrity. As defined in this course, one is in integrity when they are whole and complete. Being whole and complete is a matter of honoring one's word. The course distinguishes integrity as an objective state or condition that is necessary for workability and increased performance. That is, a person, group (corporation), or object either has or does not have integrity. Furthermore, the matter of honoring one's word is also a matter of integrity. The premise is that individuals quite often take for granted the power of their words and underestimate their inability to honor their word. This inability to honor one's word results in the inevitable compromise of integrity. Honoring one's word is defined as (a) keeping your word and on time, and (b) making those impacted by

your word immediately aware when you will not be able to keep your word, that you will keep your word in the future (by when), or that you would not be keeping your word at all, and finally what you will do to deal with the impact of not keeping your word.

Outlined in more detail, one's word is defined as the following: what you said you would do, what you know to do, what is expected of you (expressed and unexpressed requests of you) by all those whom you wish to have a workable relationship, what you say is so, what you say you stand for, and moral, ethical, and legal standards (Erhard et al., 2010, p. 3). The premise of this is that in order to be an effective leader, one must be diligent in honoring their word to themselves and those they lead.

The second foundational factor in this course is authenticity. Authenticity is defined as "being and acting consistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others, and who you hold yourself to be for yourself" (Erhard et al., 2012, p.42). That is, to be a leader and exercise leadership effectively, one needs to act consistently with who they hold themselves to be. One way that the course deals with the path to authenticity is through the identification of one's inauthenticities. In its relation to being a leader and exercising leadership effectively, being authentic means that one needs to be straightforward and honest when they are wrong, irrational, or when they make a mistake. Doing so takes courage, the sort of courage needed to be an effective leader.

The third foundational factor is being committed to something bigger than oneself. This factor invites participants to ask themselves what they are committed to. It is about taking a look at your life, career, and education and finding a purpose for each that is beyond one's personal gain. Thus, if one is seeking financial gain, notoriety, or anything

selfish in the pursuit of leadership, then one cannot exercise leadership effectively. There is also a component of fulfilling the concerns of the relevant parties. That is, in one's commitment to something greater than oneself, one ought to seek out and fulfill the concerns of those they are leading. This sort of commitment is the "source of the serene passion required to lead and to develop others as leaders, and the source of persistence when the path gets tough" (Erhard et al., 2012, p. 43).

Finally, the last foundational factor for being a leader and exercising leadership effectively in the course is "being cause in the matter". The course creators define cause in the matter as a declaration. It is that for which one is willing to stand regarding some condition, a place from which to view and deal with the set of facts that constitute some condition (Erhard et al., 2012). That is, rather than one viewing themselves at the effect of a condition (occurrence, situation, predicament, etc.), one might consider the position from which they stand in order to be effective in dealing with the circumstance at hand. It is not to say that one is at fault or to blame for any given circumstance. Rather, it is to say that one has the ability to view any circumstance in such a way that the context they utilize can shape their ability to be effective in that situation. Each factor makes available powerful access to one's ability to lead. However, although independent, each factor works in conjunction with the other. Building on these foundational factors, the course then transitions into the contextual framework that distinguishes the notions of leader and leadership.

Course Content Part II: The Contextual Framework – Distinguishing Leader and Leadership

The second part of the course content creates a contextual framework for leader and leadership. The contextual framework utilized in this course explores leader and leadership from four distinct aspects: as linguistic abstractions, as phenomena, as a concept, and as a term. When looking at leader and leadership as linguistic abstractions, within the context of this course, one is afforded unlimited possibilities for what leadership could look like. Unlike other leadership theories that offer concrete definitions of what a leader embodies and which leadership qualities are essential to leading, leader and leadership as linguistic abstractions redefine the boundaries and constrictions associated with being a leader and leadership. That is, it provides individuals with access to unlimited possibilities when leading and frees them from the constraints of commonly held ideas of who can be an effective leader or what constitutes effective leadership. In summarizing leader and leadership as linguistic abstractions, the course creators provide the following:

As linguistic abstractions, leader and leadership are dealt with as realms of possibility in which when you are being a leader all possible ways of being are available to you, and when you are exercising leadership all possible actions are available to you (Erhard et al., 2013, p. 483).

As phenomena, leader and leadership, in this contextual framework, deal with that which is experienced or impacted by someone firsthand and as lived when leadership is present. This is distinct from other leadership approaches that “teach” leadership through examples and illustrations from other leaders. Such practices leave individuals with ideas and notions of what a leader is and what leadership looks like without actually

experiencing it for themselves, as their own natural self-expression. Additionally, individuals are not left with a first-hand, phenomenological experience of being led. The course creators assert that when leader or leadership is dealt with as *phenomena*, one is examining or dealing with leader or leadership as an actual instance or experience of being a leader or exercising leadership.

As a concept, the course leaders summarize the idea of dealing with leader and leadership in the following way:

As *concepts*, leader and leadership exist in the domain of a created future, a future that fulfills the concerns of the relevant parties, that the leader and those being led come to live into, which future gives them being and action in the present consistent with realizing that future (Erhard et al., 2013, p. 546).

Essentially, the futures created by participants are futures that call for their leadership and would not otherwise happen without it. Additionally, these futures are neither predictable nor driven from a past-driven trajectory. Rather these created futures are greater than one can imagine and call for participants to be bigger than they ever imagined themselves to be.

The final aspect of the contextual framework deals with leader and leadership as terms. This last aspect is based on the three previous aspects of leader and leadership: linguistic abstractions, phenomena, and concept. As a term, being a leader is defined as:

committed to realizing a future that wasn't going to happen anyway that fulfills the concerns of the relevant parties, and with the availability of an unlimited opportunity set for being and action, *being the kind of clearing* for leader and leadership that shapes the way the circumstances you are dealing with occur for you such that your naturally correlated way of being and acting is one of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively (Erhard et al., 2012, p.48).

As a term, leadership is defined as:

an exercise in language that results in a created future that the leader and those being led come to live into, which future gives them being and action in the present that results in the realization of a future (that wasn't going to happen anyway); which future fulfills (or contributes to fulfilling) the concerns of the relevant parties, including critically those who granted the leadership (those who lead you and those you lead) (Erhard et al., 2012, p.48).

Simply put, when examining leader and leadership as a term, one should be able to conceive what being a leader is and what effective leadership looks like.

Course Content Part III: Ontological Constraints that Limit the Effective Exercise of Leadership

The last part of the course deals with ontological constraints and their impact on the effective exercise of leadership. The focus here is to loosen the grip of that which impedes one's ability to be a leader and exercise leadership effectively. Once the previous course contents have been discovered, it is critical that one gets out of the way anything that would get in the way of their leadership. That which gets in one's way is referred to as a constraint. The course categorizes ontological constraints into two categories: perceptual and functional. Perceptual constraints limit and shape what we perceive of the situations with which we are dealing. The source of one's ontological perceptual constraints is their network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world, others, and themselves (Erhard et al., 2013, p. 5). The course creators reference neuroscience and the concept of invariant representation as an example of how perceptual constraints are often invisible to most people. Erhard et al. (2013) write:

An important aspect of what the brain supplies to our perception of the world and any specific aspect of the world with which we are dealing comes from what neuroscientists term “invariant representations” (pg. 32).

Thus, invariant representations are the “models the brain uses to create our perceptions” (Erhard et al., 2012, p. 32). These invariant representations are shaped by our worldviews and frame of reference and thus create a perception of the world and what one is dealing with in any given situation. Erhard et al. (2012) write:

Our worldview and frames of reference that constitute our perceptual constraints are like air to the bird, and water to the fish – that is, our perceptual constraints are in most cases invisible to us. This ontological perspective on what occurs for us is consistent with neuroscience research which has demonstrated that 80% or more of what occurs for us is generated by pre-existing patterns in the brain rather than what our eyes record of what is actually there in the world. As neuroscientists often put it, we do not see what our eyes see, we see what our brain sees (p.32).

Invariant perceptions not only shape the way one perceives a situation, they also shape the way one predicts future events. As neuroscientist Jeff Hawkins (2004) writes:

The brain uses vast amounts of memory to create a model of the world. Everything you know and have learned is stored in this model. The brain uses this memory-based model to make continuous predictions of future events. (p.6)

In addition to invariant representations, the course creators reference the psychological term “change-blindness” as another example of a perceptual constraint. Change-blindness is a phenomenon that occurs when one is unable to notice visual changes to their surroundings. “As some neuroscientist have explained it, we see what our brains see, not what our eyes see” (Erhard et al., 2013, p. 719). As a result of these perceptual constraints one is not able to see situations for what they actually are. Rather, situations occur for individuals in a way that is shaped by these constraints. As it relates

to leadership, when one is functioning with perceptual constraints, one's ability to be effective may be diminished if the leadership situation they are dealing with is distorted.

While perceptual constraints deal with the way in which one perceives a situation, functional constraints deal with the behavior that ensues as a result of that perception. As the course creators note, "action is correlated with the occurring" (Erhard et al., 2012, p. 40). They write:

We argue ... that one's being and actions (within the limits of one's physical and mental capacities) are always correlated with the way in which what one is dealing with occurs (shows up) for one, rather than being correlated with the way what one is dealing with actually is. Of course, if by coincidence the way what one is dealing with happens to occur for one as it actually is, one's actions will be correlated with (consistent with) the way it actually is...our actions are a correlate of the limited and shaped way in which what we are dealing with occurs for us (Erhard et al., 2012, p. 40).

Functional constraints can be defined as a "fixed" way of being, based on one's perception of a situation, which can be limiting and restrictive. As an example, if one perceives that they are being made to be wrong, then their functional constraint might be to get defensive. That defensiveness might be their fixed way of being, based on the way they perceive the situation, which can then impede their ability to lead effectively. Furthermore, a functional constraint may also be "a way of being" that is not typically perceived as negative. To explain, one might have a functional constraint of humor or charm. Perhaps when feeling disconnected in a social situation one might rely on their humor or charm to connect to others. This too can be a functional constraint if it becomes their "fixed way of being". The consequence of this is that other possible ways of being and acting become unavailable as a result of relying on what is familiar. The course creators refer to this sort of functional constraint as a "winning formula". It is the go-to

way of being that one relies on to get them through life. While winning formulas might serve their purpose in just getting by, they are ultimately limiting and void of any other possibilities for action. Taking this a step further, these functional constraints create for an individual what the course creators would refer to as a “life sentence”. This life sentence is the way one has wound up being in that they are not able to see other possibilities for themselves. This way of being becomes who they see themselves to be, consciously or not, without access to the limitless possibilities that are available to them (Erhard et al., 2013).

Course Design and Delivery

The course creators are intentional in the design and delivery of the course. There are a number of elements that make this course unique from other learning experiences. The course takes place over a period of six days with two days off in the middle. Prior to attending the course, students are asked to complete pre-course readings. This is required in order to get students familiar with the material before taking the course. The goal is not only to get students familiar with the vast amount of information that will be covered during the course days, but to also provide opportunities for students to start discovering the material in their own lives as well. It is recommended that the pre-course material is read word for word and out loud. The premise is that people are more likely to retain the material when they read it out loud to themselves.

Another aspect of the course is that it is delivered through a slide deck. Each word, sentence and phrase on the slide deck is intentionally chosen by the course creators to deliver the content in the most effective way. The language used in the course is very

specific and designed to invite participants to consider new conversational domains for leader and leadership. As such, the course does not offer any tips, tricks, or formulas for effective leadership. Rather, the course is a laboratory for participants to discover for themselves the experience of effective leadership. This is accomplished by inviting participants to master the four foundational factors for leader and leadership, the contextual framework, and the ontological constraints that limit the effective exercise of leadership. Once mastered, participants are invited to create unimaginable futures that are bigger than themselves, that call for their leadership, and are unlikely to happen without their leadership.

As participants are engaging with and mastering the material, they are invited to be “on the court” developing and mastering for themselves effective leadership as their natural self-expression. Being “on the court” during the course takes on a number of forms. First, while in the course, a moderator reads the slide deck out loud while participants follow along by reading silently to themselves. Doing so engages both the senses of seeing and hearing for participants. This creates more possibility for the participants to retain the course content. The course creators also intentionally employ a degree of repetition in the slides in order to increase the degree to which participants are able to retain the information presented to them.

Participants are also invited to be “on the court” through their sharing and listening. As participants are confronting their taken-for-granted assumptions about themselves and the world, they are invited to share what is occurring or showing up for them. As they share, other participants are actively listening and considering ways that

the sharing of others contributes to their own growth and development. Sharing also occurs as participants are working in groups to complete break assignments. Participants are asked to complete break assignments during the course day and during the evenings in between course days. They are then invited to share their discoveries and insights with the group. The sharing and listening that occur during the course creates opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue. More importantly, an environment is created that invites individuals to be active participants in their learning and the learning of others.

In every aspect of the course, participants are asked to be fully present to what is happening in the class. Everything from reading the slides to one's self, listening to the slides being read, personal sharing, or listening to someone else's sharing, is to be approached from a first-person, present, and on the court standpoint. Participants are invited to actively engage and grapple with the material so as to discover for themselves the effectiveness of the course. In doing so, they come to discern what each aspect of the course means for them. Thus participants are able to create a new context for leader and leadership that provide them with actionable access to new ways of being and acting as a leader. In summary, the course creators are very intentional about the design and delivery of the course. Ultimately, the goal is to increase the likelihood that participants will fully realize the promise of the course, which is to leave participants with access to exercising leadership effectively as their natural self-expression.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm informs the perspective from which the subject or topic at hand will be researched. Glesne (2011) defines a paradigm as a “framework or philosophy of science that makes assumptions about the nature of reality and truth, the kinds of questions to explore, and how to go about doing so” (p.5). This research is approached from a critical theory paradigm. Critical theory can be defined as an orientation, a disposition, and a way of acting on the world in order to change it. As Glesne (2011) notes:

Critical theory researchers are often interested in praxis, or the relationships between thought and action, theory and practice. As such, some incorporate dialogue and critical reflection as part of the research process in an effort to reveal unexamined assumptions among participants and the ways in which people may be accepting explanations of the dominant cultural group that serves to oppress. This process “enables people to challenge learned restrictions, compulsions, or dictates of habit” (Higgs, 2001, p. 49) and can point out the way to changing current relationships and structures (p.10).

The use of a critical theory paradigm aligns with this study because this research inquires into an ontological/phenomenological course, how it might inform the transformational possibilities of individuals who engage in it, and how those individuals are creating futures for themselves and others that would not otherwise happen. Therefore, seeking the connection between thought and action is important to this work. That is, highlighting how participants examine, reflect on, and engage in discourse about the way they are occurring for themselves as they create the futures they and others are living into is a critical piece of this research. Thus, this research creates a narrative that

illuminates the on-going critical reflection and dialogue that participants are engaging in, thus the use of a critical theory paradigm. More specifically, this research is guided by a critical feminist research paradigm. Ackerly and True (2012) write:

A critical feminist perspective uses critical inquiry and reflection...to transform, and not simply explain the social order. The perspective encourages new lines of inquiry versus simply “filling in gaps” in already established disciplinary terrains (p. 2).

Critical feminist researchers believe that current society is organized in such a way as to support sexism and feminist research seeks to change this structure (Waller, 2005).

Therefore, feminist thinking and practice require the elimination of boundaries that privilege dominant forms of knowledge building; boundaries that mark who can be a knower and what can be known (Hesse-Biber, 2012). This research places the participants at the center of their experiences. They are the knowers of their experiences and those experiences are privileged as essential contributors to this research. Ackerly and True (2012) write:

A feminist research ethic is a methodological commitment to any set of research practices that reflect on the power of epistemology, boundaries, relationships, and the multiple dimensions of the researcher’s location throughout the entirety of the research process...it demands that we use critical reflection as a work ethic during research and it points us to recognize and account for...the construction of knowledge by way of boundaries and categories, and the need to relate to these categories...in transformative ways (p. 2).

The use of a critical feminist paradigm also informed the epistemological underpinnings of this research. One’s epistemology asserts the researcher’s view on how knowledge is obtained and validated, who can be the knower, and what can be known. It is a system of thought used to distinguish fact from belief. Carter (2007) offers that the

epistemological approach in research will inform the methodology as well as justify and evaluate the knowledge that results from the study. It also shapes the way in which the researcher communicates with the audience. Ackerly and True (2010) write:

An epistemology refers to one's theory of knowledge; it is a system of rules, conditions, and beliefs that one uses to tell the difference between "knowledge" and "opinion", between fact and opinion (p. 27).

Epistemology can generally be viewed from two perspectives: empiricist and constructionist. With positivism as its foundation, empiricism views reality as universal. That is, based on measurable, quantifiable processes, reality is universal, objective, and generalizable. Therefore, through scientific application, there is a shared reality. In contrast, the constructionist epistemology asserts that reality is constructed by and between the persons who experience it. Furthermore, constructivists view humans as observers, participants, and agents who actively generate and transform the patterns through which they construct the realities that fit them (Hickman, 2009). These realities are shaped by context and time. In this sense, the individual is viewed as the sense maker in that each of us seeks to understand or make sense of our world as we see and experience it (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). That is, the as-lived experience, as each one experiences it, serves as the basis of knowledge.

Drawing from the constructionist approach, the epistemology employed in this research views the participants as the knowers and experts of their own personal, as-lived experiences. Participants, being the expert of their own experiences, contribute their expertise to creating a narrative that addresses the questions posed in this research. This approach is critical as this study will illuminate how individuals talk about, create and

illuminate their personal transformations as informed by their own critical reflection and dialogue. Furthermore, the meaning that participants place on their own personal experiences ultimately informs the findings and recommendations presented in this study. Epistemologically, doing so invites considerations about who can be the knower; and how such knowing can be a contribution to this research.

As an African-American woman and researcher-participant in this study, it is important that my experience and the experience of others in this study is illuminated, thus the use of a critical feminist approach. While not all participants in this study are African-American or women, it is important to note that the critical feminist approach strives to include all voices. That is, research is collaborative and inclusive for the purpose of the greater good. From a critical feminist perspective, my research is inclusive of all participants and employs a method of mutuality between those involved. As Roper-Huilman (2011) notes:

One of the underlying reasons many feminists propose that research participants be involved in providing data and/or shaping the analysis is that such a process makes room for multiple voices, perspectives, and stories, while simultaneously shaping knowledge that can be shared with a variety of communities (p.680).

This approach rejects power hierarchies and gives voice to each participants experiences and its contribution to this research As part of this study centers on leadership and transformation, it is important that the paradigm aligns with the philosophy of inclusion, collaboration and action. As Denzin (2010) indicates, qualitative researchers have an obligation to “change the world” (p 32). Denzin writes:

It is necessary to continue to engage the pedagogical, theoretical, and practical promise of qualitative research as a form of radical democratic

process...the discourse of qualitative research can be used to help create and imagine a free democratic society (p. x)

Denzin underscores the importance of an inclusive inquiry that embodies critical discourses and conversations. Such democratic discourse can create a space for all voices to be included and all participants to be contributors to a narrative that illuminates the creation of futures that have the potential to impact society, higher education, and the world.

Data Sources

I gather data from three sources: myself as a researcher-participant; a group of women leaders, that as the researcher I am a part of, called the Women Leading Group (WLG); and individuals from a learning community that I am also part of, who are dedicated to ontological/phenomenological leadership called LECOLE (Learning Community for Ontological/Phenomenological Leadership). Members of the WLG and LECOLE are recruited from both the leadership course “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological and Phenomenological Model” in Vancouver (June 26-July 3, 2013) and the training course “Creating Leaders: Mastering the Fundamentals and Effective Delivery of the Ontological Access to Leadership” in Toronto (July 19-24, 2013). I approach individuals from both courses, inform them of my project, and seek their voluntary participation. I have access to these individuals by virtue of taking both courses myself.

1. The Researcher

As the researcher, I took both the Being a Leader course and the Creating Leaders training course. Because I take both courses and I am committed to furthering this leadership work, I become a member of LECOLE. I am also an active member of the Women Leading Group where I share my own insights and experiences from taking the course. In positioning myself as a researcher-participant I add a very personal, as-lived element to this study. I contribute an auto-ethnographic component that chronicles my experiences pre, during, and after my participation in the Being a Leader course. In my autoethnography, I write a narrative about my experience of how I perceive myself, others, and the world before, during, and after the course by illuminating those experiences from an ontological and phenomenological perspective. Ultimately, my role in this research is as a researcher-participant, a member/facilitator of the Women Leading Group, a member of the LECOLE group, and an interviewer of LECOLE members.

As the researcher and a participant in this study, I am aware of the multiple roles I play. I am cognizant of the need for reflexivity in this qualitative study. Glesne (2011) writes that “reflexivity generally involves critical reflection on how researcher, research participants, setting, and research procedures interact and influence each other” (p.151). The exercise of reflexivity involves on-going personal inquiry and reflection and the recording of those explorations. From a research perspective, the process of self-reflection also aligns with the critical feminist paradigm. Glesne (2011) writes:

Feminist researchers advocate critical self-reflections of their own roles as researchers and of their histories, values, and assumptions in relationship to the research. Feminist researchers extend their attention to interactions

among subjectivities of researcher and participants and to the role power and authority might play in the research process (p.11).

Such critical reflection challenges the researcher to discover and acknowledge their own biases and the potential influence of such on the research study. Doing so presents the researcher with opportunities to make “their research more accurate, legitimate, or valid” (Glesne, 2011 p.151).

2. Women Leading Group

The Women Leading Group is comprised of female professionals, including myself, who work in different professional sectors. We have a shared experience of taking the Being a Leader course. With the leadership course as our foundation, we share a commitment to transforming ourselves, others, and the world around us. Our group embodies professional and cultural diversity. Members represent a variety of professional sectors such as higher education, medicine, technology, and business. As a group, we also represent different stages of leadership and professional rank. The group includes senior level and mid-level professionals. The women in this group come from geographically diverse locations that span the United States, Canada, Iran and Trinidad and Tobago. Our group meets every two weeks for six months following the completion of the Being a Leader course from July 17 –December 18, 2013. During these calls, we share our personal insights, observations, challenges, new actions we are taking and successes of living into our created futures as connected to what we learn in the course. Being part of this group adds value and contributes to this research by illuminating the possibilities regarding the research questions. As a group we discuss our transformational

possibilities in an intimate and personal way. Ontologically speaking, we engage in dialogue about what it means for us to be in the world as women leaders and talk about how we experience ourselves from our first-hand, phenomenological perspectives. Focusing on the four foundations of the course: integrity, authenticity, being cause in the matter, and being committed to something greater than oneself, our group discusses ways in which these factors show up for us in our daily lives and the resulting transformational implications.

3. LECOLE

LECOLE (Learning Community for Ontological/Phenomenological Leadership) is a community of individuals who are committed to the advancement of ontological/phenomenological leadership. The group is mostly comprised of college and university faculty who have or will be leading the leadership course both nationally and internationally. One of the missions of this group is to bring the leadership course to as many institutions as possible and include it in the higher education curriculum. Members of LECOLE have a strong commitment to furthering this leadership work because they see higher education as a medium through which the transformation of individuals can occur and thus the transformation of the world. The individuals in this group add a different perspective to this research given their commitment to lead this course. As each member of LECOLE also completed the Creating Course Leaders course that would allow them to lead the course themselves, these group members provide insight into the experience of being led in and delivering the course. They also offer insight into the process of establishing this course at post-secondary institutions. They also contribute a

narrative about the challenges and successes associated with employing an ontological model in the classroom and the research they are conducting about it.

Research Methods

Critical feminist research engages in on-going critical inquiry and reflection.

Therefore, a critical feminist perspective is not simply about the method used. Rather, it is about how methods are used. Ackerly and True (2012) write:

A feminist research ethic is a commitment to inquiry about how we inquire. It requires developing your ability to be attentive to: the power of knowledge, and more profoundly, of epistemology; boundaries, marginalization, silence, and intersections; relationships and their power differentials; and your own sociopolitical location (“situatedness”) (p. 22-23).

I employ three specific methods of data collection: autoethnography, participatory action research, and interviews. Durepos (2010) defines an autoethnography as a form of self-reflection and writing that explores the researcher's personal experience and connects the autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings. Autoethnographies seek to be detailed and descriptive accounts of one's experiences. As a method of data collection, autoethnographies combine the concepts of an autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, 2011). As Scott (1992) notes, feminist scholarship validates experiences as a form of knowledge to be interrogated and that includes both the experiences of the researched and the researcher. The autoethnography in this research chronicles my first-hand, as-lived experiences pre, during, and post course participation. These experiences are then used to contribute to the research findings and recommendations offered in this study.

My second form of data collection is via participatory action research with the Women Leading Group. Participatory action research is defined as systematic inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for purposes of education and taking action or effecting change (Green, 2003). Participatory action research seeks to understand the world by changing it collaboratively and reflectively. Utilizing participatory action fosters a community of inquiry and action and addresses questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers (Reason, 2008). Additionally, in alignment with a critical feminist perspective, participatory action research is inclusive, void of hierarchal assumptions and action-oriented. Participatory action research involves researchers and participants in the collaborative design and implementation of the project with the goal of increasing understanding and improving participants' lives in some way. It promotes individual and collective empowerment and/or social change (McIntyre, 2008). Glesne (2011) writes:

[Participatory action research] is associated with critical theory in that it is action research committed to social transformation through active involvement of marginalized or disfranchised groups. PAR includes the objective of...consciousness-raising in that the group, as a whole, works to generate and analyze information that helps to transform the thinking and realities of that group (p.23).

As a research method, participatory action research collaboratively considers the contributions of all involved with all parties committed to applying the research towards social change. Additionally, the information gathered in the process of participatory action research is openly shared with and disseminated to all participants as a gesture of mutual contribution and ownership (Bergold, 2012).

As the Women Leading group, we hold monthly meetings where each of us shares our experiences and insights as it relates to the course. After each meeting, summary notes are posted on a shared online workspace. The workspace serves as a central location for group members to contribute to or edit documents and ensure that our experiences are accurately reflected in this study. Additionally, I share drafts of the dissertation with participants in order to facilitate group collaboration and contribution. Ultimately, this research method embodies the power of transformation, collaboration and action with credence given to each participant's contribution.

Finally, semi-structured, topical individual interviews are conducted with 10 members of LECOLE.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews allow guided focus, but also the ability of the subject-participant to give answers that do not conform to the researchers' (known or unknown) expectations (Ackerly and True, 2012, p. 168).

My interviews with individuals from LECOLE highlight the experiences and outcomes associated with teaching this course. These interviews also inquire about the process it takes for the participants to introduce this course into post-secondary curriculum and the futures that have created for themselves, their students, and higher education as a result. The interviews also address the challenges associated with ontological inquiry and the sort of research that participants are conducting about it. I prepare standard questions that I ask each participant. However, I allow room for additional and clarifying questions based on the direction the interviews take. As Ackerly and True (2012) write:

When the unanticipated moment of analytical import occurs during an interview, you will have an intuition about whether to pursue that possible analysis with further questions, or to set it aside for later consideration.

Doing so is a way of “co-producing” your data with your respondents, [which is] consistent with a feminist research ethic (p. 168).

Thus, I provide some structure but also allow room for detailed, personalized experiences to be shared. Unlike the Women Leading Group setting where we report regularly on our experiences since taking the course, the individual interviews are a snapshot, one-time interview summary of life post-course. Also, these interviews occur approximately ten months after the Creating Course Leaders course. Interviews are conducted via face-to-face internet meetings, by telephone or by email. Five participants interview over the phone, four via Skype, and one participant emails her responses.

Data Recording

The data from my autoethnography, the participatory action research, and interviews, are managed using field notes and tape recordings. As Glesne (2011) notes, field notes are a primary recording tool for the qualitative researcher. Field notes become “a place for ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging” (p. 71). My field notes are either kept in a journal, a notebook or on my computer. My journal specifically documents content for my autoethnography and details specific events and insights I encounter during the course of this study. My journal is a place for my autoethnographic notes and a “way to record my behavior and emotions throughout the research process” (Glesne, 2011, p.77). In addition to using a personal journal, I also document my field notes in a notebook and on my computer. The field notes I document in my notebook and on the computer specifically document my interactions with the other participants of the course and are used during Women Leading meetings and

LECOLE interviews. Finally, I tape record all interviews and group meetings with course participants. Doing so allows for a more organic, uninterrupted group meetings and interviews with the ability to capture every detail of those interactions.

Data Analysis

After all my data is collected and reviewed, I begin the process of coding. As Glesne (1991) notes, coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining. Glesne writes:

By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, we develop an organizational framework. It is progressive in that we first develop, out of the data, major code clumps by which to sort the data. Then we code the contents of each major code by clump, thereby breaking down the major code into numerous subcodes. Eventually, we can place the various data clumps in a meaningful sequence that contributes to the chapters or sections of our manuscript (p.133).

Glesne suggests creating as many codes as possible in order to have multiple ways of looking at the data. Auerbach (2003) suggests restating your research questions before reading through and coding the data. Due to the emerging nature of this research, I often refer back to my research questions in order to help me focus on what I am looking for within all the data and to ensure that the final narrative aligns with the research inquiry.

When coding my data, I use single words or short sentences to categorize common ideas. After coding the data, I organize the information under general themes.

Throughout the research process, I look for themes that emerge within the data. Emerging themes are identified upon periodic review of my field notes and recordings. After the data is themed, I seek feedback from the participants in the process of data interpretation and making meaning of the data. The data is interpreted from a critical theory

perspective. That is, I looked to highlight the “relationships between thought and action” (Glesne 2011, p. 10) articulated by the participants and how their personal experiences influence the way in which they experience themselves in this process.

A feminist research ethic also prompts us to notice how we manage the data (Ackerly and True, 2012). When reviewing the data, I seek words that frequently show up, that are connected to the four foundations of the leadership course, or demonstrated agency and transformation. I seek out themes that illuminate how participants speak about their leadership journeys from an ontological and phenomenological perspective. As Ackerly and True (2012) write:

If you [are] coding and categorizing themes-a feminist research ethic requires you to pay attention the often unintentional ways we can inscribe boundaries, marginalizing some forms of data...Is some data privileged in your analysis-for instance, scholarly literature or the so-called “authentic voices” of your research subject-participants?...How do you preserve the richness, contextuality, and authenticity of data from research subject-participants when you analyze it? (p. 181-182).

Because a key component of this research is transformational possibilities from an ontological and phenomenological perspective, it is important that the individual experiences of each participant are recognized as an important contribution to this work. Participants in this study serve as the experts of their experiences and thus the interpreters of such. It is important that the as-lived experiences of the participants are made prominent in this study. Ultimately, the experiences of the participants serve as the basis for my research about how an ontological/phenomenological leadership course might inform the transformational possibilities of the individuals who engage in it, and how

those individuals are creating futures for themselves and others that would not otherwise happen.

The next chapter chronicles my experience as a participant of the Being a Leader course through an autoethnography. The chapter is written in first person active voice in order to create an engaging narrative for the reader. This method of writing also allows me to be more direct and eliminate unnecessary words in my narrative. First person active voice is also used to position myself as the agent of action. Active writing makes clear that the subject is the one performing the action. If written in the passive voice, it would seem that the action in my autoethnography is being performed onto the subject (me), who is passively enduring the action being done upon it. That is, use of passive voice often excludes mention of the initiator of an action (the 'doer'), and, thus, serves to mask the presence of the author (Millar et. al, 2012). Rather, readers are made aware that I am responsible for the actions illustrated in my autoethnography. Finally, first person active voice allows me to be more candid in my writing as to authentically illustrate my as-lived experiences before, during, and after the course.

CHAPTER 5

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The Night Before

I thought I was ready to go to the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver and take this leadership course. Actually, I did not give much thought to the fact that I was traveling tomorrow until now. I focused so much on trying to tie up all the loose ends at the office before leaving work yesterday that I did not think much about UBC. I even packed an entire day ahead. So I should have no worries at this moment, right? Not the case. I am feeling miserable. I have a pounding migraine. Why this migraine? I had a short work week. Today I did not have one of those typical, stressful, meeting-packed days. Yet, my head is pounding and I am nauseous. The reality is that reality just hit me.

I am scared of the unknown. I did not realize it until now. I'm about to leave my husband and two children for over a week. I am traveling alone to a place I have never been before. I'm scared! Why can't I control myself? What the hell is wrong with me? I am angry at myself for even feeling this way. But I cannot avoid these feelings. There is no turning back now and no amount of planning can help me predict what to expect from this course. Planning...that's another thing. All this planning...why? I printed out almost every UBC-related email, I printed out every map of the UBC campus, I printed out the course schedule, and I even called the UBC accommodations office to ensure that I was packing and planning appropriately. I packed on Sunday for a flight that is leaving on Tuesday! As if that was not enough, I am now packing all the toiletries that I know I will

still need to use tomorrow morning before I leave for my flight. I am choosing to live out my suitcase for fear that I would leave without my toiletries!

I feverishly throw toiletries in my suitcase. I know this is irrational so why am I doing this? I do not trust myself. I already created a packing list that I would eventually check off to ensure I did not forget anything. But I am still packing these items in my suitcase for fear that I would forget them. Why can't I simply let go of that control and trust myself? This is a reflection of my life. My need to control every aspect of it is a reflection of my own lack of trust in myself. I am a prisoner for my need for predictability. My husband has always told me that I do not give myself enough credit. Now I am seeing his words play out right before my eyes and more clearly than ever before. Suddenly, I am starting to look forward to the change that this leadership course promises to bring.

At the Airport

I am sitting in this small airport waiting to board my flight. I am all in my head and I cannot hear or see anything around me. It's all a blur. I am a bundle of nerves right now. I have a million questions running through my head. What will Vancouver look and feel like? How will I convert my money to Canadian dollars? I am feeling sad and alone. It was so hard to watch my husband and two children drive away. Watching my son cry out for me broke my heart. I miss them already. Am I doing the right thing? Will this be worth it? What it will be like? My mentor told me to dump everything out before I board the plane. I need to be an empty vessel. I am writing this all down. I am emptying my soul onto this journal. I am not quite empty yet. I am still swimming in what's left of my

thoughts. I ask myself: “before I board this plane, what do I want to leave behind?” My answers: *1. Fear. Fear of my power. Fear of the unknown. 2. My lack of trust in myself. 3. The high level of pressure I put on myself. 4. My diminishing of my authority and validity as an African-American woman because I assume others are as well.* I feel a bit more open now. I just dumped years of “stuff” on this sheet of paper. I am boarding the plane. I hope to leave as a scared little girl and return as a fearless woman.

The Leadership Course: Day 1

The room is buzzing with nervous energy. I securely pin my nametag onto my blazer. I scan the room for a seat. No familiar faces. There is only one other African American woman in the room. Will I fit in? What will everyone else think of me? It feels kind of isolating. I sense the collective anticipation in the room. I find a seat in the second row on the right side of the room (not intimidatingly upfront but close enough to soak in everything). Introductions are made: Werner Erhard, Michael Jensen, Kari Granger, Steve Zaffron, and Jeri Echeverria. The rules of the course are explained. Participants are told that the class starts on time each day, no exceptions. We are asked to always sit in the center, most upfront seat. I am thinking to myself “this is intimidating! These instructors are not playing around!” The instructors make it clear that this course will not be easy and that participants need to be committed to being present and engaged in order to realize the full promise of the course.

We are immediately introduced to a number of different concepts. It is all happening so fast and I am intently trying to hang on to every word from the instructors. The instructors are sort of in a dance with each other. They are taking turns jumping in

and speaking as they lead the course. All the while, there is a moderator reading the slides out loud while we as participants are reading them to ourselves. This is definitely unconventional. There is no order, just synergy. Oh, and the other thing...coaching. "You need to be an opening for coaching", they say. Coaching? I feel myself shrinking in my seat. I hope they don't call on me. The instructors start off with a slide about ontology. They say, "ontology deals with the nature and function of being". So this course is not about the nature or function of the mind (psychology). It is about the nature and function of being, specifically as it relates to leadership. I sort of understand what they are saying but everything feels so unfamiliar.

Then next slide outlines the three structural elements that make up the course: The Four Foundations of Leadership, The Contextual Framework for Leadership, and The Ontological Constraints that Limit the Effective Exercise of Leadership. The instructors start with the four foundations of leadership: integrity, authenticity, being cause in the matter, and being committed to something greater than yourself. For now, they focus on integrity. They tell the participants that "integrity is about being whole and complete". Additionally, "integrity for a person is a matter of that person's word, nothing more and nothing less". Explained further, the slide reads:

Integrity: Your Word Defined: 1. What you said you would do. 2. What you know to do. 3. What is expected of you (unexpressed requests of you) by all those with whom you wish to have a workable relationship. 4. What you say is so. 5. What you stand for. 5. Moral, ethical, and legal standards.

This is a new approach to integrity for me. I have always defined it as what you do when no one is looking. However, as Keri explains, "you are either in integrity or out of integrity. You are either both whole and complete or not." She offers a caveat: "you may

not always be able to keep your word but you can honor it by cleaning up any mess that was caused as a result”. I am thinking about all the times I give my word to do something. How many times have I failed to honor my word to others and to myself! So I am out of integrity when I do not honor my word? I am sensing that I will have to do a lot of soul searching in this course!

Just as I am starting to stew on this new concept of integrity, we are moving on to something else. We are being introduced to the concept of “already-always-listening”. They explain that already-always-listening is anything that gets in the way of your authentic listening. The reality, as they explain it, is that most of us are unaware of the ways in which our preconceived notions, ideas, and beliefs get in the way of what we hear, see, and experience. I find this concept to be very interesting. What are some ways that my already-always-listening shows up for me? *“They don’t value what I have to say”*; *“I don’t trust what they are saying”*; *“Get to the point. I don’t need all the details”*; *“I already know this”*. It is interesting how I can be so unsure of myself yet so full of myself at the same time. I am recalling all the ways my already-always-listening filters the way I experience myself and the world. I don’t have time to think through all of this right now. We are jumping to the next topic.

We move on to the difference between “being in the stands” and “being on the court” as metaphors for a third-person perspective and a first-person perspective. The instructors explain that leadership from the stands is leadership that is observed, described, analyzed and explained. In contrast, leadership from the court is lived and experienced in real-time. It is like the difference between being a spectator of a basketball

game from the stands and being the player on the court. What I am getting is that there is a huge difference between living my life from the stands and getting out there to play. I am thinking back to my high school days as an athlete. When I was on the court I didn't think about what action I was going to take, I just played! My actions were instinctive, intuitive, and came naturally. I had no time to overthink anything, I just acted. I was present. For a moment now I am feeling what it feels like to be on the court. I am simply present and "not in my head". It feels strange but freeing. I can feel my body in my seat. The sounds around me are heightened. My head is clear. This doesn't last long. I am back in my head again trying to think about not thinking about anything.

We are now talking about being "out-here" in the world. Werner is asking "Where do you experience seeing something when you are looking at it?" What is this man talking about?! He goes on, "when you look at an object, your seeing does not happen in your head. It does not happen in your eyeball. If it did then it would be the size of your eyeball. Your seeing actually happens where the object is". Ok, now I am completely confused. I am listening to Werner and rereading the slide at the same time:

Maybe who you are is not located "in here" with life located "out there". Rather, as life is actually lived, who you are is located where what a master calls "**out-here**" – out where life (the world, others, and who you are referring to when you say "I" or "me") actually happens for you. This is where a master lives: **out-here, living where life actually happens....** You can, as most people do, automatically (that is, without examination) take yourself to be and live as though you are located in-here, with all else in life located out there. However, maybe Socrates was right when he said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

Alternatively, with your experience of realizing (examining) that you actually perceive the world, others, and what you refer to as "I" or "me", **not in-here, but out-there** (as you first called it), you are not stuck in here – you have a choice. You can go on choosing to take yourself to be and

experience living “in-here”, with life out-there. Or, based on your experience (examination) of where life actually shows up for you, you can take yourself to be and experience living **out-here** where life actually happens.

The instructors go on to talk about the distinction between “I am” and “the way I wound up being”. The difference between “I am” and “the way I wound up being” is that the latter opens up realms of possibility. “I am” is definite, limiting, and unwavering. With “the way I wound up being” there is choice, freedom, no limit, and ownership. The concept is liberating yet frightening. Could I have possibilities beyond the way I wound up being? So I can eliminate the boundaries that I placed on myself simply by changing my language? This is a powerful concept. In fact, all the concepts I am learning today are completely new to me. They are challenging me to see myself and the world differently. The concepts of I am, who I wound up being, and out-here are starting to come together for me. What I am getting is that there is a freedom that exists in the way I see myself and the world that I had not considered before. I am like a sponge soaking in every word. Yet I am also frustrated that I cannot mentally organize this information in a neat, orderly fashion. It is all making sense to me in pieces but my need for order, control, and predictability is getting in the way of my authentic listening. Day one is finally over. I am sort of in a daze. My body feels weak and my head feels heavy. I just want to go back to my room and make sense of everything I learned today. I am tired and my brain is overstimulated from all this new, foreign information.

The Leadership Course: Day Two

I am tired, detached and skeptical. I am also frustrated. All the information from yesterday is still not fitting into a neat little box. I want it to make sense now! No time to think through this. Day two is off to a quick start. We are talking about authenticity. As defined in this course, authenticity is “being and acting consistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others, and who you hold yourself to be for yourself”. I hear Werner’s booming voice say, “You need to get yourself clear that the path to authenticity begins with you being authentic about your inauthenticities. And by the way, if you think you don’t have any inauthenticities, then you are fooling yourself!” The moderator reads a slide on authenticity:

Most of us think of ourselves as being authentic; however, each of us in certain situations, and each of us in certain ways, is consistently inauthentic. And, because we avoid at all costs confronting our inauthenticities, we are consistently inauthentic about being inauthentic – not only with others, but with ourselves as well. The point is, you are inauthentic and don’t know that you are inauthentic – that’s called fooling yourself about fooling yourself, and that’s truly foolish.

Suddenly I feel uncomfortable. My mind is racing. This is first time in the course that I feel personally challenged to look at myself and possibly discover things about myself that I may not like. In what ways have I been inauthentic? I am not allowing myself to delve too deep into this question right now. I am not sure I can process all the answers this question might yield at the moment.

It is time for a break assignment. I am still feeling uneasy and frustrated. To make matters worse, I am now sitting with my assigned group to process our first assignment and I feel so out of place. Everyone is from the business world and no one understands

my Student Affairs language. No one understands what I do for a living and everyone keeps turning the conversation into some business talk that I don't understand. Why am I here? No one is looking at me when they speak. I am an outsider. I don't belong in this group. I suddenly feel isolated and alone. I retreat and I disengage. It doesn't matter anyway. The group will not care or even notice.

It is time to return from our break assignment. I am glad to be finished with the group activity but these feelings of isolation are lingering. In fact, these feelings are relentlessly piercing through me and won't leave me alone long enough for me to focus on the instructors. What is the matter with me? Why do I feel like I don't belong? Why do I always do this to myself? I tune back into the course just in time to hear the instructors talk about the difference between "conditions" and "contexts". Conditions are the facts with which one is confronted. Contexts allow one to see the possibilities in those conditions. I am thinking to myself, "So you mean my conditions won't change but I can change the context that I bring to it?" There goes this idea again of choice and freedom. The group exercise was a condition; the contexts I brought to that situation shaped the way that condition showed up for me. Could I have chosen another context?

It suddenly hits me; my contexts were showing up for me while I was in the group. Actually, my contexts have been showing up undetected in just about every "condition" in my life. Suddenly, I want to be on the court. I came here to be transformed right? I cannot continue to allow these contexts to run my life. My mind is made up; the only way to loosen the power that these contexts have on me is to share it openly and authentically in front of the entire class. I raise my hand. There is no turning back now.

The moderator is approaching me with the microphone. My heart is racing. I feel the eyes of everyone in the classroom burning through me. The silence in the room is deafening. I am fighting back tears. My voice is shaking. Here goes. "I have discovered that my contexts are victim, not good enough, not smart enough, and as an African-American woman no one cares about what I have to say". I am speaking from the depths of my heart and soul. A hidden, unexamined reality shows up. A burden that I silently carried for most of my life just purged itself right out of my mouth. I feel liberated yet deeply sad about what I just said.

I feel Warner's arm around me. I am frozen in the moment; still feeling the weight of what I just shared with everyone in the room. I can hear him tell the class that what I just did is a true example of emotional courage. He then looks at me with his piercing blue eyes and says "Your context is simply what you told yourself. God did not tell you that. If you have been this successful in life operating from that context, imagine your life without it. It takes a big person to do what you just did". I feel lighter. I just released something that was so heavy and so deep. Yet I feel indescribably sad. As I sit back down, I can no longer fight back the tears. All these years of living with such negative, unproductive contexts come up in that one moment. I cannot believe that I did this to myself for all these years. I feel guilty. How can I forgive myself for what I have done to myself? I am silently and intermediately crying throughout the rest of the day. Everything is a blur. I am emotionally drained. Classmates commend me on my courage throughout the day but I am in no position to receive any of it. My sadness is overwhelming. I just want to go back to my room and cry myself to sleep.

I am back in my room, showered, drained, and ready for bed. I am replaying the events of the day. Man, what a heavy day! I keep replaying my moment of sharing with the class today. Suddenly, my contexts become laughable. You mean I carried these silly contexts for most of life and placed so much meaning on them? How ridiculous. Now I understand what Warner meant when he said “everything is meaningless and nothing is significant”. I am discovering what the instructors mean when they say that leadership is about creating a context and that context is created in language. I am the one who gave those contexts power. I find myself actually laughing out loud. I am the one who has the power to define my contexts. This is liberating! It is a new feeling and a new concept that my brain has to get used to. I laugh myself to sleep.

Leadership Course: Day Three

For some reason I feel paranoid as I walk into the course room today. Is everyone analyzing me based on what I shared yesterday? I am quickly scanning the room for a seat. I am trying not to give anyone eye contact. I find a seat. We get started. I am trying so hard to pay attention but I feel like everyone is watching me. I am the black girl who shared with the group how inadequate she felt yesterday. Now I feel even more out of place. I need to focus. The course leaders are discussing the contextual framework for leadership. The moderator reads the slide:

Leader and Leadership, each as: THE FOUR ASPECTS OF THE CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

- *Linguistic Abstractions* (leader and leadership as “realms of possibility”)
- *Phenomena* (leader and leadership as lived on the court; that is, as experienced in the exercise of or in being impacted by)
- *Concepts* (the temporal domain that leader and leadership function in)

• **Terms** (leader and leadership as definitions)

I am feeling myself shut down and tune out already. This feels like it will require using more brain cells than I have right now. Keri starts breaking down each aspect of the framework: “What is an abstraction? An abstraction is an abstract entity that is created in language. That abstraction creates a realm of possibility”. So in essence, when leader and leadership are approached as linguistic abstractions, then realms of possibility are created in which all possible ways of being become available. I sort of get it but I’m still not completely wrapping my brain around this concept. Keri goes on. “When leader or leadership is dealt with as a phenomenon, one is examining or dealing with leader or leadership as an actual instance or lived example of being a leader or exercising leadership.” So in other words, as I understand it, leadership as a phenomenon is about what leadership is as-lived. I think I am getting it. The moderator is now reading the slide about leadership as a concept:

Drawing on the definition of concept in Webster’s Dictionary (1995): *an idea or thought, especially, a generalized idea of a thing or class of things*. When leader or leadership is dealt with as a concept, one is examining or dealing with the domain in which being a leader exists, or, the domain in which leadership is exercised. “Domain” is defined as field of interest or concern. Put simply, the question is, in what domain do leader and leadership exist, or with what are leader and leadership concerned?

Finally, we move on to leadership as a term. The moderator reads:

Drawing on the definition of term in Webster’s Dictionary (1995): *a word or phrase having a limiting and definite meaning*. When leader or leadership is dealt with as a term, one is examining or dealing with a definition that limits and makes definite the meaning of leader and leadership. “Definition” is defined as a brief precise statement of what a word or expression means. Put simply, the question is, what are the definitions of leader and leadership?

Essentially, leader and leadership as a term are based on the other three aspects and ultimately provide a definition for leader and leadership. The slides provide a definition for leader and leadership:

As a term, being a leader is defined as, committed to realizing a future that wasn't going to happen that fulfills the concerns of the relevant parties, and with the availability of an unlimited opportunity set for being and action, *being the kind of clearing* for leader and leadership that shapes the way the circumstances you are dealing with occur for you such that your naturally correlated way of being and acting is one of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively.

And

As a term, leadership is defined as an exercise in language that results in a created future that the leader and those being led come to live into, which future gives them being and action in the present that results in the realization of a future (that wasn't going to happen) which future fulfills (or contributes to fulfilling) the concerns of the relevant parties, including critically those who granted the leadership (those who lead you and those you lead).

While some of this material is landing for me, majority of it is going over my head. I am trying so hard to concentrate but I am just not present. I am still drained from the day before. They are now jumping back to another one of the four foundations of leadership. This time we are focusing on being committed to something greater than yourself. This seems like it will be easier to follow. Kari asks "What is your life, career, schooling, and relationships really about?" So what exactly am I committed to? Great, I feel lost again! I am asking myself how I know what that thing is. I am searching in my head for answers and trying to pay attention at the same time. My chest feels tight. I have a heavy feeling in the pit of my stomach. What has my life really been about? Once again, I am feeling personally challenged as I sit in this course. I don't have the answers. I can hear

Werner's words replaying in my head: "I can't give you the answers. You'll have to try it on and discover it for yourself". Yeah, yeah, yeah...I know...I have to discover it for myself. I feel more lost now than I did before I came to Vancouver.

We are on the last foundation of leadership; being cause in the matter. The instructors talk about being cause in the matter of anything you want power over. Man, there are a lot of things in my life that I want to have power over! Kari says "In any situation, if the context you give yourself is being cause in the matter, you can have power over it. If you are the effect of something, you are powerless". I am deep in thought. I am blown away by how simple yet powerful this concept is. Feelings of sadness, being lost and overwhelmed with information come rushing in at once. What has my life been about? What I have been the effect of my whole life? The reality of the prison I put myself in for years just hits me. I need to get this off my chest. Once the course day is over, I find Steve in the corner answering some questions for a few of the course participants. I wait patiently in line. I am fighting back tears. It's my turn. All my emotions come out at once. I am a blubbering, tearful mess. I am embarrassed. I barely get my words out, "how do I forgive myself?" He replies, "You just do". Day three is done and I am relieved. I just want to be by myself and think. I am walking slowly back to my room. I cannot hear anything around me, just the jumbled thoughts in my head. My brain feels like it is at war with itself. How have I been living my life? How should I be living my life? Where does this leadership work fit into my life as it is? It does not fit. This is all new to me.

A Day Off and a Mountain Climbed

It's Saturday. Finally, a day off! I have a 7am commitment with one of my group members and his girlfriend. I am surprised that he invited me out. I assumed that he didn't even notice me. So much for the accuracy of my contexts! Today we are climbing the Grouse Grind Mountain. I throw on some comfortable clothes, walk outside to a cool Vancouver morning and wait. A white pickup truck pulls up. Great, it's a three-seater so I have to squeeze in with my group member and his girlfriend. Nothing like being in close quarters with folks you hardly know first thing in the morning. I tell myself to get over it, remember everything I have learned in the course so far, and enjoy the experience. This isn't so bad. The conversation is great as we drive through the city. We arrive at the Grind and find an obscure parking spot on a dusty, gravel lot. I walk out of the car with my light jacket on and a small green purse. "You might want to leave your coat and purse in the car" he says. I am thinking to myself "Why? We are just going for a quick hike and plus it is chilly outside". Ok, well when in Rome...

We are at the bottom of the mountain and I soon realize that this will be no walk in the park. My hiking partners let me know that they have climbed the Grind before and their strategy will be to separate and meet up at the top. That way everyone can pace themselves. They offer a few disclaimers before we start: try not to stop because it is harder to start back up again, pace yourself, and pay no attention to the signs that warn of potential heart attacks. How hard can this be? I am healthy, in shape and I run often. With that, we are off. I start walking up the ruggedly placed steps imbedded in this mountain. One minute later and I am feeling like my heart is about to burst out of my

chest. I am trying to keep up with the pair but I am already sweating and breathing like I am running a marathon. I give up on the idea of keeping up. Now I just need to figure out how to finish this climb. The steps are getting steeper and steeper. The mountain offers no mercy. I am heaving and sweating. I have to stop and take a breath before I die on this mountain. So much for that stupid disclaimer they gave me about not stopping on the way up. I am about 15 minutes in now and I am having a complete melt down. Why did I sign up for this? I can't possibly finish. I want to cry but all my bodily fluids are sweating out of my body. I am telling myself that there is no way that I will be able to finish this. I have nothing left in me. I see a sign that reads "1/4 of the way to the top". That's it? I've only completed ¼ of this climb? The daunting reality hits me that I have barely made a dent in the climb yet I am too far up to turn back. Plus I have to meet my partners at the top of the mountain where they will be waiting for me. I have no choice. I have to finish this climb, even if it kills me. Plus, I am not a quitter!

I resolve to keep going. My new context: *"this climb is a metaphor for the transformational journey I am experiencing now. It is not meant to be easy. To get to the top, I must take one step at a time"*. Then something happens. I surrender to the process. I stop fighting it. I am calmer and my breathing is slower. In this moment I am creating my own disclaimers: 1. The path to the top (greatness) is not easy. If it were, everyone would take it. 2. On the way to the top, you have to stop worrying about how you look. So what if I am breathing hard, sweating, dirty, and have snot coming out of my nose? So does everyone else who is on this journey with me. You have got to be willing to be vulnerable. 3. Pace yourself! This is a very personal journey. Stop trying to keep up with

everyone else and define your own process. Define your own rules. Although I was told not to stop along the way, that did not work for me and that's ok!

The higher I climb, the harder the climb becomes but I am ok with that. The "condition" did not change, my "context" did. Imagine that! This leadership work is showing up in the middle of this mountain! I can see peaks of sunlight breaking through the trees and I hear what sounds like a brook or a waterfall not too far in the distance. I feel serene and at peace. I keep climbing. I see the ½ way sign. The higher I walk the quieter it becomes. It is as if others on this journey are also experiencing the same peace and serenity. I think it is also the quiet surrender to the surroundings and yet the humbling pride of defying the elements at the same time. Or it could just simply be the fact that we were all too tired to speak! In any event, the feeling is magical. There is unspoken comradery as hikers silently nod or smile to each other in passing. Every now and then I hear someone say "almost there". I keep going with the hope of the finish line depending on every step I take. Finally, I can see the top of the mountain. I can see my group mate waiting at the top with a cup of water for me. "1 hour and 19 minutes" he says. I am exhausted and overwhelmed with emotion. I take a moment to take in the scenery around me. I am cloud-level with the tips of evergreen trees. The view is breathtaking.

I reflect on the magnitude of what I just did. The Uchenna before this course would have found an excuse not to take this hike. I would not have accepted an invitation from someone I have nothing in common with. I would not have trusted myself or anyone else for that matter. I would have missed out on such an amazing opportunity. I am

thankful that I did not miss out. This has opened a new world for me; a new world of possibilities and a new appreciation for me, the woman that had the courage to scale that mountain. As I stand here and soak in the fresh mountain air and the awe-inspiring scenery, I recall something that I heard someone in the course say: “There is so much life out there to live for those who are willing to live it”.

Leadership Course: Day Four

What an amazing weekend! Something changed in me when I scaled that mountain. I feel renewed. Life looks different to me. I look different to me! I am walking to class and the world around me just feels open. My senses are heightened. I feel the soft morning breeze. I even hear the subtle chirping of some birds; even the colors in nature seem more vibrant. I don’t feel like I am in my own body. In fact, it feels like my whole being is part of the world around me. My steps are lighter. It’s like I am floating. I feel more open. Is this what it feels like to be out here? Is this what freedom feels like?

I am walking into the course room. My posture feels straighter, my chin higher up than the days before. Unlike the previous days, I do not feel the room closing in as I walk in. I take my seat. Today we are talking about the type of clearing one is in the world. We are talking about how we show up in the world, how we perceive the world, and how we leave people in our interactions with them. I think about the clearing I have been. The clearing I have been has been blocked. As I am conceptualizing what kind of clearing I have been, it feels a small, murky peephole. The clearing I want to be is peaceful, open, safe, and free. But that means I would have to trust others. I would have to trust myself. I can’t be afraid to get hurt.

I can feel my chest tighten up by the idea of trusting myself and others. It feels scary. But I want to be free. It is time for another group assignment. I am going to test this out. I came in this morning feeling free and I don't want to lose that feeling. This time I am giving eye contact. My body is leaning into my team members as they speak. I am not in my head. I am not judging myself. I don't feel judged. I am smiling. I am comfortable. In this moment it does not matter that I am the only black person in my group. It does not matter that I am not in the business field or an entrepreneur. I find myself connecting with the group. In this moment, I am being the clearing that I always wanted to be. It feels liberating!

Leadership Course: Day Five

It is the day before our last class. At this point I can feel transformations happening within me. I realize that there is still so much to learn. Today we are talking about created futures. I remember created futures being referenced in an earlier slide about leader and leadership as a term but I am not sure I fully understand. Thankfully, we are now expanding on what a created future is. The moderator reads the slide on created futures:

Obviously, a future derived from the past is anything but a "created future" (a future that is invented). And, leader and leadership exist in the **temporal** domain of a "created future". A future derived from the past can be, as we said, different in various ways from the past, but it will not be created. Rather, it will be an extension of the past, or at least in some way extrapolated from the past. And, extensions and extrapolations are *changes*, not *creations*. While the past-derived future is the *almost certain future* that serves as the context for the present, remember, there is no *certain future*. And, that's the good news, that is, even that *almost certain future* is not certain, it's only **almost** certain. As we said earlier, we can create contexts that leave us empowered and enabled. And here, the

context we are speaking about that leaves us empowered and enabled is a “created future”, a future that people come to live into that gives them being and action in the present that realizes that “created future”. That future that “wasn’t going to happen”.

I am listening intently as the instructors talk about how people often determine their futures based on their past. From what they are saying, I am hearing that leadership cannot exist from the past. Rather, it has to be created from a trajectory based on a created future, not continued from the past. If leadership is created from a past-driven trajectory, then it is simply an extension of the past and just more of the same. Leadership needs to be created from a new context. All futures should exist as a possibility. I like the analogy that Kari provides to illustrate how we often use the past to determine our futures. She asks us to imagine a set of file cabinets labeled “past”, “present” and “future”. Now imagine taking files from your past cabinet and placing them in your future cabinet. In doing so, your brain is predicting the future based on the past and therefore creating a “life sentence” in that no other possibilities exist besides the ones extended from the past. “What you need to do”, she says, “is file the future in your present cabinet”. In doing so, your actions in the present become consistent with the created future you have identified. In that way, you are no longer at the effect of your past. Wow! This is powerful!

It is late evening and I am sitting in my quiet room. I am asking myself what ways I have put my past files in my future drawer. I am digging deep and the answers that surface are staggering. I am visualizing myself pulling out the past files from my future drawer and placing them back in the past. I am motioning my arms as I do this and simulating the action of physically removing files and placing them back in their rightful

place. I am removing the file of my mother's death and placing it back in the past. I am imagining all the ways that her passing has informed my life. My mother was killed in a car accident only nine months after I was born. As I result, my whole life has been governed by the following contexts: *"I am alone"*, *"All I have in the world is myself"*, *"I have to figure it out by myself"*, *"I can't get too used to anything good because it can be taken away at any moment"*, and *"I am a motherless child"*. I figuratively take the file associated with these contexts and place it back in the past.

I move on to my next file, abuse. I imagine the mistreatment I suffered at the hands of the people that I was supposed to trust at an early age. I am realizing that this file, more than anything, has dictated my future in more ways than I ever realized. My actions have been informed by the following contexts: *"Shame"*, *"Powerless"*, *"Unworthy"*, *"Damaged"*, *"Unlovable"*, *"It is my fault"*, *"I cannot trust anyone"*, and *"I cannot trust myself"*. The weight of these words stop me in my tracks long enough to realize the damage I have done to myself for all these years. I recall what Werner said to me a few days ago and remind myself that these are all things that I told myself; God did not tell me this.

I am symbolically placing this file back in the past and move on to the next file, my best friend's murder. This was a recent file but a powerful one. About four years ago, my best friend was killed by an abusive ex-boyfriend that she finally found the courage to leave. After killing her, he committed suicide; all in her parents' home and within feet of her grandmother. The thought of what her last moments must have been like are too much for me to fathom. What hurt the most about this was that I cut myself out of her life

about two years before she died. It was around the time that I was planning for my wedding. I wanted to ask her to be my Maid of Honor but for some reason she would not return my calls. I resolved that she was simply not happy for me because her relationship with her boyfriend was strained. My husband, my fiancé at the time, kept urging me to call her and not give up on her. This was not typical of her. Maybe something was wrong. I refused to listen. I was hurt and my pride was greater than my desire to keep trying to reach out to her. The last time I saw her was at her wake. Since then I carried with me these contexts: *“Guilt”*, *“Undeserving; why am I still here and she is not?”*, *“The story of my life; losing a loved-one in the blink of an eye”*, and *“I am a terrible friend and a bad person”*. Of these contexts, the guilt was the strongest. However, in this moment I decide to forgive myself and I place that file back in the past.

My last file is my identity. I cannot recall any one specific event growing up that made me feel unworthy as an African American woman. It was just the combination of social commentary, subtle remarks from others, and the way I experienced the world that gave me these contexts: *“I don’t fit in”*, *“I need to diminish my presence”*, *“I don’t want to come off too intimidating”*, *“I don’t want to be seen as the angry black woman”*, *“I have no power”*, and *“I am invisible”*. These contexts informed what I always thought was and wasn’t possible for me as an African American woman. It limited me and left me with little agency, power or possibility. It has kept me from being authentic and dynamic. It kept me from really showing up in the world. It silenced and diminished me. I am done living like this! I choose to turn the pain of my past into power. I am recalling what Kari said when talking about the past and the future. She offered that one should be informed

by the past, not constrained by it. The past should be in the back, shining and illuminating a light behind you, and not situated between you and whatever is in front of you. I am discovering that my past will always be a part of me but it does not have to define me or my future. It also goes back to Werner's words that "everything is insignificant". It is really me that has the power to place meaning on anything that has happened in my life. I can feel a shift. I am no longer bound. I feel free. I can literally feel the trajectory of my life shifting. I will no longer be at the effect of my past. In fact, to ensure that my past cannot continue to have this grip on me, I decide to share this experience with the class tomorrow.

Leadership Course: Day Six

I stand in front of the class ready to share my revelations from the night before. I am on the court. It feels different from the first time I spoke in front of this group. This time I am not afraid. My voice is not shaking like the first time I shared. I am free. I am light. I begin to illustrate the exercise I did with myself the night before. I am demonstrating for them how I figuratively removed my past folders from my future drawer and placed them back where they belonged. I am freely telling the class about all the contexts I had created for myself that were hidden for so long. With each past folder I talk about, I feel myself getting freer. These contexts no longer have power over me. It feels magical. I tell the class that as I was doing this exercise last night that "I literally felt the trajectory of my life change. It was as if I had been on a train that suddenly derailed and now my future destination is instantly disconnected from my past. The possibilities I

have for the future are now limitless. It was then that I declared that I will no longer be the effect of my past”. The room erupts in applause.

It is the first break in the day. One of the cameramen approaches me and thanks me for my moving illustration. He is telling me that as I was speaking he forgot that he was recording because he was so engulfed in what I was saying. Other course participants say that I really moved them. One course member tells me that I am her hero and that she is planning to go back and do the exercise for herself at home. I realize that by sharing myself authentically, I am creating a space for possibilities for both myself and others. As I walk out of the room Michael Jensen stops and hugs me. He tells me that I was powerful on the court and how amazing it was for him to watch me. I am moved. I am feeling what it feels like to lead without the constraints of my contexts. Today, I feel transformed.

Lessons Learned and Ready to Face the World

I am sitting in the same Vancouver airport that I was in about a week ago. The setting is the same but my perspective has changed. I am a different person. The world around me is more alive. Sounds are magnified and the scenery around me appears more vibrant. I am present. I feel alive and ready to face the world authentically and unapologetically. I am waiting for my flight and reflecting on all the lessons learned from the past few days. I begin writing in my journal:

Resting on the foundations of leadership and being a leader, I discovered for myself the power of leading myself. I had to learn how to lead myself before I could lead others. Taking the risk to lead myself also allowed me to create a

world of possibilities that did not exist before I got here. I discovered that when I open possibilities for myself, I open a world of possibilities for others. Before coming here, I would always talk to my students about the importance of just being who they are and remembering that who they are is simply enough. But I now realize that I was speaking to them 'from the stands' and now I can honestly speak these words "from the court". I can now, from the court, tell them that "being who you are, authentically and unapologetically, gives other people the power and permission to do the same". This is why it is so important to take the power that I have discovered within myself at UBC and bring it to the court in whatever arena I play. This transformation simply cannot exist in a vacuum.

I board my flight. My baggage is much lighter.

Autoethnography: Findings

A Distinct Educational Experience

My experience as a participant in the “Being a Leader” course is distinct from any other educational experience I have had. This distinct experience specifically relates to research question 3: *How do course participants experience leading and being led in the course as compared with other learning experiences?* Structurally, the course is designed in a way that I find to be unconventional. The course is delivered through the use of a slide deck that is read out loud while participants follow along. I also find the material on the slide to be rather complex. The course pulls from a number of disciplines and incorporates elements of philosophy, quantum physics, and neuroscience. So while I am grappling with complicated material, I am also engaging in deep self-reflection, and then being inviting to translate what I am learning into actionable change towards more effective leadership. Additionally, course days run about eight hours long with break assignments infused throughout the day and evening assignments required at the end of each day. We are also asked to complete both group and individual evening assignments. The course is not designed to be easy. It calls for a high level of commitment from the participants. Participants must be committed to on-going learning, critical reflection, discovery and transformation. I recall a number of occasions where Werner would say that he was employing “skillful means” in the way he delivered the course material. He would give us a ‘nugget’ of wisdom then tell us to ‘try in on’ when we got home. The course leaders often invite us to discover the material for ourselves. That is, the course is not about imparting facts and information from the instructors to the students. Rather, I

am invited to struggle through the material and discover for myself the value the material in my life and what the material makes available me.

The leadership course, unlike other courses I have taken, engages me in a way where I am an active participant in my learning. On a number of occasions, I am challenged to critically reflect on the assumptions I make about myself, others and the world. In fact, all the participants are actively engaged in the learning of everyone else in the course. Through our listening and sharing of personal experiences, participants become connected to and invested in the growth and learning of others. Additionally, I find myself seeing myself in others and learning from them through their sharing. I do not feel alone in my internal struggles because others are vulnerable enough to share their own experiences as well. It is through my own sharing and the sharing of others that I am able to experience myself transforming. By sharing the constraints I place on myself, I find that those constraints no longer have the same grip over me. By hearing others share their own constraints, I do not feel alone. And through the support and encouragement I receive from the course leaders and other participants I start experiencing myself differently. I become more open and available to life's possibilities.

What ultimately makes this course experience distinctly different for me is that it does not simply provide tips or tricks for effective leadership. Rather, it offers ontological access into leadership and the being of a leader. Additionally, unlike other courses, this course is designed in such a way that I am actively engaging in the material, participating in dialogue with the instructors, and learning from the sharing and discovery of others as they also grapple with the material. The ontological model used in the course provides

me with actionable access to the being of a leader. I experience for myself, from a first-person perspective, what it feels like to lead as my own natural self-expression. One way that the course provides this ontological access is through the distinctions of being “out here” and “the way I wound up being”. These distinctions invite me to consider the possibility of experiencing life where life actually happens. Using concepts from metaphysics in their application of ontology, the course challenges the notion of being limited to the confines of our physical body. The distinction of “out here” becomes clear for me when Werner conducts an experiment that invites participants to consider where we experience seeing an object. Like most participants, I initially believe that I experience my seeing from my eyes, which are located in my head and within my physical body. However, Werner explains that if it were the case that our seeing happens in our eyes, then what we are seeing would be bounded by the size of our eyes. While participating in this experience, I am grappling with the idea that my experience of seeing an object actually happens where that object is. For a moment, I experience what feels like my being jumping out of my physical body and engaging with what I am looking at within a space that seems to have no boundaries. That is, I experience myself as unbounded by my physical body. Summarizing the critical points to be gained from this experiment, Erhard et al. (2013) write:

This is not an argument against the fact that your experience of seeing X is caused by activated patterns of neurons in your brain prompted by photons of light activating rods and cones on the retinas of your eyes. Of course it is. By the same token, your experience of seeing X is not happening for you in your brain. In this experiment we are not looking for some mechanistic explanation (no matter how valid). What we are asking about is the way you actually experience life, and as a result interact with life. In short, we are examining life as it is actually lived. What we have opened

up so far in this experiment is an opportunity to get clear that most of us are not clear where our experience of the world, of others, and of ourselves in the world is actually happening. In other words, we often encounter life through some theory or belief, rather than encountering life as we actually live it. As a result, we attempt to comprehend or understand life as it is encountered through these theories or beliefs, rather than comprehending life as it is actually lived. And as a consequence, we interact with life (the world, others, and ourselves) from these theories or beliefs, rather than interacting with life as it is actually lived. Through this experiment, you will see for yourself the power of encountering life as it is lived (p. 934-935).

I make the connection that, in actuality I am not limited to the way I experience myself internally. Additionally, I can choose to live my life within the confines of a physical silo or experience myself as part of the larger fabric of life

To further hone in on the limits we place on ourselves, the course leaders engage us in an exercise where we discover the difference between “I am” and “the way I wound up being”. During this exercise, I write sentences that begin with “I am” then rewrite those sentences by beginning them with “the way I wound up being”. When writing sentences that begin with “I am”, I experience myself as limited and without options for other possible ways of being. However, when writing those same sentences and beginning them with “the way I wound up being”, I experience myself as having options and choices that do not confine me to limited traits or characteristics. Having discovered the power of living life without boundaries and limits, the course then invites me to discover a commitment to creating futures that I never would imagine. By considering myself beyond the “way I wound up being”, it occurs to me that the way I occur for myself does not have to be fixed and unmalleable. This discovery creates access for me to consider the possibilities I have for creating futures that are not connected to a fixed way

of being. Rather, I can create futures from a space of freedom and possibility. I am able to recognize how the limited way that I experienced myself and my contribution to the world also limit my possibilities for effective leadership.

The experiencing of myself without limits, coupled with the four foundations of leadership and a new contextual framework for leadership where all possibilities are available, inspire me to create the future I want and then live into that future through my present actions. I am able to consider a future with possibilities that were not available to me before. For example, I came to the course with a goal of learning how to get out of my own way and own my power. In order to do that, I have to “get on the court” while I am in the class. I have to align my actions in that moment with the future I am committed to realizing. That is I have to be vulnerable so that I can realize the sort of freedom I was seeking before taking the course. I have to trust myself. While it is difficult for me to be vulnerable in front of the class, the distinctions outlined in the course is the foundation I need to do so. For example, after understanding the significance of integrity, authenticity, being cause in the matter, and being committed to something greater than myself, I gain a foundation from which to engage in some critical self-reflection and question the assumptions I make about myself, the limits I place on myself, and what my commitment to myself and the world has been. I discover the areas in my life where I have not made myself available to greater possibilities. I am able to discover how experiencing myself as “I am guarded” as a result of losing my mother keeps me from experiencing the fullness of meaningful relationships and close friendships. I also discover how experiencing myself as an African-American woman whose perspectives are not understood or valued

keeps me from fully expressing myself in a professional setting. In those moments, I find myself holding back from sharing my thoughts and opinions. As a result, I experience myself as confined and inauthentic. The ontological model used in this course invites me to create a future where I am fully self-expressed and actively engaging with life. The ontological model provides me with access to how powerful contexts are and opportunities for other possible ways of being. After discovering the possibilities available to me when choosing to live an unconfined life, I write in my journal:

I declare that I am free from the meaning I have placed on my past. Anything is possible. Because I have a rich, complex past as a once wounded Black woman, I have so much to offer the world. I am dynamic!

I also find that my experience in this course is distinct in that I continue to apply the material long after the course ends. I have taken many courses in my academic lifespan and may recall the material I learned. However my recollection of the material is from a third-person perspective. That is, I cannot recall actually experiencing the material in a way where I discover an application of it from a first-hand, as-lived perspective. However, I can identify the ways in which the material from the leadership course is still applicable more than a year after completing the course. I find myself in constant internal conversations about integrity and authenticity. The distinctions from the course continue to call me to discover things about myself and be a life-long learner. I am more aware of when I am operating with constraints that are diminishing my effectiveness as a leader. I am aware of when I retreat and diminish my power as an African-American woman for fear of how I will be perceived or as a result of how I perceive the world around me. For example, I can recognize this constraint when I am in

a meeting with other directors in my department. I occur for myself as one of two women and the only African American among a group of seven directors. When the meaning I place on this experience is grounded in “no one cares what I have to say”, I find myself holding back. In these instances, I am aware of how my actions become correlated with the way the situation is occurring for me. It is the ontological model and a phenomenological method used in the course that provide me with access to ontological constraints that are limiting me. The course employs a “phenomenological methodology to provide actionable access to what has been revealed (opened up) by the ontological model” (Erhard et al., 2012, p.3). As Erhard et al. (2012) indicate:

That which is undistinguished is out of your control (functions without your permission) and as a result when it is triggered it constrains and shapes your way of being and your actions. And, because it is undistinguished, you don’t even know that your way of being and your actions are being constrained and shaped. Because you have no access to those ways of being and acting, you can do nothing about them (p.746).

By having access to my way of being and action, I then have the opportunity to access other ways of being. Once I am able to access my constraints, the contextual framework for leader and leadership used in the course provides me with the tools to create a more powerful context for myself. The contextual framework for leader and leadership is designed to give participants “the being and actions of a leader as their natural self-expression” (Erhard et al., 2012, p.18). Erhard et al. (2013) write:

Employing our Contextual Framework for leader and leadership, we work with the students to create for themselves what it is to *be* a leader, and what it is to *exercise* leadership effectively as a *context that uses them*. By “a context that has the power to leave students being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as their *natural self-expression*”, we mean the following: a context that has the power in any leadership situation to shape the way in which the circumstances the students are

dealing with occur for them such that their naturally correlated way of *being* and *acting* is one of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively. Students begin to create this context for themselves by first freeing themselves from the constraints and shaping imposed by their network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, biases, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions relative to what it is to be a leader and what it is to exercise leadership effectively (p.4).

One aspect of contextual framework considers leader and leadership as phenomena. From this perspective leader and leadership exist in the sphere of language, including language as “speaking and listening to yourself” (Erhard et al., 2012, p.47). What if I consider my use of language to reshape my contexts? What if these meetings serve as an opportunity to share a different perspective that others can appreciate and benefit from? What if my contribution occurred for me as just as valuable as the contributions of others? I discover that the reshaping of my contexts is made available to me through language. As Erhard et al. (2012) write:

The good news is that most of what limits and shapes our perceptions – that is, our network of unexamined ideas, beliefs, social and cultural embedded-ness, and taken-for-granted assumptions – is in fact accessible through language. Since language is a faculty over which we can exercise real choice and through which we can employ our emotional and rational intelligence, an effective use of language provides access to a high degree of mastery in the exercise of leadership (p. 41).

It is not to say that I have reached a high degree of mastery in my exercise of leadership. I still find myself grappling with some of the same issues I had before taking the course. The course leaders are clear in stating that transformation is not a one-time occurrence. Rather, as life-long learners I will continue to experience breakdowns, to critically reflect, and to discover. However, what the course provides, through ontological inquiry, is the revealing of those breakdowns and opportunities to examine who I am

being in those moments. Through the phenomenological method, I have first-hand access to what the ontological method is revealing. That is, I have first-hand access to my being and actions in those moments; and in having access I then have a choice to employ other possible ways of being and action. In summary, this course, unlike others I have taken, challenged me during and beyond the class to critically self-reflect, to authentically share my experiences and listen to others, to consciously apply the material long after the completion of the course, and provided me with possibilities to translate the material into actionable change. In discovering, examining, and loosening the constraints that limit me as a leader, I am able to experience myself more powerfully in the world. I am also able to continually make myself available to life's possibilities and create futures bigger than myself. Such possibilities include a created future where my contribution to higher education is one where I generate opportunities for educators and students to experience themselves as active participants and contributors to learning and the creation of created futures that others can come to live into.

Autoethnography Themes

An analysis of the autoethnographic data and my experience as a participant of the course reveals four prominent themes: self-reflection, critical discourse, reframing contexts, and self-authorship. The themes that emerge from my experience in the Being a Leader course are consistent with what one might experience through transformative learning. Mezirow (1991) writes:

[Transformational learning is] the process of becoming aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive,

understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectations to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings, (p. 167).

Using a transformational approach, the course is structured to facilitate opportunities for self-reflection. The course also engages me in a way that is consistent with a critical pedagogical approach. That is, during the course, “knowledge is not simply received by students, but actively transformed, as they learn how to engage others in critical dialogue and be held accountable for their own views” (Giroux, 2010, para. 7). However, it is the ontological model that provides me with access to the limits I place on myself as an African American woman, the meanings I place on my past that create contexts of “being alone, not good enough, and not worthy enough”, and the actions that ensue in correlation with my contexts. As I look back and review the entries in my personal journal, there are many moments during the course where the material engages me in such a way that I find myself critically reflecting on my own taken-for granted views about myself and the world. An example of this is when I experience myself retreating during our first group exercise because I perceived myself as an outsider. I was a Student Affairs professional among a group of entrepreneurs and the only African-American in my group. The initial focus on self-reflection from day one is very beneficial in building the foundation for the rest of the course. Bay (2011) notes:

Critical reflection provides one way of stepping back from practice. By locating ourselves directly within the incident or event, we subject our practice to a critical gaze, unraveling the meanings and discourses embedded in our sense-making and narratives, scrutinizing knowledge claims—our own and others (p. 748).

My initial self-reflections reveals assumptions I have about myself as an African America woman, the way I experience myself in the world and the way I perceive the world experiencing me. I recall walking into the course room on the first day, intuitively looking for a similar face and immediately feeling “different” after realizing I am one of only two African-Americans in the course. One of the first things that the instructors ask us to do is reflect on what we are here for. I write this in my journal:

Get out of my own way and stop being afraid of my power. I am committed to letting go of the commentary that as a “wounded” Black woman there is little value in what I have to offer the world.

No other course that I have engaged in has provided me with access to the way I perceive myself in relation to the world and how my perceptions are directly correlated with my actions. Specifically, I have never been invited to critically reflect on these perceptions from an ontological and phenomenological perspective. During the course, the instructors ask us to reflect on the way we define ourselves. An example of this is when the instructors engage us in the exercise of distinguishing the difference between “I am” and “the way I wound up being”. By creating new contexts, I then have the opportunity to consider other possibilities for the way I experience myself and engage with the world. While continuing to weave in the foundational elements of leadership, and creating moments for critical self-reflection, the instructors persistently and artfully engaged the participants in on-going critical discourse.

I find critical discourse to play a major role in my transformational process. Engaging in critical discourse, both internally and externally, invites me to explore the root of where these assumptions come from. Ontologically, I am able to gain access to

the crucial points in my life where I shaped the way I now experience myself, others, and the world and how the way I perceive such experiences inform my actions. For example, I am able to see how in losing my mother at an early age, I create a context of “I am alone” and how the constraining nature of that context results in my actions such that I become guarded and in need of constant predictability. I am able to discover how I live my life based on the meaning I place on some critical points in my childhood, how such meaning shapes the way a situation occurs for me, and how that occurrence shapes the actions I take as a result.

I also gain access to how my intersecting identity as an African American and a woman occurs for me as being an outsider in certain circumstances and how such occurring shapes my actions in such settings. Ackerly and True (2012) write:

Intersectionality calls our attention to the fact that any situation, person, or research phenomena can be understood only in terms of intersecting and overlapping context and social forces such as race, age, gender, sexuality, income, nationality, historical moment, among many others. Consequently, attention to intersectionality provokes feminist inquiry to attend to the complexity of a problem that might serve to exclude or hide important dimensions that may be crucial to creating and/or sustaining a situation or problem (p.30).

Norris (2013) writes:

This notion [of intersectionality] explains that the social inequalities based on race, gender, class, age, and sexual orientation do not function independently of each other; instead, they operate together as interlocking structures of hierarchical power relations (p. 92).

I recall times in my childhood where I perceived that I was not smart enough or polished enough to fit in at my middle-class private schools. I recall times where I was the only Black student in a graduate class and feeling so out of place. In one sense, I feel

empowered that I am able to achieve high levels of academic success as an African American woman. Yet in other ways, I feel disempowered and isolated by being the only African American in my classes. Being “the only one” often occurs to me as my views and experiences only being my own and not shared by the majority. I find these same contexts showing up for me during the course. In those moments, I retreat and become disengaged because I assume that because I do not represent the majority that my perspective would not be acknowledged, would not matter, and would not be a contribution. The challenging of my taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions about myself is certainly an emotional process for me. This emotional reaction is what Mezirow (2000) refers to when he writes that “transformative learning [can be an] intensively threatening emotional experience in which we...become aware of the assumption undergirding our ideas” (p. 6-7). After having access to the assumptions I function in the world with and how those assumptions inform my actions, it is difficult for me to come to terms with how I have been limiting myself. While trying to come to terms with everything, I am confronted with learning how to forgive myself. While challenging, engaging in critical discourse provides me with the opportunity to reframe the very contexts that hinder me from realizing a fuller potential.

A turning point for me during the course is when Werner says to me “your context is simply what you told yourself. God did not tell you that”. That is a critical moment for me because it is then that I realize the power of contexts. The shifting of contexts is a powerful experience and as Sharma (2013) notes:

Because of this cognitive shift, the individual can move from being a passive victim of external influences to challenging prior assumptions and seeking alternative explanations and actions for events (p. 26).

I discover how easy yet challenging it was to shift my contexts after becoming present to the constraints that limit me. I find myself teetering back and forth between freedom and fear; this is also a reminder that ontological learning is an on-going process of breakdowns and discoveries. In one moment I am embracing the freedom of having limitless possibilities ahead of me. In another moment, I am frozen in fear of the idea of facing a world of unpredictability; one where there are no boundaries or limits; one where I have the power and authority to fully define; one where I would have to leave my comfort zone and let go of my need for structure; one where I can unapologetically take risks. However, I also recognize that this is what ontological inquiry is calling me to do; to make myself available for all of life's possibilities, dance with the unknown, and engage in life-long discovery and learning. I recall Kari saying that "leadership is about creating a context" and that "you create a context in language to reframe the way things occur for you". By inviting participants to reframe their language and create new contexts, the instructors are also inviting us to recreate our own narrative about how we experience ourselves in the world, and how we intend to lead within it.

When I analyze the data, I am also able to identify the ways in which I am creating new futures throughout the course. The clearest illustration of this is when I declare that I would no longer be the effect of my past. After doing the exercise where I place my "past folders" back in the past file drawer, I declare that my future would no

longer be an extension of my past. Soon after demonstrating that exercise in front of the class I write the following in my journal:

-Mother's death. -Best friend's murder.-Abuse. -Feeling Isolated as a black woman. So what? Turn pain into power! Get out of my own way! Create a new story! How? I will no longer limit myself. I will no longer be afraid to make people upset. I will stop making myself small and diminishing my power. I will no longer operate from fear. Trust yourself that you will be ok. Be authentic. Be open. Live out loud!

Being able to say “so what” to all the things that I thought defined me in the past gives me a freedom that I have never experienced before. Most profoundly, I make the declaration that I would trust myself. I would trust my internal voice and allow it to lead me in being my authentic self. As Perez (2012) notes:

In the cognitive dimension, increased trust in the internal voice allowed [individuals] to take ownership of how they made meaning of the world rather than looking to others to construct their perspective. While they were aware of others' opinions and perspectives, they tended to be introspective and engage in reflection as a means of making sense of external events. Intrapersonally, individuals recognized that they were in control of their emotions and were able to create their own happiness (p. 88).

My future became wide open with possibilities that I now have access to creating. My world changes the moment I discover what it means, from a first-hand, ontological and phenomenological perspective, to be “cause in the matter”. I am able to discover what Kari means when she says that “conditions don't change, but we can change our contexts”. What that means for me is that I will always encounter conditions that I have no control over such as racism, death, or disappointment. However, I discover that I have full control over the contexts that I use to deal with those conditions. I discover the power of creating new contexts.

The course is about more than just personal transformation. I discover that effective leadership begins with learning how to lead myself first. The use of ontology and phenomenology provided me with access to a context for leading myself where all possibilities are available to me. I discover what is possible when I learn how to engage the world around me and make a commitment to being a contribution to the world. Through critically reflecting on what my life, career, and education is really about, I am able to discover what is possible as a Student Affairs professional. I create a future where my contribution to higher education is one where I generate opportunities for educators and students to experience themselves as active participants and contributors to learning and the creation of created futures that others can come to live into. I know now what can be created when I am able to experience myself differently, without limits, and when being a leader is part of my natural self-expression. I am also aware of the possibilities that exist when I commit to leading in an area that is not likely to change without the effective exercise of leadership. I think about my role as an educator and the opportunity I now have to empower others. As Osteen and Coburn (2012) note, the “growth of our students’ leadership capacity is in direct relation to our leadership capacity as educators” (p.13). I leave the course with a renewed commitment to my role as a Student Affairs professional. I become reacquainted with the power of discovery and self-agency that education can provide. I leave with a new commitment to inviting my staff and students to experience themselves and the world differently. Being committed to empowering others and inviting them to create futures bigger than themselves would not have been possible if I did not first learn how to lead myself.

Summary

During the course, I discover the impact of ontological inquiry and a type of learning that invites me to experience myself differently. I become more aware of the limits I place on myself and how those limits hinder my effectiveness in both my professional and personal life. I also discover that the process of reflecting, engaging in critical discourse and reframing contexts is not a linear one. Rather it is a complex, interwoven, and on-going process of progressions and regressions. Before taking the course I thought that I would systematically and progressively realize changes within myself. Instead what I encounter is an undefined and unstructured journey of inquiry and challenges; a journey that still continues today. However, while this process does not present itself to me in the neat, orderly fashion that I expect, I am able to experience myself transforming in the midst of what I consider to be chaos. I am able to find freedom in the midst of something so complex.

The distinctions and the pedagogical approach of the course challenge me to think about “limits.” I am able to see how I often limit myself based on the way I define myself. I think about the limits I place on how I think people learn and who can be the knower. This course embraces each participant as the knowers and experts of their own experiences. In this course, I am able to discover some of the contexts I operate with and then redefine those contexts to create a future that I author. The course also challenges the limited definitions we ascribe to leading and leadership. By offering a context for leader and leadership where all ways of being and action are available, the course provides access to limitless possibilities for me. I often assume that ideal conditions need

to be in place for me to thrive or to be of impact. By employing the foundations of transformative learning and critical pedagogy, this leadership course invites me to be an active participant in my learning, and to critical reflect, discuss, and reframe who I experience myself to be as a leader. Additionally, ontology invites me to examine what it means for me to be a leader and experience it from phenomenological preview; thus reinforcing that anything is possible. I now know this because I actually experience it during the course. During the course I am able to loosen the constraints that were a part of me for most of my life; a feat that I would not have imagined possible before taking the class.

The power of an ontological and phenomenological course like the Being a Leader course is that it invites participants to reconsider limits and boundaries. More importantly, this course moves beyond transformative learning to engage participants in creating futures that are unlikely to happen without their leadership; futures that are not simply an extension of the past. The course does this by inviting participants to access the constraints that limit effectiveness in leadership, identify actions correlated with those constraints, and then access new ways of being that offer possibilities beyond the way they wound up. Through this course, I am able to discover the power of leading myself first and how that translates into the way I lead in the world. After leaving the course, I am able to gain more clarity on how I want to lead as a Higher Education administrator and educator. I am committed to providing my students with access to the type of learning that can transform them. I am committed to fostering the sort of learning experiences that invite students to be active participants in their learning and engage in

self-reflection, critical dialogue, and agency. I am also committed to inviting other administrators and educators on my campus to discover the power of leading themselves and inviting their students to do the same.

CHAPTER 6

WOMEN LEADING NARRATIVE

Our women's group commences a few weeks after both the leadership course in Vancouver (June 26-July 3, 2013) and the Train the Trainers course in Toronto (July 19-24, 2013) end. Our group is comprised of me and nine other dynamic women who are culturally and professionally diverse. We commit to connecting every two weeks for six months to discuss our insights, experiences and created futures since taking the course. This chapter illuminates the conversations we have over the course of six months and the created futures that evolve along the way.

The data presented in this chapter comes from our lived experiences. This research privileges the data provided by participants and recognizes that, from an ontological and phenomenological perspective, we are the knowers and experts of our own experiences. The Women Leading data is presented in a way that highlights key conversations over the course of our meetings. While every conversation is transcribed, not every conversation is included in this chapter. The conversations in this chapter are intentionally chosen to create a narrative that answers the research question: how are participants living into the futures they created in the Being a Leader Course? I include the conversations that highlight the themes that emerge. While not every conversation is included, the dialogue that is included is done in a manner that presents the data practically verbatim. Therefore, any minor edits to wording are done for the sake of keeping the data concise. As DeVault (1990) notes, preserving the messiness of everyday talk is another way to preserve the context of the speech. Ackerly and True (2012) write:

Writing [should not] reduce women to the position of voiceless *objects*, but treat them as subjects in their own right, entitled to their own voices. This echoes the very foundation of the feminist research process-the concern with voice and authority, accounts and experience (Smith 1987) (p. 182).

Additionally, each participant is given the opportunity to review the data and provide edits or corrections to ensure their words were accurately documented.

Preserving the context of our speech reinforces an epistemology that asserts that reality is constructed by and between the persons who experience it. That is, we are the sense-makers and experts of our own experiences. Therefore, our experiences must be documented in a manner that preserves context.

What follows is an account that serves to answer the research question about how participants are living into the futures they created in the Being a Leader Course. What emerges is a narrative that chronicles how we as participants are living into those futures with the contextual framework for leadership outlined in the course. The framework used in the course deals with leader and leadership as linguistic abstractions, phenomena, as a concept, and as a term. As a linguistic abstraction, leader and leadership are dealt with as realms of possibility where all ways of being and actions are available. As phenomena, leader and leadership deal with that which is experienced or impacted by someone first hand, as lived when leadership is present. As a concept, leaders and leadership exist in the domain of a created future that is unlikely to happen without one's leadership. It is a future that fulfills the concerns of the relevant parties that the leader and those being led come to live into, which gives them being and action into the present.

This narrative also chronicles how we engage in action research. Our narrative highlights the collaboration, empowerment and support we provide for each other while realizing futures for ourselves and others. Through our sharing and listening, we collectively reflect upon and engage in critical discourse about our first hand experiences after completing the leadership course. As such, the on-going reflection and the discourse we engage in is a contribution that is reflective of a collective process that each woman is committed to engaging in for this research.

The Women:

All names, except mine, are changed and all professional information is kept at a minimum to maintain the anonymity of the participants. We self-identify as follows:

- **Nadia:** An educator from Iran who looked to find her voice during the course. She struggles to get past her accent, which she thinks is a barrier to her being able to effectively communicate.
- **Darleen:** A Caribbean woman in her 40's who works as a lecturer at a state university in the Caribbean. She entered the course looking for new material to teach her students.
- **Linda:** An Asian-American woman in her 40's who works as a lead administrator at a research university in the West. She took the leadership course to prepare for the next stage of public leadership. She finds herself at the edge of her leadership abilities and in order to reach national prominence, she needs to break out of her old way of being.
- **Mary:** An American social psychologist who works in transplantation at a medical school. During the course she sought to find balance in her life and decide what her next professional step would be. She was personally and professionally successful but was looking for both worlds to work in harmony with each other.
- **Carmen:** A White American professor in her 60's who has taken the leadership course three times at Dartmouth College, Whistler Resort, and the University of

British Columbia. She took it again to continue developing herself and enhance her delivery of the course. Each time she has taken the course she has discovered something new about the course and herself.

- **Samantha:** An independently employed White Canadian woman.
- **Carla:** A White Canadian woman in her 40's who teaches and researches child, family, and community studies at a university in Western Canada. In taking the course, she was looking to go beyond "her story" about the institutional constraints that she experienced and become a full agent of her own career. She is looking to step into her leadership role at her institution and bring back what she learned from the course and incorporate it into her teaching and research.
- **Karen:** A European American woman in her 40's who works as a Department Chair and Associate Professor of Child and Family Sciences at a mid-sized, state-funded university in the Western United States. Although she has taken on a variety of leadership roles in the last five to seven years, she never received the type of training that would actually allow her to be effective in those roles. She was looking to improve her ability to lead and was invited to take the course by a campus leader whom she greatly admired. In her role as a Department Chair, she felt that the way she was working with faculty was intimidating and not conducive to creating an environment of partnership and support. She was seeking ways to foster better relationships while accomplishing the significant work she believed her department needed to do in order to improve the rigor of their program.
- **Amelia:** A Latin woman in her 40's who works as an adjunct professor and teaches transformational leadership in Latin America and Asia. She is also a writer and a public speaker whose work focuses on transformational leadership. She came to the course having taught it for almost four years. However, she wanted to train herself with the course creators and experience the course as a participant. She was looking to become a better course leader who could be of service to her students and "get herself and her concerns out of the way".
- **Uchenna:** An African-American woman in my 30's who works as a Student Affairs professional at a mid-sized public institution in the South. In taking the course, I was looking to "get out of my own way in exercising leadership" and learn how to trust myself, others, and life's process.

Call 1: Reconnecting After the Course

In attendance: Carla, Karen, Nadia, Samantha, Amelia, Mary, Uchenna, Carmen, Linda, Darleen

Uchenna: I am interested in hearing how everyone is doing since getting back from Toronto.

Amelia: I want to share. Two weeks ago I was in the midst of a huge breakdown. I started discovering the biggest inauthenticity in my life which was I was making myself wrong for being gay but I never noticed that I was. I never saw this in any course I had taken. I was the poster child for being happy and being gay. But right after the course I started discovering the biggest inauthenticity in my life and that just opened the flood doors. This brought up all these emotions that I hadn't experienced before. I make my living leading other people and teaching them what it means to be happy. I also discovered that each time I had a breakdown in my life, I would make myself wrong. I would feel like a fraud. Am I just bullshitting people when I talk about being powerful in the face of circumstances? Then I go into invalidating myself. So is the work that I am doing for nothing? I should be powerful...even in the face of this. The part that I got after so many breakdowns is that I am human. I need to allow myself to feel sadness. So I am not bullshitting people when I say 'you can be powerful in the face of circumstances'. You are allowed to be human. You need to allow yourself to cry and be sad. So many things shifted for me after taking the course. This is life and I have to deal with it and I have people who are in my life who love me, like you guys, and I am getting all the love and support I need. I felt fully self-expressed and supported in Toronto. So despite everything, I have this feeling that my life works. So thank you. I really love you guys and thank you. Thank you for being there for me, for supporting me and for loving me.

Amelia's sharing sets the stage for our calls. It is clear that these calls will be safe spaces for sharing. The silence from the other women as she shares evokes a spirit of listening.

Amelia's vulnerability immediately connects us and draws us into a space for sharing and listening. I am suddenly aware of the support system that these calls will create. I thank

Amelia for her sharing and for being so authentic. I find her vulnerability to be beautiful.

Amelia: At the course I would find myself raising my hand and being in the inquiry. In the past I used to feel like I needed to know the answer to something before raising my hand. I used to think that I had to have it all together in order to share. And thank you. I love you guys.

Mary: I can share...well my life feel likes not what I know my life to be. After the course I made some very bold offers with some very successful organizations. I went with no certainty at all that anything would actually happen. I asked [a large research institution in the west] about the possibility of a job and they said 'we really love you but we have no money'. And then I asked the CEO of a large organization if he would be interested in purchasing the rights to an educational program that I use for my non-profit. So a week after the course, I did grand rounds for a job that did not exist and listened to a number of people who said 'maybe we can make this work, or there is money that I know about here, or you're really great'. I was just able to dance with things right after the course. At the end of the day the foundation for this 80 million dollar organization gave me one million dollars to start the center for transplants and they are absorbing the non-profit work that I am doing in the foundation as one of their programs. That way the non-profit can exist but I don't have to manage it. Which, remember during the course I was sharing about how I had way too much going on? So the non-profit will land within this organization. Because of the course I have been able to get what's important and what's not important. I was able to get that I had way too many things in my life and none of it worked. So that's what I have been doing.

Mary's excitement is palpable. I can feel the energy in her voice through the phone. We listen intently as she goes on to talk about how her relationships have also been impacted.

Mary: The other part too is that my partner is amazing! I didn't realize how asking to sacrifice our relationship was affecting our relationship. I am also seeing that we are putting ourselves first for the first time. We've been long-distance for three years. It's really interesting and very much a paradigm shift from who I was before. And by the way, I also won another multi-million dollar grant so I am going to [the west coast] with three million dollars!

Uchenna: Wow! That is phenomenal!

Mary: Yeah, I mean like wow...the thing is that this was not even hard once I realized that this is what I can do when I am standing in my truth and generating what could be possible after the course. If this is what my first full week after the course is, I wonder what is possible next! I've just got my own power. It's calm within me. [My partner] thought I would have many emotional breakdowns in the midst of this because this is all very stressful. Now I am like "this is who I am, I am not hiding my truth, and this is what it's like to be me". And it's amazing and it's quieter. I am really quiet inside while it's crazy around me. I'm trusting the universe.

Amelia: The shift was so huge in your being that it was like the flood was just waiting to get released.

Uchenna: Mary, I love what you said about that trust piece. For me that's something that I am still learning how to do. First of all, trusting that the people around you can handle who you are but also trusting yourself to be that person. What I love about what you are saying is that it's about trusting yourself to be authentic and then trusting that the people around you can handle it. I think that's really powerful.

Mary: Thank you guys. A lot of people who are on this call were really rooting for me. I felt comfortable enough with this work to come in being a mess and know that this work will make a difference. I felt like all the wisdom in the room contributed to me. I really credit all the people on this call, the course, the leaders...it all aligned and now look what's possible.

Carmen: I'm absolutely in awe of what you said Mary. I am totally in awe! I so needed to hear everything that you said today! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Mary: Here's the thing...this was not predictable! I was successful already. It's like a space where I can still be the incredible, passionate, loving, inspiring person doing great research and also engage a thousand people at a national level. I get to run a center now. I am really present to what is possible when someone like me gets a million bucks to run a center.

Mary's sharing takes me back to the struggle I had with creating a created future during the course. As she is speaking, I am more present to the fact that my created future has not yet been fully defined. I ask the women how they used the course material to discover their created futures. I confess that I am struggling with this.

Samantha: In response to your question Uchenna, one of the things that I am seeing for myself, and I heard it in Mary's sharing too, is that there is a way I think about myself; that the future is kind of limited. You know...limited to 'the way I wound up being'. What I can offer, that is really extraordinary for me, is that I can say things 'out here' that I would not otherwise say. There is something about the listening that we are for each other on this call. There is something about being with people that have a listening for the distinctions of the course and listen for a creation that can't be provided if you don't have that listener.

Mary: I feel like there is a need for journaling because I can't even remember who I was in the course. This new way of being just seems so natural that I can't fully speak to who I was being before. I know there has been a transformation because my life feels different but I don't even recognize who I was before.

Uchenna: That's a good point. And Samantha, I like what you said about how your future was limited by the way you saw yourself. After the course, I felt like I should have had it all together when I got back. But the reality was that my life was waiting for me when I got back and my stuff started showing up again. I felt lost on how to apply what I learned from the course in my personal life.

Mary: What I am getting in your speaking, and I heard this in Amelia's speaking as well is that our humanity is always here. If we hate our humanity, then it's going to be a long miserable ride. It is about loving all parts of us. I am loving and embracing the smallness, the righteousness, the simple-ness of me. It's like the life sentences we talked about in the course. Everyone decides something yet nobody decides anything; which is the point of the course...so you can get some freedom around [these life sentences]. You have to make friends with all those parts of you. So as you are discovering things, I think that having some love and compassion for the person you were that made those decisions for yourself is important. There is a love and compassion that you need to have with your humanity.

Mary's listening for us is evident in her sharing. Even though she is in the midst of all the excitement in her life, she is still very present to what the other women are sharing. I feel heard in her listening.

Carmen: We also have to acknowledge when a breakdown is happening. When there is a breakdown, you still do what needs to be done without putting much significance on it. There is something to be said about empty and meaningless. Everything is really empty and meaningless...you just need to be present and do what needs to be done despite your internal state.

Karen: What I am hearing is that you take whatever circumstances you have in front of you and have them empower you. I hear you both (Mary and Carmen) taking whatever is in front of you and using it for something. You made my day. I needed to hear that. Really everything is empty and meaningless and I am the one who gets to say what the context is. I can choose not to create a context of unworkability.

I can sense how powerful the sharing was that occurred on this call. I am even more present to the listening that this call created for us. I sense that these calls will recreate the sort of sharing and listening that occurred during the course. However, there is something more intimate about these calls in the way we listen to and support each other.

Call 2: Being “Out-Here” in the World

In attendance: Carla, Samantha, Mary, Carmen, Uchenna

Uchenna: This week I wanted us to focus on two things. One was the idea of “being out here” and “being on the court”. Do you notice when you are on the court? What keeps you from being on the court when you should be? I also want to hear about any created futures that have come up since the last time we talked.

Carla: I have a small little example that I can share. I was out doing errands and when I am doing errands I can be kind of mindlessly getting my stuff done. I was buying cat food or something. I was just doing what I needed to do and getting my money out to pay for it. I then realized that I was completely in the stands. I just wanted to get it done so I can go to the next thing. Then I looked up and started looking at the woman behind the cash register and wondered what it would look like in this instance if I were on the court. So I was looking directly at her and then she looked up to give me my changed and we locked eyes and I said “thank you so much”. All of a sudden it was this amazing shift in her. All of a sudden she had a huge smile. She started asking me all these questions. What was initially an interaction where there was no eye contact became something where it was really...um...I don’t know...it was just huge shift and it is such a small example but it was incredibly powerful. It left me feeling like it was so much more positive. I just felt good about it.

Uchenna: Do you all find that you actually have to think about being on the court? Do you prepare yourself to be on the court or do you find that it is becoming part of your everyday experience? For me, it’s not until the end of the day when I ask myself how often I was on the court today. If I am not intentional about it then I just go through my day-to-day.

Mary: I was thinking as you were talking. I think for me that I am in my head until I have an intention. I am in a to-do list normally. But then when I am out here, it is usually a reason why I want to be out here that I have to figure it out first. There is this feeling of “ok I am with this person and I have a choice”. So there is a feeling of choice.

Samantha: I heard a number of things that resonated with me. This notion of having a constant to-do-list...it’s like that for me. It’s like I am present to where I am but at the

same time there is a parallel track running with me about what's next, what else needs to be done, and what else I have to do. But it does not always leave me present to the accomplishment or available to others as leaders. Part of my access to being out here is noticing that I'm not here. I do not spend a lot of time out here but I have a powerful access to noticing when I am not out here. One thing that happened to me this week was I had my 11 year old nephew visit me. He doesn't say much. I would ask him about school and he would answer politely but not say much. That's because my questions were from my world. It seemed like the way to get him to talk was to get into his world. So then we went hiking and he told me about this video game he was playing, Halo. So I said, 'tell me about Halo'. Well, he just started and he did not stop the whole hike. All of a sudden I was in this world of Halo. Then we went home and watched the movie and it was like fascinating to me. I was just as in as he was. The remarkable thing about it for me was that this great kid went from one word short answers to talking to me like he had a whole world to help me discover. Mostly all I was doing was listening and I can say that my listening was out here. Thanks for listening because even in telling this story I am so present to how amazing that kid is and how amazing so many other people can be if they have an opportunity to be out here with others.

I am again reminded of the powerful listening that is occurring on these calls. As

Samantha is talking, something else shows up for me. I think about how busy we all are as professional women. We are constantly in demand. With how hectic our day-to-day is, I wonder how we are even able to slow down and listen authentically. I ask the women about this.

Mary: One of the things that I am realizing is that there is a limit to what I can do and I have been thinking about it from an integrity standpoint. We have to realize that by having all these to-do lists, we are in a sense out of integrity because we are not allowing space for ourselves to be out-here. I had a life like that for so many years and that life caused me to come home and take things out on my partner. I was tired, so I was not able to be the person that I was committed to being with the people that love me. Great conversations take time but if you only have 30 seconds to listen then these great conversations can't break open. We should think about the ways we are setting up our lives to be out of integrity by not being completely out here with the things that matter. You have to ask yourself what matters to you and are you treating it with integrity?

Carmen: The thing I am discovering about out here is that sometimes I am just out here and sometimes I have to get myself out here. I took a road trip a little while ago and I met up with two friends that I had not seen in thirty years. Before seeing them I was in my head about how tired I was, how long I had been driving, and all the other things I needed

to do. But when I was with them I was just out here and present to how much I actually love them. It's amazing because I haven't seen them in thirty years and I am not sure that in the many years we had been friends that I was ever really out here with them. I had always lived my life before being totally in here. But being out here with them, there was no agenda. There was nothing that needed to be done. By the time I left them, I was in tears. Instead of being tired I was energized and filled with love.

Uchenna: I think about the times that I am out here, I never regret it afterwards. You think back and you are like that was awesome! So why is it so hard to be out here initially? It's almost like you need that motivator to do it but once you do, you never go back and regret it.

Carmen: I like to think about it like creating new brain patterns. We have a lot of brain patterns for being in here. It's really about creating new brain patterns and choosing to be out here. Our brains need to adjust to the idea of being out-here. I do believe that the more you are out here, the brain patterns get stronger. The way I see this leadership course is that it is creating a new being for human beings and this is something that requires practice.

Carmen's contribution reminds me of the mountain-with-no-top analogy that was often used during the course. I am reminded about the on-going process of transformation. I am aware of the commitment to life-long learning and self-discovery that the leadership course demands. What is apparent is that there is a commitment to something greater and persistence that is required for us to realize the creation of our futures.

Carla: My sister is in town for the moment and we have a long history and a very layered context for our relationship with each other. I was noticing in communicating with her, even over email, that there are times when I can be on the court with her and times when I can be in the stands. I catch myself in the stands when I am letting the stuff...like the context for our relationship and our family dynamics...I am letting that sort of speak and I am kind of coming at the communication through that lens as opposed to coming from the court which would leave me more clear and open. When I approach [my sister] with all that stuff I am carrying I just can't be out here with her. But when I put my assumptions aside I can be present and out here with her. I also find that I can authentically listen. I actually find myself having compassion for her.

Samantha: What I am becoming present to is that when you are out here with someone, you notice a difference in their response to you. It looks to me like something is moving in the world of the other that is kind of a permanent alteration, even if that alteration is recognition of the space. It is my experience that people recognize that space. They may

not have a name for it but they recognize it. At least we have the term 'out here'. But while others may not, I do believe that they recognize it.

Carmen: I also think about being out here like being able to trust myself when I am with people. I am really looking at that for myself. Like when do I need to do a lot of prep and when do I believe I already have the skill set that does not require me to do a lot of prep. There is something showing up in my life about getting that I have over sixty years of experience and allowing that experience to be alive and yet not have to have it scripted.

Mary: When I feel safe, loved and connected, out here is right here. Like with these calls...you all are authentic listeners for me. I don't feel like I am saying anything stupid or I am taking too much time. There is an experience of being safe and loved. That, to me, is what out here is. And I think that we have a lot of things from the past, constraints and to-do-lists that compete with being out here. I also think that we need to further explore the idea that as powerful women we are often too busy to be out-here. As powerful women leaders, we are often pulled in many directions, find ourselves balancing a number of tasks and having never-ending to-do lists. As a result, we go through life doing our day-to-day tasks and not finding time to really be out-here. When people are lovingly listening for you, when you are lovingly listening for yourselves and when there is sufficient time, there is an amazing space in which creativity and positivity and all that show up.

This idea of busy, powerful women, being out here, and authentically listening intrigues me. I wonder what keeps us from being out here and why we can't get away from all those to-do lists. Mary's point about integrity is a good one. She is right; we need to think about what matters to us and if we are treating it with integrity. I challenge the other women to continue to think through this for the next two weeks.

Call 3: Being Powerful, Finding a Balance, and Living a Life of Integrity

In attendance: Nadia, Carla, Carmen, Uchenna, Samantha

I invite the women to share their experiences with integrity since the last time we spoke.

Carla: After the last call, the first thing that I started to examine was the relationships in my life that were built on a lack of integrity. Seeing it through that lens helped me to really understand how it was not workable. I have not been enjoying those relationships because they have been built on these incremental breeches of integrity on my part...like not being honest. Now I am seeing all these places where I have been out of integrity and I am feeling a little bit stuck. It's just been really eye opening for me. What I have done

in the past was blame this or that person for not doing something and not truly looking at myself in it. It is not always the most flattering to look at it that way but it has been helpful. It has allowed me to look at what I can and can't commit to. For example, if I really don't want to meet that person for coffee, I have to figure out how to say no instead of saying yes and creating an out-of-integrity interaction. I have realized that I have been a 'yes' person, trying to do it all, being a people pleaser and not setting those boundaries.

Uchenna: That makes a lot of sense. I think about my experience with integrity in these last few weeks. One way I saw this was that I find that I am out of integrity when I am not being completely authentic at work. So for example, I remember being in two separate meetings where someone made a comment about how young I looked. Of course my life sentences came back into play. I am thinking 'what are they trying to say?' 'Are they saying that I am not capable enough?' I then found myself holding back on my level of energy because I wanted them to take me seriously. I didn't want to be perceived as young and inexperienced. But in doing that I found that I was not being authentic and it put me out of integrity. When I am not being myself I can literally feel myself shrinking. I see that by not being authentic I am diminishing myself and my power and then my performance as a leader is minimized.

Carmen: You remind me of something that is not in the leadership course. It is an aspect of integrity that has to do with maintaining an empowering context. So when you were being inauthentic you created a disempowering context for yourself. I often forget about that part of integrity: to be whole and complete, and having an empowering context around me is really important.

Carla: I like that contribution Carmen...the idea of an empowering context. As I was hearing it, I was thinking about this kind of dance between living with your integrity and having this life and all these created futures and feeling like you are cause in the matter and feeling like you are committed to something greater than yourself and the potency of that. I find myself in a constant dance with integrity. After leaving the course I felt so energized and empowered and very motivated to say yes to more things. But then it's like how do I do all these things that I feel so drawn to doing and maintain that integrity. It's a real dance. I am getting more present to the notion of a mountain with no top. I got it intellectually in the course, but now I really get it!

I am noticing that the different course components are showing up and working concurrently with each other. I am seeing how integrity, being cause in the matter, and being committed to something greater than yourself are all showing up in the example that Carla provides. I am also reminded about how we struggled and grappled with the material during the course. Even weeks after the course, we are still discovering how the

components show up in our lives. This is really a practice in life-long learning and these calls are a safe space for us to talk about how we continue to grapple with the material.

Samantha: I want to jump in. I have a number of different things that have been going on with me so I'll try to narrow it down. One of the things that I am discovering about integrity is that if you look from in the stands and on the court and you come from that distinction then there is the concept of integrity and there is what integrity actually looks like on the court. Those are very different phenomena. When I have an in the stands conversation about integrity, I don't seem to have much access to actually restoring and honoring my word. Nor do I seem to be able to access what needs to be done to restore my word. I remember the question that Werner left us with at the end of the course: 'where is my word when it comes time to keep my word'. One of the answers I have found for myself is 'gone'. My word is gone and it disappears for me. I am starting to see that I have to come up with some sort of system to manage my word and what I said...not just for others but for me also. One way I manage this is by not putting tasks on my calendar. What I do is replace tasks with what would be made available to me when I complete that task. It reminds me of what it took for me to give my word in the first place. It becomes a tangible and visible created future. It keeps me present to the possibilities that are available to me once I keep my word. It keeps me on the court.

Uchenna: So this idea of putting in your calendar what can be made available to you allows your being and action in the present to live into that created future you put in your calendar.

Samantha: The other thing is that I noticed a big deal for me from the leadership course was to take the 'right and wrong' out of integrity. I notice that when I know that I am not going to be able to keep my word and I have the experience that I am a bad person, then I am in the stands right away with an explanation. When I place a value on integrity, it keeps me in the stands. I am seeing that as a leader, I do not have much capacity to inspire action if I am not on the court. I have been trained to learn about leadership from the stands. So I can talk a good game and I am starting to notice when people are speaking...I can now see when people are speaking and they are intending to move something towards a future that wasn't going to happen...but their speaking isn't going to do anything. I am starting to hear that. I don't really have the language for it but it's like their words are not going to impact what they want to impact even though it all sounds right on some level.

Uchenna: In the course we learned about how language is part of what you see when leadership is happening and I am hearing from you that language is also part of what you see when leadership is not happening. It's like people can speak to some form of leadership that has been either taught or learned and it's not on the court. How can you tell if their words are their word?

Samantha: I have had experiences when this has happened for me and it was odd because I was able to see something I that I wasn't able to see before I took the course. I am able to hear some version of a great idea. You know... you should do this...this can happen... you know all versions of great ideas that really cannot move anything forward. I just know there is something there that is not creating a future.

Carla: Is it about on the court versus in the stands?

Samantha: Yes. I think it's something like that. I think I am in the midst of a discovery here. It's like there is an align-ness with the language and future that is missing and in a sense an issue of integrity. That's all I got...now I sound crazy to myself. I know something is there.

Noticing that we haven't heard from Nadia, I invite her to share what her experience with integrity has been in the last two weeks.

Nadia: I try to make a good sentence to share my experience. Samantha...you said something that I wanted to say. In two weeks I had a lot of experience and I find it impossible to have integrity when I am in the stands because then I do and I act in the stands where I am not connected to the out here space. I need a lot of power and force to get connected when I'm in the stands. Whenever I am connected to the out here space I don't need any force or any power and everything flows. It flows in my word, in my action, and in anything.

Uchenna: Is there an example that sticks out for you in that last two weeks that speaks to what you said?

Nadia: Yes, I made a promise to (one of the course leaders) that I would record myself reading the slides for the TTT (train the trainer) course. When I said that to her I was in the stands and told her I would do it by the end of August. But really I forgot. I tried to manage my time but I couldn't do that. But I did tell one of my colleagues in Iran about this course and was present when I was talking to him about it. I was seeing all my possibilities. And one good news, next Monday I travel. I go back to Iran for one month and I want to have a meeting with my colleagues to prepare them for the leadership course. I will be teaching the course in Iran in the next month at a university.

Samantha: Nadia, thank you for sharing that. I can now see, or experiment with the idea that my word only has power when I give it on the court. That's the other thing...I have more difficulty keeping my word to myself than to someone else. Given what you just said Nadia, I find for myself that I get in the stands with myself. So when I give my word to myself, it occurs like just a good idea. Like...really...I am going to run tomorrow morning. So I think there is something there. It's like I can only complete something if I am out here with that word.

Uchenna: So your word to yourself is different than when you give it to someone else? Is it because when you give it to others there is someone to hold you accountable for doing it?

Samantha: I don't think it's a function of accountability. I can hold myself accountable. In fact, I am harder on myself than anyone else. It's about not being present to when I am giving my word to myself. But I think there is something there. Like, I am not present to giving my word when I am giving it to myself. It's just like I am in some good idea about something. This goes back to the question about creating out-of-integrity behavior. It's like I make promises from a place where it can't be workable.

Nadia: I want to add something. I think in my experience, I think it is necessary in order to have integrity that you are present. It is very difficult, maybe impossible to have integrity when you are not on the court.

Carla: I like to add to that. It goes back to what you said Samantha about the right and wrong of integrity, making yourself good or bad, and being in the stands about it. What that leads to is more out of integrity behavior. When I am engaging with someone from a place of me being a bad person then it all falls apart because there is no integrity in that interaction at all for me.

Samantha: Yes that great! So it's like when I make myself wrong or guilty then I find myself going into the stands to try and resolve it. Then I find excuses: 'I was well-meaning', 'I can try it again tomorrow'. But I am trying to work out something that does not need to be worked out. It totally keeps me away from restoring my integrity.

Carla: The webs we weave....

Call 4: Created Futures

In attendance: Carmen, Linda, Mary, Uchenna

Before this meeting, we type up our created futures and share them via email. Although our created futures have already been shared online, this group meeting is dedicated to discussing our created futures with each other. They are summarized as follows:

- My created future is one where I generate opportunities within higher education for educators and students to experience themselves as active participants and contributors to learning and the creation of created futures that others can come to live into. On a personal level, I am creating a future where I can trust myself, others, and the world around me.

- Carmen's created future is "the transformation of public education (K-graduate) such that all people have access to authoring fulfilling lives of joy and passionate contribution." Linda writes that her future is one where "all great ideas scale globally in service of humanity". In her created future, her platform is "empowering women's leadership and creating environments where all people, men and women, thrive."
- Carla summarized her created future by writing: "In my created future I am working in the areas of health and social justice using collaborative processes to bring together interesting groups of people. I am teaching, facilitating, writing, and speaking about issues that matter to me. I am stimulated in my work and bring my work to my family. My children witness their mother as engaged, passionate, challenged, and making a difference in the world. My life feels balanced and whole, with healthy amounts of travel, adventure, exercise, leisure, and self-care. I am clear in who I am and what I am doing."
- Mary writes in her created future that she is the "possibility that every person is loved, celebrated, and living an extraordinary life". She writes that professionally she wants to "solve the organ donor shortage" and "advance professionally". Personally she wants to "thrive, love, connect, explore, create, manage, and rejuvenate."
- Karen writes the following in her created future: "The future that I envision, and that I'm living into, is one where I'm an effective leader as my authentic self. It's a future where I'm present, authentic, and whole in my interactions with everyone I work with, and one where I'm "out here" when that is what's effective, and "in the stands" when that is what's effective -- and one where I'm able to know and live the difference."

Uchenna: I posted my created future after having a great conversation with someone and realized that a lot of the stuff that was creeping up for me in the course was showing up for me in my life...big time. The conversation was about trying to get this course implemented at my institution. When I left the course I told myself that I was going to make this happen, no question about it. I talked to one person about it and they were not that excited. So I just sort of stopped pushing and trying. I was "at the effect" of everything and not "cause in the matter". You know...the whole idea of 'no one wants to listen to me'. For me it goes back to the commitment I made back in the course about getting out of my own way. It is about letting go of that control and trusting the things around me. My created future is centered on trust and is really about my lack of it. My

created future is about trust in myself, in others, and in life itself, even when I don't know what the outcome will be.

Linda: Restating your created future...I get it...you are the clearing for trust in the unknown.

I appreciated Linda's listening for my created future. I felt that she "got it".

Uchenna: Yes that's it. It's about trust in myself, others and the world around me. If I can conquer that, it would be huge for me.

Linda: I can share. So my created future is a world where I have a platform around women's leadership, empowering women and creating organizations where all people, men and women, thrive. So I have two exciting developments. We are doing research with (a major corporation) and I have just been on the calls in the background. Then I got an opportunity to actually interview with them. What I did was just speak my created future. I started sharing about women's leadership and creating a platform where everyone has access...I just started going on and I actually started crying. Then the interviewer goes, 'I hear your passion. Will you join us?' I just spoke from my passion for women's leadership and empowerment, and creating a space where all people can learn and share and thrive. I was out-there with the executives. I authentically listened. I heard what they needed and spoke about how I could meet those needs. So I am going to fly out next week but I can only stay for one day because that same week I have a meeting with (another major corporation). I did a workshop in the past at a women's leadership summit and (this other corporation) said they needed someone to do a similar workshop for them. So they met with me and told me that they are having a summit in three weeks and they need someone to speak in front of three hundred of their top women and one hundred men who are also in the conversation. They asked me what all the things are that I need in order to say yes. So I asked them to join as a corporate partner, I ask them to pay me ten thousand dollars and to open the rolodex and get me new partners. So now I am going to (this major corporation) to speak to four hundred of their top executives about ways we can take small acts to create sustainable change. So in two weeks I am going to these two major corporations all because I spoke my created future. I went from never giving a paid talk to being offered ten thousand dollars to speak.

I am intrigued by Linda's sharing. Admittedly, I now feel unsure about my own created future. I am feeling like my created future about trust is so minuscule compare to Linda's.

I feel inadequate, like I am not measuring up to the other women. They seem so much more successful than I am. Being in a position of leadership at my institution, I am often the youngest one around the table. There are times when my context shapes the way I

perceive myself within a certain group. In those moments, I see myself as inexperienced and not having much to contribute. I feel these contexts showing up in this moment. I ask her what she meant when she said that she spoke her future.

Linda: I told them what really excites me...what excites me is that we can take not only education but experiences...imagine a think-tank and the energy in that room...imagine if we can provide that experience to everyone in the movement to have for themselves. Imagine if we had a conference where we invited one hundred of the top thinkers...everyone in that room will blossom. What if we provided that same experience to all the top organizational leaders? All I have is my created future and being out here. When I met with (the first corporation's CEO) I did not click with the guy right away. He grilled me for over two hours. I wanted to take him down! But then I said to him...you are right. Your job is to tell me what would work because all I care about is change. It is really about empowering others to be great. I spoke my created future and he was like 'ok'. He said 'this was the first time you were human with me all day'.

Linda's sharing demonstrates her living into her future within the context of fulfilling the concerns of the relevant parties. That is, she is listening for where there is need, a gap to be filled, or possibility to be created with that organization that calls for her leadership. Thus in seeking to listen to the concerns of the CEO, she creates possibilities for a future they can both live into. She is also living within the context where all possible ways of being and action are available to her as a leader. Linda's being authentic is available to her in her interaction with the CEO. It is also what is needed in this circumstance in order for her to fulfill his concerns and for them to create a future for both of them.

Mary: That really contributes to me...just hearing how "out here" you are playing.

Linda: And I get to fly in a corporate jet!

Carmen: Anything is possible! I often forget that anything is possible if we just pick up the tools and use them. If you just say what you want and you are authentic and you are with people, you can inspire them. It's fabulous!

I am in awe of what Linda has been able to accomplish since leaving the course. At the same time, my feelings of inadequacy about my created future are heightened.

Mary: I think we should all know the created futures of all the people on this call because then you are listening for their greatness and their created futures to come into fruition.

Mary's suggestion that we become familiar with each other's created futures is a testament to the commitment we have to each other. I again become aware of the support that this group creates for all of us. There is also a component of accountability here. That is, by becoming familiar with everyone's created future, we have an opportunity to support each other in honoring our words.

Carmen: I'll say two things...one is the space that I think I heard Linda pointing to. It is the space of what's happening internally and then what's going on out in the world. I have been present to both the power of the created future as well as my resistance. I have created a number of things but then I get tired and I want to stop. And one of those things is with a partner who wants to start a new institute. What I found myself doing is not being in communication. It showed up like 'it's the start of the semester', 'I have all these papers to grade'...and then today we had a conversation and it was amazing to me how quickly in just communicating and being in dialogue all that stuff shifted. And what I was not paying attention to was what I was leaving him with when I was not communicating. I am also present to the gap between what I say internally to myself and what is actually available out there in the world. So when I hear you all talk, I get that we are all living that! And all there is to do is be out there, taking action and trusting that the next action is consistent with the created future. Uchenna when you were talking about trust in your created future, I was totally there! If I just trust the words that came out of my mouth and trust myself to honor those words...back to integrity...and just continue to take the action without knowing how it's all going to turn out or who is going to be involved or any of those pieces...that would be a whole new way to live. And that's really what is required for anything to be possible.

I feel affirmed by Carmen's words. I suddenly realize that learning how to trust myself is critical in learning how to lead myself. In this moment I don't feel isolated in my feelings about trust. I feel like there are others who connect with this struggle as well.

Uchenna: I appreciated hearing that because when I think about my created future simply being about trust and then I hear what everyone else is up to I am like...ugh...mine is just a little ol' thing about trust. I think that you all are just so fabulous and so amazing and doing so many great things and here I am just trying to figure out how to trust. But it is huge for me because I feel like once I am able to get out of my way then I can see myself the same way others see me. Carmen, I appreciate the value you placed on the importance of trust because I started to question myself when I heard everyone else sharing their created futures.

Mary: Well Uchenna we are here because you created a space for us to be here. So you trump all of us!

I realize that through these calls, I am creating a future with the women that would not have otherwise happened. While my struggle with trust makes it hard for me to build up the courage to lead these calls, I realize that these calls are bigger than me. These calls create a space for sharing, empowering, and collaborating as we live into our futures. These calls also create a space for the language of the course to remain present in our lives. Keeping the language present creates opportunities for us to continue to critically reflect on who are being while remaining available to possibilities greater than we can imagine.

Call 5: Forgiveness, Authenticity, and Created Futures Becoming Realized

In attendance: Karen, Carmen, Uchenna, Samantha, Linda

Karen: I want to share a huge insight I recently had. I wasn't promoted a few years ago when I was up for full professorship. I had done what I was supposed to do but we had a new provost who changed the rules and he did not promote me. I realize that I had

actually used that as an excuse to check out of things at the university level. It has become so clear to me that I have used this as an excuse to not do part of my job and I am ashamed. I am relieved that I finally see it but I feel such a mixture of emotions. I am proud of myself for climbing back into integrity but I am embarrassed that I did that. Had I not done this course over the summer I would have never figured that out. Thank you for listening to that...that was a lot of stuff.

Carmen: There is a lot of that in the academic world and I certainly have exhibited it myself. You know, make up excuses for why I shouldn't be held accountable. I can see that the change in my behavior has the possibility of rippling through the organization. But I think that ripple is enhanced if we really forgive ourselves. I mean, you (Karen) are a department chair...that's a gigantic contribution and it's a pretty thankless job!

Carmen's contribution shifts the conversation to one about forgiveness.

Karen: One of the course leaders said to me 'you realize this and you just move on and forgive yourself. We all do this. You forgive yourself and move on'. And I am doing that to some extent. It was just so eye-opening to realize that so many people around me could probably see me doing it and I just didn't know; I genuinely didn't realize that I was acting so terribly. And I do see that it is important for me to forgive myself because other people are going to do this too and as I leader I need to not judge them for it. If I am judging myself for it then it would be hard for me not to do that to them.

Samantha: That whole thing about being embarrassed and shamed I can so see myself in those situations. It's like when something has been there and it finally comes to light, I am like 'wow'! And it seems to me that most of them are public ones and I ask myself how I could not have seen this before. But in my experience I can just look and see that I didn't see it before. So at some level, when I realize something in hindsight then there really isn't anything that I need to forgive myself for. Listen, I can beat myself up faster than anybody. That keeps me in check. But when I look, there usually isn't anything for me to actually forgive myself for. So, Karen I am moved by your sharing and by whatever it took for you to see what you saw and also be big enough and generous enough to share that with us today. To me, that's leadership right there. That's authenticity. That's what I would say authenticity looks like on the court. It's about being authentic about where you have been inauthentic. I can't think of a better demonstration of that.

I am really connecting with this notion of forgiveness. I am thinking back to being in the course and becoming painfully aware of the prison that I put myself in for years. The hardest thing for me to do was forgive myself. I remember crying in the corner with one

of the course instructors trying to ask how to forgive myself. I was so distraught that I could barely get my words out.

Uchenna: Samantha, you talk about forgiveness and since doing this work, I find that the things that were hidden for me before and that I discovered in the course, when it shows up, like it really shows up! The difference is that I am able to recognize it now. But then I become harder on myself now because I have a language for it, I can recognize it and then it's like 'why am I doing it again'? So I think that's the hard part for me. I have a tendency to beat up myself but I don't know any other way to be. It is really about that forgiveness and giving yourself some grace. You have to recognize that you are human and just keep moving.

Samantha: One of the things I am getting for myself is that forgiveness is a practice. There is a theory about forgiveness and that's all well and good...it's like the theories on leadership...you don't just get access if you have a theory about it. The access is in practicing. I can say for myself that there are places in life where it's getting more difficult. Why is it getting more difficult, it should be getting easier! But in some way I can see that the experience of the difficulty is also an indication of my commitment and my transformation. Did I think this was going to be like a marathon? I'll just throw on my shoes and run...I don't think so! There is a kind of perverse joy in the struggle for me because it often means that I am heading in the right direction. I can say that this is what it looks like when I am training or coaching somebody. Often the struggle gets more difficult before there is a freedom on the other side. I am finding that usually the places of struggle for me are where I am resisting something.

Carmen: One of the places I have been going is to the conversation about brain patterns. I have brain pattern for these ways of being. I want access to new ways of being but sometimes those old brain patterns are just stronger and I have to remember that I am developing new brain patterns and they will get stronger with practice. There is also something about acknowledging that it's a new game. I mean really acknowledging that I started a new game and I have added a lot to that game. It's not like I am just doing what I used to do. I do take on so much more and wonder why I am tired or why my integrity gets out of line. But yet, on the other side of that I am also seeing that there is more joy, more love, more connection with people in my life, and definitely more opportunities. I recognize that I did take on transformation and with that comes so much but with that also comes a richer life than I had previously.

Carmen's contribution is a reminder that transformation does not happen overnight.

There is on-going work to be done. I am again reminded of that mountain-with-no-top analogy that comes with life-long learning and discovery. Linda joins the call. She

recently returned from her two speaking engagements for two major corporations. She shares her experience with the group.

Linda: My experience was remarkable! On Friday I was in NY with (a major corporation) for a think-tank on women's leadership with 18 people from around the world to imagine the future of women's leadership. Then on Tuesday I went to speak for (the other corporation) and combined we are talking about millions of people. I asked one of the reps before speaking: 'well, do I still get to be me'? I mean here I was on stage speaking to hundreds of people and I had to transform their perspective on gender and inspire them to take action. It was surreal. I could not believe it! I wore this beautiful dress and high heels and I was all made up and I wanted to go sit in my Snuggie! I mean I was in the corporate jet with (the CEO and other exclusive people). I perceive those people as never getting a moment to be themselves because they have to be on all the time because they are always being watched at every moment. But what I realize is that we are all on that path to create the future that changes the world. And who are we? Who am I? I mean I am wearing old yoga pants right now to go to my acupuncture appointment. I am very humbled. People were taking photos of my slides! [Laughing]

Linda's description of her experience demonstrates her living into her future through the context of leadership as phenomena. She is actually experiencing herself as a leader from a first-hand, as lived perspective. It is a perspective that only she can describe. While on stage in front of hundreds of people, she is experiencing herself being a leader as her natural self-expression.

Carmen: Fabulous!

Linda: I mean... people were taking I-phone pictures of my slides! You know what that's like? It's like...why are you taking pictures of it? It's just me! I am reconciling all of that. It was amazing! It was like I was home, like I was meant to be on that stage. All the years...I've been doing leadership training for 10 years, I've done workshops for hundreds of people, I've said yes to speaking engagements...and I was told that I had real stage presence! And it was not the way I was born. I mean, I work in my bed when I am at home. I like being snuggly and there I was! I mean I worked on this for decades and I had one moment and it was fun! I mean people were making notes and taking pictures of my slides! That was so crazy! I am seeing that being the big person I was on stage was

just a tool to for me to have a way in to do that work. Anyhow, thanks for letting me share.

I can feel the excitement in the air. We actively listen and it feels like we are on this journey with her. Something sticks with me in Linda's sharing. She says, "it was not the way I was born". Linda is experiencing herself differently now. She is committed to something greater and she is being who she needs to be to fulfill that commitment.

Carmen: I have a question Linda. It seems like there was something about having to be a certain way and I am imagining that you got to where you got not that way. That you got to do those things by being authentic and being naturally self-expressed, in being your commitment, in being your promise for the world and all of that; not by having to...I mean I guess for me I want to say 'of course you want to be in your Snuggie! That's who you are!' There's nothing at odds there. It's all a part of who you are and you get to say who you are. You got there not by being any of those other people.'

Linda: Yeah, I think it's also my struggle with when I got here I thought I would be a lot cooler than I really am. See in my head, I thought that if I were going to do this talk I needed to be this smart research person. I always imagined that if I were in front of hundreds of people that I would not be authentic. I thought I would really be cool! I mean I was wearing the cool dress but I was really being authentic because that was what was working. I mean I was in a think-tank with all these important people and I kept talking and thought I should shut up. But I realized if I did then I would be robbing the conversation of my contribution. So I spoke up even when I thought I sounded ridiculous. So what I learned is that even a matter of the way I breathe is so interesting to people.

Carmen: It sounds to me like it's the promise of the leadership course... that leading effectively will become part of your natural self-expression.

I share how inspired I am by Linda's sharing. Her story reminds us that we are enough.

We can move and inspire others just by being who we are. It is incredibly powerful to witness Linda living into the future she created during the course.

Linda: Maybe people are looking for an authentic voice so they can be themselves too. They don't have to be Wonder Woman or they don't have to get it right at first...they can always clean it up.

Samantha: Authentic is the new cool baby!

Call 6: Created Futures (Part II)

In attendance: Carmen, Amelia, Karen, Linda, Nadia, Uchenna

Uchenna: I want to hear updates! I want to hear how Mary is doing (in the West Coast). I want to hear all about Amelia's travels. I want to hear what Nadia has been up to. I know it's been a while since we have connected so I want to hear what everyone has been up to.

Mary: Ok so I am in (the mid-west) living in my parents' house. To date, I have sold my house. I have closed my lab. Every member of my lab has a job. I have moved my lab to (the west coast) effective this morning. Basically, I right now am at ground zero and having 100% possibility to create whatever I want. I literally have nothing from the past that I had for the last 15-20 years.

Uchenna: How does that feel for you? Do you have an idea what you want to create?

Mary: Well, I wrote something that I want to share with you guys because this is where I am.

Mary shares the testimonial she drafted for the Being a Leader website:

I came to the leadership course at an important juncture in my life involving a three year, long-distance relationship and a fiancé, multiple active federal grants, and jobs offers for both of us in multiple locations in both non-profit and academic settings. While successful professionally, I did not know how to make it all work. I had been wearing myself out for years. I was worn out being a leader and was considering quitting. The promise of the course was that you would leave being a leader as your natural self-expression. Thanks to the courses distinctions, many powerful conversations with the leaders and other participants, I was able to distinguish what I should do next and what I should stop doing or change. I'm still committed to (the profession I am in). But now instead of doing this as a single, overworked researcher, I am now being a leader sourcing a national consortium and conversation. I am also listening more to others to learn what else is possible beyond what I can already see. Four months later, I received a million dollar gift to start a center at the (large research institution in the west), moved to where my fiancé and his daughter live, and ensured that my original staff all had new jobs. These changes have enabled more time for my health, play, creativity and thriving relationship. A commitment to my leadership mission is renewed.

The women share how amazed we are that Mary is able to accomplish so much in such a short span of time. We recall how she struggled in the course to decide her next personal

and professional move. Now, she is living into the future she created in the course and all possible ways of being are available to her; she can have health, play and creativity while remaining committed to her leadership mission. We have been on that journey with her and are now collectively celebrating her success.

Amelia: What I find really amazing is not just that you did all those great things for yourself in such a short period of time, which is amazing in of itself, but that every single person that used to work with you also has a job. That is truly creating a future that was not going to happen...not just for you but for everyone else. Knowing that they are well and continuing to have a future is just beautiful!

Mary: Yeah...it has been extremely difficult. But I have really gotten that you don't need all the things you think you need. I've worn the same socks for three days! I am living out of two suitcases. I am glad I had a chance to share today because we get on a plane and leave tomorrow to start my life from ground zero. And I love this group and I want to thank you guys for being the space. It's been an interesting four months. You know I had a life when I walked into the leadership course that was still impressive. But the thing that I have really gotten is a sense of mission and calm. It's interesting because who I thought I would be in this situation and how anxious or righteous or annoyed...none of that has been there at the level that I thought it would be. I am about to get on a plane and... I am good. I just moved my whole life and look how calm I am! I should be a mess! It's very weird. The other part that I get is that this is what Uchenna is working on in her dissertation...this is what this is...I am living it and you need to hear the beat in the story before it all turns into normal life. I mean, you saw me at the course and here's the beat. I just disassembled my whole life as I knew it after the course and I am still alright.

Moved by Mary's sharing, I am reminded that everything eventually turns out ok and you don't need everything you think you need. I am reminded of my own created future about trust and the importance of trusting myself and life. I express my gratitude to the group for being part of my journey through their listening and sharing.

Mary: I am thankful too. I have it like you are all my cheering quad saying 'Mary go be amazing, go for it!'

Amelia: I just became present to something...we are all getting so much from just listening to Mary. Her greatness is so contagious and she leaves us in this great, happy

place. But one thing that I got was that it also gets created in the listening. If she hadn't been able to communicate...I mean all of that gets created out here in the world and it is through our listening for her that this also happens. I am present to that beautiful partnership between her willingness to share and stand in love and our partnership with her in our listening.

Mary: It is so true because in this work they talk about a committed listener being someone who stands for you as the fully expressed possibility that you are. And when you forget, they are there waiting to welcome you back and remind you of it. I think that is like standing in the fact that we are all whole and complete and there is nothing we need to do. That's the possibility of committed listening and I think we are doing this on these calls. Uchenna, it's like you are extending the course. It's been really powerful for me.

Mary leaves the call to prepare for her farewell celebration. I invite others to share.

Linda: We are hosting our big research summit soon and everything is happening as we speak. Also, the Whitehouse is sending the Council on Women and Girls because they see collaboration with what we are doing. And I got to write the opening op-ed piece for (a major magazine) about the future of work and how people can thrive. It is all coming together but it took years of tiny steps to get here.

Amelia: My dad once said that mastery is when you are looking at someone doing something very difficult but it seems so easy.

Linda: It is interesting because it does not seem easy. It still feels very hard. It feels like there is tidal wave coming and it feels like I am on the shore waiting.

Carmen: It occurs to me that we have these conversations about transformation and a created future and then we start seeing it come into existence and it is requiring new ways of being. I think it's the identity that's like 'something's going to be lost here'. In reality I don't think that anything is lost. I think that to realize that created future, this is what is called for. Also, in the midst of these transformations, we continue to be human beings. I often see my dog as a model for how to be in the world. She is related and connected to the world in a manner that keeps her "out here". She is never in her head. When I start to see myself not being out here, I remind myself that there is a demand in this world for the type of leadership work we are doing, for these created futures. For me, knowing this is freeing.

Amelia: For me, those ups and downs, our breakdowns, our struggles in this leadership work are what make us human and our humanity is what makes us who we are. Otherwise it wouldn't be magical. When I first took the course, I was trying to rid myself of my humanity. I was waiting for transformation. And then I totally got that I am a human being and the dance is a beautiful one. And sometimes inside my humanity I don't love my humanity and I want to make it wrong. But then I stand in love and have come to realize that this humanity is the very thing that makes us beautiful.

Uchenna: What I am getting from all this is just how connected we all are and how human we all are. This call reminds me that we experience very similar things and the moments where I am able to have that grace with myself then I can put less meaning on things and get out of my own way. I really value hearing what you all are talking about and I just absorb it all. I am reminded of how connected we really are.

Amelia: That's right...you have to dance with yourself!

Call 7: Workability

In attendance: Samantha, Karen, Mary, Carmen, Linda, Uchenna

Uchenna: So what has everyone been up to?

Carmen: I'll be teaching the leadership course at (a business school). This is totally insane because I have no business background. So this is a great accomplishment because I had no prior connection to this school. It kind of rocks my world. What I am seeing over and over again is that by making a declaration and aligning your actions with it... despite your internal state...surprising things happen. Teaching the course keeps the work alive in my life. Also the more I deliver the course the more power it has for the students I am teaching.

Carmen's sharing is a demonstration of how by making herself available to new possibilities, she is realizing her created future.

Mary: Two weeks ago I arrived in (the west coast) and started my life at ground zero. I have been feeling so much more self-expressed since moving. It's interesting to see how suppressed I was feeling before moving and didn't realize it. Now I kind of feel like I am bossier! I am demanding what I want. I am being straight with people. It's not like I'm doing it secretly or rebelling...I am being openly self-expressed and asking for what I want. So for example...my office manager has been asking to leave work at 3:30 each day. The thing is that she has to take a bus to get home and if she leaves later than 3:30 and catches a later bus then she ends up getting home after dark and then has to walk a few blocks to get her house. As a single woman she feels uncomfortable walking alone after dark. So after leaving before 3:30 a few times, I started to recognize that it was compromising the time she needed to give to her job. I need someone to manage the office and...it just started becoming unworkable. Now in the past, the psychologist in me would feel bad for this woman. I would feel a sense of responsibility or guilt. But now as a person working from a place of integrity I need workability in my office...and that means that I need my office manager to be at work for a reasonable amount of time.

Linda: I did this great exercise to create more workability within my team. For some time now my team has been bombarding me with pages of complaints that they want to bring to my attention. Eventually I decided to try an exercise where they each had to contribute a list of solutions with each complaint they brought forth. What that did was give them an opportunity for action. Guess what? Over time, the list of complaints disappeared. So rather than make people wrong and fire them for not producing results, I created the kind of team I wanted by providing them with an opportunity to create workability in their environment.

Carmen: That's a fabulous idea! That's a great example of using this leadership work.

Mary: Before we sign off I want to just thank the group for allowing me to share my journey with you all. Thank you for providing a space for me to go share everything that I have been experiences. I really feel completely transformed. And I feel centered. Thank you all for your listening.

Call 8: Reflections of Women Leading

In attendance: Carmen, Karen, Linda, Uchenna

Carmen: I have really valued the opportunity to be with everyone. It has been a great opportunity to hear what everyone is up to. It keeps the course present and invites me to play bigger. The meetings have allowed me to see what is possible. I am present to this being a life journey. It's about climbing a mountain with no top. It's about getting confronted, getting off, then getting back on, then getting confronted again. I am also present to the fact that this is the rest of my life.

Uchenna: I was really impacted when Linda shared the story of her being on stage in front of hundreds of people, dressed up, and then thinking about being in her Snuggie. The visual was a reminder that everyday people can change the world and that you do not need to be a superwoman to do so. You can come as you are and that's enough.

Karen: I am so disappointed that I missed so many meetings in the beginning. The meetings made this way of living so present for me. These meetings also confirmed that I want to live this way. I really appreciate that Uchenna put these meetings together. You know I had a busy, wild semester this year but without these calls, the leadership work would not have been as present.

Uchenna: I echo that! This leadership work was more present for me from having these calls. It is very easy to forget the "feeling" you had in the course. These meetings kept the language present for me.

Call 9: The Last Call

In attendance: Mary, Linda, Uchenna

Uchenna: Hi Mary! How's life in (the west coast)?

Mary: Great! I can't believe how different life is now. It's like I didn't even realize how limited I was before. When I lived in (the Midwest) I had what most would consider an ideal life. I had tenure, I walked three blocks to work, it was very affordable, I had plenty of money, my parents lived nearby...like it was really great and nothing was wrong. Except that (my partner) wasn't there and I was doing the most that I can do with my mission at my age and I still have 20 years of work left in me. So I move here and it's crazy! It's definitely forcing me to let go of control. What I learned is that you can deal with complexity...you don't have to have it perfectly under control. So there is a lot less control and a lot more being in the 'we' here.

Uchenna: You sound totally at peace with that. I remember the Mary at the leadership course where you talked a lot about trying to figure it all out. Even in your voice...you just sound so free. You sound like a completely different person.

Mary: And I still have the other sides of me that shrink or get mad you know? You have to be kind to yourself...that's what I am kind of learning. But I think I am up for it...that's what I would say at the end of the year. When you saw me at the leadership course I was running two full time jobs. I had a full time research lab and full time non-profit. So I never had any time off and I was exhausted! In leadership my exhaustion was that I was really good at what I did so I felt like I always had to be 'the one'. And now I am like...there are a number of great people and I can be one of 'the ones'.

Uchenna: Yes and you can be a clearing for other great people to come in and work with you.

Mary: Yes and empower them! Then I can have a life and be with the guy I love and have fun and all of that! It's like this morning...ok...I have to just describe...so I got up and I opened the doors to my porch. And for five hours I sat and I edited an abstract and I sent emails and wrote something that needed to get done and my two cats are sitting beside me on the outside chair sleeping and the chairs are royal blue and I hear the fountain running in my backyard and that was what my morning was. And I was still an extraordinary researcher. It wasn't like I was sacrificing and miserable and no sleep...you know what I mean?

Uchenna: A lot of what you talked about during the leadership course was having it all! I think at one point in the course you said that you realized that you can have it all. It sounds like that's what you are experiencing now.

Mary: The theme on my planner/calendar this year says ‘a new paradigm’. I did not know what that paradigm would be but I just knew there would be one where I would be able to be with (my partner)...but the theme for next year on my planner for 2014 is called ‘The Whole Enchilada!’

[Laughter]

Mary: I feel very blessed. My biggest fear was that I would not be able to still be my mission...that I would somehow loose the good that I can do if I have it work for me. But I am really seeing that you can have the good that you want to do and you can have it work for you and you can have play and community... and actually by empowering other people, some of the weight of that is shared and the celebration is shared too.

I recognize how Mary’s leadership is creating a future that others can live into as well.

Uchenna: I am just amazed at how you can stand in so much uncertainty and newness and still be so centered! It’s just an amazing transformation. You know sometime I think about my dissertation work and what I am learning is that this process is not as linear as I thought it would be. There are so many ups and downs. There are moments when I feel inspired and creative and others where I just don’t feel like doing it.

Mary: What are you resisting?

Uchenna: I guess for me the times when I am feeling creative in my work are the times that I enjoy it the most. I mean I love writing...I was an English major. But right now I guess because I am in the early stages and everything needs to be structured a certain way I often feel like my creativity is stifled.

Mary: Can you change your context? So for the next few weeks you can either stand in the drudgery of it all or you can stand in the idea that you are creating something that will be a huge contribution. So with that context can you paint a portrait of what the next few weeks can look like for you?

Linda joins the call.

Mary: Hi Linda! Yay! Uchenna, now you have two powerful listeners! Linda, she was just about to illustrate a portrait of what the next few weeks can look like with a new context for her research.

Uchenna: Yes, so if I were to paint a portrait I would say it would be fluid...so no rigid lines, no parameters. So instead of giving myself rigid timelines and time frames to do things, I would just sort of dance with it. It would be more like being inspired by thought and then writing it down rather than here’s an hour...think!

Mary: Remember, your feet are not nailed to the floor. So there is room for discovery and not just this idea of getting it right or getting it wrong.

Uchenna: There are days when I feel like this leadership work is very present for me. Yet there are days when I realize that I am totally missing the mark. What is that like for you and how are you able to come around from that?

Mary: And you know it's ok to forget sometimes. Sometimes we are amazing and at our best selves but sometimes we are ordinary, and judgmental, and grumpy. We've lost the vision and we are living in miserable martyrdom. I think that a certain part of my power is the space that I have for some of the "ordinary" in myself. That's ok! It is all about self-love as the foundation. In this journey there are going to be times where you are doing it beautifully or when you are being creative. But when you lose possibility and you need it, get in a conversation with somebody. I am totally willing to offer my space for you to get represent to your possibility when you feel like you are losing it.

Uchenna: Yeah and it goes back to what Werner said about being a leader. There is no right way to do it. You can still be effective any way you need to be but it's also about accepting all those parts of you that are you.

Linda: Sometimes you just have to be open to being a complete failure. The reality is that people usually see you bigger than you see yourself. Anything is possible; you've got to keep dreaming!

Uchenna: This has been such an amazing journey. I can't believe it's our last call. I have gained so much from this. You women just inspire me so much and I am thankful for you all.

Mary: And Uchenna, the thing I don't think you get is that all of us came together because you asked us to. You get that? Like we are making time because we respect you and what you are creating and who you are.

Uchenna: I really appreciate that. This has taught me so much about support and those relationships and collaboration. I have never been good at that because of that trust factor but this process has really taught me to trust and to put myself out there even when it's not what I am used to doing. You ladies have always been there to support me in this journey. You give me great insight. I really appreciate your commitment to me.

Linda: I think there are a lot of failed attempts to bring people together after a course like that and you did it! With a lot of busy and successful women!

Uchenna: Yes! A lot of busy, successful and amazing women who are doing amazing things!

Women Leading Findings

The narrative of the Women Leading Group responds to the research question: How are participants living into the futures they created in the Being a Leader Course? When analyzing the data, I look for themes that reoccur and emerge from our Women Leading conversations. Some themes emerge more overtly, specifically when call topics are established ahead of time. However, some themes emerge that are not explicitly or frequently stated. As Ackerly and True (2012) note, what generates the analysis “is the recognition that something is unsaid and that we must try to produce the missing part.” (p. 181).

What emerges from my analysis is a narrative that chronicles the ways in which we are living into our futures within the context of leader and leadership offered during the course and an account of the action research we all engage in doing so. Through our collective inquiry and discourse about how we are living into our created futures, we become co-researchers in creating a narrative that highlights our journeys in engaging in this leadership work. Additionally, rather than placing meaning on each woman’s experiences, our experiences are as we language them. Ultimately, our experiences also contribute to informing the research questions. Utilizing our personal experiences to inform the research is important because, as women leaders, it is essential that our voices are viewed as a contribution to the creation of new knowledge and information. Doing so brings “marginalized voices to the center of the conversation” (Barton, 2006, p.238). As Ackerly and True (2012) note:

A feminist research ethic encourages scholars to conceptualize their research question from the perspective of concrete and located

experiences, including the experiences of the powerless. Such reflection, does not, however, lead away from research that can be generalized across a population. Such analysis may be exactly what the powerless need! (p. 94).

The account that emerges from our personal experiences highlights the ways in which we are living into the futures we create during the course. As demonstrated in our narrative, we are living into these futures by becoming the futures we created. That is, our lives after the course become about the realization of the futures we create during the course. The futures we create give us being and action in the present consistent with the future we want to realize. More specifically, as we live into our created futures, our being and actions become reflective of honest self-reflection, authentic self-expression, commitment, and collaboration.

The narrative also reveals that the calls go beyond talking about and identifying our created futures. The calls create a space in which the complexities, struggles, joys, and successes of our journeys in leadership are shared, listened to and celebrated. The calls recreate the course distinctions in a more intimate and personal way. Thus, in reviewing our conversations, I am aware of the life-long commitment to learning and discovery that is required as we live into the futures we created in the course.

As a group we continually engage in honest self-reflection. One example of this is Amelia sharing that she made herself wrong for being gay. In that moment, she is being honest about the internal turmoil she is feeling as a result. She shares that she “felt like a fraud”. Another example of honest self-reflection is demonstrated in Karen’s sharing that she failed to be fully committed at work after being passed up for a promotion. The realization that she allowed herself to be less committed as a result of not getting a

promotion is devastating to her. After her sharing, Carmen offers that once we acknowledge that we have fallen short, we could forgive ourselves and recognize our contributions.

Engaging in honest self-reflection also leads us to recognize our humanity. After Amelia shares her struggles with her sexuality, she offers that “part of being human is allowing yourself to feel all the emotions that come with it.” During another call Carmen reminds the group that “in the midst of these transformations, we are still human beings.” Amelia adds, “our ups and downs in this leadership work are what make us human and our humanity is what makes us who we are. This humanity is the very thing that makes us beautiful.” Being able to share our internal struggles with each other in a safe, non-judgmental space also allows the women to connect on a deeper level. From the acknowledgment of our humanity comes forgiveness, connection and compassion. On many occasions, the women talk about the importance of self-forgiveness and compassion. We remind ourselves to show ourselves some grace. At one point, Samantha tells the group that we can only access forgiveness through practice, There is no access to it through theory. That is, having an understanding of forgiveness as a concept is different from exercising forgiveness. Additionally, Carmen reminds the group to be patient with ourselves as our brains are adjusting to new leadership language.

We discover that the moments in our lives when we are embracing our humanity are the moments where we experience the most joy, the most success, and the most freedom. That is, we experience ourselves as being more authentically self-expressed. This is evident in a number of instances. For example, Mary’s life becomes about

realizing her created future of solving the organ donor shortage while maintaining a good work-life balance. Mary's actions become consistent with realizing this future in a number of ways. She secures multi-million dollar grants from major corporations, leaves behind a very successful career in the mid-west, and moves to the west coast where starts from ground zero but is also able to be closer to her significant other and foster the personal relationships that are so important to her. Once her move to the west coast is secured, she talks about feeling "completely self-expressed" in a way that she has not experienced before.

Linda shares that her created future, which includes empowering leadership on a global scale, "simply came to be by speaking her passion". Even more profound is Linda's realization that once she actually reached a high level of success it is enough for her to simply be herself. She talks about how well-received she is as one of the speakers at a leadership convention for a major corporation. She says, "I did not need to be a smart research person. I did not need to be Wonder Woman. I just needed to be human. People are looking for authenticity". Linda demonstrates that effective leadership is not limited to specific characteristics or traits. That is, she does not have to rely on being a "smart research person" in order to be effective. Rather, embracing her humanity and allowing herself to be fully self-expressed enables her to be effective as a leader.

As demonstrated by Linda's story, there is also some collective recognition that in order to be powerful and effective, we do not have to be perfect. That is, there is no "ideal" way to be for us to be powerful. Linda's story about being on stage in front of hundreds of people and thinking about being in her Snuggie is a great example of that.

While on the call and telling the group about this experience, she shares that she is on the way to the doctor because she has a sinus infection. She says she is wearing sweatpants and that her head is “filled with mucus”. This is the same “dressed up” woman that just had a remarkable experience where the audience was so enamored by her. She says, “I am still the same [Linda]. I look a mess right now but I am still a powerful woman”.

Another example of embracing our imperfections was when Mary says “sometimes we are amazing and powerful but sometimes you have to leave room for the ‘ordinary’ in yourself”. As Carmen states:

“There is an aspect of integrity that has to do with maintaining an empowering context. So when you are being inauthentic you created a disempowering context for yourself. I often forget about that part of integrity: to be whole and complete, and having an empowering context around me is really important”.

Creating an empowering context of embracing imperfection allows us to recognize and embrace all parts of ourselves. Mary shares that sometimes she is responsible and of service to others and other times she is playful and spoiled. Being one way does not mean that she is disloyal to the other parts of her. Rather, the different and often conflicting parts of how she experiences herself are all part of how she shows up in the world and need not be in conflict with each other. She sums this up best when she says she “discovered the power of ‘and’”. She shifted from “or” to “and”. As she is living into her created future of solving the organ donor shortage and finding work-life balance, Mary’s actions also become consistent with realizing that future. She can still sit on her porch editing abstracts, wrapped in a blanket with her cats by her side and still be a “great researcher in that moment”. Individually and collectively, we create new contexts for our

experiences in leadership. Within these contexts, ordinary, authentic, and imperfect are sufficient for us to create new possibilities for the future. It is a reminder that ordinary women like us have the capacity to create new futures for the world; futures that are not simply extensions of the past but ones that are created from the new possibilities for leadership that we are now able to see for ourselves.

During these calls, we also discover the power of sharing and listening. The women, on a number of occasions, talk about the value we find in sharing the discoveries we encounter through our self-reflection and having others listen to our sharing. Our sharing reminds us that we are all connected. Much like our experience in the course, as others share their insights and discoveries, we are able to see ourselves and our lives in each other's sharing. In that manner, the sharing of others becomes a contribution to our own inquiry and discovery. Additionally, as Amelia notes, our sharing is made powerful through our listening. After Mary shares some of her insights and discoveries, Amelia says to the group:

I just became present to something...we are all getting so much from just listening to Mary. Her greatness is so contagious and she leaves us in this great, happy place. But one thing that I got was that it also gets created in the listening. If she hadn't been able to communicate...I mean all of that gets created out here in the world and it is through our listening for her that this also happens. I am present to that beautiful partnership between her willingness to share and stand in love and our partnership with her in our listening.

Linda also talks about the importance of listening as she lives into the future she created. In her interactions with major organizations, she speaks about asking them what their concerns are then asking them how she can address those concerns. During the course, Linda often speaks about her challenges with communicating with her colleagues

and staff. She speaks about how others would perceive her as tough, demanding, and insensitive. In fact, she admits to bringing a few of her staff and colleagues to tears during her interactions with them; she did not leave people feeling heard. However, as she interacts with the organization's CEO, she listens to his concerns and seeks to partner with him so that she can realize her future of propelling leadership to a national level. Linda recognizes who she needs to be, an authentic listener, in order to realize the future she created. Linda also notes that the workability within her team is increased after she authentically listens to and considers her team's concerns. From there, she is able to help her team articulate their created futures and how those futures align with the concerns of the company. In doing so, she is not only creating a future for herself but is inviting others to participate in the future they are creating together.

There are also some underpinnings of listening to the discoveries, breakdowns, and insights of ourselves and the other women in our group. These calls provide a space for the sharing of and listening to our experiences as it relates to how we are living into the futures we created in the course. Linda says, "these calls are a great opportunity for listening. I feel like I am with some amazing women and [these calls are] a great opportunity to listen". Recognizing and validating our own and other's experiences create a powerful testament to the fact that as culturally and professionally diverse women we all have something valuable to say about and contribute to the world. Amelia reminds us that our humanity is beautiful and invites us to embrace our imperfections. Mary's journey is inspiring. She serves as an example of someone who is living into her created future by taking a risk, redefining her career, relocating for love, and experiencing herself

as fully self-expressed. Nadia, a woman who did not feel comfortable speaking in front of a large group because she believed that her accent was a barrier, brings the course back to Iran where she leads others in their leadership journeys. The women in the WLG demonstrate that anything is possible when one creates a future that calls them to be bigger than they imagine.

As we live into our created futures and share our experiences with each other, a sense of collaboration emerges. It is clear that we find our regular meetings to be instrumental in keeping the course work present in our lives. I share with the group that “this leadership work has been more present for me as a result of these calls...these calls keep the [leadership] language present for me”. Collaboration is also evident in Mary’s suggestion that we all become familiar with each other’s created futures. Her suggestion is based on the idea that we would hold each other accountable and that we are in this together. While we have our own individual goals, together we have a greater purpose in mind.

Our collaboration is an example of the commitment we have to this leadership work and supporting each other along the way. We are committed not only to holding ourselves accountable to this work, but to holding each other accountable as well. We recognize that the change we want to see in our lives and the world cannot happen in silos and without the support of each other. Mary says to the group “I am discovering the beauty of collaboration. That’s what I love about being in this group. This group created a Mary that is a “we”. Our commitment to ourselves and each other is also evidenced in our dedication to participating in bi-weekly calls for six months. Understanding the

importance of this leadership work, we are committed to keeping these conversations going, even in the midst of very busy lives and our other obligations. Our commitment to ourselves is evidenced in our persistence to navigate through this leadership work even when it is challenging, complex, and emotional. Our commitment to each other is demonstrated in our decision to become familiar with each other's created futures, in our authentic listening of each other and the unconditional support we provide in spite of our individual struggles and challenges. The women in the group are committed to the wholeness of the group and each member within it. Ultimately, the commitment to each other creates workability and a collaboration that contributes to the realization of the futures we created in the course.

Our collaboration and commitment to this leadership work also create a narrative about the action research conducted in this study. Participatory Action Research calls for collective contribution and action on the part of research participants. As a group, the women demonstrate this through the sharing of our experiences, the listening of each other and our support through the realization of created futures that we and others are invited to live into. As a Women Leading group, we collectively share our struggles and support each other in our growth and development as leaders. We are invested in supporting each other through those discoveries and breakdown and take a collaborative approach in the creation of futures that generate possibilities for us and those around us. Thus, while individually we are each realizing incredible opportunities, as evidenced in Mary securing million-dollar grants and Linda gaining a national forum for leadership,

we collectively listen, support, and encourage each other in our journeys. As a group, we understand that the success of one is our success as well.

As a group, our journeys in the process of creating and realizing futures can be conceptualized through a feminist perspective. On individual levels, our journeys parallel the process of what Magolda (2009) identifies as self-authorship. This process starts with the listening of our internal voices through the shifting of the way we came to see ourselves. Moments where we shift the way we came to see ourselves are evidenced in our conversations about humanity and loving all parts of ourselves, even the imperfect parts. Such moments are also seen through Linda's realization that she does not have to be "cool" for her to connect with the audience. Mary comes to realize that she could have it all; she does not have to choose between a relationship with her fiancé and successful career. I come to experience myself as someone who can trust others, be vulnerable, and lead the Women Leading Group in our bi-weekly calls.

Our individual processes of self-authorship were culminated in what Magolda (2009) identifies as "securing internal commitments". We are committed to having those internal commitments inform our daily interactions. We share experiences of having better connections with friends and loved-ones as a result of our authentic listening. Carmen's experience with her friends after driving cross-country and Samantha's connection with her nephew during a hike are examples of an internal commitment to "being out here". An internal commitment to creating and being available for possibilities greater than ourselves is evidenced in Karen's declaration that she would move beyond the hurt of not getting promoted and become a more effective leader of her department. It

is also evidenced in Nadia's decision to bring the course back to her native country of Iran. In the midst of all these great opportunities, we still continue to struggle with issues of self-assurance, trust, and confidence. However, because we are self-authoring our journeys, our internal commitments trump the constraints that we encounter and we stay committed to lives of action and agency as we live into the futures we are creating.

Our processes of critical self-reflection, creating new contexts, and allowing those contexts to use us are also reflective of a transformative process. Mary and Linda's processes of realizing their created futures are clear examples of a journey in transformation. Both women often express how different their lives have become since taking the course and how they are experiencing themselves newly. While Mary and Linda demonstrate more identifiable examples of transformation, the idea that transformation is on-going and evolving is not lost in the experiences of the other women. For example, Amelia's realization that she was making herself wrong for being gay created opportunities for reflection, dialogue and discernment. The same is true for Carla's examination of the sort of relationships she creates. Carla comes to realize that when she authentically listens to her sister, despite their unstable relationship, she is creating opportunities for compassion and better communication. Through critical self-reflection and discernment, Carla also discovers that she creates out-of-integrity relationships by being a people pleaser and not setting boundaries. Our small moments of self-reflection and clarity are as monumental in the process of transformation as are the moments where we are experiencing major life-changes and opportunities beyond our wildest dreams.

While critical self-reflection and self-authorship are reflective of a feminist perspective and contribute to our transformational process, the ontological inquiry we engage in gives us access to the nature of who we are being in the midst of our breakdowns and to the actions that arise as a result. We are able to identify, from a first-person, as-lived perspective, what we are experiencing during our breakdowns. For example, Amelia shares her discovery that she makes herself wrong each time she is experiencing a breakdown. In this example, she is demonstrating the access she has to the behaviors that show up in the midst of her breakdowns. That is, she has access to the fact that she makes herself wrong. Having access to those actions provides Amelia with possibilities for other ways of being in those moments. She says:

“The part that I got after so many breakdowns is that I am human. You need to allow yourself to cry and be sad. You can be powerful in the face of circumstances. You are allowed to be human. You need to allow yourself to cry and be sad”.

The possibilities made available to Amelia are created through her use of language. That is, the creating of new context offers a different perspective from we can view the circumstances we are dealing with. As Mary says,

“Everybody decides something yet nobody decides anything; which is the point of the course...so you can get some freedom around these life sentences”.

While we are able to create new contexts for ourselves, we also have access to the challenges we face in trying to do so while in the midst of those breakdowns. This, in fact, is the challenge with ontological inquiry. That is, while we are creating new contexts, we are doing so within a new paradigm adopted by the course. The course adopts a new paradigm for performance where one's performance is impacted by one's

action or inaction. Additionally, one's action or inaction is correlated with the way in which the circumstance that one is dealing with occurs for them. The occurrence is "that which is constituted as an activated neuronal pattern of perception in the brain" (Erhard et al., 2010, p. 50) and the way in which a circumstance occurs for someone is shaped by and accessible through language. This paradigm is distinct from current, theoretical approaches to performance. A theoretical approach to performance does not examine performance "from the perspective of the way performing is actually experienced" (Erhard et al. 2010, p. 2). As a result, a theoretical approach to performance

explains performance as an effect of some cause and assigns that cause to some combination of the performer's mental characteristics and attributes (including knowledge and know-how), that is, their "traits and states", and the external circumstances of the performance situation...[this] the current model is constrained and shaped to be what it is by our everyday commonsense Newtonian/Cartesian worldview (a cause/effect, dualistic worldview) (Erhard et al. 2010, p. 2).

With this new paradigm of performance, our performance and actions are not caused by our traits, knowledge, or skills. Rather, our performance is dictated by action, our action is correlated with the way a situation occurs for us, and we have access to this occurrence through our language. Erhard et al. (2010) writes:

While there are pre-existing genetically determined neural patterns in the anatomy and physiology of our brains that constitute categories of perception,⁶³ and the innate neural capacity for language, and while certain structures of language must also be a part of that innate capacity, the way the world, others, and we ourselves occur for us is certainly impacted by our use of language in speaking and listening about the world, others, and ourselves...For a performer, the occurring world—the *way in which* the circumstances on which a performer is performing and the circumstances in which a performer is performing *occur* for the performer—is unquestionably impacted by language (p.73).

Thus, with this new paradigm of performance, having access to the source of our actions also provides us with access to other ways of being through language. Language is a critical component of this performance paradigm. If one's performance is directly correlated with one's action and action is correlated with the way in which what one is dealing with occurs for them, then it is through language that the occurring is shaped. It is then through language that the occurring (or our activated brain patterns) is altered; and when brain patterns are altered then action is altered. Erhard et al. (2010) writes:

When the occurring with which action is correlated is altered, the action correlated with the occurring is also altered", and it follows obviously that, when the occurring with which action is correlated is *not* altered, action is not altered (p. 47).

The altering of our actions is directly correlated with and essential to the realization of a created future. That is, a created future can only be realized when one's actions are altered in such a way that their future is also altered. As Erhard et.al. (2013) note:

A future derived from the past can be different in various ways from the past, but it will not be created. Rather, it will be an extension of the past, or at least in some way extrapolated from the past. And, extensions and extrapolations are *changes*, not *creations* (p. 594).

When our brains create patterns of prediction derived from past experience, our being and action in the present become correlated with these pattern. As a result, our actions then result in a future that is simply an extension of the past. Conversely, when our brain patterns are altered, then so are our actions. Certainly, the practice of reframing our language in such a way that our actions positively impact our performance takes time and effort. As Carmen states:

“One of the places I have been going is to the conversation about brain patterns. I have brain pattern for these ways of being. I want access to new ways of being but sometimes those old brain patterns are just stronger and I have to remember that I am developing new brain patterns and they will get stronger with practice. There is also something about acknowledging that it’s a new game. I mean really acknowledging that I started a new game and I have added a lot to that game. It’s not like I am just doing what I used to do”.

Essentially, these new brain patterns are accessed through language that shapes the way what we are dealing with what occurs for us. Carmen’s observation that we are still developing new brain patterns is a reminder that we do not immediately adopt new ways of being and acting in every situation after the course. That is, it takes time and commitment to create new brain patterns that generate actions consistent with realizing a created future. For one to generate new brain patterns and realize a created future, it is critical that one experiences themselves being “out here” with the world. That is, it is important that one experiences life where it actually happens and doing so requires the bracketing of preconceived notions or assumptions about one’s self, others, and the world. In such instances, there is nothing between the individual and what they are interacting with. Erhard et.al. (2013) explain:

When you are 1) complete with your strongly held positions, views, opinions, rationalizations, justifications, judgments, and significant history, and 2) complete with the default past-derived future that was your almost certain future, you will find that you have the freedom, and even a natural inclination, to create a “created future” (p. 666).

Certainly, in the process of creating these new brain patterns, we are faced with breakdowns as we continue to confront the constraints that inform the way we, others, and the world occur for us. In fact, the model of the course is such that we are invited to dance with these breakdowns, engage with them, and grapple with them inside the

context of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively as our natural self-expression. It is a context that has the power to leave one “with the being and actions of effective leadership” by “shaping the way the circumstances one is dealing with occur for them such that their naturally correlated way of being and acting is that of being a leader and exercising leadership effectively” (Erhard et al., 2012, p.45). Essentially, the course does not eliminate our breakdowns; it provides access to them so that we can consider other possible ways of being and acting in such a way that our performance as leaders is improved. Essentially, as our language creates new brain patterns, these new brain patterns create new ways of being. These ways of being, such as our attitude, feelings and emotions, become consistent with realizing the futures we create. As such, our past-driven futures no longer have the same significance. That is, while our pasts are not erased, the meaning we once placed on them in determining our futures no longer has the same impact. Rather, our created futures occur to us as predicted futures and thus our ways of being become consistent with realizing this future.

Therefore, while the feminist and transformative perspectives certainly offer valuable contexts for our journeys in leadership, the ontological perspective offers a distinct level of access to the possibilities and futures we are realizing during the course of this research study. Thus, while similar to the feminist and transformative perspectives in creating opportunities for critical self-reflection and re-contextualization, the ontological perspective differs in that it creates possibilities for new ways of being by providing first-hand access to the ways of being and actions that limit our effectiveness. That is, the purpose of the ontological approach to leadership is providing access to “a

way of being and acting in any leadership situation that is a spontaneous and intuitive effective response to what one is dealing with” (Erhard, 2013, p.3). As such, from an ontological perspective, when one is effectively exercising leadership, they are doing so as their natural self-expression. The Women Leading Group is a demonstration of what is possible when there is collaboration and a commitment to action within the framework for leader and leadership offered in the course. As a group, we demonstrate what is possible when women begin to experience themselves as having the freedom to be in the world without limits and with endless possibilities for being and action. Within this framework, learn to embrace our humanity and continue to seek out opportunities for action in spite of it. As a Women Leading Group, we each recognize that we are not perfect nor are we superhuman. Rather, we are every-day women committed to something greater than ourselves and driven by the commitments we made during and after the course. Exemplified by the Women Leading Group, one can only imagine the opportunities available to others who have access to creating futures that exist in possibilities; where all ways of being are available; where one’s action and being in the present is consistent with the future they are realizing; and where one is making themselves available to a future that is not simply an extension of the past. Such a future is realized through a commitment to create something that requires one to be bigger than they imagine and one that reaches beyond individual gain. Rather, it is a future that creates possibilities for others to experience themselves anew and in such a way that their actions also create possibilities for others as well.

Summary

The Women Leading group is a powerful demonstration of support, collaboration, empowerment and agency. While each woman participates in their own way, each serves as an essential part of the whole experience. Our commitment to each other motivates us to keep our new language of leadership present in our lives. Our group is also a testament to the power of listening to ourselves and each other. Our authentic and non-judgmental listening creates a safe space for sharing our deepest fears, thoughts of inadequacies, and our biggest successes.

In our listening and sharing, we recognize that there is no set definition of what leadership and being a powerful woman looks like. The contextual framework for leader and leadership offered in the course is a contribution to this realization as it provides new perspective on what leadership can look like. That is, with this framework, leadership is not limited to a set of traits or characteristics. For example, as demonstrated with the women in the WLG, vulnerability and authenticity are possibilities for us in being effective as leaders and in the realization of our created futures; we can be fearless and take risks, even in the midst of fear and uncertainty.

In a sense, we are living into our created futures in a similar manner in which we were experiencing our transformations during the course. During the course, we all struggled with different ontological constraints that kept us from being effective in our leadership. Issues of inadequacy, uncertainty, insecurity and doubt all show up for us while taking the course. And yet despite all the remarkable futures that we are realizing

after the course, similar “petty concerns” still surface for us. Thus even in the midst of all our new and amazing opportunities to lead, we still experience struggles.

As we are living into our created futures post-course, we are often reminded that the lives we left before taking the course are awaiting us after we return. Taking the course does not ensure a perfectly fixed life afterwards. In fact, living into our futures through ontological inquiry after the course almost guarantees that we will encounter more breakdowns because we now have access to them. During one call, I share with the women that I felt “lost after coming back from UBC”, and that I would often beat up on myself for “not knowing better”. In reality, the course does not fix our problems, nor does it eliminate the barriers and breakdowns that we encounter. In fact, I often find myself unprepared to engage in the process of ontological inquiry after the course because my life after the course often occurs to me as not being any easier. I find myself going back and forth between embracing and despising the challenges of ontological inquiry, having access to the source of my actions, and confronting my constraints. In these moments, I recognize the importance of a created future. A created future gives one being and action in the present that is consistent with realizing the future. Essentially, even in the midst of experiencing barriers and breakdowns, a created future keeps one in the inquiry as it requires a commitment that is bigger than the challenges that one might face.

Recognizing that we are “playing a new game”, the women also come to recognize that transformation does not happen overnight and are often reminded of the commitment to life-long learning and discovery that ontological inquiry demands and that is required for transformation to persist. This is demonstrated in Samantha’s example

of running a marathon. She notes that one has to train for it and cannot simply throw on sneakers and start running. This is similar to our lives after taking the course. We must, as Carmen points out, understand that we are creating new brain patterns. Thankfully, being able to share the “petty concerns” we are still grappling with after the course remind us of how human we are. Also, acknowledging and sharing our concerns, through the context of leader and leadership offered in the course, makes it perfectly acceptable to be imperfect while still being extraordinary leaders. As such, we are examples that heroes are ordinary people that do extraordinary things.

The conversations from our Women Leading Group are a critical contribution to this research. Collectively, as diverse and powerful women, we are able to create an inspiring narrative about leadership, collaboration, transformation, and action. As collaborative contributors in this research, we demonstrate a shared responsibility for the creation of unimaginable futures that would not otherwise happen. As it relates to this research and educational reform, one can only imagine the possibilities that exist when educators and students begin to experience themselves differently and live within a context where all possible ways of being are available and futures can be created that call for our being and action in the present to be consistent with that future. The Women Leading Group also serves as an example of the power of commitment. While we all have a commitment to our own created futures, we also have a commitment to each other. There is a sense of “when one succeeds, we all do and when one fails we all do”. We understand the created futures that are at stake: Nadia introducing the course in Iran, Linda creating a national platform for women’s leadership, Carmen transforming public

education, Carla creating collaborative opportunities between the health and social justice sectors, Mary solving the organ donor shortage, Karen being present, whole, and complete in all her interactions, and me creating opportunities within higher education where educators and students experience themselves as active participants and contributors to learning and creation of futures that others can come to live into. These are futures which required our commitment and collective action; futures that is unlikely to happen without our leadership. Imagine our school leaders, educators and administrators having that same commitment to each other, our schools, and our students. The responsibility for improving our world and being committed to better outcomes for our students belongs to all of us. Arguably, the reforming of American higher education depends on educators, administrators and students from all walks of life becoming transformed, challenging personal and social barriers, making a collective commitment to action and creating futures greater than ourselves.

CHAPTER 7

LECOLE

About LECOLE

LECOLE stands for Learning Community for Ontological/Phenomenological Leadership and was co-founded in 2011 by two faculty members who attended the 2010 Train the Trainers Course. LECOLE represent a community of academics, teachers, and scholars who are committed to furthering ontological and phenomenological leadership education by introducing it to national and international institutions of learning. To be a member of LECOLE, one must have taken both the Being a Leader course and the Creating Course Leaders training course. To retain active membership, members must engage in one of the following within a two-year period: lead or co-lead the leadership course; organize a course for others to lead; attend at least one LECOLE conference; work on a LECOLE subcommittee; or conduct scholarly research advancing the mission of LECOLE. Currently, LECOLE has about 40 active members. Members meet at different locations within the United States and Canada once or twice a year with the first meeting commencing in January of 2011. To date, meetings have taken place in Texas, Colorado, New York, Toronto and Florida. Members discuss a variety of topics while at these meetings. The first meeting was dedicated to creating a mission and vision for LECOLE. Subsequent meetings were used to discuss the different methods of and resources for delivering the course. Members also provide updates on the work they are doing and share specific action steps in continuing the furthering of this leadership work.

Doing so creates a community of accountability, sharing, resources and support for members to maintain their personal commitment to ontological/phenomenological leadership.

The Research Participants

A total of 10 LECOLE members were interviewed for this research. I interviewed five participants over the phone, four through Skype, and one participant emailed her interview responses to me. For the purpose of anonymity, names were changed and each participant self-identified as follows:

- **Marie:** A West-Indian program director and faculty member at a Caribbean institution. She has been a member of LECOLE since August 2013 and has been teaching the leadership course since September 2013. She has incorporated the leadership course into the business and technology courses she teaches to graduate students at her university.
- **Barbara:** A middle-aged, Anglo-European woman that works at a university on the west coast of America. She taught the Integrity module in the spring of 2014 to the student leadership council at her institution. During that time she also co-taught the entire leadership course for a cohort of doctoral students. She has been a member of LECOLE since February 2014.
- **Adam:** An associate finance professor of Asian descent in Western Canada. He has taught the Integrity module three times in an MBA course since 2012. He taught the full course in the fall of 2014. He has been a member of LECOLE since 2012.
- **Florence:** A middle-aged woman of European descent. She first taught the Integrity module in a finance course in the fall of 2012. She taught the full course for the first time in the fall of 2014. While she has only attended one LECOLE meeting in 2013 she has been a member since the fall of 2012.
- **Marcus:** An African-American male in his sixties. He is a university professor at a major American university in the South. He taught the leadership course twice since 2013 in Nanjing and Beijing. He has been a member of LECOLE since 2012.
- **Jackie:** A retired educator who has taught at the secondary and higher education level, served as an administrator, and is committed to offering the leadership course whenever she can. She has been teaching the leadership course since 2011. She has taught the course at three universities on the west coast of America and

internationally in South America, Singapore, Toronto, and Bermuda. She has been a member of LECOLE since 2011.

- **Bobby:** He is a 63 year old man who has been a business executive for most of his life. He is now an academic who wants to give back to future generations. He has a deep commitment to making a difference for others. He has been teaching the leadership course since March 2011. He has taught the course at a western American university and at a children's camp in Canada. He has been a member of LECOLE since July 2011.
- **Chris:** He is an independent scholar and consultant. He has been teaching the leadership course since January 2014 at the business school at an urban research university on the east coast of America. He has been a member of LECOLE since August 2013.
- **Denise:** A consultant who is dedicated to bringing the leadership work into higher education. She has co-led the entire course once in South America and has been part of LECOLE since 2013.
- **Nikki:** She is a school administrator of a southeastern school in America. She co-lead parts of the course in November 2013 and April 2014. She has co-lead the course in California and South America. She has been part of LECOLE since 2013.

I start every interview with the same question about how participants learned about the Being a Leader course. I am curious about how the participants become initially connected to this leadership work. Some of the members were already familiar with previous work that the course leaders had done and therefore were eager to be part of this course. Some participants learned about the course through someone else who took it. A number of participants mention that the course was recommended to them by a mentor or a life coach. Generally speaking, the majority of the participants learned about the course through word of mouth.

Overall, all participants are asked the same questions. However, varying clarifying and follow-up questions are also asked during each interview based on the

direction of the conversation. Ultimately, the interviews serve to answer the following research questions:

2. How has LECOLE supported participants in having the course offered at national and international post-secondary institutions and how are they conducting research about the course?
3. How do participants experience leading and being led in the course as compared with other learning experiences?

The purpose of LECOLE is to create a learning community of people who are committed to furthering ontological and phenomenological leadership. LECOLE supports members in the following ways: leading the course as it was most recently designed; stimulating and supporting research that advances the study and teaching of the ontological/phenomenological model of human behavior and its impact on leadership, as well as life, living, and self; supporting and training for academics and teachers leading the course in academic settings; and supporting activities leading to offering the course, such as scheduling and delivering introductory talks and preparing materials in advance of offering the course. As I interview participants, it is clear that LECOLE is an extraordinary learning community of individuals who are committed to creating futures for higher education and students. What follows in this chapter is a narrative that illustrates, from the perspective of the participants, how their experience in taking the course differs from other learning experiences, the process of getting this course introduced at their universities, what it takes to deliver the course, and the challenges they encounter with engaging in ontological inquiry. What also emerges is a clear demonstration of the commitment LECOLE members have to this leadership work. This

dedication is evidenced in their commitment to continue establishing and leading the course nationally and internationally as well as conducting research that furthers the reach of this work.

Becoming part of LECOLE begins when participants take the Being a Leader course; doing so is required in order for one to become part of this learning community. Participants express a distinct difference in being led in this course as compared to other learning experiences. They speak to elements of critical reflection, discovery and transformation that are evident in their experience during the course. Both Florence and Bobby talk about the level of commitment required when taking this course. Florence states:

“The course is intense! It is not leisurely at all. The level of introspection required is like nothing I have ever done before. The ontological and phenomenological model is very different.”

Bobby echoes that sentiment in stating:

“There is just a different level of commitment required in taking and leading this course. The intent and the goal is discovery. There is just a different level of depth and discovery in taking this course.”

Other participants talk about the transformational aspects of the course and how they experienced the material landing for them in a way they had not experienced in other courses. Denise states:

“Fundamentally, the difference is that most other courses are about gaining knowledge. You are given techniques to be used later or to leverage yourself. This course however is truly transformational.”

Jackie says:

“I have had courses that have inspired me in the past but those were all intellectual experiences. This course was more than intellectual, it was experiential. I actually had to try on the material. I was able to get a much deeper experience of who I was and who others were.”

The participants are attuned to the discovery, introspection, and transformation that set this course apart from their other learning experiences. They recognize the ontological and phenomenological approach as distinct in inviting them to experience, first-hand, themselves as leaders. Participants are aware of the difference in pedagogy compared to other learning experiences. While they do not directly quote scholars like Paulo Freire or Henry Giroux, nor do they specifically talk about evidence of critical pedagogy, it is clear that they recognize a difference in the way information is delivered during the course. That is, through their introspection and self-discovery, they see themselves as active participants in their learning. For example, Adam observes:

“In this course, teaching and learning is not one way. It’s not like information just comes from the teacher to the student. It’s more back and forth. When I am teaching other courses, I have the comfort of being the ‘expert’. In this course, no one is the expert. The students are intimately involved in their learning.”

Nikki adds:

“With traditional education, you are ‘in the stands’. You are a passive learner. The teacher puts information together and you are supposed to do something with it, maybe later on in life. With this one, you are on the court. It is about transformation.”

Nikki found that the pedagogical approach used in this course is very similar to the approach she uses at her Montessori school. She says that the course allowed her to see herself differently and approach the world with ‘awe and wonder’. She adds that

“traditional education tells us that we can’t be that way.” Jackie, a retired educator who still teaches, echoes the same sentiment about the limits of traditional education. During her tenure, she taught at the secondary and university level and eventually became one of the highest ranking officials within a state university school system. Speaking to her experience in taking and leading the course, she says:

“My whole life has been in education--taking and teaching courses. As a child, my parents told me I needed to go to school in order to be successful. I always believed that education could transform people. It worked for me--I had a great career, status, and a great income. However, I have been reacquainted with the power of education as an experience versus a body of knowledge to be learned. As a senior officer, I had spent four decades thinking about and studying education. However, the most powerful learning experience has been learning through the discovery of something for myself.”

Chris specifically notes how ontological learning made a distinct difference in his career as a teacher. He talks about who he was being as a faculty member before taking a course offered by Landmark in 2000. Landmark is a company that develops and delivers training programs that are based on the work of Werner Erhard and are designed to transform the lives of participants. Chris says:

“In 1999, I was an adjunct and I had this future of becoming a professor. Once I received my first assignment, I had to figure out what it meant to become a professor. The first thing I got was that I had to be a subject-matter expert and know everything about my topic. That’s the place I came from when teaching in the field of leadership. But I kept telling myself that I don’t know enough and felt like I had to know more. I would create tests for my students where only the things I knew would come up. To control the class, I would control the conversation so that only the things that I knew would show up so that I looked like an expert.”

He talks about eventually meeting a female mentor who often engaged him in conversations about Buddhism and Landmark. She would often say things about “being

vs. doing” and it took some time before he was able to discover what she meant. This discovery came while working on a case study about people who took a Landmark course, which finally found him in a course at Landmark.

“After that first course (the Forum) in 2000, I reconstituted my teaching as a commitment and let go of the need to be an expert. Before I feared students’ questions about topics that I didn’t know and I didn’t want to push students too far because I didn’t want to be responsible for dealing with whatever the mess was. Then after my work at Landmark, I became my commitment. My commitment allowed me to be unstoppable and stand for my students being a contribution to the world. I was able to see what was happening on the court. Although the material was the same, I changed, and the students showed up for me differently. They were engaged differently. It had nothing to do with the material, it was really about me.”

It is evident in their speaking that these members of LECOLE find their experience in the Being a Leader course to be distinct from other learning. The unique, life-changing experience of being led in the course ultimately informs the participants’ decision to lead the course. To lead the Being a Leader course, participants must first take the Creating Course Leaders course. This prepares participants to lead the Being a Leader course and supports them in the process of doing so. Participants’ decisions to take the Creating Course Leaders course vary. Some take it because they want to learn more about and master the material. Others want to explore how they might adjust or amend the material in their own teaching of it. Some participants state that they were personally invited to take the training course. Florence says that she took the course because she was inspired by the course leaders’ commitment and states, “the (course) leaders have an unwavering commitment that is inspiring and makes me want to master and teach this material”. Throughout the interviews, participants echo their gratitude for the support system that

LECOLE provides in their efforts to lead the course. Denise states that she is “so grateful to be a part of this group”. Being a part of LECOLE inspires her to be “wildly committed to the leadership course”. Florence also expresses how privileged she feels to be able to do this work. Some of the participants credit the instructors for the support they are receiving to further the leadership work. Adam says that two of the instructors invited him to continue the leadership work because they saw a space for him to teach after witnessing the impact the course had on him.

The support members receive from LECOLE enables them to create opportunities to further this work at national and international universities. I assume that establishing the course might pose many challenges for some participants and I am admittedly surprised by the narratives the participants offer about this process. I anticipate that most would tell stories of struggle and institutional push-back. However, some participants, such as Adam, Marcus, and Jackie indicate that they had already been well-established faculty at their institutions and therefore did not have much trouble getting the courses into the curriculum. Additionally, those who have been successful in introducing this course to their institutions report that the course was well-received by faculty and students. Challenges they mention relate to technical issues. For example, some participants taught the course internationally in places such as South America, China, Trinidad and Tobago, and Beijing. Those participants note initial issues with getting the course established internationally due to distance and international requirements. Adam specifically references issues around language and translation. He states that most of his students were from China and only 20 percent of them had English as a first language. He

says that “it was a challenge”. Denise, however, reports having minimal issues with language barriers. She co-taught the course in South America and says:

“I was amazed at how the students were able to reach beyond the language barrier and understand the material. Some students had limited English and struggled a little more but they asked questions when they didn’t understand something.”

Once these courses are established, the next step is for participants to actually lead the course. A number of participants talk about supporting each other through co-leading the course together. In doing so, the process of introducing a new course to universities becomes less daunting. Barbara, Adam, Florence, Jackie, Chris, Nikki, and Denise have all co-led the course with other members of LECOLE. The value and importance of this support is evidenced in the narratives that participants offer about what it actually takes to lead the course. Participants talk about the on-going, life-long learning that this course provides for them long after they take it. They talk about having to actually live the material and in doing so they are continuing to discover new insights about themselves. They often reference the “mountain with no top” analogy that is used during the course. That is, with ontological inquiry, there is always something new for them to discover about themselves. However, with on-going discovery comes some challenges. As Chris notes:

“The primary frustration is the willingness to be in the gap, in the breakdown, and reconcile the cognitive dissonance. In an ontological inquiry the question is where is the gap going to show up, and am I willing to be in that gap to deal with it? I am still discovering that each gap invites a new discovery, and new discoveries lead to new breakdowns. The challenge is in becoming comfortable with questioning the premise of something. We have to be willing to inquire into the premise of our beliefs to reveal our faulty assumptions; otherwise we put them in action and they

become the truth. The truth becomes something to protect and we hold on. To engage in ontological learning, we have to have a beginner's mind".

While the ontological model creates opportunities for on-going discovery, it also invites participants to confront their beliefs, grapple with breakdowns, and embrace a learning that requires continuously seeing the world new. Chris continues:

"We are always disclosing. Whatever we engage in is disclosing who we are. The self and the students are the material, the students are the material and the interaction generates new material-if we are willing to see it. We need to bring all of that in the classroom. We need to have access to all the material that is present: the self is the material. We have to be willing to discover on an on-going basis, 'who am I being about the material in the class that has it show up a certain way?'"

As such, participants indicate that while leading the course, they become students all over again. As they are leading the course, they continue to discover things about themselves and thus continue in their process of learning and growth. Jackie states that she actually studies the course more now than when she was participating in the course. She states that she is "more of a student now as a leader because the course demands more than just taking in information". Bobby says that as he is leading the course, he is also "participating, learning, and listening". Denise and Marie both speak to the on-going learning that the course invites participants to engage in. Denise states:

"I find that I can only lead the course as a student of the course. I can't have all the answers. My ego can't get in the way. I look at it more like a journey with the other students. It keeps me humble."

Marie writes:

I got that 'mountain with no top experience'...when you think you understand something then you realize how little you really understand. I had a few discoveries while teaching. I was left with feeling uncertain all over again. The course shakes up your 'wall of bricks' both as a student and as a leader.

Some participants find that their own personal insecurities about delivering the course material shows up while leading the course. Nikki states:

“The first time I co-lead the course, I only did a few sections. I was nervous. I wondered ‘am I able to do this?’ ‘Do we need to read all these slides?’ I only did a section a day at first.”

While leading the course, LECOLE members become more aware of what they did not initially understand as a student of the course. Marie indicates that she did not feel comfortable reading the slides out loud. She shares:

Reading the slides was a major challenge as I usually don’t read slides (even if I use slides to teach). I even chastise my students for reading from slides instead of talking to the audience. I felt like it took me off the court and into the stands.

Florence shares that she includes pictures and diagrams in the delivery of the course because she feels that her students will be better able to follow the material. I sense that she is concerned that her students will have a hard time grasping the material as designed. In addition to her desire to have her students follow the material is her need to feel comfortable with the material herself. She states:

“I keep discovering the wall of my need to be entertaining. I use props, dance, posters, and music. I also want to add pictures to the slides. I struggled with the purely cognitive [nature of the work] when I took the course. I wasn’t happy with the way the slides were written and I wanted to rewrite them. It is hard to stand by the slides and defend them when I am still grappling with them myself.”

Participants not only note personal challenges, they also discuss some practical challenges they encounter. Marcus notes time constraints as a challenge. He taught the course during a one week period for 30 hours and found that it was not enough time for

him. He says that he would have liked to have at least 10 more hours and it was difficult to get through all the material in the time he was given. Chris shares that he changed the original delivery of the course. He says that having 45 students in one course was a challenge and thus he needed to adjust the material accordingly:

“I redesigned the course and I will write an assessment of my findings for that. There were things about the way it was (originally) taught that I was concerned about. I felt like the slides took too much time and did not allow enough soak-time for conversation, agitation, discussion, and reflection so that people could break open things for themselves. So I reduced the number of slides from over 1 thousand to more than 400, added readings to deepen the meaning of some of the terms, and added a set of practices to embody the work. This allowed enough time for coaching and conversation.”

While some participants amend the course in some fashion, others choose to deliver the course as designed. Marcus chooses to deliver the course as designed because he believes that the course, as is, is well designed and it makes sense. He says that he did not come to this realization until he has the experience of leading the course himself. Others also indicate that they have taught the course as designed. Barbara, Nikki, Denise, Bobby, and Jackie have all delivered the course, in different settings and capacities, using the slide deck. More specifically, they have delivered the full course, presented a module of the course, or conducted a workshop about the course but have all done so using the slides as designed. While the extent and manner to which the course is delivered varies, it is clear that all the participants are committed to delivering the course because they want to make a significant contribution to their students.

Despite the challenges encountered while leading the course, it is clear that participants remain unwavering in their commitment to furthering this leadership work.

Denise expresses that teaching the course brings her so much joy. She says, “I felt so joyful teaching the course. I was learning so much about myself and did not want it to end”. Commitment is a sentiment that is expressed a number of times in response to this question. It is evident to me that the participants are committed to the material, committed to leadership, and committed to providing access to this work for others.

Marcus says that he knows this leadership work is his vocation. He goes on to say, “I wanted to be transformed as a leader and do that for others. This course was a gift from God”. Bobby also expresses a commitment to share what he is learning from the leadership course with others. He states, “I wanted to share this work with others and (taking this course) was a requirement. I also find that when you dig deeper into something, you grow more”. Other participants speak of a commitment that comes from a desire to learn more about themselves and the material. Denise says that she decided to lead the course because she is always looking for ways to develop and expand her thinking. Jackie states, “I wanted to take a deeper cut into experiential learning and the occurring world. I knew I would be retiring soon and I wanted to stay connect to the material and teach it.” Participants are inspired and motivated by their own personal experience in taking the leadership course and are committed to sharing this work with others. They are aware of how this work is impacting their lives and want to share that transformative experience with others. Denise shares that she is enlivened by her participation in the course because it has a transformative context for her life. She states, “it broke barriers for me and I wanted to bring that to my institution”. Bobby says:

“It began with a commitment to everything I do. When I established a purpose and what I am about, I established my commitment to make a

difference to others. It is about giving others an opportunity to make a difference too.”

Some participants speak to this commitment to lead the course like it is a calling. Marie writes that she felt a strong sense of commitment to deliver the leadership course after taking it. Marcus shares:

“I tried to run from this work for so long but this work requires integrity to honor the commitment you have to it. You have to manage what needs to be managed to do this work. Nothing else matters. I am not going to live forever so why not do this now? The consequence of not living your best life can kill you. I want to live a purposeful life.”

Chris expresses his commitment as one that goes beyond leadership. Chris’ passion for a better society through education is evident in my interview with him. He talks about how important this leadership work is for education, humanity, and a better society. His commitment to the leadership work is rooted in his vision for a better world. He states:

“My commitment goes beyond leadership. I am committed to developing leaders but also the ‘being of being in a human way’. I believe that peace will never occur in the world until people feel fully heard and feel like contributors. Much of the peace that the world does not have is rooted in the insecurities that people have because they are not heard or valued. That aspect of humanity is not always addressed. Education should be a natural place where this happens.”

The commitments of the people in LECOLE to this leadership work also go beyond leading the course nationally and internationally. They are also committed to conducting the type of research needed to invite others to engage in the discourse and practice of ontological inquiry. Marie, Florence, Jackie, and Chris all indicate that they engage in on-going reading of articles and research related to the course. Marie cites reading articles about integrity. Florence continues to research material about ontological

leadership. Jackie reads about philosophers such as Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty. She is also learning about brain science and reading work from Fitch and Damasio. Chris states that he has engaged in studies, practices, and research in the following areas: ontology of language and ontological design; philosophy of mind and language; leadership and management; leadership development, generative language and communications; and systems thinking, integral thinking, and spiritual intelligence. Both Marcus and Bobby have either presented or published data from the research they conducted about the course. Marcus delivered a paper at a management conference in Shanghai in November of 2013. The data he presented was collected from a course he led in Beijing and Nanjing in 2013. He is also currently collecting a second round of data from students who participated in those courses. Bobby published a paper about integrity and learning as it relates to enhancing student performance outcomes. In this paper, he references the “disengagement compact” referenced in the work of Arum and Roksa (2011). In his paper, he discusses how incorporating integrity into curriculum can maximize learning opportunities and outcomes in the classroom. Bobby also co-authored a 2014 document that explores his first-hand experiences and challenges associated with leading the course. The document also offers recommendations for those who wish to lead the course.

Currently, LECOLE is establishing of their first-ever Conference on Ontological Inquiry. Set to launch in March 2015 at UCLA, this conference invites members of LECOLE to explore and present their experiences in delivering and researching their work with ontological learning. The conference also aims to create opportunities for

members to develop themselves as scholars in the field of ontological inquiry. The theme of the conference is “how might re-search occur in ontological inquiry?” Utilizing this theme, members will present posters, reports from the field, workshops, and working papers. They are also invited to consider a number of questions as they consider the research they want to present at the conference. Such questions center around the discoveries and challenges associated with doing this leadership work as well as how this work has informed the way presenters engage in teaching, learning, and gathering data. Presenters are also asked to consider how their work will contribute to theory, literature, practice, and/or pedagogy. Collectively, in launching this conference, members of LECOLE are demonstrating a commitment to creating a community for inquiry, support, and practice.

It is clear that engaging in this work continues to ignite in the participants a commitment to creating futures for education that others can come to live into. The transformations that participants experience seem to permeate different aspects of their lives. Marie shares that after taking the course she started exploring the “foundational factor of integrity”. She discovers that she used the word “integrity” for years but never really “got it”. As a result she continues to examine what integrity looks like in different areas of her life and continues to look at the commitments she makes. Others articulate that the course impacts just about every aspect of their lives. Adam states that he has a new zest and optimism about life and those around him. After taking the course, he found that he got more enjoyment out of life. Marcus shares:

“I am much freer to make choices that sustain and nourish me. I can live my life without the approval of others. In the context of this work, you find your self-expression. I have access to freedom to be, to peace of mind, and to love.”

Bobby says the course impacts everything he does and has become a part of his “day-to-day being and acting”. He feels that he is better able to connect with people and is more open to moments of disagreement as a result of taking the course. He is “more open to people”. Bobby shares:

“This course has impacted everything because the change was in me. I have more compassion and empathy now. I didn’t have that for myself before. My heart has tripled in size. I have a deep sense of love for myself and others.”

Nikki adds:

“The course has impacted every area in my life. I am a better leader at school; a better parent. It even changed my relationship with my husband after 25 years of marriage.”

In their sharing, I sense the freedom and power they continue to discover after taking the course. In discovering the power of leading themselves, their actions begin to align with this discovery and their commitment to lead in other ways also become evident. Their level of passion is simply inspiring. Through my interviews, I too am reminded of how this course continues to be impactful to me. I am reminded of the commitment I am to life-long learning, self-discovery, and transformation after taking the course. I am also aware of how lucky I am to be a part of such an amazing group of educators. They too are present to the fact that they are surrounded by a support system of like-minded educators with a commitment to change the way educators and students

see themselves. As Adam articulates, the course is “a spirit of giving that is magical and inspires commitment from all involved”.

Summary

The interviews I conduct with some of the members of LECOLE provide perspective on how the experience of being led and leading this course differs from other educational experiences, the process of establishing the course at national and international universities, and what it actually takes to deliver the course. These interviews also highlight the level of commitment that LECOLE members demonstrate in their dedication to leading the course and conducting research about it. Participants articulate the value they find in the ontological model and phenomenological method employed in the course. As participants in the course, they recognize themselves as active participants in their learning and experts in their discoveries. This sort of learning experience mirrors the type of pedagogical approach that Giroux (2007) advocates:

[one where educators provide] the conditions for students to engage in unlimited questioning and sustained dialogue so that teachers and students can experience themselves as critical agents and learn how to oppose dogmatic forms of education which not only limit critical thinking, but also close down the capacity for self-determination, agency, self-representation, and effective democracy (Polychroniou, 2007, para.1).

It is an experience where students are not simply receiving information. Rather, students are actively engaging in critical dialogue and are responsible for their views and ideas. Also, unlike other learning experiences, the material presented in this course engages participants in a way that invites them to discover new things even after the course ends. As leaders of the course, participants see themselves as learners as well. That is, when

leading the course, participants do not consider themselves to be the experts. Rather, they are engaging in learning that is “steeped in awe, wonder, and humility”. Palmer (2010) might have called this the “knowing that serves the human cause” (p. 22).

A classroom dynamic such as the one fostered in the Being a Leader course is essential to the critical pedagogy that Paulo Freire advocates for. The elimination of hierarchies and the reciprocity between student and teacher are in direct opposition to the “banking model” that Freire (1972) opposes. That is, in this course, information is not simply “deposited” into the student from an “expert”. Rather, both teacher and student roles are interchangeable and each participant becomes a valuable contributor to learning in the classroom.

The course not only creates opportunities for ongoing discovery and transformation, it also invites participants to move to action. As Giroux (2010) notes, education should be “guided by passion and principle” and invite individuals to “take constructive action” (para 1). The course does this by connecting the four foundational factors of leadership and a contextual framework for leader and leadership to the creation of a created future while identifying and loosening any constraints that would hinder the realization of such future. Utilizing the course content as a foundation, participants not only demonstrate a commitment to learning but also a commitment to leading the course nationally and internationally. Neither geographic or language barriers are enough to lessen their commitment to this work.

After discovering what is possible after taking the course, participants commit themselves to broadening the reach of this work. As educators, participants are present to

the need for this leadership work to be introduced at their institutions As Osteen and Coburn (2012) write:

The growth of our students' leadership capacity is in direct relation to our leadership capacity as educators to understand higher education's responsibility to this work...This work is driven and motivated by the reality that students are not only our future but our present. As each of us, students, faculty, and staff, enhance our leadership capacity and accept our leadership responsibility, our real world gets better each day (p. 13).

Through their commitment, LECOLE members are creating futures for their students and higher education that might not happen without their leadership. This commitment is highlighted in the created futures that some of the participants share with me. Chris says that his created future is one where he "sees himself as a scholar awakening people to new ways of learning." He states:

"The course reinforced my notions of the power of ontological model and phenomenological method to access to new ways to transform and open us to new ways of being human. Being willing and able to access transformation as a source of critical awareness at this time in our global community is of great concern to me."

Chris says that he is living into this future through "three domains of daily activity": study, practice and service. That is, he studies "ways to critically reflect on text and understanding to offer greater access to the sources of the material." He practices "ways to live the work daily that find me more present, and more available, to be used by the work." Finally, through service, he seeks "ways to be of use by others in the work or to make a difference in others' lives by being a source of transformation." He adds that he engages life inside these three domains through "contemplation, listening, writing, teaching, presenting material, training, and coaching."

Florence and Adam, a husband and wife pair, share a joint future they create. Their created future is to fulfill together a commitment of the Being a Leader course by bringing it to Adam's university, teaching the full course, and becoming master teachers of the course. They are living into that created future by seeking and creating opportunities to get the course offered through two strategies. One is to work with their extension division to offer the course. The second is to propose the course as a regular course offering through the academic committees at Adam's business school.

Marie's created future is one where Caribbean natives experience themselves as active contributors to the knowledge that is created there. She says that "in the Caribbean it is easy to just accept what the rest of the world creates as 'our own' but we need to also be 'out here' adding value." Therefore her created future is "to change the mind-set of her students from just being consumers to being both producers and consumers."

Denise says that her created future is to do "meaningful work that makes a profound difference for others." She also shares how profoundly struck she is by her daily observations of how people suffer unnecessarily, both personally and professionally. She believes this emanates from the context people unknowingly create for themselves, others and the circumstances in which they find themselves. Consequently, happiness appears illusive and anger and fear abound. As part of her created future, she is committed to people transforming their relationship (context) to self, others, circumstances, and the world in which they live. While she is not completely clear how to be that which becomes the clearing for this transformation to occur on a large scale, she is certain that the course is a solid starting point. She is also

clear that it is an essential element of her created future and that she is committed to discovering how she can bring this transformation into existence.

Marcus is committed to doing work that makes a difference in the world. His created future “is teaching the ontological principles of transformation and leadership throughout the world, in multiple languages.” He is living into this future by “incorporating the principles of the course into his communication and leadership courses, and conducting related research in the U.S., Latin America, China and Africa.”

Barbara is also living into a future where she is expanding the reach of the leadership course. Her created future “is being the promise of this course” in her leadership at her institution and “making the Being a Leader course available to undergraduate students”. Since completing the course, she has committed to co-teaching the leadership course in a doctoral program in the summer of 2015 and independently teaching it in the summer of 2016. She also recently accepted the position Associate Dean for her college and plans to use this opportunity to teach the course in the Honors Program at her university.

Jackie is committed to using this work as a contribution to something meaningful for others. She says that she is experiencing herself as “a person who is dedicated to contributing to the quality of life for others.”

“My created future is a future in which the methodology of ontology and phenomenology is incorporated into higher education, such that students in higher ed are provided with an opportunity to experience the type of as-lived, first-hand, first-person-generated learning for themselves that this work provides, and in which universities once again thrive as vital robust institutions that contribute to the quality of life and are open to the exchange of new ideas.”

After completing the leadership course in 2010, she “realized that [the] course is an enormous vehicle for [her] to continue working in education and make perhaps an even more powerful contribution to others than [she] did when [she] was working.”

As a learning community of university educators and administrators, LECOLE members understand what is at stake with the futures they are creating. As one participant notes, “The world is in desperate need for leadership. As an educator, I am committed to having students transform themselves to be leaders.” Giroux is an advocate for this sort of commitment and calls for educators to generate “knowledge that is not simply received by students, but actively transformed, as they learn how to engage others in critical dialogue and be held accountable for their own views” (Giroux, 2010, para. 7). As educators, these LECOLE members illuminate what is required for transformation and action to be realized in the classroom where both teacher and student are actively engaged in and contribute to the process of learning. Their classrooms provide students with opportunities to engage in critical dialogue so as to experience themselves as active participants in their learning. LECOLE members are creating opportunities in the classroom for students to partner with them and realize their capacity for agency and creating a democratic society (Giroux 2007). Each person in the classroom, teacher and student, contributes to the learning that happens. As Rautins and Ibrahim (2011) argue, educators and students must critically ask themselves what the purpose of education is and what their place in it is. We must ask, “What is our collective purpose in the world? What is our unfulfilled human potential? And what role does education serve in cultivating student capabilities of acting in and changing the world?” (Rautins and

Ibrahim, 2011, p. 30). In doing so, taken-for-granted assumptions about one's self, others and the world are challenged, transformation can then be realized and social action is inspired. This is the sort of educational experience that participants are committed to bringing into our universities. As Cantor (2012) reminds us, "the problems we face are all of ours collectively, and the solutions will only come from all of us collectively" (p. 1).

As demonstrated in their interviews, members of LECOLE are committed to realizing the possibilities that exist when education invites learners to critically examine what it means for them to be in the world. They also understand that when educators, administrators and students are transformed, then American education has the potential to be reformed. As evidenced in this study, the work that LECOLE members are engaging in on a national and international level demonstrates their commitment to creating futures for higher education that calls for their leadership. They are establishing the leadership course at their universities, actively engaging in research about ontological inquiry, and continuing to commit themselves to the life-long learning that ontological inquiry requires. As Nancy Cantor (2003) notes:

We must attend to the public purposes of higher education too, including the cultivation of social and civic skills and proclivities to work together to make a difference in our highly challenged world (p. 3).

What LECOLE offers for participants is a community of academics, teachers, and scholars who are committed to furthering ontological and phenomenological leadership education by introducing it to national and international institutions of learning. Members of LECOLE support each other by co-leading courses with each other, engaging in ontological research that supports the development of other members, and creating

opportunities for members to meet twice a year to share their challenges, accomplishments, and discovers with ontological inquiry. LECOLE supports members by fostering a community of like-minded leaders who are collectively engaging in ontological inquiry and creating opportunities for this inquiry to inform classroom experiences for educators and students.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

This research illuminates the distinct nature of the Being a Leader course as I experience it, how the Women Leading participants are living into the futures we created during the course, and how members of LECOLE are furthering this leadership work through leading the course and conducting research about ontological inquiry.

My autoethnography details my distinct experience in the course. During the course I am invited to engage in ontological inquiry and experience from a phenomenological perspective the constraints that impede my effectiveness as a leader. I discover the limits I place on myself as an African-American woman who experienced great loss and hardship in my life. I have the opportunity to share my insights and discoveries with others as well as learn from their sharing. I also discover the power of language in creating new contexts for confronting the constraints I encounter. As such, I am able to loosen the grip that my past has on shaping my future.

After engaging in the Being a Leader course, the participants in this study continue to create and live into futures that call for their leadership. However, as illuminated in this research, participants still discover some of the constraints that they contended with during the course as they live into their created futures after the course. Struggles with self-doubt, insecurity, and uncertainty persist. Linda shares that despite living into her created future, maintaining an empowering context “still feels very hard”. Carla says that she sometimes finds it hard to stay motivated and committed to the things

she “said yes to” after the course. Carmen talks about discovering “the power of her created future and the resistance that comes with it”. Although she is creating a number of things, like starting a leadership institute at her university, she sometimes “gets tired and wants to stop”. The experiences of the participants after taking the course is consistent with the challenges one would expect with the kind of ontological inquiry invited by this course. The course invites us to continually engage in an inquiry about who we are being no matter how challenging doing so might be. Despite our internal states and the persistence of breakdowns, the commitment of the women in the WLG are such that we are creating futures that call for us to be bigger ourselves.

While all the women in our group are actively living into our created futures, some of the women are engaged in creating futures that are more noticeably demonstrated in this study. Mary and Linda are great examples of women who create futures that appear to be impossible and unlikely without their leadership. Mary creates a future where her personal and professional worlds work in harmony with each other. During the course, she shared her struggle with choosing between pursuing a successful career and a nurturing a relationship with her significant other with whom she had a long distance relationship. After the course, she discovers that she is able to start from ground zero, find peace in the midst of uncertainty, make herself available to the possibilities that living into her created future invites, and continue to research a solution to the organ donor shortage. Additionally, in the midst of her transition, she is able to secure jobs for those who worked with her prior to moving to the west coast to be with her partner. Linda discovers that being authentic is effective in her connecting with the CEO’s and in

doing so she is able to create a national platform for women's leadership. Her commitment to her created future for women's leadership gives her the being and action needed to realize this future.

However, as expected with the type of inquiry that this course invites, not all the women are in the process of creating unimaginable futures. Realizing a created future requires on-going inquiry of who we are being in order to identify and confront the constraints that limit our ability to shift away from a past-driven future. As such, by the conclusion of this study, the women remain at different stages of creating their futures. For example, I still find myself continuing to discover my created future as I am confronted with the constraints that place me back into a default way of thinking that leads a default future. This default future is one where I am not fully self-expressed and remain constrained by the contexts I have for myself as an African American woman. While I recognize that access to new ways of being in order to realize my created future is through language and the reframing my contexts, I also recognize that creating a new language and brain patterns is an on-going exercise in practice. However, as Carmen says to the women:

“[We] just continue to take the action without knowing how it's all going to turn out or who is going to be involved or any of those pieces . . . it is a whole new way to live.”

Chip Souba (2011), a former participant of the course and former Vice-President for Health Affairs and Dean of the Dartmouth School of Medicine notes:

Commitments that are hollow or partial succumb and are short-lived. Real commitment means being steadfast about creating the future one stands for and being unflustered by the breakdowns that invariably show up along

the way. Otherwise, the temptation to back off with the smallest derailment will be too great; after all, that envisioned future is only a possibility, not a guarantee (p.5).

This level of commitment and action is also evident in the created that the members of LECOLE interviewed in this study are in the midst of realizing. They are demonstrating what is possible for higher education when ontological inquiry is introduced into the curriculum at national and international institutions. They demonstrate the possibility that educators can engage in on-going learning and inquiry in the classroom, students can be active contributors to the learning that happens in the classroom, and together both educator and student can engage in an exercise of on-going discovery, collaboration, and contribution. Through leading the course these research participants are transforming through on-going reflection and discovery and thus creating spaces for their students to do the same. They are also inviting their students to create and participate in a democratic learning process in the classroom; a process where all experiences can serve as a contribution to learning. They are also creating space in the classroom for students to discover and confront the constraints that limit their ability to create a future that calls them to be bigger than they imagine. They are coaching their students through these discoveries and inviting them to stay in the inquiry. Additionally, while they are inviting their students to remain in the inquiry, they too are engaging in their own on-going inquiry. These participants also recognize the challenges associated with ontological inquiry. As such, they are conducting and sharing their research about ontological inquiry.

Participants in this study are also speak to the distinct learning experience that this course provides. The course is not designed to impart information that we can use at a later time. Rather, it invites us to actively engage in on-going inquiry and discovery. Ontologically, the course invites us to grapple with who we are being in the moments where our constraints are informing our actions, the phenomenological method provides access to those actions, and we are then invited to create a framework that considers other possible ways of being.

It is critical to note that this research is not implying that the effect of ontological inquiry is immediate transformation. The very essence of transformation is that it is a process and often not instantaneous. As we explore the nature and function of human nature, it is inevitable that our relationship to ourselves, others, and the world will continue to shift. What ontological inquiry calls for is the on-going commitment to the discovery of who we are being. It calls for us to consider a paradigm where we do not have all the answers but rather we are constantly engaging with the questions in order to remain present with how we are showing up in the world, how the world occurs for us, and ultimately discovering what our contribution to the world will be. As Nozick (2000) writes:

When we guide our lives by our own pondered thoughts, it then is our life that we are living, not someone else's. In this sense, the unexamined life is not lived fully (p.15).

This research also does not imply that ontological inquiry is positively received or easily understood by all who engage in it. After completing the Creating Course Leaders course, I conduct a three-day workshop at my institution with one of the course leaders.

For three mornings in a row we engage over 40 Student Affairs professionals and faculty. We invite them to reconsider leadership and their personal commitment to educating our students. Much like my struggle to live into a new paradigm of on-going inquiry, I find that some of the workshop participants are also challenged by this. Some attendees confuse this work with “positive thinking” or liken the course terms with psychological terminology. It is difficult for some to adapt to the language used in the course. One participant states that the material is “too heady”. That is, it is too complex and needs to be simplified to be more easily digestible. To be honest, I anticipated that some attendees would struggle with the material, much like I did while taking the course. This anticipation often has me questioning my decision not to water-down the material. I often worry about what the participants will think about the workshop.

As I continue in my journey in ontological inquiry, I can recognize that the challenges faced by me and some participants are partly a function of the way we are conditioned to teach and learn. We are accustomed to looking for an answer rather than living in the question. As the leader of this workshop I was still learning how to engage in ontological inquiry. I was not the expert. Rather, along with the attendees, I had to continually question who I was being and allow myself to be confronted by my assumptions about the way learning should occur during this workshop. I had to be ok with the attendees struggling through the material. I had to find comfort in knowing that all of them might not have discoveries or insights. Was this not the sort of engagement and purpose-driven experiences that I sought as a Student Affairs professional prior to taking this course? And yet, here I was inviting workshop attendees to engage in a

journey-driven experience while still living in my destination-focused paradigm. I was more concerned about the attendees knowing and understanding the material rather than engaging in the inquiry of the material.

Ironically, despite my concern about the challenges that attendees would face while engaging with the material, a majority of those who provide feedback after the workshop have positive things to say; although only 13 of the 40 who attend the workshop provide feedback. While two respondents indicate that they would not recommend the workshop to someone else, the other ten respond that they would. All 13 respondents indicate that they believe that the material from the workshop will increase their effectiveness as a leader. One respondent writes:

I am finding that in the time since the workshop I have been much aware of my own thinking and my sense of grace for myself. I have also been more willing to take the action towards my future. The distance of the future self helps give me a perspective I hadn't had before. I also have been able to apply my learning to my work in the Career Center. I am more aware of my "already always listening" towards people and I have been working on putting it aside. It has been very helpful.

Some respondents are also able to demonstrate their awareness of the ontological distinction between "being" vs. "doing" that the workshop provides. One respondent writes, "I was highly pleased that we focused on BEING leaders rather than how to DO leadership." Another respondent writes:

I especially found it helpful to have a new language to describe issues encountered when working with people and trying to lead them and also new language to understand what I am doing and why. I found it very helpful to understand that leadership is about "being a leader" not "doing leadership". I also appreciated the tangibles that I am taking away from the conference. The tangible awareness that I now have of my own thoughts and my own development, granting myself permission to grow and not

having a sense that there is an end destination but rather a mountain without a top so I will be striving for my lifetime to grow.

While some find value in an ontological approach to learning, there are those who are still operating within models of learning and leadership that invite learners to simply “do” rather than also considering who they are being. When asked if there were additional topics the attendees would have liked to discuss, one attendee responds that they would have liked for us to “examine other great leaders and instances of their courage in leading people in times of crisis.” Another suggests that we discuss “other concepts and theories on leadership.” These recommendations demonstrate the challenges one might face when shifting from a third-person approach to learning to an ontological, as-lived approach. Thus, as previously mentioned, ontological inquiry can be challenging and not always easily adopted.

I am also presented with the opportunity to teach the full course at my institution. I teach a 3-credit course to 20 graduate students; 12 are Doctoral students and eight are Master’s students. Students are graded on a 100 point scale based on participation, 3 journals, 3 discussion entries, 1 quiz, and a final paper that outlines a culminating leadership project. The required readings for the course include the slide deck and 6 additional articles. While I do not get the sense that my students came into the course being skeptical about the material, I do get the sense that they are not prepared for the challenges the material would present. Most students seem to struggle the most with the contextual framework for leadership. I attribute this to the fact that at the time, I do not feel completely comfortable delivering that part of the course. One student asks me what a linguistic abstraction had to do with leadership. In that moment, I think back to how

confused I felt when Kari was explaining a linguistic abstraction during the Being a Leader course. I feel myself tensing up in front of the class as I struggle to find a way to answer the student's question. Aren't I supposed to be the expert? How can I not know the answer? Will my students discredit me? In hindsight, I see that I wasn't being authentic about my inauthenticities. In that moment, I choose not to communicate to the student that I am not clear on this aspect of the course. Rather, I resort to trying to give the right answer to avoid looking like I am not the expert.

Another challenge is that as graduate students in our Higher Education program, my students are accustomed to taking courses that engage them in theories and examples of effective leadership. As a result, some students liken the material to another theory of leadership that they are familiar with. There is one student in particular that I find myself constantly redirecting from using Chickering's Theory of Identity Development. This theory examines identity development through seven vectors and uses terms like autonomy, identity, purpose, and integrity. As a result, I constantly remind my students that the course is not about a theoretical application of leadership, but rather an ontological one.

I find that some struggle to dig deep in their self-reflection. One student insists that he is always a person of integrity. This is because he defines integrity as "what you do when no one is looking". He is not able to discover the ways in which he might be creating out-of-integrity behavior in his life. Another student insists that she is always authentic. She would say "what you see is what you get" or "I am who I am and I make no apologies for it." For her, authenticity means "being true to who you are" rather than

an exercise in confronting her inauthenticities. I invite her to consider her taken for granted assumptions. When I ask her about a strongly held belief that she has she responds “that everything happens for a reason”. Without truly mastering the foundations of integrity and authenticity, some students are left with a superficial understanding of the importance of these foundational factors.

Like my experience leading the workshop, I find myself challenged and frustrated by the idea that some of my students are not connecting with the material. Yet, rather than challenging them to continue in the inquiry, I often resolve to my assumption that their experience of the course will be diminished if I push them too hard. Plus this is my first time teaching the course and I do not want them to leave with a bad experience. I liken this approach to the “disengagement compact” that Kuh speaks of. That is, if I don’t challenge them as students, then they won’t challenge me as a professor. They would also view me more favorably if I don’t make the course too difficult.

This concern about creating a challenging learning experience is a constraint that I am constantly confronted with as an instructor. I talk about this constraint a few weeks after teaching the class as I attend the Creating Course Leaders course again for the second time. I can remember Mike Jenson telling me and the rest of the course participants that as instructors we cannot be concerned with people liking us. Rather, we ought to maintain our integrity and the integrity of the course by remaining committed to our students and the possibilities available them when engaging in ontological inquiry. I think back to some of the created futures that my students write about and realize that I should have challenged them to think bigger. One student’s future is creating a

comprehensive recruitment plan for her sorority organization. When she submits this as her final leadership project, I do not get the sense that this is a future that she created nor is it one that calls for her leadership. Rather, it is a project that she is in the midst of doing anyway and she finds a way to fit the course material into this project; it is not a created future. In hindsight, I wish that I pushed her to dig deeper. I am able to see how my constraints hinder me from being fully committed to this student and her creation of a bigger future. My experiences in leading the workshop and teaching the course are clear demonstrations that ontological inquiry can be challenging for both student and teacher.

In fact, as the researcher I find the process of conducting research about ontological inquiry to be extremely challenging. While working on this dissertation research, I am often confronted with the difficulties of writing about ontological inquiry while engaging in it. I find myself challenged by the on-going process of examining who I am being while completing this dissertation. In many instances, writing this dissertation occurs to me as a process that needs to have a clear endpoint rather than a process that calls for on-going inquiry and discovery. As a result of this occurrence, I often find myself resisting the inquiry and looking for an answer; any answer that would satisfy my need for an end goal. Chris, a member of LECOLE, talks about this challenge with ontological research in a way that accurately speaks to the challenges I experience. He says:

“We want to know what it’s going to be like before we do it. We need a clear definition before we act. Our education says we need to know first. Understanding is knowledge. I can only learn by letting go of what I know. As a researcher it is hard to let go of what I know. You have to be with what is emerging. The solution is questioning and thinking in ways that don’t have an explanation. You have to be in a dance in the inquiry.

You have to be in this space of ‘I can dwell with a certain rigor that does not require something to happen.’

I recognize that this research into ontological learning requires a commitment on my part to on-going discovery and a willingness to continually look at my work from new lenses. I find this level of commitment especially challenging when I am not present to the greater contribution that this work is to highlighting the possibilities that ontological inquiry can offer for higher education. I do, however, find myself in moments of clarity where I am not resisting. It is through my interactions with the participants in this study that I come to experience this research as more than just a dissertation. That is, I realize that this research is part of the future I am creating for higher education. In those moments, I find inspiration and strength in the unwavering commitment demonstrated by the participants in this research. I am reminded that some of the benefits of engaging this leadership work is the collective support, encouragement, and empowerment that each member provides through the challenges and successes we face. As such, I am aware that the future that this research can create for higher education is one that we are collectively living into. It is one where the collective narratives of all the participants in this study serve as critical contributions to the creation of a future for higher education that might not otherwise happen without our leadership.

It is also important to note that this research does not argue that an ontological/phenomenological leadership course is the only answer to educational reform and fostering classroom experiences that invite students to experience themselves as active contributors in the creation of futures for society. Rather, this research highlights the possibilities associated with ontological inquiry and how it might inform or

compliment current practices we engage in within our classrooms. However, while the course employs elements of critical pedagogy and transformative learning, it is distinct in its ontological model and phenomenological method. Also distinct to the course is an approach to leader and leadership that is based on the four foundational factors for leadership, the contextual framework for leader and leadership, and the examining of the ontological constraints that hinder effective leadership. Using this approach the course invites students to experience themselves anew and discover what it means for them to be in the world. Utilizing the distinctions of the course, participants are invited to consider that that we are not confined to fixed traits or characteristics. Rather, we can choose to experience ourselves as malleable with the freedom to be and act without constraints. In doing so, the course invites participants to create a new context for what it means to be a leader. As one Chris, a LECOLE member notes:

“We have a notion called leadership. So what we do is we take that and create knowledge around it. So a certain language is created around it based on that. . So our notion of leadership needs to be reexamined. That’s where transformation happens. Rethinking the way we define leadership.”

The importance of creating new contexts for leadership ought not to be lost. In the creation of new contexts, this course challenges participants to rethink traditional definitions of leadership. That is, leadership is no longer confined to traditional or societal definitions; rather it is uniquely and individually defined as only the individual can experience it. In experiencing ourselves as leaders and creators of a future we gain access to the possibilities that exist as we continue to examine the limits we place on

ourselves. Such possibilities have great implications for higher education. As

Lingenfelter (2012) notes,

American colleges and universities....can no longer consider themselves merely the instrument for producing intellectual elite; they must become the means by which every citizen, youth, and adult is enabled and encouraged to carry his education, formal and informal, as far as his native capacities permit (p. 1).

As demonstrated through the narratives in this study, participants have been able to use the distinctions of the course to create futures for educators and students that renovate the way teaching and learning occur in the classroom. Participants are experiencing themselves as leaders who have created futures that invite them to access ways of being beyond the way they wound up being. Ultimately, the course invites participants to actively engage in a journey of inquiry and discovery that generates possibilities for creating futures that might not happen without their leadership.

Implications for Practice

While this research illuminates how an ontological model and phenomenological method in the classroom can inform the personal and collective transformation of the participants, this work is about more than just transformation. That is, how can the transformation that individuals continue to realize catalyze educational reform? While this research does not assume that ontological inquiry is the only answer to educational reform or that it results in immediate transformation, it does seek to illuminate how this work can inform the work we do as educators. One possibility might be the incorporation of ontological inquiry into liberal arts education. Certainly liberal arts education has

much to contribute to the development to graduates who can experience themselves as creators of a future for society. Thus, an integrative approach to ontological inquiry and liberal arts might enhance the learning that occurs in the classroom. As McGowan (2014) notes:

Not unlike the journey of life itself, the liberal arts journey is indirect, textured, often difficult, but ultimately rewarding. This is because liberal education is about discovering your passion and developing your capacity to pursue and realize a life that is successful and meaningful. Liberal arts students learn more than intellectual content; they learn how to learn as a way of being in the world (para. 2-4).

As such, ontological inquiry might support liberal arts education in realizing its goals of providing “students with knowledge, values and skills that will prepare them for active and effective participation in society” (Barker, 2000, para. 6). Ontological inquiry, much like liberal arts education aims to develop one’s capacity for critical inquiry and understanding. Therefore, ontological inquiry can provide students with actionable access to who they are being as they engage in learning that invites them to negotiate their relationship to the larger world.

Ontological inquiry can also support educators in realizing their capacity for critical inquiry and understanding. That is, if we are to invite our students to develop their capacity for inquiry, we ought to engage in critical inquiry as well. As educators, if we are seeking to foster the sort of learning that liberal arts education calls for, we ought to engage in practices that model on-going inquiry and discovery for our students. Much like my experience and the experiences of LECOLE participants in teaching the course, we ought to find comfort in not being the expert in the classroom. We ought to be able to stand in the inquiry with our students rather than resorting to the “banking model” that

Paulo Freire (1972) argues against. That is, as educators it is critical that we not view our students as empty vessels into which we are to deposit knowledge and information. Rather, it is important that we consider the power dynamics that we create in the classroom by examining who we are being as educators, who we are assuming our students to be, and how learning in the classroom occurs for us. If we are seeking to realize the goals of liberal arts education yet learning occurs for us as only the teacher can be the knower, then we may fail to develop our students as global citizens with the capacity to pursue lifelong learning and become valuable members of their communities (Haidar, 2014).

In the most fundamental way, the findings in this research call for a reconsideration of the way we teach and learn. This research invites educators to consider possibilities for creating the sort of learning experiences that cultivate leaders who know themselves as engaged contributors to society. As Giroux (2013) notes:

There is a need to invent modes of communication that connect learning to social change and foster modes of critical agency through which people assume responsibility for each other. This is not merely about skill sharing or democratizing education and politics; it is about generating a new vision of democracy and a radical project in which people can recognize themselves, a vision that connects with and speaks to the American public's desires, dreams, and hopes (p. 19).

American higher education not only has a responsibility to leave learners transformed but also with the tools needed to create futures that might not happen without their leadership. That is, educators and students must move beyond social barriers and towards a social movement that embodies democracy, agency, and contribution from all

walks of life. This can only be realized when educators and learners experience themselves differently, more powerfully.

As educators we might consider challenging our taken-for-granted assumptions about ourselves, others, and the world. How might we reconsider the limits and barriers we place on ourselves and our students? How might we disrupt the social paradigms that assume racial, gender, and economic hierarchies? Perhaps we might reconsider the sort of learning experiences we are creating that reproduce such dynamics in the classroom. Part of achieving this, as evidenced in the interviews conducted with LECOLE members, is fostering learning experiences that empower students to discover things for themselves. We might then find value in the unique and individual experiences of our students and validate those experiences as valuable contributions to the world. In doing so, we empower our students to consider themselves beyond the “way they wound up” and experience themselves as contributors to the creation of futures for society. As noted by Tomas and Levine (2011):

Every citizen has a voice in the management of the community. The progress, and even the safety, of a democratic community depend in part upon the intelligence of the citizens, and by thus we cannot mean the intelligence of some citizen, but the combined intelligence of all (p. 154).

What is critical here is that “every citizen” has a voice in the development of a democratic society, especially those who have been traditionally underrepresented. All students, including women, people of color, the underprivileged, and the underrepresented, warrant opportunities to see themselves beyond the way they have been defined by society and self. This requires the creation of new and empowering contexts that offer possibilities for other ways of being in the world.

The Women Leading Group embodies this idea of accessing new ways of being in order to realize actionable change. The leadership course does not remove our humanity. Rather, it invites us to play bigger while maintaining our humanity. Erhard et al. (2012) write the following about the course:

We are not talking about changing who you are, or being different than you are, or being better able to explain or understand why you are the way you are. This is not a psychological exercise. Rather this is an ontological exercise. It is about a transformation in who you “wound up being”. That is, expanding your “opportunity set” of possible ways of being and acting. Or, said in another way, giving yourself a greater range, or repertoire of being and acting (p. 63).

As educators, how can we empower our students to transform who they “wound up being” and expand their opportunity for other possible way of being and action? It is important that we invite our students to be active participants in learning and social change while celebrating their unique contributions to the world despite whatever conditions they are encountering.

Also evidenced in this research is the need to rethink the power structures created in the classrooms. Many LECOLE members experience themselves as students all over again when leading the course. As they are leading the course, they do not view themselves as the experts in the classroom. These are well-respected and highly successful educators in the field. Yet, when leading the course and in any given moment, the educator becomes the student and the student becomes the educator. This creates a spirit of investment and collaboration that calls for everyone to be accountable for the learning and success of each other. Certainly this requires vulnerability and openness on the part of both educator and student. Sharing experiences creates a space of humanity

and connectivity. We are then able to see ourselves and our students as a part of the greater fabric of life. We become accountable for each other and work together for the greater good. As such, one also cannot underestimate the value of authentic listening in the classroom.

As educators it is important that we consider the listening we have for our students. That is, it is essential that we create a space where their aspirations are heard and celebrated. In doing so, we also invite them to be a listening for themselves in the way they language their beliefs about themselves and the world. As Souba (2011) notes:

This idea that reality is constituted in language is core to an ontological approach to leadership. Language reframes our observing, sensemaking, and feelings so we can be a different kind of leader. When we change our thinking and speaking, a different reality becomes available to us. Shifts in our mental maps generate new possibilities for desires, actions and outcomes not previously accessible. The distinctions that we share with one another, with the intent of achieving mutual understanding, are those that occur in language. This...is the foundation for connectivity, collaboration, and alignment (p. 8).

There is an internal dialogue and external language that proves essential if individuals are to experience themselves differently. As evidenced in the Women Leading calls, critical reflection is essential to this internal dialogue. Additionally, this dialogue is best navigated through the sharing of such with others who can challenge, support, and inspire us to be our best selves. As educators, it is important that we take the time to authentically listen to the concerns of our students and thus challenge them to self-reflect and consider their internal dialogue. Imagine creating a space where students can share the challenges, struggles, and successes through their self-reflection with others who are a

supportive listening for them. And as they become more aware of their humanity, it is essential that we invite them to celebrate it as a contribution to the world.

Imagine a system of education that invites educators and students to be contributors that engage in democratic practices within and beyond the classroom despite whatever conditions they are facing. That is, despite social conditions and the personal narratives we assign to ourselves as a result, we still powerfully engage with the world. Souba (2011) writes:

While we cannot do much about what we know, we can alter the way we know it. We have the freedom to alter the way we distinguish the situations that occur in our lives; we can shift the context (p.8).

What this research highlights is that when people have a commitment bigger than themselves, they become connected to people in a different way. When individuals continuously make themselves available to the possibilities of creating futures that require their leadership, they become keenly aware of the world around them and can choose a life of freedom without limits. Individuals might then see themselves as part of the world around them rather than a person who happens to simply exist in the world. The result is a web of connectivity that invites all voices to the table in the creation of futures for society. Imagine if education occurred to us as communities of learning, discovery, sharing and action. This is what an ontological and phenomenological approach to learning can create and how such an approach can reform American education.

Having established the need to rethink the way we approach education we might now consider how to prepare people for the kind of learning that ontological inquiry requires. Those who are engaged in this leadership work are cognizant that we have a

commitment larger than what the current educational structure provides. We are grappling with how to engage our colleagues in this work although many are still operating from a different paradigm. The participants in this study are committed to shifting the current paradigm in education. We are doing this one course, one workshop, and one presentation at a time. Certainly, the reformation of American higher education will not happen overnight. Much like the process of transformation, it will require on-going critical reflection, discovery, and action from all those involved. As educators we are called to consider new pedagogical practices that invite our students to experience themselves as part of the future they want to create. This will require from both educators and students a commitment to a better future for themselves, others, and society. It will collectively require educators and students to critically think about who we are being in the world and what our contribution to it will be. It will require us as educators and students to align our present actions with what is required to create a future founded in democracy, inclusivity, access, agency, and the elimination of social inequalities. As such, the course invites participants, regardless of race, gender, SES, or ability, to create a future bigger than themselves that wasn't going to happen; one where their being and action in the present is consistent with that future. As educators, we are also invited to engage in life-long discovery, on-going inquiry, and to dance with the challenges and successes that come with on-going critical reflection and discourse. Essentially, the Being a Leader course can offer much in informing educational practices that foster the development of future leaders who can then inform the creation of a future society and the catalyzing of educational reform.

Limitations of the Study

The research conducted in this study was exploratory and considered a topic that is limited in previous research. Therefore, I found myself exploring what it means to conduct research about this course as I was conducting my own research for this study. That is, I was researching a topic that I was continuing to discover in the process. As such, I continued to discover what was missing as the study was emerging. Additionally, because the topic of this study is relatively new, the results cannot refute or confirm findings from previous research. This study assumes an association between an ontological leadership course, transformation, and educational reform. While this research illuminates the transformations of the participants who engaged in an ontological leadership course, the span of this research does not reach far enough in time to identify more examples of specific reforms in education realized as a result. That is, this study does not longitudinally follow participants over a long span of time. As a result, this study cannot identify the long-term ways in which ontological inquiry is contributing to reform within American higher education.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research might follow participants over time to identify the ways in which ontological inquiry contributes to and informs educational reform. The majority of the participants in this study are educators who have or will implement an ontological model into the curriculum at national and international institutions. While the participants in this study are adult professionals who are engaging in ontological inquiry and introducing this

inquiry to universities, future research might be longitudinal in nature and inquire about how an ontological model has informed the futures created by university students of the course over the span of many years. Much like Magolda's 1992 twenty-year, longitudinal study on college students and self-authorship, future research might also follow college students who have taken the leadership course and inquire about how their experiences with ontological inquiry informed the futures they go on to create. Additionally, there are those who might not experience any lasting or life-changing effects of an ontological course. Perhaps it is the case that there are some variables that determine the extent to which one engages in and benefits from an ontological course. Therefore, longitudinal studies would provide insight into the degree to which one continues to engage in ontological inquiry and ascribe value to such an experience over time.

Further research might also explore how ontological inquiry translates into everyday curriculum in a university setting. That is, what sort of pedagogical adjustments are being made in the classroom that foster an ontological approach to on-going inquiry and discovery? Additionally, what changes in student-teacher dynamics are being created by incorporating ontology in the classroom? Future research might also consider how ontological inquiry translates in a non-traditional classroom setting. That is, with higher education embracing more on-line education and the recent explosion of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), how might ontological inquiry translate in such a setting?

Finally, comparative studies might also look at outcomes for those who maintain support systems, much like the Women Leading Group, after taking the leadership course as compared to those who did not. WLG and LECOLE members found it beneficial to have

on-going conversations with others who were familiar with the language and distinctions associated with the course. Findings for such a study might inform the sort of long-term resources and support needed to sustain on-going ontological inquiry.

Appendix A: Approved IRB Consent Forms: LECOLE and Women Leading Forms

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

March 24, 2014

P.I. Name: Baker
Protocol #: 14-459M

Uchenna Baker
319 Chablish Way.
Wilmington NC 28411

Dear Uchenna Baker:

(Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment)

Protocol Title: "An Ontological/ Phenomenological Model of Leadership: Igniting Individual and Collective Transformation and Catalyzing Educational Reform"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Approval Date:	3/3/2014	Expiration Date:	3/2/2015
Expedited Category(s):	6, 7	Approved # of Subject(s):	20

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval**-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. **This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;**
- **Reporting**-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications**-Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)**-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review**-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

Additional Notes: Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110.

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,



Acting For,
Dr. Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Rutgers University Institutional Review Board
(MW: lb)

cc: Carolyn J. White

An Ontological/Phenomenological Model of Leadership: Igniting Individual and Collective Transformation and Catalyzing Educational Reform

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Uchenna Baker, who is a student in the Urban Education Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine the possible associations between an ontological/phenomenological leadership course, individual/collective transformation, and educational reform.

Approximately 20 subjects between the ages of 30 and 60 years old will participate in the study. Depending on the group you are a part of, your participation will last either 1-2 hours or approximately 6 months.

The study procedures include participatory action research via biweekly web-based group meetings and individual interviews. Therefore, participants can participate from their home, office, or anywhere they have access to a telephone or internet. The principal investigator will conduct research and collect data from her home or office in North Carolina.

Participation in this study will involve the following:

- As part of a group of women (Women Leading Group) who have taken the leadership course your involvement in this study will include the following:
 - Bi-weekly meetings with other women where a specific aspect of the course will be discussed.
 - During these meetings, each group member will be invited to offer commentary on their experiences and insights as it relates to the course.
 - Summary meeting notes will be posted on a shared online workspace after each meeting. The workspace will serve as a central location for group members to contribute to or edit documents and ensure that our experiences are accurately reflected in this study.
 - Each group conference will last approximately 1 hour. We will have approximately 10 conferences that will span the timeframe of 6 months.
 - All group meetings will be tape recorded.
 - These group meetings will occur via on-line web conferencing. Participants can choose to only call in to the conference without the use of a web camera. Participants can participate from their home, office, or anywhere they have access to a telephone or internet.
- As part of the LECOLE learning community, your involvement in this study will include:
 - Participation in a one-time, semi-structured, topical individual interview. I will have some standard questions that I will ask each individual.
 - Each interview will last at least one hour but no longer than two hours.
 - These interviews will be tape recorded to allow for organic, uninterrupted conversation and documented for accuracy.
 - The field in which these interviews will occur will vary depending on the participant. Due to the fact that course participants are both nationally and internationally located, interviews will be conducted via face-to-face web-based meetings, telephone, or email. Each participant can determine which field is most convenient for them. Participants can participate from their home, office, or anywhere they have access to a telephone or internet.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your name, age, race, gender,

APPROVED

MAR 03 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

EXPIRES

MAR 02 2015

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

AUDIOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: "*An Ontological/Phenomenological Model of Leadership: Igniting Individual and Collective Transformation and Catalyzing Educational Reform*" conducted by Uchenna Baker. I am asking for your permission to allow me to use audiotape as part of that research study. Women Leading and LECOLE members do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study. If an individual Women Leading group member declines to be audio recorded, they would not be able to participate in the web-based group conference meetings. However, such member may provide information to the researcher via email or phone without being recorded. Members of LECOLE can fully participate in this study without being recorded.

The recording(s) will be used for data analysis by the researcher.

The recording(s) will include participants' names, professional affiliations, and any information shared by the participants as related to their experiences and insights resulting from taking the "Being a Leader" course.

The recording(s) will be stored in an online Google drive that is password protected and will be destroyed upon completion of the study procedures.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

APPROVED

MAR 03 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

EXPIRES

MAR 02 2015

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

Appendix B: Research Invitation Letter

Attachment 3

Research Invitation Letter

Dear Leaders,

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Urban Systems Program: Educational Policy Track at Rutgers University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting to inquire into an educational intervention and the contribution it may make to the transformation of higher education. Specifically, this study will focus on the individuals who took the course, "*Being and Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological and Phenomenological Model*" and the associated leadership actions that participants are in the process of initiating since taking the course. My research will highlight the transformational possibilities associated with taking this course and the potential opportunities these individual transformations may contribute to the collective reformation of higher education.

This is a confidential study. Therefore, no identifying information will be recorded. This means that your name, address, phone number, date of birth, etc. will not be recorded for this study. Please feel free to email me at bakeru@uncw.edu or call me at (732) 309-9108 with any questions or concerns. I truly look forward to working with you on this study.

Respectfully,

Uchenna Baker
Associate Director of Residence Life
University of North Carolina Wilmington
601 South College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403-5959
Email: bakeru@uncw.edu
Office: 910-962-3241

APPROVED

MAR 03 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

EXPIRES

MAR 02 2015

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

Appendix C: List of Presented Talks Associated with the Leadership Course

Name of Talk or Presentation	Date(s)	Location
Integrity and Leadership	Feb 2009	Mays Business School, Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Apr 6 2009	Olin School of Business, Washington University, St. Louis, & Cook School of Business, St Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Apr 30 2009	Center for Character and Leadership Development, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	May 20 2009	Gruter Institute, "Law, Behavior, and the Brain" Conference, Squaw Valley Law,
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Jul 22 2009	Simon School of Business, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York
CMIS Leadership Retreat	Aug 25 2010	Camp Allen, Navasota, Texas
Why We Do What We Do: A New Model Providing Actionable Access to The Source of Performance	Sept 2009	John F Kennedy School of Government, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Oct 22 2009	Canyon Partners, Los Angeles, California
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Nov 15 2009	Decision Sciences Institutes Meetings, New Orleans, Louisiana
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological Model"	Feb 26 2010	Microchip Technology, Inc.
Visionary Leadership	Spring 2010	Colorado Springs, Colorado
Now that we have studied Leadership, what is it?	Aug 5 2010	National Association of College and Business Officers (NACUBO), Business Management Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	August 7 2010	Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Professional Development Workshop, Montreal, Canada
An Introduction to "Being a Leader...."	August 2010	Space Education and Training Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado
An Introduction to "Being a Leader...."	August 2010	Space Education and Training Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado
An Introduction to "Being a Leader...."	September 2010	Antelope Trails International Baccalaureate Elementary School, Colorado Springs, Colorado

An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Sept 5 2010	India International Center, IC Center for Governance, New Delhi, India
The Language of leadership	Oct 7 2010	Humanism Honor Society, Dallas, Texas
A Free Value Approach to Free Value	Oct-10	KaosPilot, Aarhus, Denmark
A Value Free Approach to Value	November 2010	KaosPilot, Aarhus, Denmark
Leading Again for the First Time	Oct 27 2010	Presentation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Resilient Systems for Peak Performance	Oct 29 2010	Fischer College of Business, The Ohio State University
First Annual Leadership Summit, Texas A & M Health Science Center	Dec 6 2010	Scott and White Healthcare, College of Medicine, Texas A & M, Temple, Texas
Introduction to Leadership	Dec 8 2010	Microchip Technology, Inc., Arizona
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Feb 11 2011	Thunderbird School of Global Management, Phoenix, Arizona
Access to Performance	Jan-11	San Antonio, Texas
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	Jan-11	Olin School of Business, Washington University, St. Louis, & Cook School of Business, St Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri

Increasing Performance: Integrity, Listening, Shifting Context	Feb-11	Space Education and Training Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado
Increasing Performance: Integrity, Listening, Shifting Context	Mar-11	Space Education and Training Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado
Access to Performance	Mar-11	Washington, DC
Leading a Life That's Hittable	May 7 2011	Keynote address at the Annual Wheelock Conference
A New Model of Leadership Performance	June 6 2011	Boston University School of Management
Leading Yourself: Being a Leader First	June 7 2011	American College of Surgeons
How do we know when we are in the presence of authentic leadership?	Aug 1 2011	National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), Business Management Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara
The Foundation of Leadership, Context/Occurrence, and creating a future beyond what would have happened anyway.	Aug 2 2011	The Phoenician Resort, Scottsdale, AZ.
Foundation of Leadership: Integrity, Authenticity and Having a Purpose Bigger Than Ourselves	Aug 2 2011	National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), Business Management Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara
Leadership	Nov-11	Leadership Forum of McArdle/Ramerman, Rochester, New York

Being a Transformational Leader in Higher Education	May 9 2012	Conference Presentation on Leadership in Higher Education, Western Association of College and University Business Officers, Annual Meeting, Denver, Colorado
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	August 1, 2012	National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), Business Management Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	November, 2012	Presentations in Mexico City (at IPADE and UP)
Master in Business Administration/ Finance	November 2012	Presentation at University of Northern British Columbia, British Columbia
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	March 2013	Presentation at University of Delaware
The Context is Decisive	March 2013	Kyiv Polytechnic University Linguistic Conference, Kyiv, Ukraine
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	April 2013	Presentation at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	April 2013	Presentation at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	August 5 2013	National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), Business Management Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara
Integrity in the Work Place	August 6 2013	National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), Business Management Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara
Integrity	September 2013	University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, British Columbia, Canada
Integrity	October 2013	Midwestern University, Phoenix, Arizona
An Introduction to "Being A Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological/Phenomenological Model"	December 2013	Various talks in Singapore, New Delhi and Bombay to introduce the Leadership Course. Specific dates to follow.
Integrity	January 2014	Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada
Undergraduate Guest Seminar on Integrity	January 2014	University of Denver, Denver, Colorado
How do we know when we are in the presence of authentic leadership?	Feb 11th, 2014	Humboldt State University, Arcata, California
The Power of Context	March 2014	University of Arizona
An Ontological Approach to Engineering Leadership	March 21 & 22, 2014	San Jose State University, San Jose, California, and Coherent Inc., Santa Clara, California

The Contextual Framework	April-May 2014	University of Arizona
The Contextual Framework	May-June 2014	Thunderbird University, School of Global Management, Glendale, Arizona
Introduction to the Leadership Course	May 14, 2014	Rand Corporation, Los Angeles, California
A Personal Experiment	May1, 2014	University of Arizona
An Introduction de ser lider (Introduction to Being A Leader)	June 5, 2014	XIII National Trauma Conference, Bogota, Colombia

Appendix D: Individual Interview Questions (LECOLE)

1. How did you learn about the course “Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological and Phenomenological Model”?
2. What were some key insights and/or discoveries that you took away from the course?
3. Why did you decide to participate in the training course “Creating Leaders: Mastering the Fundamentals and Effective Delivery of the Ontological Access to Leadership”?
4. What informed your commitment to lead the leadership course?
5. Where have you taught and/or where are currently teaching the course? If you have not taught the course, why not?
6. Are you teaching the course the way it was designed or have you amended it in anyway?
 - a. If taught as is, why?
 - b. If amended why and how?
7. What challenges, if any, have you encountered in the process of leading the course?
8. What insights and/or discoveries have you encountered from teaching the course?
9. What insights and/or discoveries have your students encountered from taking the course?
10. Are you able to identify some similarities in your experience as a student of the course and as a leader of the course?
11. In what ways, if any, has taking and leading the leadership course impacted other aspects of your life?
12. What additional information, if any, would you like to provide about the course, being a student, and/or being an instructor?

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Ph.D. in Educational Policy with a focus on Urban Education

Research Focus: An Ontological and Phenomenological Model of Leadership: Igniting Individual and Collective Transformation and Catalyzing Educational Reform-May 2015

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, New Brunswick, NJ

Masters of Education in Counseling Psychology, Graduate School of Education

Bachelor of Arts in English and Sociology-May 2004

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, Vancouver, Canada

Being a Leader and the Effective Exercise of Leadership: An Ontological and Phenomenological Model - Course Certification 2013

RYERSON UNIVERSITY, Toronto, Canada

Creating Course Leaders Workshop: Mastering the Fundamentals and Effective Delivery of the Ontological/Phenomenological Access to Leadership-Workshop Certification 2103 and 2014

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON, Wilmington, NC

Associate Director of Residence Life, January 2012-present

Title IX Investigator, November 2014 –present

Part-time Faculty, Watson College of Education, May 2014-present

UTICA COLLEGE, Utica, NY

Director of Residence and Life and Housing, June 2010-January 2012

Instructor, August 2010-December 2011

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, New Brunswick, NJ

Residence Life Coordinator, Cook/Douglass Campus, 2007-2010

MIDDLESEX COUNTY CARE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION, Edison, NJ

Care Manager, Coordinated Family Care, 2004-2005

SELECTED UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON, Wilmington, NC

♦ *Student Affairs Assessment Committee*, member, present

- ◆ *Living Learning Community Development Committee*, co-chair, present
- ◆ *New Staff Professional Development Committee*, member, present
- ◆ *Leadership Symposium Steering Committee*, member, present
- ◆ *LGBTQIA Workgroup*, fall 2012

UTICA COLLEGE, Utica, NY

- ◆ *ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Committee*, 2010-2012
- ◆ *Orientation Committee*, 2010-2012
- ◆ *First Year Experience Committee*, 2010-2012
- ◆ *Registration Operations Committee*, 2010-2012
- ◆ *Committee on College Sustainability*, 2010-2012
- ◆ *Campus Safety Committee*, 2010-2012

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, New Brunswick, NJ

- ◆ *First Year Experience Committee*, 2009-2010
- ◆ *Professional Development Committee*, 2008-2009
- ◆ *University Open House Committee*, 2007-2010
- ◆ *Diversity Committee*, 2007-2008
- ◆ *Large Scale University Programming Committee*, 2007-2008
- ◆ *Student Life Leadership Committee*, 2004-2007