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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

GENDER EQUALITY AND AUTHENTICITY: A STUDY OF WOMEN IN IT LEADERSHIP

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Samantha L. Dewalt

March, 2017

Doug Leigh, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Samantha L. Dewalt

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Doug Leigh, Ph.D., Chairperson

June Schmieder-Ramirez, Ph.D.

James R. DellaNeve, Ed.D.

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VITA

EDUCATION

- Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA May 2017
Education Doctorate in Organizational Leadership
Honors: Passed Comprehensive Examination with Honors
- The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK May 2012
Master of Business Administration
Honors: Phi Beta Phi, Beta Gamma Sigma
- The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK May 2006
Bachelor of Arts in Communication; Minor in Sociology
Honors: Phi Beta Kappa

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA 2015–present
Senior Director, Industry Engagement
- The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 2012–2015
Associate Director, IT Corporate Engagement
- Cole Technology Group, Norman, OK 2008–2012
Vice President, Marketing
- Hal Smith Marketing Group, Norman, OK 2006–2008
Vice President & Partner

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Kahoe, S., Matranga, J., & McCoy, C. *Driving Innovation Through University-Industry Strategic Partnerships*. Presented at the UIIN International Conference, Amsterdam, Netherlands. June 2016.

Kahoe, S., & McCoy, C. *Big Data Collaboration Leads to Big Impact: Driving Innovation Through University-Industry Strategic Partnerships*. Invited keynote address at OSISoft Users Conference, San Francisco, CA. April 2016.

Kahoe, S., & McCoy, C. *Leading Change: Implementing a Comprehensive Industry Engagement Model*. Presented at the UIIN International Conference, Berlin, Germany. June 2015.

Kahoe, S. *Driving Innovation through Strategic Vendor Partnerships*. Presentation selected for Educause 2014 Annual Conference, Poster Session, Orlando, FL. October 2014.

Kahoe, S. *An Innovative Approach to IT Corporate Engagement*. Invited talk at Big 12 CIO Conference, Norman, OK. March 2013.

Kahoe, S. *Creating a Culture of Collaboration*. Presented at the Network of Academic Corporate Relations Officers Annual Conference, Evanston, IL. August 2012.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND SERVICE

Lehigh University Academic Infrastructure Working Group	April 2016–present
University-Industry Innovation Network (UIIN)	January 2015–present
National Academy of Inventors (NAI)	January 2015–present
Network of Academic Corporate Relations Officers (NACRO)	April 2012–present
The University of Oklahoma Administrative Staff Council	2014–2015
Norman Chamber of Commerce; Board of Directors, Executive Committee	2006–2014
City of Norman Strategic Water Supply Committee	2012–2014
Norman NEXT Young Professionals; Chair, Founding Board Member	2006–2014
MOR Associates, Advanced Leaders Program	2013
City of Norman Charter Review Commission	2013
Norman Rotary Club; Board of Directors, Director of Public Relations	2006–2012
Leadership Norman Graduate, Norman Chamber of Commerce	2008–2009

PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

Journal Record Achievers Under 40 Award Winner, Oklahoma City, OK	2013
NEXT Under 40 Award Winner, Norman, OK	2012

ABSTRACT

This purpose of this dissertation is to understand how women senior leaders in the information technology (IT) industry experience leading with authenticity in the context of a male-dominated work environment. The IT industry has been unsuccessful in attracting and retaining women in leadership positions. For decades, women have faced challenges with gender biases in the workplace. Research has shown that in some predominantly male work environments, women experience pressures to conform to long-established norms in order to advance up the corporate ladder. Using a phenomenological methodology, this study examines how women describe their present perceptions of leading with authenticity in the IT industry. *Authenticity* is defined as the experience of being true to one's self (Vannini, 2004). It represents a healthy alignment between internal values and external behaviors (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013). This study uses the social constructivist theory of gender as a theoretical framework to analyze the experiences women face with regard to gender equality and individual authenticity in the workplace. Moustakas's (1994) method of analysis of phenomenological data is used to analyze the verbatim transcripts from one-on-one interviews with nine female leaders in the IT industry. Overall, the female participants epitomized authenticity at work. Based on key findings, a new definition for authenticity at work is proposed. *Individual authenticity at work* can be defined as understanding your core values, principles, and beliefs, and living them out every day through your actions and words, regardless of situation or circumstance. Furthermore, authenticity can be viewed as bringing your whole self to work; integrating your personal and professional self as identities that coexist. While the present study provides support for the notion of authenticity as a state-based phenomenon, a new conceptualization of authenticity as a skill-based phenomenon is proposed. The DIvA framework is introduced as a tool for developing individual authenticity

among females in the workplace. IT organizations can do more to attract, retain, and develop women in IT. Women and men alike must feel empowered to bring their best selves forward and to develop their full capabilities along the lines of excellence.

Keywords: gender equality, authenticity, technology, women, leadership

Chapter I: Introduction

Background

The topic of this research study is gender equality and authenticity in the workplace. The study examines the experiences women information technology (IT) executives face with regard to leading with authenticity in a male-dominated work environment. Authenticity has been defined as “the experience of being true to one’s self” (Vannini, 2004, p. 8). It represents a healthy alignment between internal values and external behaviors (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013). The interest of this study is authenticity among women leaders in the context of the workplace, rather than authentic leadership among women. These related but distinct concepts are further discussed in Chapter Two.

While women sometimes make a conscious decision to conform to gender stereotypes in the workplace, the decision to conform to norms can also be an unconscious one. The inability of individuals to function authentically in the workplace inhibits both personal happiness and overall organizational performance. According to Ruderman and Rogolsky (2013), “organizations that foster authentic behavior are more likely to have engaged, enthusiastic employees and workplaces that are open and promote trust” (p. 1). Employees will not follow a leader they perceive to be inauthentic. Furthermore, in order for employees to thrive, they need to work for an authentic organization (Goffee & Jones, 2013). The findings from this research study aim to shed light on what it means for women to function authentically in the workplace and to provide valuable insight to organizations and human resources (HR) managers as they strive to create more supportive work environments for women.

The concept of gender equality in the workplace suggests that all employees—females and males—are able to “develop their personal abilities and make choices without limitations set

by strict gender roles; and that the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally” (Olgiati & Shapiro, 2002, p. 2). Organizations that value diversity and inclusion should foster work environments that enable all employees, male and female, to achieve their full potential. U.S. President John F. Kennedy often conveyed the idea that happiness is the full use of an individual’s faculties. In a speech to a group of foreign students, Kennedy (1963) said, “The ancient Greek definition of happiness was the full use of your powers along the lines of excellence” (p. 380). Ruderman and Rogolsky (2013) argued that it is challenging for people to fully develop their abilities when they are hiding their true values or experiencing a conflict between internal thoughts and external behaviors. Thus, an underlying premise of this study is that a leader’s ability to act at work may enhance personal happiness and organizational performance.

Women in the Workplace

The number of women in the workplace has significantly increased since the end of World War II (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) and the implementation of the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (Michael, 2013). In the 1940s, women made up approximately one-third of the labor market (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Today, the gap between men and women’s participation in the workforce is closing, with women accounting for 57.2% of the working age population among women, and men accounting for 69.7% of the working age population among men in 2013 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2015), the number of women in the labor force is expected to rise by 5.4% between 2012 and 2022, compared to a 5.6% increase in the number of men. In 2013, the industries with the largest number of women employed were education and health services (36.2%), wholesale and retail trade industry (13.1%), professional and business services (10.5%), and leisure and hospitality

(10.3%). The industry with the smallest percentage of women employed in 2013 was the information industry at 1.7% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Overall, women still make up a minority of leadership positions in corporations, higher education institutions, and the political sector (Bullough, 2008; Chin, 2011).

Women's educational achievements and workplace earnings have also been on the rise over the past 50 years. The proportion of women in the labor force, ages 25 to 64, who hold a college degree increased from 11.2% to 40% from 1970 to 2014 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Women's earnings have also grown in proportion to men's earnings, increasing from 62% of men's earnings in 1979 to 83% of men's earnings in 2014 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Despite growth in women's educational achievement, workplace participation, and earnings, women remain underrepresented in certain fields, such as the IT industry.

While women have attained greater equality in the workplace, they remain underrepresented in male dominant fields such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Women are two times more likely than men to leave jobs in STEM-related fields (Belkin, 2008). Scholars have sought to understand why women opt out of STEM careers, examining biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors (Ceci, Williams, & Barnett, 2009; Diekmann, Brown, Johnston, & Clark, 2010; Faulkner, 2009).

The increased presence of female leaders in the workplace has stimulated an increase in social science research related to gender and leadership, ranging from pay equity and work-family balance to distinctions in male vs. female leadership styles and perceived leadership effectiveness (Vecchio, 2002). Historically, research literature has suggested that men are perceived to be more effective leaders than women due to their agentic characteristics, such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and individualism (Eagly & Karau, 2002). On the contrary,

recent literature has pointed to women as more effective leaders, arguing that a female leadership advantage stems from the idea that women display a more collaborative and empowering style of leadership, while men adopt leadership styles that are based on command-and-control type behaviors (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014). Yet, some scholars say these arguments are too simplistic and do not take into consideration the importance of contextual contingencies (Vecchio, 2002). For example, men may be perceived as more effective leaders in male-dominated work environments due to the masculine nature of those roles (Vecchio, 2002). In a male-dominated field such as the IT industry, it has been argued that women feel pressure to act more like men in order to be perceived as effective leaders (i.e., more authoritative, autocratic, competitive, etc.). The present study examines the extent to which women IT executives are able to lead with authenticity in a male-dominated work environment.

Statement of the Problem

The IT industry is predominantly male and has long been characterized as inhospitable to women (Foust-Cummings, Sabattini, & Carter, 2008). Women comprise approximately 25% of the IT workforce, holding 10% of corporate officer positions in Fortune 500 IT companies and 9% of IT management positions, such as chief executive officer (CEO), chief information officer (CIO), chief technology officer (CTO), vice president (VP), strategist, and architect (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). Men hold the overwhelming majority of executive positions within Fortune 500 IT companies, including 81% of CIO positions at Fortune 250 companies and 96% of CEO positions among tech companies within the Fortune 100 (National Center for Women & Information Technology, 2013). Some of the biggest names in technology, including Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, and Yahoo, are primarily staffed by white, male employees (Eadicicco, 2014). Well-known female executives currently serving in Fortune 500 IT companies include Meg

Whitman, CEO of HP (2011–present), Ginni Rometty, CEO of IBM (2011–present), Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook (2008—present), and Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo (2012–present). However, these women are the exception rather than the norm.

The IT industry has been unsuccessful in attracting and retaining women in senior level leadership positions. According to Ashcraft and Blithe (2009), “41% of women leave technology companies after 10 years of experience, compared to only 17% of men” (p. 16). A staggering 56% of technical women drop out of the industry at the mid-level point, which is the most costly time for companies to lose talent (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). Scholars and practitioners have sought to understand why women are choosing to leave the IT industry. Some have pointed to challenges such as authenticity and work-life balance (Goodsell, 2009). Others have theorized that unconscious biases can unintentionally disadvantage the minority group who do not have the same needs as the majority population (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). According to Ashcraft and Blithe, “unconscious biases result when our pre-existing beliefs and attitudes about particular groups of people subtly influence behaviors and decisions” (p. 24).

Like men, women executives need to be in a work environment that allows them to act in a manner that is congruent with their inner values (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2004). However, women often “encounter strong and long-established norms in some predominantly male organizations, often believing they need to conform in order to advance up the corporate ladder” (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013, p. 7). To be successful at attracting and retaining female executives in the IT industry, companies should foster environments in which women leaders can participate fully and authentically in the workplace. Therefore, empirical research is necessary in order to understand the experiences women face with respect to individual authenticity in the workplace.

Purpose and Nature of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of women executives in the information technology (IT) industry with regard to leading with authenticity. Using a phenomenological approach, this study examined how women describe their present perceptions of leading with authenticity in the workplace. As authenticity is viewed as a “self-reflective and emotional experience,” researchers examining authenticity should seek to understand “people’s emotional experiences of being true or untrue to one’s self and people’s ideas about what their true self is” (Vannini & Franzese, 2008, p. 1621). The data collection was cross-sectional in design and consisted of face-to-face, interactive interviews with nine women who hold senior-level leadership positions in Fortune 500 IT companies.

Research Question

To evaluate the lived experiences of women executives in the IT industry and to understand the meaning they assign to those experiences, a qualitative research methodology was selected for this study. The phenomenon under investigation is authenticity. Specifically, this study will examine the thoughts and experiences women observe with regard to their own authenticity in the workplace. To explore this phenomenon, the following phenomenological research question has been proposed: What are the lived experiences of women executives in the information technology (IT) industry with regard to individual authenticity?

Theoretical Framework

This study uses social constructivist theory as a theoretical framework to analyze the experiences women face with regard to gender equality and authenticity in the workplace. Rooted in phenomenology, the theory of social constructionism or the social construction of reality was first introduced into the social sciences through the work of Berger and Luckmann

(1966). The underlying premise of social constructionism is that individuals or groups interacting in dynamic social systems create ideas about others' actions, and these concepts are habituated into mental representations about shared roles played by actors in society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Over time, these assumptions of reality become institutionalized. One example of a socially constructed object is gender. Distinguished from the biological nature of sex, gender is ascribed through the socialization process in which society constructs masculine and feminine identities and roles based on physical appearance ("Social Constructs," 2008).

Social constructionist theory of gender suggests that gender is an identity that is socially situated. Individuals internalize social expectations and behave according to gender norms constructed by society. West and Zimmerman (1987) coined the term *doing gender* to characterize the notion that gender is performed in interactions with others, and behaviors are judged based on what is gender appropriate. Social constructionist theory regarding the doing of gender posits that women and men modify behavior to the particular situation in anticipation of being judged or held accountable for their actions. Similar to a male in a female-dominated work occupation (Pleck, 1995; Sobiraj, Rigotti, Weseler, & Mohr, 2015), when a female is in a male-dominated field, she must make the decision about whether or not to engage in behaviors that are uncharacteristic of female traits, but are otherwise a part of her professional identity (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

This study explores authenticity and the social construction of gender, viewing authenticity as a state-based phenomenon that is situated in the context of the environment (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). Consistent with this notion, authenticity is seen as something leaders do, rather than something they possess. Leaders who demonstrate authenticity exhibit behaviors that are consistent with internal thoughts, feelings, and values rather than behaviors that are

externally influenced by the desire to please others (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). This study uses social constructionism of gender as a model to analyze the conflict between doing authenticity and doing gender in the context of a predominantly male work environment.

Operational Definitions

The primary variable under investigation in this study is authenticity. Definitions of authenticity are varied. For the purpose of this study, authenticity is defined as “the experience of being true to one’s self” (Vannini, 2004, p. 8). *Authentic expression* refers to the congruence between internal thoughts (i.e., thoughts) and external expressions (i.e., verbal statements; Roberts & Dutton, 2009). Authenticity will be measured as a state-based phenomenon in the context of the workplace through one-on-one, in-person interviews with nine female leaders in the IT industry. Using the three-part construct applied by van den Bosch and Taris (2014), individual authenticity at work will be measured based on (a) authentic living, (b) self-alienation, and (c) accepting external influence. Finally, the study will examine how the women balance authenticity and the social construction of gender in the context of the workplace.

Key Terms

The key terms outlined below are relevant to this research. Definitions are provided according to how the terms are used in the study. Key terms include the following: executive, Fortune 500 IT companies, gender equality, and information technology (IT) industry.

- An *executive* in an IT organization is a senior-level leader who has administrative authority. Position titles used in this study include c-level executive, vice president, and global/managing director.

- *Fortune 500 IT companies* refer to the top technology companies that are represented in the Fortune 500, such as Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft (Griffin, 2015). The focus of this study is on female executives who work for Fortune 500 IT companies, rather than females who serve in IT leadership positions within non-IT Fortune 500 companies.
- *Gender equality* in the workplace is defined as the equal treatment and representation of males and females, and affording equal rights and opportunities to both genders (International Planned Parenthood Federation, n.d.). Furthermore, while the differences between men and women should be acknowledged, they should not serve as a means to discriminate against either group.
- The *information technology (IT) industry* refers to the sector that offers a range of technology-based products and services for consumers and businesses, such as computing hardware, software, networking equipment and computer services.

Importance of the Study

Gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace is beneficial to organizations. The representation of females in senior leadership positions can lead to more diverse perspectives, better organizational strategies, and more creative business solutions (Wade, 2015). In order to support a more diverse work environment, organizations should understand the factors that enable or inhibit the advancement and effectiveness of women in leadership roles.

Authenticity is important to personal happiness and organizational performance. “When employees have opportunities to express who they really are in the workplace, everyone benefits” (Rudin, 2014, para. 2). Women often experience pressures to conform to gender stereotypes in the workplace. While men are able to use a variety of risk-taking techniques and

command-and-control behaviors, women are not free to use a full range of such behaviors and can be perceived negatively for exhibiting authoritative or dominating behaviors (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2004). Women leaders must be able to achieve their full potential in the workplace by embracing both their feminine and masculine leadership competencies (Goodsell, 2009).

To optimize personal development and organizational effectiveness, women must be in an environment that fosters alignment between their values and everyday behaviors, and promotes growth, learning, and overall psychological well-being (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2004). According to Ruderman and Rogolsky (2013), “organizations that place a premium on conformity at the expense of authenticity may be incurring hidden costs” (p. 1), such as losing members of their workforce or limiting the potential of high-achieving employees. The optimal organization makes unequivocal efforts to overcome the dominant currents in its culture that may be preventing employees from achieving their greatest potential (Goffee & Jones, 2013). Thus, promoting individual authenticity in the workplace should be of importance to organizations and HR managers.

This study seeks to reveal the experiences women face with regard to leading with authenticity in a male-dominated work environment, and to create awareness for female and male leaders regarding the importance of behaving authentically in the workplace. By gaining insights into these experiences, organizations can develop human resource policies to promote gender equality. Specifically, organizations can provide environments in which women can function authentically without fear of failure or consequence. Women must be empowered to bring their best self forward and to develop their full capabilities along the lines of excellence (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2004).

Key Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions: (a) women experience gender inequality in the IT industry, (b) participants are able to identify and articulate incongruities between their internal values and external expressions, (c) participants will be open and honest in their responses, (d) a representative sample of women IT executives will participate in the study, (e) authenticity can be accurately measured, (f) individual authenticity in the workplace is valuable to organizations, and (g) authenticity leads to personal happiness and better organizational performance.

Limitations of the Study

The target population for this study is female executives within Fortune 500 IT companies. The goal was to obtain a sample size of 10 women executives across at least five different technology companies represented in the Fortune 500. This scope may cause a limitation on the generalization of findings to other companies and industries. The application of the research findings beyond the IT industry is at the discretion of the reader. To mitigate the potential impacts of these limitations, the study will obtain data from as many different Fortune 500 IT companies as possible. Furthermore, recommendations for future research beyond the IT industry will be provided.

This study does not control for differences in organizational culture and practices, which may have an impact on the experiences women face with regard to authenticity. This could limit the generalization of findings across different organizations. To mitigate this limitation, one-on-one interviews with the female participants will include questions about their perceptions of the organizational culture and environment as it pertains to gender equality, and will identify what practices, if any, inhibit or promote a culture of authenticity.

Another limitation of this study is the individual interpretation regarding the meaning of authenticity. This study focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of the extent to which women are able to demonstrate individual authenticity, or whether they feel pressures to conform to gender roles and stereotypes in a male-dominated work environment. It does not attempt to examine if there is a healthy level of authenticity appropriate for the workplace, or if there are negative consequences with being too authentic. Recommendations for future research are included for the examination of the appropriate level of authenticity.

Finally, this study focuses on the perceptions of women IT executives concerning their own authenticity in the workplace. Because it does not seek to understand how others perceive them, this could be seen as a limitation. However, this approach is appropriate for this study, as authenticity has been defined as a personal experience regarding the thoughts and feelings an individual has with respect to the healthy alignment between internal values and external behaviors.

Summary

Chapter One addressed the importance of gender equality and authenticity in the workplace. Using social constructionist theory as a theoretical framework, this study examines the experiences women face with regard to leading with authenticity in a male-dominated work environment. Authenticity is important to the full functioning of employees and overall organizational performance. Thus, organizations should strive to foster environments that enable all employees to be their authentic self at work.

While the number of women participating in the workplace has risen over the last 50 years, they are still underrepresented in certain fields, such as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The IT industry is facing a shortage of women executives, creating

challenges with gender equality in the workplace. As women experience pressures to conform to social norms and behaviors that are not congruent with their inner values, their ability to demonstrate authenticity is threatened. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences women executives face with respect to leading with authenticity in the IT industry. The findings will provide insight for organizations and HR managers as they strive to create authentic work environments in which both women and men can develop their capabilities along the lines of excellence.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The topic of this research paper is gender equality and authenticity in the context of the workplace. This study seeks to examine the extent to which women information technology (IT) executives feel free to express their authentic or true self in a work environment that is predominantly male. The purpose of this literature review is to provide a synthesis of current research pertaining to the following topics: women in leadership, gender equality in the workplace, the constructs of authenticity and authentic leadership, the impact of authentic leadership on followers, authenticity in the context of the workplace, women and authenticity, and women in IT leadership. Finally, a brief review of the literature on masculinity and gender role strain is provided. The research literature pertaining to these topics is vast. Thus, the intent is not to be entirely comprehensive, but rather to focus on the current research landscape and key findings from previous studies related to these topics. The literature review begins with a broad look at the topic of women in leadership, including current statistics regarding women in the workplace and a review of literature pertaining to gender differences and leadership.

Women in Leadership

In spite of the growth in women entering the workforce, the number of women corporate executives remains low. While more women are becoming leaders and managers, few have reached senior leadership positions (Altman, 2006). In 2012, women only accounted for 8.1% of the highest earners and 14.3% of executive officers in Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2012). Research has suggested that women are highly capable leaders and can bring beneficial capabilities to the workforce, such as strong interpersonal abilities (Altman, 2006; Bartol, Martin, & Kromkowski, 2003; Burke & Collins, 2001; Groves, 2005; Lips & Keener, 2007; Newbury, Belkin, & Ansari, 2008). However, “despite the evidence that women are capable of

being top performers, women are still not attaining top-level leadership positions in comparison to their male peers" (Baker, 2014, p. 332). Scholars and practitioners have sought to understand why this is the case, and have pointed to factors such as differences in leadership style, gender stereotypes, social role expectations, and organizational cultures and practices that are inhospitable to women.

A major challenge faced by women in the workplace throughout history is the social perceptions and prejudices that inhibit them from rising to positions of power (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In general, people more often envision males as leaders (Sczesny, 2003). Eagly and Karau (2002) suggested that people's preferences for having a male over a female supervisor are directly linked to their perceptions of gender appropriate roles. Gender stereotypes that are ingrained in childhood reinforce attitudes about whether or not women should serve in positions of leadership (Michael, 2013). Eagly and Karau maintained that a general bias exists in favor of men as leaders and that when a woman becomes a leader, she is judged more severely than her male counterparts. As such, women are often seen as less effective. Banse, Gawronski, Rebetez, Gutt, and Morton (2010) noted that by the age of 12, children become rigid in gender perceptions. These gender stereotypes are carried with them as they enter various social settings, such as at home, at school, or in the workplace. Because women are often associated with the caregiver role, perceptions exist regarding their drive and ability to lead outside the home (Wood, 2008). When women perform certain behaviors that fall outside of traditional female roles, they are often criticized and accused of being inauthentic. Liu, Cutcher, and Grant (2015) demonstrated that whether or not a female leader is deemed authentic is dependent upon her behaving in a manner that is consistent with socially constructed expectations of what is

considered gender appropriate. The next section examines what the research literature says regarding the perceived gender differences between male and female leaders.

Gender Differences in Leadership

Scholars have sought to understand how men and women differ in their leadership approach. There is an ongoing discussion about the effectiveness of male versus female leadership tendencies. Numerous studies have revealed that people perceive males as more effective leaders than females due to differences in their leadership styles (Bible & Hill, 2007; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Langford, Welch, & Welch, 1998; Powell, Butterfield, & Bartol, 2008; Wood, 2008). Historically, management has been associated with more male-dominated characteristics and traits. Given the perception that males make more effective leaders, do women feel pressure to conform their behaviors and adopt more masculine traits to be promoted in their organizations? This question will be examined in the present study.

Numerous scholars have proposed that women naturally employ a transformational leadership style, while men typically portray a transactional leadership style (Burke & Collins, 2001; Cuadrado, Morales, & Recio, 2008; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Lips & Keener, 2007; Michael, 2013). Women bring gender-specific capabilities to the workforce, such as relationship-building, transparent communication, and empowerment of others (Newburry et al., 2008). While women typically employ a team-oriented or participative approach to leadership, men have been found to display a leadership style associated with more autocratic and aggressive behaviors (Cuadrado et al., 2008). Furthermore, females are often viewed as more effective in coaching, developing, and communicating (Burke & Collins, 2001).

Eagly and Johnson (1990) conducted a meta-analysis of 162 studies on gender and leadership style and discovered that the majority of existing studies examined the degree to

which males and females lead with a task-oriented style versus an interpersonally oriented style, or a democratic versus an autocratic leadership style. The meta-analytic review yielded a sample size of 370 sex comparisons, 329 of which had known effect sizes, indicating differences in the reported leadership styles of the male and female participants. Eagly and Johnson found that men and women leaders did not differ in interpersonally-oriented versus task-oriented leadership style in organizational studies ($d = -.03, p < .001$), and perceptions of task versus interpersonal leadership styles were somewhat based on gender stereotypes in laboratory experiments ($d = .12, p < .05$) and assessment studies ($d = -.04, p < .01$). Analyzing democratic versus autocratic leadership styles, 92% of the comparisons were in support of women having more democratic or participative leadership style than men ($d = 1.03$), while men were found to lead with an autocratic or directive leadership style in organizational ($d = .21, p < .001$), laboratory ($d = .20, p < .05$) and assessment studies ($d = .29, p < .01$; Eagly & Johnson, 2009). The findings indicated that perceived differences in leadership style between sexes vary based on setting (i.e., organizational vs. experimental) and aspect of leadership style (task/interpersonal orientation vs. democratic/autocratic leadership style).

In a study investigating 658 middle managers and executives, Bartol et al. (2003) found that female leaders scored higher on interpersonal behaviors than their male colleagues ($M = 3.84$ vs. 3.64 out of 5.0 , respectively; $F = 13.53, p < .01$). Furthermore, females were perceived to be more goal- and task-oriented (Bartol et al., 2003). Groves (2005) studied 108 senior leaders and 325 of their employees to examine the correlations between gender and social skills, emotional skills, and charismatic leadership. The study revealed that the women scored higher than the men on all three variables, citing that leader gender added 5% to R^2 for overall social skills ($F = 5.95, p < .05$), 10% to R^2 for emotional skills ($F = 10.91, p < .01$), and 5% to R^2 to

charismatic leadership ($F = 4.60, p < .05$; Groves, 2005).

Chin, Lott, Rice, and Sanchez-Hucles (2007) studied over 1,000 women leaders and found that while many had a preference for using a more collaborative and inclusive leadership style, they did not feel that this style of leadership was supported by their organizations. According to Chin (2011), “many feminist women often sought leadership positions to achieve social justice goals, striving to be transformational in their vision, empowering in their actions, and upholding ethical principles” (p. 4). To be effective in their leadership styles, women often experience challenges with adhering to institutional rules set forth by masculine cultures and norms, while compromising feminist principles that are incongruent with more stereotypical male behaviors (e.g., striving for power and status; Chin, 2011).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) described leadership as the ability to inspire individual followers to collectively achieve a shared vision. Transformational leadership occurs when leaders raise awareness and acceptance of a shared purpose and mission among employees, elevating employees’ interests and inspiring them to operate for the good of group rather than in self-interest (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership has been gaining attention in the field of leadership studies, and many theorists today argue its effectiveness over traditional leadership styles. Women are often associated with having a transformational leadership style, while men are often described as having a more transactional leadership style. Although women have been increasingly recognized for their strong leadership capabilities, they still face more challenges than men when it comes to achieving and succeeding in leadership roles, particularly in male-dominated fields (Eagly, 2007). According to Chin (2011), women face obstacles to how they lead due to contradictory portrayals of women leaders, which range from women leaders being portrayed as either “soft and ineffective or domineering and manipulative” (p. 2). Chin further

argued that people often describe leaders based on characteristics that do not have much to do with effective leadership, such as he “looks like a leader” (p. 2). Leaders are often described using words that represent a socially constructed view of how leaders should look and behave, and these terms are often linked with gender roles and stereotypes (Chin, 2011).

A recent theory that has emerged in the literature is the female leadership advantage, which argues that under contemporary conditions, women are more effective than men at certain leadership skills such as “inclusiveness, interpersonal relations, power sharing, and nurturing of followers” (Vecchio, 2002, p. 647). Helgesen (1990, 2016) argued that women have received bad advice for decades about leaving their values at home and conforming to whatever norms existed in their workplace. Through interviews with 80 successful women, followed by diary studies of four of America’s most successful women leaders, Helgesen (1990) highlighted the advantages that women bring to the workplace, such as the female tendency to prefer frequent communication and the sharing of information, resulting in webs of inclusion that promote greater efficacy.

In a study that surveyed female members of the Independent Women’s Forum, as well as their male counterparts, Rosener (1990) found that males prefer an alpha leadership style based on command-and-control, while females adopt a beta leadership style centered on social interaction. Furthermore, the women were found to take an encouraging style of participative leadership, focused on developing others’ sense of self-worth and energizing followers (Rosener, 1990). Vecchio (2002) comprehensively reviewed the literature pertaining to female advantage and contended that claims of a gender advantage in leadership are exaggerated. Through a meta-analytic review, Eagly and Carli (2003) found no difference in the perceived effectiveness of men vs. women leaders ($d = -.02$, signifying a trivial, non-significant effect of gender). While

women experience some advantages associated with typical female leadership characteristics, they suffer from disadvantages that stem from biased evaluations of their leadership competence, particularly in predominantly male work environments (Eagly & Carli, 2003).

In conclusion, while numerous studies have examined gender differences in leadership, the findings regarding a gender leadership advantage based on stereotypic traits are inconclusive. Some scholars provide evidence for a male advantage (Schein, 1973, 1975; Sczesny, 2003), while others argue a female leadership advantage (Helgesen, 1990, 2016; Rosener, 1990). Furthermore, some scholars have contended that leadership style and effectiveness has little to do with gender and that claims regarding a gender advantage in leadership are overstated and too simplistic (Vecchio, 2002). Regardless of view, the topic of gender differences in leadership has proven to be an important one, particularly as scholars and practitioners strive to promote workplace gender equality.

Gender Equality in the Workplace

The concept of gender equality at work suggests that all employees—females and males—are able to “develop their personal abilities and make choices without limitations set by strict gender roles; and that the different behaviors, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally” (Olgianti & Shapiro, 2002, p. 2). Female and male employees must work in environments that enable them to achieve their full potential. President John F. Kennedy often conveyed the idea that happiness is the full use of an individual’s faculties. In a speech to a group of foreign students, President Kennedy said, “the ancient Greek definition of happiness was the full use of your powers along the lines of excellence” (Kennedy, 1963, p. 380). The Center for Creative Leadership argued, “it is difficult to develop your capabilities when you are suppressing your true values and style or are distracted by inner

conflict” (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013, p. 1). Thus, an underlying premise of this study is that an individual’s ability to act authentically in the workplace leads to personal happiness and organizational performance. Barriers to gender equality at work, such as gender stereotypes and social norms, could be creating environments in which women experience difficulties acting authentically and participating fully in the workplace. The next section of the paper explores some of the well-researched impediments to workplace gender equality.

Barriers to Gender Equality in the Workplace

Research literature has identified numerous cultural and societal barriers that inhibit gender equality at work, including gender stereotypes, glass ceiling effect, work-life balance, and role congruity. *Gender equality* is defined as the equal representation and treatment of women and men. It suggests that women and men should be afforded equal rights and opportunities (International Planned Parenthood Federation, n.d.). Catalyst (2001) identified barriers that inhibit women in the workplace, citing factors such as lack of women mentors and role models, exclusion from informal networks, stereotyping and preconceptions of roles and abilities, lack of general management experience, and commitment to personal and family responsibilities. While there is extensive literature on this topic, the following paragraphs will highlight some of the most commonly known theories regarding the barriers that inhibit the advancement and equal treatment of women in the workplace.

Gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes have been found to develop as early as childhood years. Children as young as three years old exhibit ideas about what constitutes male versus female behaviors (Banse et al., 2010). “Gender stereotypes are categorical beliefs regarding the traits and behavioral characteristics ascribed to individuals on the basis of their gender” (Duehr & Bono, 2006, p. 816). The proliferation of gender stereotypes serves as a

contributing factor to discrimination and gender bias in the workplace (Stuart, 2008). A study examining 120 chief executive officers and 705 female senior leaders from Fortune 1000 corporations found that 72% of the chief executives and 51% of the female leaders believe that gender stereotypes in the workplace, particularly regarding women's leadership abilities, are a significant barrier to the career advancement of women (Wellington, Kropf, & Gerkovich, 2003).

Since the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and Title IX in 1972, organizations and U.S. culture, in general, have made great strides in fighting gender discrimination (Stuart, 2008). Additionally, the perceptions of women leaders have been changing. According to a study involving over 600 managers, male managers today associate women with more leadership type behaviors, exhibiting more confidence, ambition, and assertiveness than in prior years (Duehr & Bono, 2006). However, the stereotype still exists that men naturally make more effective leaders because of their more aggressive and autocratic behaviors, which are typically seen as leadership behaviors (Cuadrado et al., 2008). Next, some of the existing theories that explain the major social barriers still present in the workplace today are outlined.

Unconscious biases. According to Ashcraft and Blithe (2009), "unconscious biases result when our pre-existing beliefs and attitudes about particular groups of people subtly influence behaviors and decisions" (p. 24). Unconscious biases pose major problems for work environments or industries that are dominated by a particular gender, and can unintentionally disadvantage the minority group who does not have the same needs as the majority population (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). Banaji and Greenwald (2013) explored unconscious or hidden biases to examine the extent to which social groups unconsciously shape judgments about the character, abilities, and potential of others. Banaji and Greenwald proposed that everyone carries hidden biases that are shaped by a lifetime of experiences with social groups, whether based on age,

gender, religion, ethnicity, or other factors. Most people have good intentions and do not intend to harm others through discrimination. Rather, as part of a social group, good people go above and beyond to help an in-group member, and this selective helping reinforces the status quo (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). Furthermore, self-stereotyping can result in unintentional discrimination. For example, 80% of female respondents in a study on implicit association associated female with family and male with career (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). These unconscious biases can make it difficult for individuals to fit in or to excel in certain social settings, such as the workplace. However, there is good news for organizations. According to Banaji and Greenwald, it is possible to counteract prejudices by turning an unconscious bias into a visible one. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) can be helpful in accessing biases.

Implicit association. Greenwald and Banaji (1995) defined implicit attitudes as "introspectively unidentified (or inaccurately identified) traces of past experience that mediate favorable or unfavorable feeling, thought, or action toward social objects" (p. 8). A person's actions and judgments, without their conscious awareness, are subject to automatic evaluation (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). The Implication Association Test (IAT) was designed to measure the differential association of a contrasting concept (i.e., male vs. female) with an attribute (i.e., family vs. career), without requiring an act of introspection by the performer (Greenwald et al, 1998; Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2005). The IAT seeks to reveal implicit biases about subjects by measuring their underlying automatic evaluation (Greenwald et al., 1998). Implicit bias affects attitudes about people and the groups to which they belong. For example, according to a report by Hill, Corbett, and St. Rose (2010), many people associate STEM fields with male and arts and humanities with female. Societal values influence implicit biases that lead to attitudes toward the nature of gender-appropriate roles, suggesting that

females should work in feminine fields (i.e., nursing) and males should work in masculine fields (i.e., technology). A study by Nosek et al. (2009) examined citizens from 34 countries and found that 70% of more than half a million participants associated science with males, indicating an implicit bias. The findings suggested that “a nation’s average implicit stereotyping (and not explicit) is uniquely related to gender inequality in science and math achievement and, by extension, to other markers of a diverse scientific workforce such as interest, participation, and presence in scientific leadership” (Nosek et al., 2009, p. 10597). Since the technology field is often associated with other STEM fields (science, engineering, math), an inference can be made that implicit stereotyping related to gender is occurring in the IT industry. By taking the IAT, individuals can identify and learn how to compensate for their biases. Accordingly, as the IT industry strives to attract, retain, and promote women into leadership positions, understanding the implicit biases against women will enable individuals and organizations to combat attitudes and behaviors that may be contributing to the underrepresentation and underperformance of women in IT.

Social role theory. Social role theory explains that managers hold certain expectations for employees’ behaviors and characteristics based on their perceived social roles (Skelly & Johnson, 2011). Scholars have found that hiring managers typically favor individuals believed to be more capable of fulfilling the social expectations of leaders; individuals who have specific traits such as strong technical skills, relationship skills, and assertiveness (Skelly & Johnson, 2011). According to social role theory, society has typically associated these traits with the characteristics more commonly portrayed by a man (Baker, 2014). Accordingly, women are often overlooked for promotions to senior-level positions by managers who value more male-type characteristics. Providing support for this claim, Wade (2015) argued that male prejudicial

views of female leadership aptitude and effectiveness may inhibit the advancement of women, reaffirming the belief that unconscious biases against women are prevalent in the workplace. Social role theory is yet another theory that calls attention to a significant stereotype that exists for female leaders in the workplace (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

Role congruity theory. Role congruity theory, which is grounded in social role theory, was developed by Eagly and Karau (2002). It posits that individuals develop expectations of others' behavior based on gender role stereotypes that stem from sex-based roles, such as associating men with breadwinner roles and women with homemaker roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012). According to social roles, women are often perceived to be more nurturing and relationship oriented than men, while men are perceived to be more independent and assertive (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Furthermore, role congruity theory argues that people are often punished for behaving in manners that are inconsistent with societal expectations (Skelly & Johnson, 2011). "Because women who are effective leaders tend to violate standards for their gender when they manifest male-stereotypical, agentic attributes and fail to manifest female-stereotypical, communal attributes, they may be unfavorably evaluated for their gender role violation, at least by those who endorse traditional gender roles" (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 575). A meta-analysis by Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) provided evidence supporting the prejudice women face in leadership roles. Through an analysis of 56 documents reporting on 61 studies, Eagly et al. examined participants' reactions to the equal behavior of male and female leaders. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant but small effect size regarding the devaluing of female leaders compared to male leaders ($d = .06, p < .001$), particularly in male-dominated leadership roles and when the females portrayed more stereotypical male behaviors (i.e., autocratic or directive).

Cultural dimension theory of masculinity/femininity. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimension theory is a framework that describes how values in the workplace are influenced by culture, and how an organization's values drive the behavior of its members. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) six dimensions include power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance index, long-term orientation versus short-term normative orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. The masculinity/femininity dimension of Hofstede's theory reflects the balance between ego goals, which are associated with masculinity, and social goals, which are associated with femininity (Hofstede, 1980, 1998). The masculinity dimension represents a societal preference toward competition and achievement, while femininity represents a preference for humility, collaboration, and caring for others. In the context of the workplace, masculinity and femininity have been referred to as tough versus tender cultures (Hofstede, 2001).

Lack of fit theory. As previously demonstrated in this literature review, gender stereotypes and biases toward women are prevalent in the workplace. Another theory that helps explain the prejudices against women is the lack of fit model (Heilman, 2001). The model suggests that personnel decisions are largely influenced by expectations regarding how successful an individual will be at a particular job and that expectations of performance are determined by the perceived fit between the required skills and abilities of the job and a person's attributes (Heilman, 2001). In a work environment that is dominated by male gender-typed roles, the perceived lack of fit between the requirements of the traditionally male job and the stereotypic attributes assigned to women creates expectations that a female will be unsuccessful in the job. As a result of these negative expectations, a general attitude towards women's ability to perform the job competently is created, leading to a gender bias in judgments. Heilman

argued that women are less likely to be selected for male gender-typed positions, their performance is more likely to be devalued in such positions, and career advancement is limited. Moreover, when women do succeed at male roles, they are penalized for their success. In three experimental studies involving 242 male and female participants, Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins (2004) investigated reactions to the success of females in male stereotyped roles and found that successful women were viewed negatively and were less liked than their equally successful male counterparts (male mean = 7.13, female mean = 5.81). Furthermore, Heilman et al. demonstrated that these negative feelings can have severe consequences for women, such as impacting evaluations of performance and recommendations for organizations rewards, including salary and promotions. Perhaps most interesting in the study was that female subjects did not react differently than did the male subjects, confirming the universal nature of gender-stereotypic norms and the tendency of society to penalize individuals who violate gender norms (Heilman et al., 2004).

Expectation states theory. Similar to social role theory, expectation states theory is another sociological theory that has been used to explain social inequality through predictions about the evaluation of women leaders in the workplace (Ridgeway, 2001). The theory attempts to explain how status characteristics influence group behavior and help form a shared set of performance expectations for each member of a task-oriented group (Kalkhoff & Thye, 2006). These performance expectations are unconscious beliefs about which group members are most likely to contribute to the success of the group, and are theorized to determine differential rates of social influence based on perceived power and prestige (Kalkhoff & Thye, 2006). Group members who are most influential are those who are perceived to be more competent and able, and are more highly rewarded for their participation, more favorably evaluated, and of higher

status (Wagner & Berger, 1993). Expectation states theory is relevant to women in IT leadership because gender status beliefs inhibit the success of women in the workplace, particularly in mixed-sex or gender-relevant contexts such as IT. “The gender system is deeply entwined in social hierarchy and leadership because gender stereotypes contain status beliefs that associate greater status worthiness and competence with men than women” (Ridgeway, 2001, p. 637). According to Ridgeway, for both men and women, gender status beliefs shape their assertiveness, the evaluation of their performance and ability, the influence they achieve, and the likelihood that they will emerge as leaders. Ridgeway theorized that when women leaders demonstrate assertiveness and therefore violate the expected status order, gender status beliefs create legitimate reactions that penalize the women and reduce their ability to gain followership.

Think manager—think male. The think manager-think male paradigm refers to the theory that people tend to think of leaders as male. The theory stems from a study conducted by Schein (1973), in which 300 male middle managers were administered a descriptive index examining sex role stereotypes and characteristics of successful middle managers. The results from the study proved the hypothesis that “successful middle managers are perceived to possess those characteristics, attitudes and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men in general than to women in general” (p. 99). Schein theorized that the association between sex role stereotypes and perceptions of what makes a successful manager contributes to the likelihood of men being selected for managerial positions, leading to the underrepresentation of women in leadership. Schein (1975) replicated the study with 167 female middle managers to test the hypothesis that successful middle managers are perceived by female managers to possess the characteristics more commonly associated with males, providing further support for her original

claim regarding the relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics.

Double-bind. Women often face a double-bind with respect to preferred styles of leadership. Eagly and Carli (2007) argued that many female leaders adopt a more masculine approach to leadership because of the gender bias toward stereotypical female leadership traits. When women attempt to conform to more masculine styles of leadership, taking on a more assertive approach, they are often criticized for being uncaring and too masculine (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Sapiro, 2008). While their male counterparts receive no criticism for exhibiting the same behaviors, female leaders report that they risk being perceived as too hard and unlikeable (Sapiro, 2008).

Glass ceiling. Another barrier to achieving gender equality in the workplace for female leaders is a concept known as the glass ceiling. Powell and Butterfield (1994) defined the glass ceiling as “a barrier to entry into top-level management positions . . . based on attitudinal or organizational bias . . . simply because they are women rather than because they lack the ability to handle jobs at higher levels” (p. 68). The gender-stereotypical ideas about women leaders, as outlined in the paragraphs above, can create a glass ceiling effect. However, there are mixed findings in the research literature regarding the pervasiveness of the glass ceiling. Powell and Butterfield conducted a study on the advancement of women to determine if the glass ceiling effect played a role in whether or not the women were promoted to senior management positions. They found no bias against the promotion of women and even suggested that gender may be positive for women (Powell & Butterfield, 1994). In contrast, Ogden, McTavish, and McKean (2006) found that the glass ceiling effect is still very much visible in the workplace and inhibits the promotion of women into mid-level and senior management positions, particularly in

environments with long working hours and male-dominated networks. Bullough (2008) argued that the inconsistencies in the literature pertaining to the glass ceiling effect are likely due to the context of the work environment.

Work-life balance. Work-life balance, or more recently referred to as work-life integration, “is the ability to care for a family, have a fulfilling job, and engage in a rich personal life” (Goodsell, 2009, p. 40). Successful leaders practice integration of work-life. Rather than trying to equally balance all areas of life, which is consistent with the competitive model, the integration model means engaging in a practice of flexibility and choice (Goodsell, 2009). According to Goodsell, “authentic leaders integrate balance into their lives through the process of careful decision-making and priority setting that is aligned with their greatest self” (p. 42). Balance can be achieved through careful planning and establishing priorities, but organizations must put policies and practices in place that allow for better work-life integration.

In most North American work cultures today, there is a prevailing sense that leaders are expected to prioritize work over other obligations in one’s personal life. This sense puts an additional strain, particularly on working parents, to balance it all. Women, who often serve as the primary caregivers, are forced to choose between pursuing an executive level position and having a family. Of high-achieving women in corporate America, approximately 49% of the older generation (41 to 55 age bracket) do not have children and 60% are married, while 75% of high-achieving corporate men in the older generation have children and 76% are married (Hewlett, 2002). Women leaders today desire a greater capacity to integrate their personal and professional lives.

Work-life integration remains a challenge for women as they experience pressures to lean into their careers. Thornhill (2011) found that one way in which women practice meaning

making is through maintaining the connection between home and work. However, workplace cultures, particularly in the United States, tend to encourage women to keep their private lives separate from their work lives. According to one female leader, “the idea that you come into work and your personal life and your professional life are completely separate, that’s crazy” (Thornhill, 2011, p. 62). Work-life integration is a healthy practice that should be encouraged for all employees, males and females. In order to achieve this, however, significant improvements need to be made in present-day work cultures if organizations wish to foster leaders that can effectively practice work-life integration.

The next sections provide an overview of literature regarding authenticity and authentic leadership. Although the two constructs are related, the study of authenticity in the context of leadership and leader development has emerged in more recent years. The primary variable under investigation in this study, authenticity, will be examined using a three-part construct pertaining to authenticity, rather than authentic leadership. However, it’s important to examine the literature from both constructs to create a more comprehensive view of the landscape.

Authenticity

Authenticity has been loosely defined as the ability to be true to one’s self, or the congruence between internal thoughts and external behaviors. Roberts and Dutton (2009) defined authenticity as the subjective experience of alignment between one’s internal experiences (i.e., thoughts, feelings, values, and behavioral preferences) and external expressions (i.e., verbal and nonverbal behavior, attire, office décor). A key assumption in this definition is that individuals are capable of determining congruence between their experiences and expressions.

Authenticity can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. It can be considered “a

subjective experience (introspection, 'I feel authentic'), an objective property ('s/he is authentic'), or a state or a disposition" (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014, p. 2). Rogers (1965) argued that subjectively experienced authenticity is a good measure of the extent to which a person is fully functioning. Authentic functioning has been "characterized in terms of people's (1) self-understanding, (2) openness to objectively recognizing their ontological realities (e.g., evaluating their desirable and undesirable self-aspects), (3) actions, and (4) orientation towards interpersonal relationships" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 284). Authenticity has been examined as a trait-based phenomenon (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008), as well as a state-based phenomenon (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). The trait-based conceptualization views authenticity as unchanging and consistent across time or situations, while the state-based conceptualization believes authenticity is situational and can vary based on the specific environment in which a person functions (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). Research literature has historically focused on trait-based measurements of authenticity, rather than measuring authenticity within the context of specific environments. However, state-based authenticity has been gaining attention in the literature in recent years.

Goldman and Kernis (2002) offered a new multicomponent conceptualization of dispositional authenticity, based on four related, but distinct, components: awareness, unbiased processing, behavior, and relational orientation. Awareness "refers to possessing, and being motivated to increase, knowledge of and trust in one's motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 294). Unbiased processing "involves objectivity with respect to one's positive and negative self aspects, emotions, and other internal experiences, information, and private knowledge" (p. 296). The third component, behavior, involves "behaving in accord with one's values, preferences, and needs as opposed to acting

“falsely” merely to please others or to attain rewards or avoid punishments” (p. 298). Finally, relational orientation involves “valuing and striving for openness, sincerity, and truthfulness in one’s close relationships” (p. 300). Goldman and Kernis (2002) developed the Authenticity Inventory (AI) to measure these four components. The final scale (AI-3) distinctly measures the four separate components, as well as a single higher-order authenticity factor (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

Roberts and Dutton (2009) viewed authenticity as a variable state rather than an individual trait. Instead of looking at individuals as either authentic or inauthentic, Roberts and Dutton sought to understand where people stand on a spectrum of experiences that range from inauthenticity to authenticity at any particular time. The specific aspect of internal self and the way in which internal experiences are expressed may vary across situations. According to Roberts and Dutton, “what matters in each circumstance is whether the professor expresses those thoughts, feelings, values, and preferences that he or she considers important and relevant in each relational context” (p. 152). The important thing is that in each situation, those thoughts, feelings, values and preferences an individual considers important and relevant are expressed in each relational context.

In a study focused on the authentic personality, Wood et al. (2008) examined authenticity on an individual, trait-based level using person-centered psychology. The tripartite person-centered conception of authenticity is made up of self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence (Wood et al., 2008). *Self-alienation* refers to the incongruence between a person’s conscious awareness and his or her actual experience; *authentic living* is performing behaviors and expressing emotions that are in accordance with the conscious awareness of physiological states, emotions, beliefs and cognitions; and *accepting external influence* involves

the extent to which a person feels pressure to conform to the expectations of others (Wood et al., 2008). Using this tripartite conception of authenticity, Wood et al. developed the Authenticity Scale and found that trait authenticity is strongly correlated with self-esteem and conceptions of well-being.

White (2011) compared the two theory-based measures of authenticity developed by Kernis and Goldman (2006) and Wood et al. (2008) by examining their factorial structure and incremental validity. The factorial structure of the Authenticity Inventory (AI) developed by Kernis and Goldman did not receive strong results due to the lack of clarity in what their concept of authenticity was measuring. White found that the Authenticity Scale developed by Wood et al. performed well and supported the three-factor construct they proposed to measure authenticity. Thus, the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008) has proven to be a more valid and reliable measure of authenticity.

Van den Bosch and Taris (2014) developed a theory-based and context-specific measurement for authenticity at work, arguing that authenticity is a subjectively experienced phenomenon. The Individual Authenticity Measure at Work (IAM Work), the first instrument to measure authenticity in the context of the workplace, has been proven a reliable and valid measure of state-based authenticity. Van den Bosch and Taris sampled 646 Dutch employees and administered a 25-item authenticity survey that the authors adapted from Wood et al. (2008). Work engagement, work demands, autonomy, in-role performance, overall job satisfaction, stress, and negative affect were also assessed. The authors conducted an exploratory factor analysis on the survey results, followed by a confirmatory factor analysis and correlation analysis. Their findings reinforced the underlying three-part construct of person-centered authenticity and proved good psychometric properties of the state-based measure of authenticity

at work. The resulting subscales of authentic living, self-alienation, and accepting external influences were positively related to common work outcomes such as job satisfaction, in-role performance, and work engagement (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). Furthermore, van den Bosch and Taris found that work characteristics, such as autonomy, account for part of the variance in authenticity. The study concluded that the IAM Work is a valid and reliable instrument that allows researchers and practitioners to study authenticity in the context of the workplace.

Authentic Leadership

The construct of authentic leadership has emerged in recent years from within the fields of social psychology, positive organizational behavior, and leadership studies. Luthans and Avolio (2003) introduced an initial model for authentic leadership that identified the specific construct variables and relationships that are key to authentic leader development. Authentic leadership was initially defined as “a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243). Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005) argued that leader character and self-development are important factors in the practice of authentic leadership and that self-awareness is about developing knowledge of and growing trust in one’s personal characteristics. Thus, in the application of the authentic leadership process, leader personal authenticity reflects the way in which the leader views himself or herself in relation to the social environment and the application of deeply held personal values (Ilies et al., 2005). Rather than responding to the expectations of others, authentic leaders perform in a manner that is consistent with their internal idea of who they are as a leader.

Numerous studies have argued that authentic leadership encompasses a positive moral perspective based on high ethical standards (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Building upon the work of Gardner et al. (2005), Ilies et al. (2005), and Luthans and Avolio (2003), Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) redefined authentic leadership as,

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

The four dimensions of authentic leadership, proposed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), include self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The first factor, self-awareness, is the understanding of one's own strengths, weaknesses, values and emotions (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Self-awareness is an ongoing development process rather than a fixed state, requiring leaders to continuously reflect on their concept of self in relation to environmental events taking place around them (Gardner et al., 2005). The second factor of authentic leadership, internalized moral perspective, happens when a leader's behavior is self-regulated by individual moral standards and values, rather than being largely influenced by the moral standards and values of one's group, organization, or society (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The practice of self-regulation results in a healthy alignment between internal thoughts and external behaviors, which is core to the practice of authentic leadership. The third factor, balanced processing, refers to a leader's ability to objectively analyze data in the decision-making process and to understand both positive and negative characteristics about themselves (Avolio et al., 2009). Ilies et al. (2005) argued that balanced processing is at the core of personal

integrity and character and that leaders must be open to engaging in challenging situations that lead to personal growth and learning. Leaders who exhibit balanced processing are able to develop stronger leader-follower relationships that are characterized by mutual respect, openness, and trust (Ilies et al., 2005). Finally, relational transparency refers to a leader's openness when sharing information and feelings as appropriate in situations (avoiding inappropriate displays of emotions), and building trust in followers by demonstrating consistency between words and actions (Avolio et al., 2009). Relational transparency is about transparent communication, open decision-making, and follower empowerment (Gardner et al., 2005).

Walumbwa et al. (2008) developed and tested a theory-based measure of authentic leadership. The authors conducted a series of studies on five separate samples from China, Kenya, and the United States. Using confirmatory factor analyses and structural equation modeling, the study proved the construct validity and reliability of a new set of authentic leadership scales. The Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) emerged as a higher order, multidimensional model comprising of the four components of authentic leadership outlined above (self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing). Walumbwa et al. demonstrated the ALQ as a valid measure for predicting important work-related attitudes and behaviors, and also identified a positive relationship between authentic leadership and supervisor-related performance.

Harvath (2013) analyzed the relationship between individual character strengths of leaders and the effective practice of authentic leadership. The study examined 311 Field Service Leaders and their follower cohort of District Executives from the Boy Scouts of America organization. The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA) self-assessment was used to measure 24 individual character strengths and the 16-item ALQ was used to measure the four

factors of authentic leadership: self-awareness, balanced processing, internal moral perspective, and relational transparency. The correlational data analysis revealed relationships between particular character strengths and the four factors of authentic leadership practice. In particular, Harvath found that the character strength of kindness was positively correlated to the authentic leadership factors of balanced processing, relational transparency, and internal moral perspective. This finding supports the notion of Ilies et al. (2005) that others-focused relational orientation is fundamental to authentic leadership. Harvath also found a negative relationship between the character strength of the love of learning and the authentic leadership factor of internalized more perspective. Finally, Harvath found that leader tenure negatively correlated to character strengths of bravery, teamwork, honesty, and judgment, and leader age negatively correlated to the character strengths of bravery, love, hope, and zest. The author concluded that the results of the study might indicate that certain leader virtues, rather than leader character strengths, could be necessary for the practice of authentic leadership (Harvath, 2013).

Authentic Leadership and Followers

Authentic leadership theory, which has its roots in transformational leadership theories, focuses on the personal authenticity of a leader rather than on leader actions (Gardner et al., 2005). The leader-follower relationship is critical to the definition of the authentic leadership process (Gardner et al., 2005). Accordingly, Walumbwa et al. (2008) argued that authentic leadership is about more than being true to oneself. Individual authenticity plays an important role in the leader-follower relationship. An authentic leader builds trust in followers by openly sharing important information, accepting input from others, and disclosing personal values and motives, thereby enabling followers to assess the leader's actions and motivations for congruence (Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). Avolio et al. (2004)

proposed that authentic leadership evokes three states of follower identification: hope, trust, and positive emotions, resulting in follower outcomes such as job performance, extra effort, and withdrawal behaviors.

Multiple studies have examined the effects of authentic leadership on follower behaviors and have found that authentic leadership leads to greater employee engagement (Roberts, 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2010; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). When authentic engagement is made possible, organizational effectiveness increases (Roberts, 2007). Authentic leaders have followers who feel more empowered and exhibit positive attitudes and behaviors that lead to greater organizational performance (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Because of the positive effect on organizational outcomes, the relationship between authentic leaders and their followers has received increased attention from scholars and practitioners in recent years.

Avolio et al. (2004) examined the process by which authentic leaders influence follower attitudes and behaviors. The authors argued that authentic leadership alone is not sufficient to achieve desired goals and that a process linking authentic leadership to followers' attitudes and behaviors must be identified and better understood (Avolio et al., 2004). Avolio et al. proposed a model showing how authentic leaders influence followers' attitudes and behaviors through the creation of personal identification with the follower and social identification with the organization. Avolio et al. suggested that by combining personal and social identification with "intervening variables, such as hope, trust, positive emotions, and optimism" (p. 804), authentic leaders can improve followers' work attitudes and performance outcomes.

Building upon their prior work, Gardner et al. (2005) proposed a model of authentic leader and follower development and emphasized the developmental process of self-awareness and self-regulation for leaders and followers. The authors identified positive trust in the leader,

workplace well-being, engagement, and veritable, sustainable performance as positive outcomes of authentic leader-follower relationships. The leader's personal history (i.e., family influences, role models, early life challenges, educational and work experiences) and key trigger events were determined to be precursors for authentic leadership development (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Likewise, follower's trigger events and personal history have been found to play an important role in follower authentic leadership development. Trigger events were believed to increase the level of leader self-awareness and personal insight, which are key factors in the development of authentic leadership. Gardner et al.'s framework for leader-follower development was founded on the notion that authentic leaders model the way for their followers through their words and actions, high levels of self-awareness, balanced processing, transparency, and authentic behavior. Consequently, Gardner et al. argued that authentic leaders play an important role in the development of authentic followers. Finally, an inclusive, ethical, caring, and strength-based organizational climate was found to play a critical role in authentic leader and follower development (Gardner et al., 2005).

Eagly (2005) examined relational authenticity in leadership, arguing that much more is required of leaders than being transparent and acting in accordance with values. Authentic leadership is not one sided. Eagly stated, "Even if leaders carry out their role in a manner that reflects their values and convey these values effectively, followers' cooperation and identification with leaders' goals does not necessarily follow" (p. 460). Authentic leaders must promote goals that are aligned with the shared values of the community they lead. Thinking about relational authenticity requires the identification of two components. The first component is viewing authenticity from the perspective of the leader. That is, authentic leaders transparently convey shared values and promote the interests of the larger community to

followers (Eagly, 2005). The second component, which stems from the first, requires that followers identify with these values and accept them as beneficial to the community to which they belong (Eagly, 2005). Eagly provided evidence that achieving relational authenticity in leadership is more challenging for female than male leaders because of the non-traditional view of women as leaders. Because women traditionally have not held high-level leadership positions, and leadership is often defined in masculine terms, women who do hold these positions can be viewed as outsiders (Eagly, 2005). Eagly and Karau (2002) used role incongruity theory to explain the prejudice women face when inconsistencies exist between the requirements of leadership roles and socially constructed views of the female gender role. When women are in positions of power and behave in an authoritative manner, people may react negatively because they resent the deviance from the typical hierarchical relationship between males and females (Eagly, 2005). Eagly concluded that achieving authenticity as a leader is challenging for women, and training of women for leadership should focus on the relational aspects of interacting with followers.

Walumbwa et al. (2010) examined how authentic leadership behavior relates to followers' citizenship behaviors and work engagement. Organizational citizenship behaviors were viewed as positive employee behaviors, beyond normal duties, that support better organizational performance and work engagement. Work engagement was defined as "the state of mind characterized by vigorous attention and dedication to work and a high level of enthusiasm while at work" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, as cited in Walumbwa et al., 2010, p. 901). The sample consisted of 387 employees and their 129 direct supervisors. Using the 16-item ALQ to measure authentic leadership and other survey instruments, the researchers found that authentic leadership behavior was positively related to organizational citizenship

behavior ($\beta = .20, p < 0.01$), empowerment ($\beta = .25, p < .01$) identification with supervisor ($\beta = .40, p < .01$), and work engagement ($\beta = .26, p < .01$; Walumbwa et al., 2010).

Wang and Hsieh (2013) examined data from 386 employees of companies in Taiwan to determine the effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement and employee trust. The study found that supervisors' authenticity is strongly and positively related to employee trust ($r = .80, p < .01$) and employee engagement ($r = .64, p < .01$), and that supervisor's consistency between words and actions had the strongest influence when it comes to authentic leadership (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Furthermore, the study found that employee trust was positively linked to employee engagement ($r = .64, p < .01$), thereby concluding that authentic leadership is essential in building employee trust and maximizing engagement. Wang and Hsieh recommended that supervisors develop the following categories of behaviors when fostering authentic leadership: behavioral consistency, behavioral integrity, sharing and delegation of control, competent communication, and demonstration of concern.

Xiong and Fang (2014) studied the effect of authentic leadership and work-related outcomes at the group level by conducting an empirical study using data from 301 employees of Chinese companies. Specifically, the authors examined the relationship between authentic leadership, collective efficacy, and group performance. Xiong and Fang used the 16-item ALQ to measure authentic leadership, a four-item scale to measure collective efficacy, and a five-item scale to measure group performance. Xiong and Fang found that each dimension of authentic leadership and authentic leadership as a whole had a strong and statistically significant impact on group performance ($\beta = .772, p < 0.001$) and collective efficacy ($\beta = .667, p < .001$). Finally, collective efficacy was found to have a significant positive impact on group performance ($\beta = .586, p < .001$) and was a weaker partial mediator in the relationship between authentic

leadership and group performance ($\beta = .379, p < .001$; Xiong & Fang, 2014).

Authenticity and Well-Being at Work

Failure to exhibit authenticity in the workplace can be dangerous in leadership, resulting in negative consequences for individuals and their organizations. Many studies have found positive correlations between authenticity and psychological well-being (Menard & Brunet, 2011; Toor & Ofori, 2009; van den Bosch & Taris, 2014; Wood et al., 2008). Organizations that want to foster trust, employee engagement, and well-being should strive to create authentic workplace environments.

Menard and Brunet (2011) investigated the link between authenticity and well-being at work by surveying 360 managers in public organizations. The results of the self-reported questionnaires revealed that satisfaction at work was positively related to both authentic behaviors ($\beta = .469, p = .000$) and unbiased awareness ($\beta = .418, p = .000$), and “positive affect at work was also significantly and positively related to authentic behaviors at work ($\beta = .336, p < .001$) and unbiased awareness ($\beta = .386, p = .000$)” (p. 339), thereby indicating a significant and positive relationship between authenticity and well-being at work (Menard & Brunet, 2011). Furthermore, the meaning of work was found to be a mediator in the relationship between authenticity and subjective well-being at work. Menard and Brunet concluded, “authenticity leads to meaning which, in turn, leads to happiness” (p. 342). The authors proposed that future studies should apply the findings to different types of managers and employees to determine the generalizability of the findings. This present study seeks to apply these findings to examine authenticity within specific work contexts and environments (women in the IT industry).

Building upon the Person-Environment (P-E) fit theory, which states that stress arises

from the incongruence between the person and his environment, van den Bosch and Taris (2014) hypothesized that individuals feel more comfortable and lose less energy when they can be their authentic self at work. In their study, van den Bosch and Taris examined 685 workers to determine the role of authenticity in predicting well-being (work engagement, burnout, and job satisfaction) and work outcomes (turnover intention and in-role performance). The study built upon previous work that defined authenticity as a three-part concept that consists of self-alienation, authentic living, and external influence (Wood et al., 2008). Van den Bosch and Taris found that the tripartite construct of authenticity in the context of work “adds substantial value and accounts for a substantial amount of variance in predicting well-being (11.5% on average) and work outcomes (7.0% on average) controlled for relevant work characteristics” (p. 674). Authenticity was found to be a greater predictor of well-being than work outcomes. Self-alienation was the strongest predictor of work outcomes, followed by authentic living and external influence (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014).

Cassar and Buttigieg (2013) examined the relationship between authentic leadership and well-being and whether meaningfulness of work is a mediator in this relationship. The participants, comprised of 123 white-collar workers from five different services-oriented organizations, were asked to complete a 16-item Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) by Walumbwa et al. (2008). Participants were also asked to complete surveys measuring psychological well-being and meaningfulness of work, independently. Correlation and mediation analyses were used to analyze the results, which revealed that authentic leadership is related to subjective well-being (coefficient = .30, $p < .01$) and to flow (coefficient = .24, $p < .01$). Furthermore, Cassar and Buttigieg found that meaningfulness of work was a weak partial mediator in the relationship between leadership and subjective well-being

($\beta = .0215, z = 2.0848, p < .05$), but a full mediator in the relationship between meaningfulness and flow ($\beta = .0734, z = 2.0878, p < .05$). The authors concluded that there is a need to re-evaluate leadership from an intrinsic perspective that looks at a leader's internal sense-making processes before attempting to change behaviors (Cassar & Buttigieg, 2013).

Women and Authenticity in the Workplace

The topic of gender and authenticity in the workplace is an important one. Scholars and practitioners have argued that women often feel pressure to conform to gender stereotypes in the workplace, resulting in behaviors that are inconsistent with their internal values or beliefs. Many women feel that they must act like their male counterparts in order to be perceived as an effective leader, which they equate with behaviors such as decisiveness, competitiveness, and competence (Goodsell, 2009). When women exhibit certain behaviors in the workplace that are not consistent with their authentic leadership style, not only can this cause internal conflict and stress for the female leader, but it also perpetuates the gendered stereotypes associated with women in leadership. This is an ongoing conflict for present-day women leaders.

The Center for Creative Leadership found that “women encounter strong and long-established norms in some predominantly male organizations, often believing they need to conform in order to advance up the corporate ladder” (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013, p. 7). According to Ruderman and Ohlott (2004), “one of the key needs of women executives is to be in an environment in which their everyday behavior can mirror their values” (p. 43). While men are able to use a variety of risk-taking techniques and command-and-control behaviors, women are limited to a lesser range of behaviors and can be perceived negatively for exhibiting authoritative or dominating behaviors (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2004). Women leaders must be

empowered to bring their authentic selves to the workplace and achieve their full potential by utilizing their feminine and masculine leadership competencies (Goodsell, 2009).

Faulkner (2009) conducted a study on gender in engineering workplace cultures and proposed a concept called gender in/authenticity to capture the congruence or incongruence of gender and engineering identities for men and women. Faulkner argued, “the inauthenticity and invisibility of women engineers as engineers means they have to do extra layers of practitioner identity work . . . they also have to do an extra layer of gender identity work” (p. 177). This is because women engineers are stereotyped by their colleagues according to feminine identities, most often with identities that have nothing to do with their ability to perform the job (i.e., mother or sexually available; Faulkner, 2009). The gender in/authenticity works as follows: “‘real women’ are not ‘real engineers’, and conversely women who are really into engineering are not ‘real women’” (Faulkner, 2009, p. 177). Consequently, women engineers are often perceived, and can even think of themselves, as not ‘real engineers’ or ‘real women’ (Faulkner, 2009). Faulkner argued that if workplaces want to be more successful at attracting and retaining women engineers, their cultures must be more welcoming and supportive for women.

Women in IT Leadership

Women are underrepresented in the information technology (IT) field, particularly at the leadership level. Reports have shown that women are leaving technology companies after 6–10 years of service, prior to attaining leadership positions, resulting in a concentration of women in entry-level and mid-level IT positions (Acholonu, 2011; Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009; Stephan & Levin, 2005). The percentage of women in computing fields has fallen over the past 23 years, dropping from 35% in 1990 to just 26% in 2013 (Corbett & Hill, 2015). A report by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) identifies social and environmental

barriers as contributors to the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields, citing factors such as beliefs about intelligence, stereotypes, implicit bias, and workplace bias (Hill et al., 2010).

The culture in IT organizations has been described as male-dominated, competitive, and individualistic (Acholonu, 2011). Women face certain gender biases in male-dominated work environments. For example, women who hold masculine positions are often viewed negatively and are considered less likable when perceived as competent in the job (Hill et al., 2010). A study by Carr-Ruffino (2005) analyzed nine case studies of successful women leaders and found that women are faced with greater expectations than men to prove their business acumen in order to be promoted. These findings suggest that women do not receive equal treatment in the workplace, particularly in environments that are characterized as stereotypically male. In technology, stereotypes could be holding women back from advancing through the IT pipeline, causing them to drop out at mid-career or to avoid the IT profession altogether.

Lemons and Parzinger (2007) used gender schema theory to examine women in technology and to explain the gender-stereotyped behaviors and attitudes that may negatively impact IT women in the workplace. Lemons and Pazinger defined gender schemas as “mental models that determine the gender role expectations of individuals based on biological sex” (p. 92). To measure the gender schemas of women in IT, compared to the gender schemas of women in the general public, Lemons and Parzinger surveyed 218 members of Sisters, an organization for women working in IT, using Spence and Helmreich’s (1978) Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS). The 15-item scale examines attitudes toward rights, roles, and privileges women should have. Lemons and Parzinger also surveyed 85 male college students majoring in computer science or management information systems to compare the gender schemas of men in IT and men in the general public. Using analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the means of

the four groups under investigation (women in IT, men in IT, women in the general public, men in the general public), the study revealed that women in IT had a significantly higher level of non-traditional gender schemas (mean = 4.67) than did men in IT (mean = 3.43), and higher non-traditional gender schemas than both women (mean = 4.07) and men (mean = 3.71) in the general public (Lemons & Parzinger, 2007). This study suggested that women in IT may be viewed as a deviation, and because non-traditional gender schemas elevate sensitivity regarding women's rights and privileges, this may explain attitudes and behaviors that lead to job dissatisfaction in IT women. Furthermore, as men dominate the IT field, social norms in the workplace may be driven by male values (Lemons & Parzinger, 2007). As a result, women may experience frustration and feelings of inferiority at work and choose to select out of the job and the IT field altogether.

Acholonu (2011) also examined the underrepresentation of women in IT leadership and factors that may contribute to IT women opting out of the IT workforce at mid-career. Using evidence-based research theory and practice on retention issues in organizations, scholarly research evidence, and an expert panel of three members, Acholonu identified common factors that contribute to women dropping out of the IT pipeline. Specifically, Acholonu confirmed that the rapid rate of change in IT, socio-cultural roles, and limited access to career advancement opportunities for women interdependently contribute to the underrepresentation of women in IT leadership positions.

IT organizations must set up hiring practices and retention policies that encourage diversity and equal treatment of women in the workplace. Some IT companies have launched diversity efforts, while others have not yet started. For example, Google has invested in a diversity manager and is conducting workshops on unconscious bias (Peck, 2015). On the

contrary, one of the most prominent tech venture capital firms in Silicon Valley recently faced a high-profile discrimination case filed by a former female partner (Peck, 2015). While the IT industry is in need of talent, women remain underrepresented. For IT women to be successful, the people and organizations around them must be fully supportive of their full participation in the workplace and advancement into leadership positions.

The Other Side: Masculinity and Gender Role Strain

The present study examines gender equality in the workplace and the challenges women face with respect to individual authenticity in a male-dominated work environment. While the socialization of male gender role stereotypes is not the primary focus of this study, considering the challenges men face with male role expectations in the workplace is also important. The next section of this paper highlights key research literature that pertains to masculinity and the social construction of gender.

Pleck (1995) developed a theoretical framework known as the gender role strain model to explain how cultural standards for masculinity, as influenced through socialization of gender role stereotypes, can negatively affect males. Pleck proposed three theoretical subtypes to support gender role strain: discrepancy-strain, trauma-strain, and dysfunction-strain. Pleck argued that gender role *discrepancy* can arise when males fail to fulfill male role expectations or characteristics, resulting in psychological consequences such as low self-esteem. Pleck further argued that even when males do fulfill these expectations, the process of doing so can be traumatic, leading to gender role *trauma*. Finally, gender role *dysfunction* occurs when the successful fulfillment of male role expectations can cause negative consequences for the individual or others due to the characteristics or behaviors deemed acceptable, such as low level of family engagement (Pleck 1995). When men adhere to a masculine ideology, it can be

incompatible with other role demands (i.e., father), leading to dysfunction strain (Sobiraj et al., 2015).

Sobiraj et al. (2015) explored the relationship between masculinity ideology and psychological strain for men in female-dominated occupations. By surveying 175 German men in female-dominated occupations and 88 men in male-dominated occupations, Sobiraj et al. (2015) used multigroup structural equation modeling (SEM) to demonstrate a stronger relationship between masculinity ideology and social stressors for men in female-dominated occupations (effect size = .10, $p < .01$) than for men in male-dominated roles (effect size = -.01, $p < .01$), though the effect sizes were small. Masculinity ideology, which is concerned with the internalization of cultural and social beliefs about the male gender role, associates masculinity with toughness, status, and antifemininity (Sobiraj et al., 2015). In female-dominated occupations, it has been argued that feminine attributes such as expressiveness, nurturance, or empathy are essential for success (Sobiraj et al., 2015). When men adhere to masculine ideology in a female-dominated occupation, it can lead to social stressors, such as interpersonal conflict with colleagues and superiors, due to the contradictory nature of the professional work role (Sobiraj et al., 2015). Sobiraj et al. concluded that social stressors can lead to psychological strain for men in a male-dominated workplace, thereby supporting the theory of gender role dysfunction.

The topic of gender role expectations in the context of the workplace is important for male and female employees. Literature suggests that both males and females experience social and cultural challenges when they are the minority in a female-dominated or male-dominated work environment. Though not the focus of this study, it would be interesting to understand the

different experiences males and females face with regard to individual authenticity in a work environment in which they are the minority gender.

Summary

This literature review has provided a synthesis of research literature pertaining to gender equality and authenticity, with a particular focus on women in leadership, gender equality in the workplace, the constructs of authenticity and authentic leadership, women and authenticity in the workplace, women in IT leadership, and masculinity and the gender-role strain. Although authenticity, the notion of being true to one's self, has been defined for decades, authentic leadership theory has recently emerged from transformational leadership theories. General agreement across the research literature shows that authentic leadership is comprised of four factors: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective. Furthermore, leader character and self-development have been identified as key components of authentic leadership. Authentic leadership is an ongoing process in which the leader must continually develop his or her self-awareness through self-reflection, growth, and learning relation to the world around them.

Authentic leadership is about more than being true to one's self, as the leader-follower relationship plays an important role in authentic leadership practice. Research has demonstrated that authentic leadership leads to greater follower engagement and trust, resulting in greater work outcomes. As such, authentic leadership development is becoming increasingly important to organizations as they strive to improve worker productivity and overall organizational performance.

Authenticity in the context of the workplace is an emerging area of study for scholars and practitioners. Research has demonstrated the influence of authentic leadership on leaders,

followers, and the organization as a whole. While research has historically focused on the psychological and productivity costs of inauthenticity in organizations, positive organizational scholars are beginning to focus on the positive benefits of authenticity to organizations and are seeking to better understand the process of authentic leader and follower development.

Some research has examined the experiences women face with authenticity in the workplace, finding that women often feel pressure to conform in order to move up the corporate ladder. To thrive, women need to be in an environment that allows them to integrate their personal and professional life and to bring their true self to work. Industries that are predominantly male, such as the IT industry, present greater challenges for women as they battle gender stereotypes and well-established social norms. As women experience pressures to conform to norms and behaviors that are not congruent with their inner values, inauthenticity becomes a threat to personal happiness and organizational performance. Organizations that wish to attract and attain more women leaders should put policies and practices in place to ensure they are promoting environments that foster authentic leadership development for male and female leaders.

In conclusion, this research study builds on existing literature regarding gender equality and authenticity in the workplace. The goal is to understand the extent to which women IT executives feel free to behave authentically at work, and whether this plays a role in their success as female executives. The outcomes of this study will add new insights to the field of authenticity and authentic leadership practice.

Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology

Research Design and Rationale

A phenomenological methodology was used to investigate how women executives experience leading with authenticity in the IT industry. According to Richards and Morse (2013), phenomenology is the most appropriate method when seeking to understand how participants describe their lived experiences and the meaning of those experiences as they relate to the particular phenomenon under investigation. This study examined how the women perceive present thoughts and feelings related to leading with authenticity in the workplace, and to gain insights into the meanings of those experiences. The variable under investigation was authenticity, which is defined by Vannini (2004) as “the experience of being true to one’s self” (p. 8). A three-part construct that consists of self-alienation, authentic living, and external influence was used to measure individual authenticity at work (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014; Wood et al., 2008). To collect data on this variable, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with women executives in Fortune 500 IT companies. Data were collected through oral self-report and note taking during the interview, followed by memoing. With permission from the participants, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Data collection was cross-sectional in design and took place over a three-month timeframe, beginning August 2016.

A qualitative research approach is appropriate for the present study because of the complexity of the topic under investigation and the need to closely examine the phenomenon through the eyes of the women who are currently living it. As individual authenticity has been described as a person-centered and subjective experience, a phenomenological approach allowed for deeper understanding of the meaning women assign to their personal experiences. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to guide the conversation thoughtfully by using

some pre-determined questions and responding to the cues of the participants. In addition to examining the participants' words and stories, interviews conducted face-to-face or by video conferencing allowed the researcher to observe and respond to the non-verbal cues of the participants as they described their experiences of leading with authenticity in the workplace. The goal of the interviews was to collect and transcribe self-report data from an intended sample size of 10 participants, and to comprehensively analyze the data for key themes and trends pertaining to how women executives experience individual authenticity in the IT industry.

Population, Sampling Method, Sample, and Response Rate

To understand how women executives experience leading with authenticity in the IT industry, an in-depth, cross-sectional analysis on a single population of women was conducted. The target population for this study included females who serve in senior-level leadership positions within a large information technology company, including both Fortune 500 and private IT companies. When selecting a population for participation in a research study, ascertaining known demographics about the population is important. Within the IT industry, women only make up approximately 25% of the IT workforce, 10% of corporate officer positions in Fortune 500 IT companies, and 9% of IT management positions, such as chief executive officer (CEO), chief information officer (CIO), chief technology officer (CTO), vice president (VP), strategist, and architect (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). Of the 25% women in the IT workforce, 18% of the population are White, 4% are Asian, 2% are African American, and 1.5% are Hispanic (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). The women in this study were geographically dispersed across the United States. Inclusion criteria for participants in the study were as follows:

- female in gender
- have one of the following job titles:

- chief executive officer (CEO)/president
 - chief information officer/chief technology (CIO/CTO)
 - chief marketing officer (CMO)
 - chief operating officer (COO)
 - chief financial officer (CFO)
 - vice president (VP)
 - global director/managing director
- works for a Fortune 500 or large privately held IT company

The sampling method was purposive, which is a non-probabilistic sampling method. Companies were initially selected from the 2015 Fortune 500 list from the Fortune website. Upon reviewing the Fortune 500 list, IT companies were selected based on the researcher's current relationship and access to the company. Female executives were identified by conducting a search on the company websites, on LinkedIn, and through personal referrals. Large, privately-held technology companies were identified based on their reputations as industry leaders and the researcher's relationship with the company. A maximum of three females was selected from each company. Due to potential scheduling limitations of the women, a list of approximately 15 women was generated, with the goal of securing 10 women for interviews. Recognizing that the participants may withdraw at any time, the final goal was to comprehensively analyze and report on the lived experiences of at least eight female IT leaders. In the end, nine female leaders were interviewed for the study.

Human Subjects Considerations

Proper Interview Review Board (IRB) procedures were followed to ensure the protection of participants in the research study. First, each participant was contacted via e-mail and asked

for her participation in the study. The e-mail contained a description of the study and a request for an interview. The sampling for the study was purposive, and specific female leaders were identified across multiple companies. Therefore, it was not necessary to obtain company or site permission. Instead, since the female participants had sufficient authority to approve their participation in the study, they were asked to sign a consent form that included a description of the study, along with its intended use and potential for publication. The consent form also specified that company or participant names would not be included in the study. The signed consent forms were provided to the participants via e-mail and collected electronically or during the face-to-face interview. Prior to the interview, a list of sample interview questions was provided via e-mail. In-person interviews were scheduled for up to one hour and took place at the company location or at an agreed-upon location outside of the company, based on privacy and convenience. When in-person meetings were not feasible due to travel constraints or scheduling conflicts, interviews were conducted via telephone or video conferencing. Prior to the start of the interview, participants were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that she could withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Additionally, each participant was asked to indicate her permission to audio record the interview by checking the appropriate box on the informed consent letter. If a participant declined audio recording, notes were exclusively handwritten or typed.

Risks and benefits of participation were articulated, and a detailed description of the interview process was provided. The greatest known risk of participation in the study is the vulnerability of the participant to share personal information. Additionally, the participant may have shared sensitive or political information about the company, and even though the information has been safeguarded as outlined in this section of the paper, there is a risk that the

information could be breached. However, these risks were relatively low given the procedures that were taken to safeguard the information, such as storing the interviews in a password-protected location on the researcher's computer and ensuring that personally identifiable information is not disclosed. The primary benefit of participation in the study is the ability for the women to contribute to the literature and practice of women in IT leadership and to gain valuable insight into the experiences women share with regard to leading with authenticity in the workplace. Furthermore, the findings from this study provide valuable information to organizations as they strive to create a more supportive work environment for women. As such, the benefits of the study outweigh the risks by contributing substantially to a topic that is growing in importance across academia and industry.

After explaining the risks and benefits and addressing any questions regarding the interview process, the participant was asked to sign the consent form. Since privacy and confidentiality are critical to a research study, proper steps were taken to protect the identity and the responses of each participant. To ensure personally identifiable information is not disclosed, the names of corporations were not used and the women were assigned pseudonyms when referenced in the study. Data were recorded in the aggregate, and any specific stories featured in the final report were not connected to any participant. All transcripts, documents, and audio recordings with confidential information were kept in a safe location that was locked or password protected and only accessible by the researcher. Additionally, all backed up data were encrypted.

Instrumentation

The variable measured in this study was authenticity, which is defined as “the experience of being true to one's self” (Vannini, 2004, p. 8). The phenomenon was explored by seeking to

understand and interpret how each participant subjectively experiences individual authenticity as a leader in the IT industry, which is known for being a predominantly male industry. To collect data on this variable, semi-structured interviews with women in senior-level IT leadership positions were conducted. With approval from the participants, four interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Data from each participant were collected during a one-on-one interview that lasted up to 60 minutes. Nine interviews were conducted over a 3-month timeframe. Informal conversations took place outside of the scheduled interviews, but data were not collected beyond the timeframe of three months. A breakdown of the variable under investigation, the data source, and respondents is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Instrumentation

Variable	Data Source	Respondents
How women experience leading with authenticity in the workplace (present experiences)	semi-structured interviews	9 female IT leaders

For the semi-structured interviews, each participant was asked similar questions. A list of predetermined questions was developed and used to carefully guide the conversation while not constraining it. The questions were elaborated upon or adapted based on the responses and cues of the participants. Questions were derived from the Individual Authenticity Measure at Work (IAM Work), an instrument that was developed by van den Bosch and Taris (2014) to measure authenticity in the context of the workplace (see Appendix A). This theory-based measure,

which has been proven a valid and reliable measure of state-based authenticity, is based on a three-part construct of person-centered authenticity (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). Since this is a phenomenological study, the quantitative IAM Work survey was not administered to participants. Rather, qualitative interview questions were developed using the IAM Work as a theoretical construct to measure authenticity based on authentic living, self-alienation, and accepting external influence. As previously outlined in Chapter Two of this study, *authentic living* is performing behaviors and expressing emotions that are in accordance with the conscious awareness of physiological states, emotions, beliefs, and cognitions; *self-alienation* refers to the incongruence between a person's conscious awareness and his or her actual experience; and *accepting external influence* involves the extent to which a person feels pressure to conform to the expectations of others (Wood et al., 2008).

The interview questions were arranged into the following seven clusters according to what the questions were designed to measure: leadership style (Q1), meaning of authenticity (Q2), authentic living (Q3 & Q4), self-alienation (Q5 & Q6), accepting external influence (Q7), and balancing authenticity and gender at work (Q8–Q10). The final three interview questions (Q11–Q13) were designed to measure the women's overall thoughts and feelings regarding authenticity and women in IT leadership. To examine how the women described their personal leadership style and the meaning of authenticity, interview questions included the following:

1. Please describe your leadership style.
2. Tell me in your own words what being authentic, or true to yourself, means to you in your workplace.

To examine individual authenticity in the workplace, the following interview questions were used to measure authentic living, self-alienation, and accepting external influence:

3. Do you generally feel that you are able to be yourself at work? Has there been a time when you were unable to be yourself at work? What was that experience like?
4. Do you generally feel that you are able to stand up for what you value or believe in at work? Could you share a story about a specific work situation or scenario in which you were unable to stand up for what you valued or believed in?
5. Please share your thoughts regarding the extent to which you feel in touch with the real you at work. Could you tell me about a time when you felt out of touch with the real you at work?
6. Are there times when you feel alienated at work? If yes, can you describe a specific situation?
7. What have been your experiences with regard to feeling pressure to conform to the expectations of others in the workplace?

Grounded in the research literature on social constructionism, additional questions were developed using the social constructionist theory of gender to examine the experiences women face with respect to the *doing of gender* in the workplace. Social constructionist theory and the doing of gender posits that men and women adapt their behaviors to a particular situation in anticipation of how others will judge them based on what is gender appropriate (West & Zimmerman, 1987). When a female is in a male-dominated work occupation, such as IT, she must make decisions about whether to engage in behaviors that are part of her professional identity but are uncharacteristic of female traits (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In a male-dominated work environment, women often feel pressure to suppress their emotions in an attempt to come across as more stereotypically male (Sandberg, 2013), and believe they need to conform in order to advance up the corporate ladder (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013). As such,

the following interview questions were used to analyze women's experiences with balancing authenticity and adherence to gender stereotypes and social role expectations at work.

8. Has there been a time at work when you felt the need to adapt your behavior to a particular situation based on what is considered appropriate for women?
9. Have there been any times at work when you felt pressure to suppress your emotions to come across as more stereotypically male? If so, what was that experience like?
10. Are there situations at work in which you feel pressure to engage in behaviors that are uncharacteristic of traditionally-defined female traits (for example, pressure to be authoritative, competitive, or autocratic)?

Finally, to measure the women's overall thoughts and feelings regarding authenticity and women in IT leadership, interview questions included the following:

11. Could you share your overall thoughts and experiences regarding what it means to be a female leader in the IT industry?
12. Given your personal experiences and watching other women in the IT industry, do you feel like part of your success can be attributed to your staying true to yourself?
13. Overall, do you feel like the culture of the IT industry is supportive of women being their authentic or true self at work?

Data Collection Procedures

For data collection, up-to-60-minute interviews with each participant took place at a time and location agreed upon by the researcher and participant. Due to scheduling challenges and travel constraints, only two of the interviews were conducted in person in the city where the participant lived or worked. Remote interviews took place via telephone or by using a video conferencing. Scheduling of interviews began in July 2016, once IRB approval was awarded.

Data collection began in August 2016, and all interviews were completed by the mid-October 2016. Data was collected through one-time interviews.

As previously outlined in the Human Subjects Considerations, participants were purposefully selected for participation in the study and contacted directly via e-mail. Most interviews were scheduled by working with the participant's executive or administrative assistant. An informed consent form was provided via e-mail and collected prior to the interview or during the in-person meeting. In order to explore the lived experiences of the women and the meanings they assign to those experiences, data were collected through in-depth interviews using previously formed questions grounded in the research literature on authenticity. Interviews were either typed verbatim or audio recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Analytic Techniques

The intent of this study was to examine the lived experiences of women executives in the IT industry and to understand the meaning they assign to those experiences. The variable under investigation in this study is authenticity, which is defined by Vannini (2004) as "the experience of being true to one's self" (p. 8). To collect data on this variable, a phenomenological approach was taken to understand how women in IT senior-level leadership positions experience leading with authenticity in the workplace. Interview questions sought to uncover experiential descriptions regarding the thoughts and feelings of the women as they pertain to attributes of authenticity (i.e., personal values and behaviors). Although some research questions were predetermined to elicit plausible insights, additional questions were asked during the interview based on the flow of conversation. Prior to starting data analysis, the researcher bracketed any assumptions about women leaders and authenticity in the workplace by documenting these thoughts in a memo.

In accordance with phenomenological data analysis described by Richards and Morse (2013), verbal data from the women were collected, transcribed, reflected upon, and dissected for common themes according to their words and phrases. Through deep immersion and thorough analysis of the participants' textual expressions, the researcher was able to make meaning of the data by grouping and labeling the data based on similarities and themes. The goal was to describe the essence, or the internal meaning, of the lived experience (Richards & Morse, 2013). To uncover the essence, seven steps were followed: intuition, analyzing, describing the phenomenon, watching modes of appearing, exploring the phenomenon of consciousness, suspending belief, and interpreting concealed meanings (Richards & Morse, 2013).

This study used Moustakas's (1994) modification of Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975) methods of analysis of phenomenological data. This method involves obtaining a comprehensive description of the phenomenon by analyzing verbatim transcripts from each participant and uncovering the meanings and essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Using a coding process, the raw data from each interview were transcribed and organized into relevant statements and non-repetitive/non-overlapping statements. The invariant meaning units of the experience were organized into themes and synthesized into a description of the textures (Moustakas, 1994). Verbatim examples (i.e., quotes) from the participants were included, though pseudonyms were assigned to participants to protect identities. Next, textural descriptions were reflected upon using imaginative variation, thereby constructing a textural-structural description of the meanings of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The desired result was a combined description of the experience that characterized the group as a whole. Through this process, the researcher sought to uncover the psychological nature of the phenomenon, which is the women's emotional experience with respect to leading with authenticity at work.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The present study examined the experiences of female leaders in the IT industry with respect to leading with authenticity in the context of a male-dominated work environment. Authenticity has been defined as the experience of being true to one's self (Vannini, 2004). It represents a healthy alignment between internal values and external behaviors (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013). The goal of this study is to shed light on what it means for women to function authentically in the workplace and to provide valuable insight to organizations as they strive to attract, retain, and promote women in IT.

The focus of this study is the information technology (IT) industry, which is predominantly male and has long been characterized as inhospitable to women. Research has shown that women encounter strong and well-established norms in some male-dominated organizations and experience pressures to conform in order to advance up the corporate ladder (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013; Sandberg, 2013). While progress has been made with respect to gender equality in the workplace, men still hold an overwhelming majority of leadership positions in the IT industry. Studies have shown that women are dropping out of the IT industry at the mid-level point in their careers (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). Some have argued that women drop out of technology companies due to hostile work environments, isolation, and extreme work pressures (Hewlett, Sherbin, Dieudonne, Fagnoli, & Fredman, 2014). Others have pointed to challenges with authenticity and work-life balance (Goodsell, 2009). An underlying premise of the present study is that a woman's ability to be authentic at work enables her to be a fully functioning and engaged employee, thereby contributing to her longevity and success as a female leader in the IT industry. The present study examined how women experience individual

authenticity in the IT industry, and furthermore, how they balance authenticity with pressures to conform to cultural norms and gender stereotypes in a male-dominated work environment.

To evaluate the lived experiences of female senior leaders in the IT industry, and to understand the meaning they assign to those experiences, a qualitative research methodology was selected for this study. The phenomenon under investigation was authenticity, which is viewed as a self-reflective and emotional experience (Vannini & Franzese, 2008). Accordingly, a phenomenological research methodology was used to understand how women describe their present perceptions of leading with authenticity in the workplace. Semi-structured interviews with nine female leaders in the IT industry allowed the researcher to examine each participant's thoughts, perceptions, and emotions regarding her own authenticity in the workplace. The one-on-one interviews took place in-person, by phone, or via video conferencing. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the event that the participant elected not to be audio recorded, interviews were typed. The study used a purposive sampling method. Companies were first selected from the Fortune 500 list of technology companies. Additional privately held, large information technology companies were selected through personal relationships with the companies. Females who held a senior-level leadership position were identified through a personal relationship or referral. Nine interviews were conducted over a three-month timeframe, beginning in August 2016.

This phenomenological study examined the experiences of women leaders in the IT industry with respect to leading with authenticity in the context of a male-dominated work environment. Chapter Four presents the findings from nine interviews with female senior leaders in the IT industry. First, this chapter summarizes the demographics of the participants, restates the research question under investigation, and explains the process by which the data was

analyzed. Next, the detailed findings from the data analyses are discussed in accordance with the cluster of interview questions and key themes that emerged within each cluster. Finally, a summary of key findings is presented.

Demographics

The total number of participants in the study was nine ($n = 9$). The female senior leaders represented six different companies that operate in the information technology industry. No more than three female participants were selected from a single company. The job titles included one managing director, one global director, six vice presidents, and one C-level executive. Of the six companies represented, five are featured on the list of Fortune 500 technology companies, while one company is a privately held, large global information technology company that is considered a leader in its field. The female participants have served in the IT industry for an average of 26 years, have 235 cumulative years of experience in the IT industry, and have been with their current company for an average of 10 years. The participants were geographically dispersed across the United States. Two of the interviews took place in-person, five by phone, and two via teleconferencing.

Research Question

The following research question was proposed for the study: What are the lived experiences of women executives in the information technology (IT) industry with regard to individual authenticity? To analyze this, semi-structured interviews were conducted using the following questions to guide the discussions.

1. Please describe your leadership style.
2. Tell me in your own words what being authentic, or true to yourself, means to you in your workplace.

3. Do you generally feel that you are able to be yourself at work? Has there been a time when you were unable to be yourself at work?
4. Do you generally feel that you are able to stand up for what you value or believe in at work? Could you share a story about a specific work situation or scenario in which you were unable to stand up for what you valued or believed in?
5. Please share your thoughts regarding the extent to which you feel in touch with the real you at work. Could you tell me about a time when you felt out of touch with the real you at work?
6. Are there times when you feel alienated at work? If yes, can you describe a specific situation?
7. What have been your experiences with regard to feeling pressure to conform to the expectations of others in the workplace?
8. Has there been a time at work when you felt the need to adapt your behavior to a particular situation based on what is considered appropriate for women?
9. Have there been any times at work when you felt pressure to suppress your emotions to come across as more stereotypically male? If so, what was that experience like?
10. Are there situations at work in which you feel pressure to engage in behaviors that are uncharacteristic of traditionally-defined female traits (for example, pressure to be authoritative, competitive, or autocratic)?
11. Could you share your overall thoughts and experiences regarding what it means to be a female leader in the IT industry?
12. Given your personal experiences and watching other women in the IT industry, do you feel like part of your success can be attributed to your staying true to yourself?

13. Overall, do you feel like the culture of the IT industry is supportive of women being their authentic or true selves at work?

Data Analysis

For data analysis, Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975) method of analysis of phenomenological data was used to analyze the verbatim transcripts from one-on-one interviews with nine female participants. The transcripts for each participant were first analyzed in full and then by the seven clusters described in Chapter Three under Instrumentation. The researcher looked for patterns and keywords or phrases in the data. Emergent themes were chosen if three or more participants gave a similar response, thereby indicating a pattern in the data. The clusters and themes are presented in Table 2.

Prior to beginning the data analysis, any assumptions about authenticity among women leaders in the IT industry were bracketed. After conducting and transcribing the verbal interviews, the raw data were reflected upon and deeply analyzed for common themes according to words and phrases. The goal of the phenomenological methodology was to identify the essence or internal meaning of the lived experiences (Richards & Morse, 2013). Through this process of data analysis, the researcher uncovered the psychological nature of the phenomenon, or how these women experience leading with authenticity in a male-dominated work environment.

Table 2

Clusters and Themes

Cluster	Theme
Leadership Style	1. Collaborative leadership
	2. Servant leadership
Meaning of Authenticity	3. Personal values
	4. Integrity
	5. Whole self
Authentic living	6. Person-organization fit
	7. Establishing professional identity
Self-alienation	8. Versions of authentic self
	9. Feeling isolated
Accepting external influence	10. Organizational expectations
Authenticity and gender at work	11. Emotional intelligence
	(a) Controlling emotions
	(b) Adaptability
Authenticity and women in IT	12. Support network
	13. Female advantage
	14. Work-life balance

Findings

The findings are reported in a synthesized form representing the experiences of the participants as a whole. Responses are organized into major sections or clusters according to the

interview questions, as discussed in the preceding section on data analysis. The findings within each category were analyzed and grouped according to patterns and key themes that emerged from the data.

Leadership style. The first interview question, “Please describe your leadership style,” was designed to examine how the female leaders describe their own leadership style. All of the responses could be classified into two categories of leadership: (a) collaborative leadership or (b) servant leadership. Both styles of leadership are defined below.

Collaborative leadership. Many of the women described themselves as having a collaborative leadership style, using words such as *collaborative* and *inclusive*. Rather than leading through an autocratic or directive style, collaborative leadership is more democratic and participative and requires not only soliciting suggestions and ideas from one’s peers and subordinates but also preserving good relationships when evaluating and rejecting ideas (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

The participants did not view themselves as the command-and-control or authoritative types. When it comes to making decisions, a participant stated, “I’m decisive when I have to be, I don’t shy away from decisions, but I like to have an informed decision that takes into account a 360-degree perspective.” Another participant shared, “I’m not authoritative, I tend to gather info and input . . . I will take people’s ideas, input, and opinions but then ultimately I’ll make the decision.” Finally, a third participant said, “I like to do a lot of consensus building and delegation, but I have no qualms and understand that I’m ultimately there to make final decisions and to truly be a leader so people feel comfortable.”

Servant leadership. While each participant described her leadership style in different ways, the descriptions were consistent with the notion of servant leadership. *Servant leadership*,

coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1970, is a leadership philosophy that views leaders as a servant first, carrying out a set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations, and creates a more just and caring world (Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2016). According to Greenleaf (2002), some of the principles of servant leadership include listening, empathy, awareness, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. These principles are consistent with the way in which the women described their leadership styles, using words such as *compassionate, empathetic, coaching/mentorship, empowered, motivational, engaged, building teams, and servant leader*.

Meaning of authenticity. The second interview question, “Tell me in your own words what being authentic, or true to yourself, means to you in your workplace” was designed to gain insight into how the participants described what authenticity means to them in their workplace. Three major themes emerged from the data: (a) personal values, (b) integrity, and (c) whole self. Each theme is described in further detail.

Personal values. Personal values are the principles that guide an individual through life. Personal values are linked to one’s social attitudes and behaviors, and provide the lens through which people evaluate individuals or events (Schwartz, 1996). Accordingly, the participants in the present study described authenticity as knowing your core values, openly sharing them, and living your values through your work and interactions with people. The participants used words such as *beliefs, values, and principles* when discussing authenticity. Key responses included:

I think about acknowledging who I am, what strengths I bring, what my values are, what my personality is, and then what I try to do is ensure great value alignment with whomever I’m working for because that’s the foundation of authenticity.

[Authenticity is] staying true to what’s important to you personally . . . It’s your voice, it’s your beliefs, and it’s how you act and what you say.

I started a value chart early on in her career and use the same chart today to explain to people who I am and what I stand for.

[Authenticity is] not comprising my beliefs . . . It means having integrity and living your values through work and through how you deal with your people that report to you and your peers.

[Authenticity is] being true to yourself—performing my job and leading my organization in a way that is aligned to what I believe in principle.

Integrity. Integrity is defined as being honest, truthful, and having strong moral principles (Robbins & Judge, 2010). Furthermore, integrity is about consistency and reliability: doing what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it. Finally, integrity is demonstrated through openness and transparency, and staying true to your voice when communicating with others. Integrity is arguably the most important characteristic a leader must possess in order to gain the trust of others (Robbins & Judge, 2010).

The participants in the present study consistently described the notion of authenticity as being true to self and others through words and actions. They repeatedly used words such as integrity, transparent communication, and trust to describe authenticity. Relevant key responses included:

Authenticity is saying what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it, and being predictable to your team.

It's the notion of integrity, which is "I will tell you what I think and I will tell you if what I think you're doing is wrong. I will be polite about it, and if you're my boss, I'll do it behind a closed door and not in front of other people." It's an important piece of being authentic.

Being authentic is being true to my voice, which is how I communicate. I'm not about the corporate jargon or catchy phrases. It's about speaking from your heart and mind.

Being authentic means that I can operate without filters . . . I find that I'm my best at work when I can put forth ideas, defend ideas, and challenge ideas without politics or positioning. The less I have to worry about those, the more free and effective I am.

Whole self. A majority of the female participants talked about authenticity and the notion of whole self, which means honoring one's whole self by not hiding or minimizing roles outside of the work setting (Goodsell, 2009). Embracing the concept of whole self involves bringing your whole self to both your personal and professional life and successfully practicing work-life integration (Goodsell, 2009). A key response related to the idea of whole self included:

There is a tradition of women thinking they must separate work and the rest of their life and that's how you gain respect in the workplace, by pretending the other side doesn't exist. At some point, I threw that out the window and said I am a working mother who is active in the community, and I want people who work for me to know that because I want them to know that I support them in all of their lives.

One participant told a powerful story involving a quotation from Coretta Scott King that greatly impacted her perspective on this topic. When the participant was about to become a new mother, she heard Ms. King, in a televised interview, being asked how she balanced being a mother, a wife, and a leader of the cause. Ms. King replied, "Your first problem is that you view these as separate things. I don't look at these as three separate things, they make up all of me."

In discussing how she learned to embrace her whole self, one participant said, "In being transparent in everything about myself, I've been able to enjoy my work a lot more." A second participant stated, "another key [to authenticity] has been about integrating work and life . . . At the end of the day, I try to make sure I'm feeling satisfied about all things in life." Finally, a third participant described authenticity as being "the same person whether you're at work or at home."

Authentic living. The next two questions were designed to measure authentic living, which is defined as performing behaviors and expressing emotions that are in alignment with values, beliefs, and cognitions (van den Bosch & Taris, 2013). Question 3 was, "Do you

generally feel that you are able to be your true self at work? Has there been a time when you were unable to be yourself at work?" Question 4 asked: "Do you generally feel that you are able to stand up for what you value or believe in at work? Could you share a story about a specific work situation or scenario in which you were unable to stand up for what you valued or believed in?"

Most of the women reported that in their current organization and role, they are generally able to be their true self and stand up for what they value and believe in at work. This was primarily due to three factors: alignment of personal and organizational values, the ability to freely express thoughts and opinions in most situations, and a strong understanding of self. However, the women also shared experiences regarding challenges they faced earlier in their careers with respect to authenticity in the workplace. In analyzing the data to better understand the factors that once made it more difficult for the women to be their authentic self at work, two major themes emerged: (a) person-organization fit and (b) establishing a professional identity.

Person-organization fit. In responding to the questions pertaining to authentic living, most of the participants reported at one point in their career working for an organization or manager whose values and principles did not align with their own, which made authenticity particularly challenging. Value congruence between an employee and the organization has been defined as "the degree to which an individual employee's personal values (preferences) are congruent with his or her work organization's values (conceptions of the desirable) as manifested within its culture or subcultures" (McDonald, 1993, p. 38). This definition of value congruence is in line with the concept of person-organization fit (P-O fit), which is defined as the alignment between the values of a person and that of their organization (Chatman, 1989). Relevant key responses related to value congruence and P-O fit included:

In my prior company, there was so much bureaucracy and politics, and so much natural aversion in the company; and I'm a high-risk taker. As I became more senior [leadership], I found my style was suffocated because of politics and bureaucracy, and in order for me to be effective I had to spend so much time and energy making others feel comfortable with change and risk. It took away my time to spend on ideas myself . . . I recognized that I had to make a career or a life decision about was I willing to suppress so many of my ideas and the way I wanted to approach things and the impact I wanted to have or did I need to get out of the environment to be myself.

Culture is what plays more into it for me—it's the culture and the people. If the environment is genuine and values different thoughts, it's a lot easier to be authentic than if the culture doesn't want thoughts and change. And if there is a lot of hierarchy, it's hard to be authentic.

There have been occasions where I had to remind myself of my values and keep myself on the right path. At one point, I was working for a boss that was not of the same principles, and this was very painful. It became clear to me that I had to leave. Being surrounded by people with different set of values is really hard to do. I realized I'm not going to change them, so I have to leave.

One participant shared that she felt stifled at one point in her career when she worked for a boss who had very different values and leadership style (i.e., boasting, good ole' boy network, not open to outsiders). She said, "Even though I tried to play by the new rules, I wasn't being authentic." Another participant reflected on a time when the owner of her former company had very unethical business and personal practices. She did not feel that she was able to take any sort of action, so she felt trapped. The participant shared, "knowing something was wrong but not knowing how to take action was very challenging."

All five of the participants who shared stories about a misalignment between their personal values and the values of the organization eventually left and moved on to new companies. Today, these participants feel fortunate to be in an environment that aligns with their personal values and beliefs.

Establishing professional identity. Professional identity is a socially constructed self-concept based on one's attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences at work (Ibarra,

1999; Schein, 1978). Professional identity evolves over time with life and work experiences. Particularly earlier in one's career and during times of transition, an individual may adjust or adapt their professional identity (Ibarra, 1999; Schein, 1978).

The participants in the present study reported facing challenges earlier in their careers with respect to authenticity due to a lack of experience and a personal belief that they needed to prove themselves in the workplace. Each of the participants believed her ability to be authentic evolved over time with a stronger understanding of her personal identity in the context of the workplace. Key responses included:

Being authentic and true to yourself also comes with understanding what that is. I think earlier in my career, the first time you manage people you learn a lot about yourself . . . The feedback I got [through a 360 analysis] was definitely that I was too harsh, that I was too direct, that my approach was too egocentric and too male like. And at that time, I was like okay, but that's what I was told I needed to do in order to be successful. At that point, I realized that yeah, that really isn't who I am.

If I reflect back on the years . . . in my 20s, it was about really trying to figure out and prove what you can do and what your opportunities are. In your 30s, it's more about what did you learn, what are you interested in, what things you might try . . . In your 40s and 50s, this is who I am, this is the value I bring, and this is what I can do.

Earlier in my career, I was still trying to figure out the large corporate machine, and how I could be most successful at a successful company. In that context, I looked around at how other people were being successful and tried to emulate who they were.

I would say that if I go way back to when I was a less experienced person, I did have to learn about being a version of yourself that's pretty professionally tough.

Self-alienation. The next two questions were designed to measure self-alienation at work, defined as feeling cut off or out of touch with the real you. To analyze self-alienation, responses to the following interview questions were used.

- Question 5: Please share your thoughts regarding the extent to which you feel in touch with the real you at work.

- Question 6: Could you tell me about a time when you felt alienated or out of touch with the real you at work?

All of the participants reported that for the most part, they felt in touch with their real self at work. In analyzing the women's personal experiences with self-alienation, two key themes emerged from the data: (a) versions of authentic self and (b) feeling isolated. Each is described in further detail.

Versions of authentic self. The goal of authenticity is not to have a single unchanging style or persona throughout every situation; instead, it's about demonstrating consistency and alignment with personal values and beliefs when performing different roles across the many contexts in which one lives and works (Slocum, 2016). In other words, there can be multiple versions of one's authentic self. In the present study, the participants provided support for this notion by stating that different versions of their authentic selves exist, depending on the situation or circumstance. They didn't feel like they were inauthentic or out of touch with their real self; rather, they saw themselves as having to adapt in order to be successful in certain work contexts.

Relevant key responses included:

My work life is different to my personal life. My work life is very fast paced, intense. My personal life is calm. I'm not being inauthentic; there are just two different parts of me, different versions based on the situation.

I know who I am—I really do. [But] there are times that I have to do things that I don't like to do (i.e., personnel decisions). I still bring my authentic self, and my authentic self has a big streak of empathy in it, and sometimes I have to temper that empathy.

The career advice I give to a lot of women I mentor is that you've gotta be comfortable being uncomfortable if you want to succeed. And sometimes that means you have to step outside your comfort zone, but I don't think that's about authenticity; you can still be true to yourself.

I think many work environments today you have to adapt [to]—but those adaptations aren't a gender issue. Having to adapt to be able to be heard is about understanding the culture.

I'm a bit of an open book, I don't tend to try to be political. [But] I am careful sometimes with how I approach a situation, the words I use or approach I take, and that can sometimes be challenging for me because sometimes I just want to get it out in the open and deal with it versus maneuver around.

Feeling isolated. Feelings of isolation can occur when a person feels socially or emotionally isolated from others (GoodTherapy, 2015). Being in the minority, whether due to gender, personality type, age, viewpoint, or role, can make an individual feel left out or excluded from the rest of the group; even though it might be an inadvertent omission (O'Hara, 2014).

When asked about feeling alienated, the participants in the present study shared stories about specific times when they felt isolated. To note, five of the seven stories were related to gender.

Key responses regarding feelings of alienation at work included:

Our executive leadership team, they spend a lot of time together and do dinners out. The guys go out to dinner one on one and with each other all the time, and they get that networking opportunity, but I don't, because if I do than people assume the worst.

Yeah—I mean I think so. And part of that is due to my gender and part is due to my role. Sometimes I've wondered if it's based on the fact that I'm a woman. Because I interact a lot with men, it's a joking environment and I wonder if it would be different if it were all women.

In recent years, I attended a global leadership training . . . there were more engineering teams than sales and marketing. From a gender perspective, I think I was the only woman. In terms of customers, many times I will find myself in a meeting as the only female, or there may be one or two. It doesn't make me feel alienated, but I do feel like a bit of an outsider.

Certainly—probably one story earlier in my career, it's a situation where gender got me . . . I was a female director working with all males. A guy invited us to a charity event and bought a table. I didn't have a spouse to bring. It was fascinating. These were guys I worked with day in and day out. They acted like they didn't know me. It was the most awful experience in my life. The dynamics had all changed. And I was there as a single woman and they were there with their spouses. The next day at work it was all back to normal, but it made me think about things [from then on] in a different way.

[Not] being one of the boys can be a tough situation . . . They go out and don't necessarily invite you and you're not included in the discussions.

Being an introvert in IT and in a corporation is tough, and there have been points of alienation. I had to do two things: (1) figure out how I would cause the discussion to pause so that I had an opportunity to weigh in, and (2) in my discussions with management and others, I would let them know what it felt to be an introvert at the company.

You feel alienated when you have the lone view and no one else does, and you try to articulate it and people don't get it. It's pretty lonely when you're alienated and you believe so strongly in something and you can't get people behind it.

Accepting external influence. Question 7, What have been your experiences with regard to feeling pressure to conform to the expectations of others in the workplace?, was designed to measure accepting external influence, which refers to the extent to which a person feels pressure to conform to the expectations of others at work (Wood et al., 2008). All of the participants in the present study reported feeling some pressure to conform to the expectations of others in the workplace. A key finding that emerged from the data is that expectations to conform appeared to be ingrained in the culture and implicit norms of an organization, and reinforced by the leadership at the top of the hierarchy. Insightful responses, grouped into the theme *organizational expectations* are included below.

Organizational expectations. Organizations have certain expectations of their employees, whether implicitly or explicitly stated. Organizational culture and politics can play a role in the expectations an organization has on its members, and these expectations can be viewed as friendly or unfriendly (Fairholm, 2009). Some examples of these expectations include work hours, quality and quantity of work, loyalty, appearance, and other behaviors that are specific to the organization's culture (Fairholm, 2009). Key responses regarding organizational expectations included:

You have to separate reasonable expectations and unreasonable expectations—the reasonable expectations are that you'll get your job done and you'll do so in a professional manner. [With respect to] unreasonable ones—the biggest one that transcends the 30 years is an expectation around time . . . this expectation that your time is not your own.

The company values diversity, but there are definite norms. I would say to be successful in my job, particularly as a female leader, there are expectations in terms of what you're giving back, how you're contributing in a meeting, your work style, work habits, this is where I feel a ton of pressure. In the company, there is a ton of conformity around how you articulate yourself; in being very articulate and speaking in public, that's where I've felt a lot of pressure over the years. And you have to do it if you want to be a leader and continue to grow, particularly at the leadership level, but we definitely push down a pretty high level of expectation on your communication.

I think sometimes as an executive, you're seen as you should be more authoritative—that's not my style . . . I think as an executive you have to uphold the values of the company, but you're not allowed to have your own opinions or put your spin on it. I don't feel like I've ever really violated my ethics, but it's different sometimes . . . I think it's in part due to role, in part due to gender.

Culture is in the walls of an organization. If the culture in an organization is a culture of pressure to conform, then you feel the pressure. And I've worked at seven companies, so I've felt that pressure to conform.

It's a piece of this conforming to an expected behavior, but those expectations are sometimes driven by the top of the hierarchy, rather than being fixed for all time. So you have to navigate what is the expectation now.

Balancing authenticity and gender at work. The next three questions were designed to understand the experiences women face with respect to balancing authenticity and the social construction of gender in the workplace. The questions were:

- Question 8: Has there been a time at work when you felt the need to adapt your behavior to a particular situation based on what is considered appropriate for women?
- Question 9: Have there been any times at work when you felt pressure to suppress your emotions to come across as more stereotypically male? If so, what was that experience like?
- Question 10: Are there situations at work in which you feel pressure to engage in behaviors that are uncharacteristic of traditionally-defined female traits?

When it comes to balancing authenticity and gender in the workplace, most of the women reported feeling like they were able to be their authentic or true self at work and did not view gender as an inhibitor. The participants did not believe that they needed to adapt their behaviors based on what would be considered appropriate for women. However, multiple responses indicated the women felt the need to downplay stereotypical female traits, such as being emotional or too talkative, or the need to emphasize certain communication styles in order to be more effective in getting through to their audience, which often happened to be male.

In analyzing the participants' responses, an overarching theme of emotional intelligence emerged. Emotional intelligence can be described, in part, as managing one's emotions and demonstrating social competence when dealing with interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1998, 2002). The first two components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness and self-regulation—are concerned with the ability to demonstrate emotional awareness and to control one's internal states, impulses, and resources (Goleman, 1998). Furthermore, self-regulation is characterized by self-control, conscientiousness, and adaptability (Goleman, 1998). Social skills, the third component of emotional intelligence, require a proficiency in stimulating desirable responses in others through effective communication (Goleman, 1998). Finally, the fourth component of emotional intelligence is empathy, which involves social competence and exhibiting political awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns (Goleman, 1998).

While the participants' responses could be classified under the major theme of emotional intelligence, the responses were further segmented into two subcategories: (a) controlling emotions and (b) adaptability. Key responses included:

Controlling emotions. Five of the participants reported being conscious of keeping their emotions in check at work. Relevant responses included:

I try to keep my emotions intact, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. I am a passionate person; sometimes I get overly emotional because I'm passionate. I'm very self-aware—I am conscious of how I am received, especially because I am the only woman in a large group of men. This does cause me to be more aware of holding my emotions in check.

Early on it was a certain way of behaving in executive meetings. Very fact and figure driven and very dispassionate. And that's not who I am. The passion part is interesting; if it's too bright people just can't receive it. As a passionate woman, I've had to learn how to channel my passion in a right way so that people can actually hear what I'm saying that's driving the passion.

My natural tendency is to be pretty reserved. If I get worked up or passionate I tend to get emotional. I consciously try to control that because I'm afraid it may be taken wrong. I think I do tend to present myself as cold or logical. Especially when I'm trying to get a point across or justify a decision because that's how we should do things rather than appeal to emotions... if I let myself get emotional my impression is that people would dismiss me.

Yes—[there are] absolutely [times when I have had to suppress my emotions]. And that's been since day one. I actually was told when I was interning at (company name redacted) by my male manager, and he was a really good guy, but he told me I had to gain mental toughness. And I've seen it called out before. If a woman is viewed as emotional, it's definitely not a good thing.

There are always situations where a woman is emotional if she raises her voice. That will probably never go away, but it's less than it used to be. The notion that a man is forceful and a woman is bitchy will probably never go away.

Adaptability. The women reported that to be effective in their communication, they recognized the need to adapt their style to the audience or situation. Rather than perceiving this as being inauthentic, they viewed it as a healthy level of adapting to the needs of the audience.

Key responses included:

Yes, we all have to do that. It's more about reading the audience and group you're with, reading the dynamic and what you need to do to continue or advance the conversation . . . Adapting yourself to the group and what's needed is important. Male or female; American or not.

I don't think it's stated (expectation), it's more that (name redacted) and I are the only two women on the executive team and the rest are white males and they're engineers too. You add all these factors and if I was to come at them with an emotional appeal they'd shut down. Stepping up or raising the bar or raising the game, adapting to an

environment when I'm having to present to engineers, I don't think that's not being true to myself, it's just being efficient in having to get done what I need to get done.

To some degree, it's a game. I remember an occasion when I was trying to convince an executive who was slightly higher ranked than me, and in a different part of the organization, and I needed him to do something. I had laid out my argument and it was clear he wasn't listening. I tried again with a different set of facts, I tried a third time, then finally turned and said, "Is there any fact I can put in front of you that would cause you to actually listen to me and change your decision?" . . . I tell that story because as he became more obstinate, I did become more and more authoritative, fact-based, and more and more directive in my style. When it was clear nothing was going to work, I flipped to humor.

It's a tricky balance to find—but you have to do that with so many things. I do a lot [of business] globally. Every different culture [I'm] in, [I] have to figure out where I can adapt myself and be true to myself, and where do I just have to be true to myself.

The other thing was when I moved from IT into engineering and operations, it was even more male dominated. The idea of how verbose I was [it was] a problem. They worked in more of a command-and-control style and had little tolerance for extra words. I had to learn to adapt speaking styles so I would be heard.

The only thing I could think of is being less talkative because men are less talkative, use fewer words, shorter e-mails, word choices. Men generally wouldn't say, "I love this." I think of it as knowing your audience. But my authentic self might say, "Yeah, I love this idea," but if I know the audience is a male, I won't say it.

We definitely run our business on an extremely architected framework that is built around showing up with your results, articulating results and a plan, in a very authoritative, competitive way, and you have to get comfortable with that. I don't feel uncomfortable with it, but it would be considered uncharacteristic of traditionally defined female traits.

Authenticity and women in IT leadership. The final three questions were designed to ascertain the women's overall thoughts and experiences regarding authenticity and being a female leader in a male-dominated industry. The questions are:

- Question 11: Could you share your overall thoughts and experiences regarding what it means to be a female leader in the IT industry?

- Question 12: Given your personal experiences and watching other women in the IT industry, do you feel like part of your success can be attributed to your staying true to yourself?
- Question 13: Overall, do you feel like the culture of the IT industry is supportive of women being their authentic or true self at work?

Eight of the nine participants reported that overall, their experiences as female leaders in the IT industry has been extremely positive and empowering. They believed strongly that part of their success could be attributed to staying true to themselves at work. The participants also shared having a strong support network of family members, mentors, and good leaders throughout their career. While the participants reported having positive experiences personally, they acknowledged that more work needs to be done with respect to attracting and retaining women in IT. In analyzing the data from the final three questions, three major themes emerged: (a) support network, (b) female advantage, and (c) work-life balance. Each theme is further discussed.

Support network. In reflecting on their own experiences with being a female leader in IT, and also in discussing what more could be done to attract and retain women in IT, the participants consistently mentioned words such as *mentoring*, *coaching*, *role model*, and *sponsor*. The women indicated that their own successes as female leaders in the IT industry could be attributed, in part, to having a strong support network of family members, bosses, mentors/coaches, and role models. Furthermore, the women indicated a need and an opportunity to help other women in IT by encouraging them to move into the profession and by mentoring and sponsoring them. Key responses included:

I realize this now more than when I was young—I progressed quickly because I had great bosses. When you have an opportunity to coach people, you have to be willing to reach

out and grab them, to focus on impact and influence. I never noticed I was the only woman in the room, but now that I'm older I reflect more on it. Now I feel more pressure to be a role model . . . Now I realize there is nothing wrong with helping women through the system.

Being a woman now in this type of career, industry, and company—never been a better time. We have a great runway here. Leading up to it, you still have to learn how to play in a very male-dominated area. Not as many women and young girls are interested in the IT industry, for whatever reason, so we're doing a lot of work here to get people excited and exposed [to it]. It is a very male-dominated industry, and you have to learn to work in that environment while staying true to who you are and what you stand for. We have to mentor and sponsor women.

It's a powerful position to help others. I think it's both male and females that you can help. Because of years of experience, mentoring other females, younger females who are new in their career. By doing it well, you get respect from males and it breaks down any stereotypes.

One of the large accountabilities is to be a role model. That is huge. Being a role model and then investing the time to actually mentor, teach, and coach. That is of paramount importance.

In my case, I feel like I have been given and have taken the opportunity to express myself. On the other hand, trying to mentor these young women who are coming up is a struggle. They often times feel like they're not listened to, they get talked over. So my concern is how to help them so they're given an equal playing field and they're given an opportunity. We don't have enough leaders over in our development group and I don't believe we're doing enough to develop those women.

I had great leaders, especially the tech companies, that never treated me any different. I was so empowered that I never even thought about it. That set the foundation for my career.

IT is a great place for women, we should do everything possible to discourage the stereotype that it's only for men and encourage more females into the IT industry.

Female advantage. It has been theorized that women may bring a female advantage to the workplace due to the unique perspectives, talents, and leadership styles that set them apart from their male counterparts (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Accordingly, the participants in the present study reported that being a female in the IT industry allowed them to stand out in a positive way, particularly when they understood their strengths and celebrated the qualities that

made them unique. The stories shared by the participants highlighted a perceived advantage to being a female in a male-dominated workplace. Key responses included:

I was once told, “you might be better served if you had a woman mentor, but at the least, you do understand your strengths as a woman and don’t let a male mentor coach you out of that. You have a female advantage.” That was very powerful—it was a man who gave this advice. And I thought to myself, “He’s right.” You have to understand your own strengths in general, but also because you’re a woman.

I’m aware that women communicate and look and act differently. What I’ve learned is to use that to your advantage, in that we are great collaborators and we pull people in and along. I’ve been pretty conscious of using those skills in a way that makes people feel part of the process.

To be a female leader in IT, I’ve always found a way to turn that to being an advantage. It’s the attitude you take with it . . . focus on the positive. Being a female leader in that world, it’s allowed me to set myself apart more easily.

So often we look at the negative side of how few women there are [in IT]. But, there is a positive side to it as well for the women . . . If you do a great job, you will be viewed as unusual and you will get more attention for good or ill than a guy who is comparable or slightly less than you. So as much as you feel singled out and may think that’s always negative, you are also gaining attention for the positive. And I think sometimes we have to stop and think about that. It is a double-edged sword. Less of forgiveness for a mess up, but potentially more attention for success because maybe some of them didn’t think you could do it.

I’ve had many bosses say to me, “I can count on you, you tell me the real deal, you genuinely care about the business, you care about the people.” Standing out hasn’t been by design; it’s my core values. That’s who I am and that’s what makes me stand out.

Work-life balance. Work-life balance “is the ability to care for a family, have a fulfilling job, and engage in a rich personal life” (Goodsell, 2009, p. 40). The participants in the present study noted that work-life balance is still a major issue for women in IT, particularly for women earlier in their careers. In fact, multiple participants indicated there is no such thing as work-life *balance*, thus supporting the notion that successful authentic leaders practice work-life integration, actively engaging in a practice of flexibility and choice (Goodsell, 2009). Key responses included:

I hate the word [work-life balance]—it’s a utopia nobody ever achieves . . . It’s a constant [search] to find balance. Enjoying my work has helped me with my balance. Another key has been about integrating work and life.

I think for women, work-life balance or integration is probably our biggest struggle. I think internally we struggle over it and beat ourselves up over it and constantly are fighting against it. . . . All my friends, both stay-at-home moms and career moms—I think we always are questioning the choices we make. I think society has definite opinions about what you should be doing, and you can’t win either way. If you’re focused on your career, you should be home taking care of your children, and if you’re staying home taking care of your children, you should be focused on your career. And so, you really can’t win. And in that scenario, it’s really tough as a woman. If you’re a woman who focuses on your career and you don’t have children, again it’s “why aren’t you having children?” From a work-life balance perspective, it’s very tough. In my generation, we were told that you can have it all. But you can’t. Something has to go. And what ends up happening for most women is it’s themselves.

Often times I find women today, earlier in their careers, that are struggling to try to figure out how to do it all between home and work. In many cases, they don’t know who they are, and in many cases, they’ve never really taken the time to figure out what’s important to them and why. In general, I find women in the workplace five to 10 years into their careers at a point of crisis where they’re not sure who they are, what they want, where they’re trying to go, yet they have a number of family and work responsibilities and they’re trying to do it all. And I find that much more germane with women than men . . . As a leader, you have to be sensitive to those things and you have to make yourself available to give people tools to navigate time in their lives.

I was a proponent of Sheryl’s [Sandberg] book—it’s true, women are more prepared to sacrifice for the better good of their family in all ways. No matter what that means—daughter, parents, mother taking care of kids. Women more often step back and sacrifice, so it doesn’t even mean taking time out of the workplace, but it’s the difference of saying, “Yeah, I want to step up.” Because it flat out means more work. It means one more level of work and investment. And I think that men, while the trend is you see men [stepping up at home], the percentage still speaks to that [it’s the women who primarily play the caregiver role] . . . Being a working mother is the hardest thing you can ever do. And I think for a lot of women, the higher you are the harder it is.

In that era, I tried to hide that I had to leave at 5 p.m. to pick the kids up at daycare. Or I would do e-mail at 2:00 a.m. to cover that I couldn’t get to the office until 7:30 a.m., and I don’t know how much of that was required and how much of that I put on myself . . . I was the only woman manager in an organization of 2,000 people. So, I felt enormous pressure.

Outliers

In addition to the clusters and key themes presented above, analysis of the data revealed a few key outliers that could provide fertile ground for future research. While all of the women reported that they believe being their authentic self contributed to their successes as female leaders in the IT industry, two of the women noted that choosing to be authentic and staying true to themselves could have held them back from advancing further or faster in their careers. One participant felt strongly that the IT industry is not supportive of women being their authentic self because the current reward system doesn't allow them to do so. The participant gave a specific example of a time when she voiced a concern in an executive meeting about gender diversity in the workplace, and her boss later reprimanded her for doing. Additional insightful responses included:

You always wonder if you would have played the game differently, would you have advanced further, would you have gotten a different job. Perhaps, but I'm content with how things turned out. For example, there are still women in my firm who put their kids in boarding school, so as to never have a conflict when you need to do something at all hours. I think there are probably some jobs—had I been willing to be a more obedient employee and less willing to tell you what I think—I think there are some jobs I could have gotten that would have advanced my career, but it's not the only thing that's important to me.

I haven't changed who I am, but I'm sure if I changed my approach I might be further along in my career. I try to be my authentic self as much as I can—but by being my authentic self, I'm not rewarded or incentivized to do that. There's no benefit to it. They don't care that I'm a really good manager, all the things I bring forward, I don't get points for doing that.

The perspective that the IT industry is not supportive of women being their authentic selves could be the result of a variety of factors, but the insight provided indicates that organizational culture may be a driving force. The findings suggest that the extent to which an individual can be authentic at work may be specific to a company and its leadership, and generalizability to a broader industry may be limited. Thus, more research should be done to

analyze organizational culture and the impact on authenticity. This will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

Summary of Key Findings

Chapter Four presented the findings from this research study on authenticity and women in IT leadership. Moustakas's (1994) modification of Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen's (1975) method of analysis of phenomenological data was used to analyze the verbatim transcripts from one-on-one interviews with nine female participants. Through a coding process, raw data was organized into themes and textural-structural descriptions of the meanings of the experiences were constructed. Seven clusters were formed based on the interview questions, and key themes were identified within each cluster. Key themes were identified when three or more participants provided an interrelated, confirmatory response. A total of 14 themes emerged from the data. Example verbatim responses were included to illustrate each theme. Finally, the combined descriptions of the experiences allowed the group to be characterized as a whole.

Overall, the women epitomized authenticity at work. Based on the combined descriptions of the participants, *individual authenticity at work* can be defined as understanding your core values, principles, and beliefs, and living them out every day through actions and words, regardless of situation or circumstance. Furthermore, authenticity can be viewed as bringing your whole self to work; integrating your personal and professional self as identities that coexist. All of the women shared experiences that spanned their careers in IT, which was an average of 26 years and a cumulative total of 235 years. Their understanding of authentic self evolved over time, indicating that authenticity is an ability that can be developed with experience and a greater understanding of the authentic self. Finally, balancing authenticity and gender in the workplace required a great deal of courage and emotional intelligence.

The major findings from this chapter are discussed in further detail in Chapter Five. A new framework for developing individual authenticity is proposed on the basis of these findings. The implications for individuals, as well as organizational policy and practice, is examined. Finally, recommendations for future research are offered.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions

This final chapter discusses the key findings from the research study, along with concluding thoughts, implications, and recommendations for future research. This study generated a framework for developing individual authenticity, which is a newly proposed conceptualization of skill-based authenticity. The findings from the study indicate that key elements in developing skill-based authenticity include: (a) identification of personal values, (b) building emotional intelligence, (c) embracing the concept of whole self, and (d) developing a support network. This framework will be further discussed later in the chapter.

Discussion Regarding Key Findings

The purpose of the present study was to analyze how women experience leading with authenticity in the context of a male-dominated work environment. Through one-on-one interviews with nine female leaders in the IT industry, the researcher uncovered the participants' thoughts and perceptions regarding their personal leadership style, the meaning of authenticity, individual authenticity at work, balancing authenticity and gender in the workplace, and authenticity and women in IT leadership. The interview questions were phrased in the present (e.g., Do you generally feel that you are able to be your true self at work?) and in the past (e.g., Has there been a time when you were unable to be yourself at work?), which may have influenced the way in which the participants thought about and answered the questions. The responses were grouped into clusters according to the interview questions and analyzed for patterns and emergent themes. A discussion of the key findings and their relevance to the research literature is presented below.

Leadership style. The females in the present study described their leadership styles in a manner that was indicative of collaborative and servant leadership. The women used words such

as *collaborative, inclusive, compassionate, engaged, coaching/mentorship, empowered, motivational, and building teams* to describe their leadership styles. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggested females tend to utilize collaborative and empowering styles of leadership (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Women leaders have been found to employ a team-oriented or participative approach to leadership, and bring gender-specific capabilities to the workforce, such as relationship-building, open communication, motivating abilities, and the sharing of power (Cuadrado et al., 2008; Newburry et al., 2008). Women have also been viewed as more effective in coaching, developing, and communicating (Burke & Collins, 2001). The findings from the present study provide support for these claims. The findings also suggest that females may bring a *female advantage* to the workplace, particularly in a male-dominated field. While the findings do not suggest that one gender is better at leadership than the other, it is important to recognize the value in diversity of perspectives and the unique leadership capabilities that women bring to the workplace when allowed to participate fully as their authentic selves.

Meaning of authenticity. Through the participants' personal descriptions of the meaning of authenticity, three major themes emerged: (a) personal values, (b) integrity, and (c) bringing your whole self to work. Previous scholars have defined authenticity as the experience of being true to one's self (Vannini, 2004), and representing a healthy alignment between internal values and external behaviors (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013). *Authentic expression* has been defined as the congruence between internal experiences (i.e., thoughts) and external expressions (i.e., verbal statements; Roberts & Dutton, 2009). While the findings from the present study provide support for these existing definitions of authenticity, a new definition is offered for individual authenticity at work. This study proposes that individual authenticity at

work can be defined as understanding your core values, principles, and beliefs, and living them out every day through actions and words, regardless of situation or circumstance. Furthermore, authenticity can be viewed as bringing your whole self to work; integrating your personal and professional self as identities that coexist. This final view of authenticity provides support for Goodsell's (2009) assertion that authentic leaders practice work-life integration.

Individual authenticity at work. Individual authenticity at work was measured using a three-part construct of authenticity: authentic living, self-alienation, and accepting external influence. This three-part construct of authenticity was proposed by Wood et al. (2008), and operationalized by van den Bosch and Taris (2014), who demonstrated it to be a valid and reliable measure of individual authenticity at work. Overall, eight out of nine participants in the present study unequivocally believed they were able to be their authentic self in their current work environments. Specific findings for each component of authenticity are further discussed.

Authentic living. Authentic living is defined as performing behaviors and expressing emotions that are in accordance with the conscious awareness of physiological states, emotions, beliefs, and cognitions (Wood et al., 2008). The findings from the present study suggested that overall, the women experience authentic living in their current workplace. However, this appeared to be a greater challenge earlier in their careers, either during a time when they were still establishing their professional self or due to a misalignment of personal and organizational values.

Self-alienation. Self-alienation is defined as the incongruence between a person's conscious awareness and his or her actual experience (Wood et al., 2008). This was measured by examining the extent to which a participant felt like she was in touch with her real self at work, and whether she experienced feelings of alienation. Overall, the participants reported feeling in

touch with their real self at work but acknowledged that there are different versions of self, based on the situation or audience. While not currently prevalent, the participants reported experiencing feelings of isolation in different situations throughout their careers, in part due to gender.

Accepting external influence. Accepting external influence is defined as the extent to which a person feels pressure to conform to the expectations of others (Wood et al., 2008). The participants reported feeling pressures to conform to expectations of others in the workplace, and these pressures to conform were reinforced by organizational culture, norms, and leadership. This was not necessarily a gender specific issue. Furthermore, the participants did not view conforming or adapting to certain situations as compromising their authentic selves. While the participants viewed some organizational expectations as unrealistic, such as the expectation of time, other expectations were viewed as normal demands of the workplace (e.g., work habits and communication style).

Balancing authenticity and gender. This study used the social constructivist theory of gender as a theoretical framework to analyze how women experience balancing authenticity and gender in the context of a male-dominated work environment. Research has shown that when a female is in a male-dominated field, she must make a decision about whether or not to engage in behaviors that are uncharacteristic of traditionally defined female traits (West & Zimmerman, 1987), such as being more authoritative and competitive, or to suppress her emotions to come across as more stereotypically male (Sandberg, 2013). The findings suggest that, overall, the women were able to be their authentic selves at work and gender was not an inhibitor. While the women reported being consciously aware of suppressing their emotions in the workplace and adapting their communication style when working with predominantly male audiences, the

women were able to do so without compromising their values or beliefs. However, the participants noted that balancing authenticity in the workplace is a struggle for some women, particularly earlier in their careers when they are still trying to prove themselves.

Authenticity and women in IT leadership. Eight of the nine participants reported that their experience as a female leader in the IT industry has been an exceptional one, and their success can be attributed, in part, to demonstrating authenticity throughout their careers. Being authentic allowed them to build trust and engagement among followers, which provides support for prior research literature on authentic leadership and the effects on followers (Roberts, 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2010; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). The women believed there is much more to be done to not only attract but retain women in IT, particularly through coaching, mentoring, and sponsoring women. Finally, the women indicated that the greatest perceived challenge that females still face in the IT industry is a work-life balance or work-life integration, which provides support for Goodsell's (2009) findings regarding the challenges women face with respect to authenticity and balance.

Conclusions

This section of Chapter Five presents conclusions for this study based on the previously discussed findings. First, a summary of key learnings regarding the meaning of authenticity is provided. Next, a new view of authenticity as a capability or skill-based phenomenon is proposed, followed by the notion of versions of authentic self. Finally, a new framework for developing individual authenticity is proposed.

Meaning of authenticity. The present study viewed authenticity as a subjectively defined experience and was predicated on the assertion that subjectively experienced authenticity is a good measure of the extent to which a person is fully functioning (Rogers, 1965). The findings

from this study revealed these key insights into the meaning of authenticity at work, particularly for authentic female leaders in the IT industry.

- Authenticity is a personal experience.
- Authenticity is cultivated when one's core values, principles, and beliefs are understood and lived every day through actions and words, regardless of the situation or circumstance.
- Individual authenticity at work requires a high level of emotional intelligence.
- Individual authenticity at work facilitates trust and engagement between leaders and followers.
- Authenticity requires an integrated view of one's *whole self*, embracing both one's personal and professional self as identities that coexist.
- Individual authenticity is reinforced by having a strong network of role models, mentors, and good leaders, and by working in an environment that aligns with one's personal values and beliefs.
- Authenticity can be viewed as a state-based or a skill-based phenomenon. The skill-based perspective, proposed in this study, views authenticity as a capability that evolves over time. The deeper a person understands and values her authentic self, the stronger her ability to demonstrate authenticity regardless of environment or situation.
- Organizational culture, including values and principles, plays an important role in the extent to which a female is able to be her authentic or true self at work.
- Authenticity is a balance. Being a successful authentic leader requires understanding oneself first, one's audience second, and bringing forward the best version of oneself

based on what is appropriate or necessary for the situation. What matters most is staying true to what's important—one's internal values and beliefs.

Authenticity as a skill-based phenomenon. Historically, authenticity has been viewed as a trait-based phenomenon, defined as unchanging and consistent across time or situations (Wood et al., 2008). In more recent years, authenticity has been viewed as a state-based phenomenon, meaning it can vary based on the specific environment in which a person functions (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). The findings from the present study provide support for the view of authenticity as a subjectively experienced, state-based phenomenon. However, the findings also suggest that as an individual's authenticity develops over time with experience and a greater understanding of self, it can become less situational and more skill-based. Thus, this study proposes a new conceptualization of authenticity as a skill-based phenomenon. The deeper a person understands and values her authentic self, the stronger her ability to demonstrate authenticity across environments and situations. To clarify, the environment in which a person functions is still critical to enabling her authenticity. In order for a person to be fully functioning, she or he must be in an environment that aligns with personal values and beliefs (Rogers, 1965). When an authentic person experiences an incongruence between their internal self and the external environment, steps will be made to bring the two back into alignment. Sometimes this is a matter of speaking up, but sometimes it means permanently removing oneself from the environment or situation, as demonstrated by a number of the stories shared by several of the female participants in this study. Our ability to be authentic is cultivated when we understand our core values, principles, and beliefs, and we live them out every day through our actions and our words, regardless of situation or circumstance.

Versions of the authentic self. Roberts and Dutton (2009) theorized that when it comes to individual authenticity, the specific aspect of internal self and the way in which internal experiences are expressed varies across situations. What matters is whether the thoughts, feelings, values, and preferences an individual deems important are expressed in each relational context (Roberts & Dutton, 2009). The present study supports this notion through the finding that there can be different versions of self, and a person can adapt to an audience or situation while still being authentic as long as their actions are aligned with their internal values and beliefs. This takes a level of emotional intelligence, which is made up of five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1998). Of particular importance is self-awareness, which deals with recognizing one's internal states and preferences, and is comprised of emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence (Goleman, 1998). Self-regulation is concerned with managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources. It is characterized by self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, and innovation (Goleman, 1998). Empathy, which deals with social competence, is the awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns. Individuals who demonstrate empathy strive to understand and develop others, are service oriented, leverage diversity, and exhibit political awareness (Goleman, 1998). Finally, social skills require a proficiency in stimulating desirable responses in others. This requires skills such as influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, initiating and managing change, building relationships, collaboration, and team capabilities (Goleman, 1998). All five components of emotional intelligence are key in demonstrating authenticity across boundaries and situations, while effectively connecting with others.

The participants in the present study demonstrated a high level of emotional intelligence, which likely contributed to their ability to remain authentic regardless of the situation. Emotional intelligence also enabled the women to identify a healthy level of conforming or adapting to situations when necessary, while not compromising their values or beliefs. Finally, the women possessed another trait identified as *courage*—the courage to speak one’s mind, courage to stand out and be different, courage to do what’s right for self and others, and the courage to overcome obstacles that stood in their way. For these women, demonstrating authenticity was a skill that evolved over time and took a great deal of courage and emotional intelligence.

Developing authenticity. The view of authenticity as a skill-based phenomenon suggests that authenticity can be developed. Rather than viewing authenticity as an innate talent or a trait-based characteristic that is consistent across time or situations, authenticity is viewed as a learned capability that can be developed. Anyone can learn to be an authentic leader, but it requires a commitment to developing yourself (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007). Authenticity is a choice that must be practiced daily (Brown, 2009); it can be developed by practicing self-awareness, living out your values and principles, building a support network, and living an integrated life (George et al., 2007).

The present study provides support for the notion that authenticity can be developed. Through interpersonal interviews with nine female leaders in the IT industry, the participants revealed that individual authenticity was a capability they developed over time with a greater understanding of self and personal values, and something they actively chose to practice regardless of the situation or circumstance. Furthermore, the women practiced living an integrated life at work by embracing the concept of whole self. Finally, the women relied on

support networks to help them develop and reinforce their authentic self. George and Sims (2007) proposed a program for developing authentic leadership centered on five key areas: knowing your authentic self, defining your values and leadership principles, understanding your motivations, building your support team, and staying grounded by integrating all aspects of your life. Building upon existing literature and incorporating key findings from the present study, a new applied model for developing authenticity in female leaders is proposed.

Developing Individual Authenticity (DIvA) Framework

The researcher developed the *Developing Individual Authenticity (DIvA) at Work Framework*, proposed as a tool to enable a female leader to become the best version of her authentic self and to develop capabilities that allow her to practice authenticity across time and situations. The components of the applied framework include defining your core values, developing emotional intelligence, embracing the concept of whole self, establishing a support network, and finding your true north. The components of the framework, depicted in Figure 1, are described in further detail.

Core values. The first component of the DIvA framework aligns with the third theme, *personal values*, discussed in Chapter Four. Personal values are the principles that guide an individual through life. Finding and developing one's authentic self begins with defining one's core values, principles, and beliefs. The first step a woman takes in developing individual authenticity is reflecting on what is important to her personally, considering all aspects of her life, both personal and professional. Next, a woman creates a chart of values that can be referred to throughout her career, particularly when confronted with difficult decisions. This chart is used to communicate to others her identity and personal convictions. The woman needs to be intentional about upholding her values through words and actions. Finally, the woman seeks

workplace environments that are congruent with her personal values and beliefs, thereby ensuring a positive *person-organization fit* (theme six).

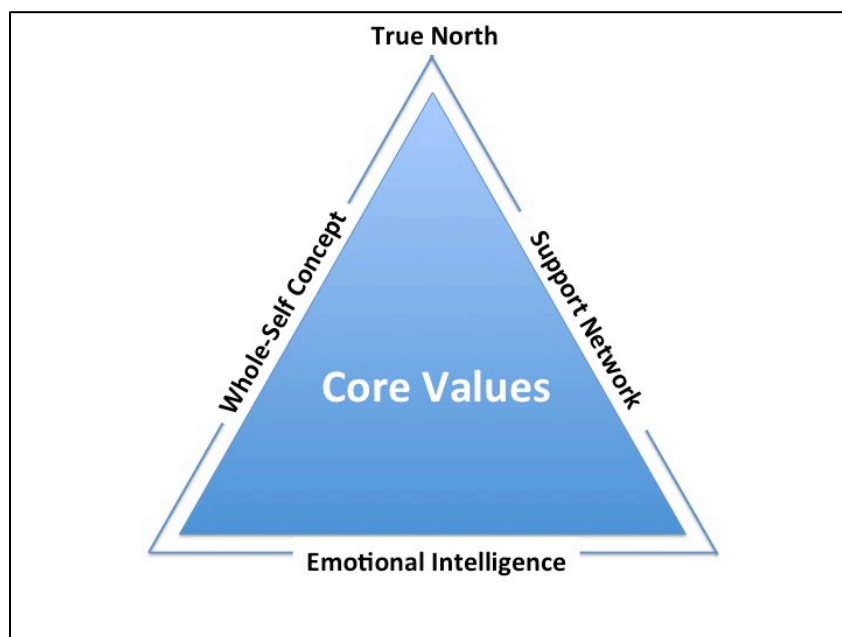


Figure 1. Developing individual authenticity (DIvA) framework

Emotional intelligence. The next component of the DIvA framework aligns with theme 11, *emotional intelligence*, outlined in Chapter Four. As indicated through the findings in the present study, demonstrating authenticity requires a great deal of emotional intelligence, which is made up of five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1998). The first step to increasing emotional intelligence is to assess one's current emotional and social competence. The Emotional and Social Competence Inventory (ESCI), developed by Goleman, Boyatzis, and Hay Group, Inc., is a valid and reliable tool that can be used to measure emotional and social intelligence (Hay Group, 2016). Two of the components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness and self-regulation—play particularly important roles in authentic leaders' positive self-development (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Self-awareness can be developed by gaining knowledge of and growing trust in one's personal characteristics (Ilies et al., 2005). As authenticity is a constant balancing act, developing

empathy and social skills enables leaders to exhibit political awareness and adapt to the needs of others while remaining true to themselves. Once a woman assesses her emotional and social competencies, a step-by-step process and personal development plan can be created for increasing emotional intelligence (Hay Group, 2016).

Whole self concept. The third component of the DIvA framework aligns with the themes, *whole self* and *work-life balance*, discussed in Chapter Four. This component focuses on honoring one's whole self by not hiding or minimizing roles outside of the work setting (Goodsell, 2009). The concept of whole self can be embraced by acknowledging and celebrating the various roles that make up a women's life—such as wife, mother, sister, friend, professional, volunteer. A personal memo is written to document these various roles, titled, *This Is Who I Am*. Then the plan is enacting, practicing the integration of balance into one's life through careful decision-making and priority setting (Goodsell, 2009), referring back to the values chart created in the first component of the DIvA framework. Ultimately, the goal is to bring the best version of a woman's authentic self to all aspects of her life, embracing both her personal and professional self as identities that coexist.

Support network. The fourth component of the DIvA framework aligns with the *support network* theme discussed in Chapter Four. As evidenced by the findings of this study, having a strong support network can reinforce individual authenticity. Thus, this component of the DIvA framework focuses on developing a network of mentors, colleagues, and friends who can reinforce your authentic self. This group of people can be depended on to help a woman stay grounded, provide her with guidance during times of uncertainty, and help her understand her strengths, particularly as a woman. The support network should be a combination of women and men. Having a diverse support team can help broaden one's perspective (George, Sims,

McLean, & Mayer, 2007). Finally, the woman should seek to work for good leaders and organizations who inspire her to be her greatest version of herself.

True north. The final aspect of the DIvA framework, discovering one's *true north*, is a concept that was introduced by George and Sims (2007) in the context of developing authentic leaders. True north is one's guiding compass, passions, motivations, and purpose in life (George & Sims, 2007). Being in touch with one's authentic self supports the quest of finding one's true north, and in turn, that true north helps a woman to remain true to her authentic self. Finding one's true north requires a lifetime of commitment, but it can be achieved (George & Sims, 2007). Understanding and living out one's core values, developing emotional intelligence, honoring your whole self, and developing a strong support network is one path toward finding your true north and living an authentic life as the best version of one's self.

The DIvA Framework aims to contribute to the development of female leaders, in particular, those working in male-dominated industries such as IT. However, while this tool was developed with women in IT leadership in mind, women and organizations across industries could adopt it. This study's implications for policy and practice are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Authenticity is, or should be, important to organizations. Research has shown that an individual's ability to act authentically in the workplace leads to personal happiness and better organizational performance (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Furthermore, organizations that foster authentic environments are more likely to have engaged employees and workplaces that promote trust (Ruderman & Rogolsky, 2013). All employees, women and men alike, must be empowered to bring their best self forward and to develop their full capabilities along the lines of excellence

(Ruderman & Ohlott, 2004). Organizations can play a key role in helping employees cultivate and sustain authenticity in the workplace.

Company values. The present study revealed that a key factor in one's ability to be authentic at work is the alignment of personal and organizational values. Authentic companies empower authentic employees. A values-driven company must have a clearly articulated set of core values that are communicated to all employees and upheld through all business practices. Furthermore, a company's values must be demonstrated and reinforced by its leadership.

IT companies must value diversity and inclusion if they want to promote authentic environments that engage employees and lead to better business outcomes. Studies have shown that the representation of females at the senior leadership level can lead to more diverse perspectives, better organizational strategies, and more creative business solutions (Wade, 2015). In addition to valuing a diverse workforce, IT companies should put a reward system in place to encourage the authenticity of its employees. For example, companies and their leaders should reward individuals for respectfully sharing dissenting opinions, rather than discouraging them from doing so. Companies can also reinforce authenticity by promoting employees who demonstrate it, rather than only rewarding those who conform. To gain a more diverse workforce, particularly at the leadership level, IT companies must put practices into place that not only attract but also retain women in IT.

Developing women in IT leadership. While much focus has been placed on hiring women in IT, more can be done with respect to retaining and developing women in the workplace. First, women should be empowered to bring their best selves forward. This includes recognizing and encouraging the unique perspectives and leadership skills women bring to the workplace (e.g., collaborative and empowering leadership skills). Organizations can also aid in

the development of women by connecting them with mentors and coaches in the industry, and by providing opportunities that allow them to establish credibility, gain confidence, and build expertise. Stretch assignments, for example, allow employees to learn and grow by giving them a project that extends beyond their current knowledge or skill level (Deloitte, 2016). Finally, the DIvA Framework proposed in this study can be used as a tool to develop women in IT, particularly early in their careers. By implementing the DIvA framework in organizational development programs, companies can help female employees cultivate authenticity by defining their personal values, building emotional intelligence, mastering the concept of work-life integration, and developing a network of mentors, coaches, and sponsors.

Work-life balance policies. The participants in the present study shared that work-life balance is still the greatest struggle for women in the workplace. Establishing work-life balance policies, allowing employees to meet family and personal responsibilities, helps companies retain their best employees (Grant, 2011). Some of the best practices for work-life balance include allowing flex-time, telecommuting, encouraging employees to take their vacations, giving generous maternity and paternity leaves, and offering amenities such as on-site daycare. One of the major challenges that women face is returning to work after maternity leave (Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012). Women need to feel like they can safely take maternity leave and come back without fear of consequence. In addition to work-life balance policies, cultural expectations need to adapt, such as the expectation around time and accessibility, or penalizing someone because they need to leave early to tend to a family matter. The women in the present study shared stories about how the constraints with respect to work-life balance are still prevalent in the workplace today. In fact, many of the women argued that there is no such thing as balance. According to Goodsell (2009), employees must be able to practice flexibility and choice,

achieving work-life integration through the ability to care for a family, have a fulfilling job, and engage in a rich personal life.

Recommendations for Future Research

Authenticity in the workplace is an emerging area of research. In order to further understand how women and men experience leading with authenticity in the context of the workplace, additional research should be conducted. Recommendations for future research are provided in the following areas: authenticity among entry and mid-level women in IT, authenticity among female leaders from a 360-degree perspective, authenticity and men in IT leadership, and the impact of organizational culture on authenticity.

Entry and mid-level women in IT. The present study analyzed female senior leaders in the IT industry to understand the experiences they face with respect to leading with authenticity in the context of a male-dominated work environment. The findings of this study confirmed that the participants are able to be their authentic self at work, but they indicated that this has not always been the case. The women reported that their ability to be authentic at work was something that evolved over time with more experience and a greater understanding of self and personal values. This could also be attributed, in part, to the change in times concerning women's participation in the workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014), and the recent increase in focus by companies to celebrate diversity in the workplace (Peck, 2015).

In order to gain further insight into the experiences all women face with respect to authenticity in the workplace, particularly earlier in their career, future research should examine entry-level and mid-level females in IT. As previously discussed, this is the point at which many females drop out of the IT industry (Ashcraft & Blithe, 2009). By better understanding some of

the challenges females with authenticity face earlier in their careers, organizations can implement policies and practices that not only attract but retain women in IT.

360-degree perspective. While the present study viewed authenticity as a subjective and personal experience, it can also be viewed as an objective property (van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). Scholars have analyzed the impact of authentic leadership on followers and have found that authenticity leads to greater employee trust and engagement (Roberts, 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2010; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Accordingly, future research could analyze female leaders in the IT industry by conducting a 360-degree analysis to understand the extent to which others view them as authentic and the perceptions regarding leadership effectiveness.

Men in IT leadership. Authenticity is not a gender-specific experience. All employees, males and females, should be in an environment that allows them to participate fully in the workplace as their authentic selves. Men, too, feel pressure to conform to cultural norms in the workplace, as influenced through socialization of gender role stereotypes (Pleck, 1995). When males fail to fulfill male role expectations or characteristics, or they adhere to a masculine ideology that is incompatible with other role demands (i.e., father), it can cause psychological consequences known as gender role strain (Pleck, 1995; Sobiraj et al., 2015). Therefore, the present study could be replicated with men in female-dominated industries to better understand the experiences they face with respect to balancing authenticity and gender at work.

Organizational culture. The present study did not control for or examine factors related to organizational culture. As this study identified, an organization's culture can play an important role in the extent to which an employee is able to be one's authentic self at work. Future research should be conducted to analyze the impact of organizational culture on authenticity, and to understand which elements of an organization's culture inhibit or enable

authenticity. Furthermore, research could be conducted to explore whether women in the workplace are rewarded or held back in their careers for being authentic. The fact that women must conform in order to advance up the corporate ladder (Sandberg, 2013) may be culturally bound, as it appears to be changing in the American workplace today as evidenced by the findings in this study. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory could be used as a framework for analyzing the relationship between culture and authenticity on an international scale. Finally, future research can provide further insight into the policies and practices that organizations can adopt to allow all employees, female and male, to participate authentically in the workplace.

Summary

The present study analyzed individual authenticity among women leaders in the IT industry. A phenomenological research methodology allowed authenticity to be examined as a subjectively experienced phenomenon through the eyes of female senior leaders in a male-dominated industry. Based on the findings from this study, a new definition for authenticity at work was proposed. Individual authenticity can be defined as understanding your core values, principles, and beliefs, and living them out every day through your actions and words, regardless of situation or circumstance. Furthermore, authenticity can be viewed as bringing your whole self to work; integrating your personal and professional self as identities that coexist.

Authenticity is a constant balancing act. To be an effective leader, there may be different versions of your authentic self. Authentic leaders demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence in practicing authenticity while adapting to and effectively communicating with others in the workplace. Being a successful authentic leader requires understanding oneself first, one's audience second, and bringing forward the best version of one's authentic self, based on

what's appropriate or necessary for the situation. What matters most is staying true to what's important to oneself—one's internal values and beliefs.

The nine female senior leaders in the IT industry who were interviewed for this study shared valuable experiences, both past and present, regarding balancing authenticity and gender in the context of a male-dominated work environment. Their experiences provided a new insight that authenticity can evolve over time with experience and a greater understanding of self. While the present study provided support for the notion of authenticity as a state-based phenomenon situated in the context of the environment, a new conceptualization of authenticity was proposed. The environment plays an important role in enabling authenticity, but demonstrating authenticity across environments is a skill. Accordingly, this study proposed that authenticity is a learned capability that can be developed, and therefore can be viewed as a skill-based phenomenon. The DIvA framework was introduced as a tool for developing individual authenticity at work. The components of the framework include (a) defining your core values, (b) building emotional intelligence, (c) embracing the concept of whole self, and (d) developing a support network. This tool can be particularly valuable for females who are entering the IT workforce or who are still working to establish their authentic self in the workplace.

Organizations that value diversity and inclusion should create authentic environments in which all employees, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or religion can participate fully in the workplace. While progress has been made with respect to the number of women in senior leadership positions in the IT industry, women leaders are still the minority. Organizations should further identify opportunities to attract, retain, and promote women in IT. One theory is to empower them to lead with authenticity. After all, women and men alike should feel

empowered to bring forward their best selves and to develop their full capabilities along the lines of excellence.

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APPENDIX A

Individual Authenticity Measure (IAM) at Work

by Ralph van den Bosch and Toon W. Taris (2013, p. 7)

Authentic living

1. I am true to myself at work in most situations.
2. At work, I always stand by what I believe in.
3. I behave in accordance with my values and beliefs in the workplace.
4. I find it easier to get on with people in the workplace when I'm being myself.

Self-alienation

1. At work, I feel alienated.
2. I don't feel who I truly am at work.
3. At work, I feel out of touch with the "real me."
4. In my working environment, I feel "cut off" from who I really am.

Accepting external influence

1. At work, I feel the need to do what others expect me to do.
2. I am strongly influenced in the workplace by the opinions of others.
3. Other people influence me greatly at work.
4. At work, I behave in a manner that people expect me to behave.

APPENDIX B

Notice of Approval for Human Research



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: June 29, 2016

Protocol Investigator Name: Samantha Kahoe

Protocol #: 16-05-292

Project Title: Gender Equality and Authenticity: A Study of Women in IT Leadership

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Samantha Kahoe:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chairperson

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives
Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist