

Leading with Heart: Beyond the Heroic Myth of Leadership

by

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M.Sc., Pepperdine University, 2002

M.Sc., Western Illinois University, 1988

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

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The challenge with traditional and hierarchical leadership models is that rarely are the complex issues present in our society today, resolved by one individual. Knowledge is distributed across multiple domains. Reviewing the alternative perspectives in leadership literature offers additional considerations for the dominant traditional models of leadership in existence today. With increased globalization, technology advancements, and interconnectedness, greater communication and collaboration are needed. The purpose of the study was to explore the role that personal values play in sustaining leadership during challenging times. Narrative inquiry and narrative interviews were used so leaders could share their stories of navigating challenging situations. One group interview was scheduled to share preliminary research findings with the research participants and continue the process of meaning coconstruction. Both narrative analysis and thematic analysis were used to harvest the key themes and wisdom offered during the interviews. Collective values identified included integrity, caring, courage, and commitment. The model for sustainable leadership included the ongoing pursuit of personal mastery, a values-based personal and professional support network, and expertise in leading self and other through the inevitable transitions that occur. These transitions are often due to changes associated with the predictive challenges that come

from such situations as the election cycle and changes in mandate. The above recommendations allow for leaders to sustain themselves and others while working in service of the common good. Leaders who adopt the above recommendations will be well positioned to support their leadership and to use values as guiding principles to release the hero in everyone around them, including themselves.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
Acknowledgments.....	xii
Chapter 1: Overview and Framing the Study	1
The 21st Century Leadership Challenge.....	2
Moving Beyond Traditional Views of Leadership	4
Challenge, Change, and Transition.....	5
A Brief Overview of Leadership Theory	7
Significance of the Study	8
Values and the Case for Building Sustainable Leadership	11
Summary.....	13
Chapter 2: Beyond the Heroic Leadership Perspective: Review of Relevant Literature.....	16
Key Concepts	17
Public administration	17
Public bureaucracy.....	18
Public servant.....	19
Public good, public interest, common good.....	19
Public sector leadership	20
Values	20
The Interconnected Elements of Public Administration.....	22
Beyond a traditional heroic view of leadership: alternative perspectives explored.....	25
The challenge of integrating alternative perspectives and accompanying values	27
Greater opportunities to reduce the presence of hierarchy	31
Opportunities for greater stakeholder engagement	31
Greater opportunities for serving the collective interest.....	32
Opportunities for taking a longer-term view	33
Public sector leadership	35
Values and Leadership.....	41
Leadership: Values and the influence on organizational culture	43
Relational Leadership – “relationship is everything”	46

One Path to Leadership Sustainability – Choosing Values, Relationship, and Community	47
Summary of Literature Review.....	48
Chapter 3: Qualitative Methodological Approach.....	50
Research Focus	50
Research Methodology	50
Methodological overview	50
Research questions.....	51
Specific Research Methodology	51
Narrative inquiry methodology.....	51
Narrative interview method	53
Hermeneutics explored	55
Narrative researcher journey.....	56
Ontological and Epistemological Positions	58
Specific Research Design	60
Recruitment and data collection.....	60
Initial contact and interview procedure.....	61
Research interview.....	62
Limitations of the recruitment and interview procedure.....	63
Transcription.....	63
Group interview	64
Field notebook	65
Data Analysis	66
Narrative analysis.....	68
Analysis across narrative interviews.....	72
Group Interview Data Analysis	75
Research Rigour.....	76
Researcher Reflexivity.....	77
Outcomes	78
Research Implications.....	78
Personal Motivation.....	79
Ethics.....	80
Ethics in Data Collection	81
Relationship Between Researcher and Research Participants	82
Summary.....	83
Chapter 4: Findings – Narrative Analysis.....	85
Introducing the Narratives	87
Narrator 1	87
Narrator 1: “Pulling back the curtain on illumination”.....	88
Narrator 2.....	91
Narrator two: “Holding the questions as I stood for authenticity”.....	91

Narrator 3	96
Narrator 3: “Don’t turn your back on your heart – leading with courage and integrity”	96
Integrity	100
Courage	100
Truth	101
Narrator 4	101
Narrator 4: “Shining the flashlight on learning in community by honouring compassion and diversity”	102
Narrator 5	106
Narrator 5: “Release the rope of security to step out and make a difference”	106
Courage	110
Learner centred	110
Narrator 6	111
Narrator 6: “Bringing out the hero in everyone through responsibility, respect, and caring”	111
Narrator 7	116
Narrator 7: “Balancing the scales of justice with fairness and acceptance”	116
Fairness	119
Narrator 8	121
Narrator 8: “Empowering the heart of the work”	121
Narrator 9	125
Narrator 9: “Nurturing the dragon fly of learning”	126
Narrator 10	129
Narrator 10: “Gaining wisdom on my leadership journey”	129
Compassion	131
Narrator 11	132
Narrator 11: “Leading through the neutral zone with respectful engagement and authenticity”	132
Community contribution	135
Social justice	135
Respectful engagement	135
Summary	137
Chapter 5: Findings – Analysis of Narratives	138
Leadership Reflections	138
Leading With Heart: Honouring Emotion and Honouring Self	142
Emotional Impact on Self and Other	143
Sustaining Leaders in the 21st Century	149
Finding 1: Becoming a Leader of Transitions for Self and Other	150
Transition and transitions leadership	150

Endings	153
Organizational experience of endings.....	153
Relational experience of endings	158
Individual experience of endings	160
Neutral zone	162
New beginnings	166
Final reflections: The role of self-care in serving as a transitions leader.....	167
Finding 2: Building a Values-Based Support Network	171
Leadership is lonely	171
Personal support network.....	173
Professional support network.....	176
Role of mentors.....	180
Finding 3: Exploring Personal Mastery and Learning Amidst Leadership Challenges.....	181
Purpose.....	183
Inner reflection.....	186
Learning	189
Summary	191
Finding 4: Collective Values that Sustained Leaders as they Navigated Challenges.....	192
Collective values identified and explored.....	192
Courage	193
Integrity.....	197
Caring.....	203
Commitment	207
Collective values.....	210
Leading with heart	211
Challenges and lessons learned about heart leadership	211
Demonstrating heart leadership	213
Honouring the voices of the narrators – final reflections	216
Summary	219
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions.....	221
Building Sustainable Leadership	223
Leading Self and Other Through Transition, Change, and Challenge.....	223
The Role of a Strong Values-Based Support Network	225
Personal Mastery and Learning Amidst Challenge	226
Values Implications for Leaders	229
Relational Leadership, Values, and Community	231
The Importance of Values.....	233
Setting the Stage for Moving Forward.....	234
Implications for Public Sector Leadership.....	236

My Final Reflections.....	237
Beyond the Heroic Myth of Leadership: A Multi-disciplinary Approach	
Forward.....	239
Conclusion – Values Release the Hero in Everyone	244
References.....	246
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter for Potential Research Participants	267
Appendix B: Informed Consent and Information Letter.....	268
Appendix C: Interview Outline.....	271
Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement for Transcriptionist.....	273
Appendix E: Email Sent to Participants Requesting Input in Advance of Group Interview	275
Appendix F: Preliminary Values and Descriptions of What Sustains Leaders as they Navigate Challenge.....	276
Appendix G: Group Interview Protocol.....	280

List of Tables

Table 1	Themes From the Alternative Perspective in Leadership Literature.....	34
Table 2	Summary of Leadership Challenges Experienced by the Narrators.....	86
Table 3	Summary of Findings Identified in the Research.....	150
Table 4	Summary of Participant Leadership Experiences in Each of the Transition Zones.....	152
Table 5	Summary of self-Care Strategies Identified by Participants	167
Table 6	Values-Based Personal and Professional Support Network.....	174
Table 7	Recommendations for Exploring Personal Mastery and Learning Amidst Challenge.....	183
Table 8	Summary of Collective Value of Courage	193
Table 9	Summary of Collective Value of Integrity	198
Table 10	Summary of Collective Value of Caring.....	203
Table 11	Summary of Collective Value of Commitment.....	208

List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual tree image of the public sector.	24
Figure 2. Conceptual framework: Public sector, values-based and relational leadership literature contributions.	35
Figure 3. Summary of the emotions participants identified during the interviews.....	143
Figure 4. Collective values explored during the group interview with the participants.	211
Figure 5. Building sustainable public sector leadership.	228
Figure 6. The Berkana two-loop model (adapted for this research).	241

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I recently completed a reflective journey walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain. I walked the Camino while my dissertation was being reviewed by my committee, and I had just delivered a paper based on the preliminary findings of my research at the International Leadership Association Conference in Barcelona, Spain. I completed the Camino during a small window of time when my head and my heart were available to listen to my feet hitting the ground during this walk. Two moments of insight captured while on this 110 km trek in Spain have remained with me. First, I experienced the gift of being present to my experience, the people around me, and the friends that companioned me on the journey. My insight during this time was that much like there are many steps to completing the Camino, there are also many steps to completing a PhD, and both experiences call for perseverance, a willingness to learn from experience along the way, and to make adjustments as needed. Second, I was reminded of gratitude. I was grateful for the privilege of health, time, and space to complete this walk. I came home from this trek more aware and mindful of gratitude in my life. As I complete this PhD, my heart is full of gratitude for the many people who have supported me. May the acknowledgments I articulate below, breathe life into the gratitude and appreciation for the many people who have been companions to me.

I was drawn to this research as I have experienced many personal and professional challenges. I have experienced the professional rupture of betrayal, and experienced values-based conflict as part of my leadership practice. This research has

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With deep and heartfelt gratitude,

Beth

Chapter 1: Overview and Framing the Study

In today's relentless 24/7 global operating environment, human capacity is stretched to its very limits (Roche, 2013). We have a unique opportunity in this challenging time to explore whether personal values are one of the key factors that create and sustain individual leaders. In Canada, the debate of values and ethics in the public sector has been widely documented for many years (Heintzman, 2007; Kernaghan, 2000; Langford, 2004; Tait, 1996). News reports remind us of the values conflicts faced by public sector leadership. One example is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), who continue to address issues of leadership in relationship to female personnel (Drews, 2013). This long-standing issue suggests that individuals have stepped away from the core values of the RCMP and systems have tolerated this inappropriate behaviour towards female personnel. Also, in 2002, the details of what became known as the sponsorship scandal were widely reported following the Auditor's Report (Lawand, 2002). In each of these situations, leaders made choices that served to build or harm public trust in these public sector leaders and their organizations.

Public sector leaders have an opportunity to make this commitment to strengthen public trust through values-based leadership. For example, using the situation with the RCMP above, the RCMP Commissioner and administration could use values-based leadership to make explicit their commitment to address issues of gender inequality among their personnel. Values-based leadership occurs when "the leader and all those in authority to live according to values that are less focused on self-interest and more focused on the common good" (Barrett, 1998, p. 3). However, leaders in the public sector have an opportunity to explicitly open this dialogue with stakeholders and employees.

Specifically, Shields (1998) asserted, “Public administrators operate within a living democracy. This is an environment that is changing, organic and teeming with values” (p. 199). Values-based leadership offers an opportunity to harness and leverage these values more fully within the public sector. Also, Horner (1997) pointed out leaders are required to think and act differently, using innovation and personal values to help guide their actions, instead of following textbook solutions. By embracing the personal values that are already present in the individuals who work in the public sector, leaders have an opportunity to use these values as a tool for greater engagement and fulfillment of public sector service to the common good. As DePree (1992) asserted, “Beliefs and values are the footings on which we build answers to the questions ‘*Who matters?*’ and ‘*What matters?*’” (p. 36). Articulating values as a foundation for identifying commitments to members of the organization allows everyone to understand more fully who and what matters. In the absence of values being articulated, organizational members are left to work their way backwards from the decision to make hunches about the priority values. Further, C. L. Larson and Murtadha (2002) documented the work of Thomas Greenfield, who “argued that organizations are not objective systems; rather, they are products of human construction. To Greenfield, institutions such as schools unavoidably reflect the values, perspectives, and interpretations of the people who create and sustain them” (p. 137). How might these values help and assist the public sector as it moves forward?

The 21st Century Leadership Challenge

Leader and leadership have many different definitions (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Luke, 1998). The leadership literature included definitions for servant leadership, situational leadership, catalytic leadership, transformational

leadership, positional leadership, values-based leadership, and collaborative leadership, to name but a few dominant theoretical frameworks (Barrett, 2010; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Copeland, 2014; Greenleaf, 1998; Kotter, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Luke, 1998). As a result of these many frameworks, leadership as a field of study lacks one widely accepted definition. As Burns (1978) noted, “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (p. 2). For the purposes of this research, leadership was broadly defined as working with and through others to accomplish positive organizational goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Positive organizational goals were used in this working definition of leadership to clarify the assumption that this research was not seeking to explore bad leadership or administrative evil (Adams & Balfour, 2009; Kellerman, 2004; Manz, Manz, Anand, & Joshi, 2008; Reed, 2012).

According to Kellerman (2004), bad leadership can be either unethical or ineffective. Within the federal public sector, historical examples of bad leadership could include the Walkerton water scandal (McCallum, 2013), which resulted in a faulty water filtration system that allowed *E. coli* bacteria to be transported through to residents resulting in the loss of four lives; the sponsorship scandal (Leblanc, 2013), in which approximately \$40 million was spent and not accounted for; and RCMP treatment of female personnel (Drews, 2013), which resulted in a class action lawsuit from former female personnel for alleged gender discrimination. The above definition is also broad enough to inclusively represent many of the frameworks articulated above. Public sector leadership is defined as using leadership skills and capacity to pursue public service goals (Lawler, 2008).

Moving Beyond Traditional Views of Leadership

The challenge with traditional and hierarchical leadership models is that rarely are the complex issues present in our society today resolved by one individual (Ulhøi & Müller, 2014). Chrislip and O'Malley (2013) noted, "Leadership cannot remain the exclusive domain of those in positions of authority or influence" (p. 3). One only needs to review the news for examples of the downside of the heroic perspective. Incidences include former Mayor Robert Ford of Toronto within our home country and Prince Andrew abroad, which served to help us capture a disturbing snapshot of leaders in prominent roles (Alcoba, 2014; MacAskill, 2014). Heroic views of leadership are a dominant model in our society. Individual leaders can be exalted, demonized, or experience both, depending on what is uncovered and reported in the media. The media invites us to follow along daily when instances of poor behaviour or unethical leadership are reported. The examples noted above are two of many.

With increased globalization, technology advancements, and interconnectedness, greater communication and collaboration are needed. As Chrislip and O'Malley (2013) emphasized, there is a "critical need to democratize leadership" (p. 3). Knowledge needs to be distributed across multiple domains. We are invited to move beyond the individualized perspective and shift our perspective from

viewing the exercise of leadership in the civic arena as a way of furthering individual desires or acting only when our backyards are threatened, we see it as a means of sharing responsibility for acting together in pursuit of the common good. (Chrislip & O'Malley, 2013, p. 1)

This research invites us to move beyond this traditional and heroic view to explore the possibilities when values-based approaches to shared leadership are embraced with thoughtful intentionality. To establish the context for this research, throughout this review of the literature I aimed to identify the challenges inherent in this heroic model of leadership, and explored the contributions offered by the alternative perspective in leadership literature in service of offering options to public sector leaders who wish to step beyond the traditional model of leadership that is most visibly represented within the political context that public sector leaders work within.

Challenge, Change, and Transition

In the public sector, with our aging public service workforce, leadership is a priority for investment, as the public sector prepares for the future (Mau, 2009). As the rate and pace of retirement increases in the coming years with the public sector workforce, there will also be a significant departure of historical knowledge and capacity. As the public sector positions itself for the future, strong collaborative leadership will help to mitigate the risks that exist in these departures. Collaborative leadership involves developing alliances and partnerships outside of one's own sector and working largely without positional authority to accomplish cross-sector goals with peers (Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

The challenges being navigated by leaders are complex and diverse. Some specific challenges include decreased expertise of regulatory monitoring and mitigation, decreased labour to satisfy the service demands currently delivered by government, and tasks that are no longer performed because they were deemed less important than emerging needs (Raffel, Leisink, & Middlebrooks, 2009). Within the changing context of

the public sector, leaders are being called upon to navigate increasing complexity. The leadership link to values was noted by O'Toole (1996), "The leadership of change does not depend on circumstances: it depends on the attitudes, values, and actions of leaders" (p. 11). Within the public, health, and education sectors, the additional stakeholder considerations of political leaders and the impact of the election cycle on these environments add further complexity for these leaders to navigate.

To place these predictable changes and challenges into perspective, the theoretical framework of transition, developed by Bridges (2009), is of service. Bridges (2009) defined transition as "psychological; it is a three phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about" (p. 3). Transition serves as the meaning making and reintegration process that occurs as individuals navigate change and challenge. In contrast, change is seen as a situational external event. Individuals experience transition in both personal and professional contexts. The transitions that begin with job loss, leaving a familiar community to move somewhere new, or death of a significant person in one's life are perhaps more easily identified. More challenging may be the transitions that might occur as a result of a promotion, new partnership, completing school, or an inheritance. Yet in each of these example situations, transition occurs. Sometimes, such as when unanticipated job loss occurs, the transition challenge is not in identifying the ending, but with no new beginning immediately on the horizon, the process of meaning making and rediscovery of identity without the role to rely on can be particularly challenging. The transitions framework offered by William Bridges (1980, 2009) will be explored further in Chapter 6, as this framework surfaced during the research interviews. In the following

section I provide a brief overview of leadership theory and the challenges identified in the leadership literature.

A Brief Overview of Leadership Theory

The study of leadership occurred over the course of many centuries. The relationship of ethics and leadership can be traced back to the early philosophers (Raffel et al., 2009). However, the leadership literature that most related to the development of public sector leadership and this research occurred in the late 19th century to present day. Specifically, this brief overview of the leadership theory began with a period in which significant importance was given to single individuals, often referred to as “great men” (Raffel et al., 2009, p. 3). Leadership theory continued to evolve with the articulation of the specific traits possessed by these great men. The next period of leadership theory was marked by the economic shift in the west—from agriculture to industry, leadership theory literature incorporated the recognition of followers as an asset. Followers were viewed as enabling the execution of the work identified by the leader. The leadership literature developed models and theories to help leaders maximize their human assets to gain greater efficiency and productivity during this industrial age (Herman, 2000).

In the latter half of the 20th century, leadership theory began to incorporate behaviour theory and the relationship of leaders and followers more fully as Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs and the dual factor hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1968) became areas of study that influenced leadership theory. These leadership theories offered constructs on the sources of employee motivation, as leaders explored how to develop higher performance in their organizations. Situational leadership theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974) and contingency theories such as the Fiedler (1965) contingency theory

model evolved. In the last several decades, leadership theory explored many different types of leadership, such as authentic leadership (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007), ethical leadership (Eisenbeiss, 2012; Van Wart, 2014), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1998), situational leadership (Blanchard, 2008; Hersey & Blanchard, 1974), catalytic leadership (Luke, 1998), transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), values-based leadership (Barrett, 2010; Copeland, 2014; O'Toole, 1996), virtuous leadership (Cameron, 2011), and collaborative leadership (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2007), to name a few dominant theoretical frameworks. Many of these current theoretical frameworks explore the relationship between the leader and the follower more fully. This is an exciting time for the leadership field of study, as the scholarship in the alternative perspectives of leadership literature also continues to evolve and influence the more traditional models of leadership. Several contributions are offered by the alternative perspectives in leadership, such as greater inclusiveness, an ethic of care, and concern for others, which I explored more fully below (Bordas, 2012; Kenny, 2012).

Significance of the Study

The purpose of my research was to understand the role that personal values play in sustaining leaders as they navigate challenging situations using narrative inquiry as my methodology. Leadership is a relational endeavour, and it occurs between and among individuals. I specifically chose to conduct this research adopting an interdisciplinary approach to explore the research question focusing on leadership in the public, health, and education sectors. My overarching research question was what role do personal values play in sustaining leaders as they navigate challenging situations? The leadership

research in the public sector scholarship is less developed than private sector leadership scholarship (Van Wart, 2014).

I chose to complete a qualitative study, as it aligned fully with my ontological and epistemological position. Qualitative research honours the relational nature of the interaction between participant and interviewer throughout the research process, from the moment of inquiry through to documentation of the final study. Gilligan (2015) discussed the ethical challenge of inquiry as a relational challenge. Specifically, Gilligan identified the challenge to remain in relationship with self and other while conducting the research.

Laszlo (2012) stated, “Human science, as a reaction to the use of positivistic methods for studying human phenomena, has embraced more holistic approaches, studying social phenomena through qualitative means to create meaning” (p. 97). The relational orientation that I hold towards leadership is well supported by research conducted within the social constructionist paradigm. As F. J. Barrett (2015) stated, “Social constructionism asserts there is no meaningful reality independent of social interactions and agreements” (p. 67). The relational experience of leadership is honoured within social constructionism, as I wished to fully recognize my research participants. Also social constructionism “welcomes both the voices of tradition and critique into the dialogue” (Gergen, 1999, p. 4). Indeed, as I concluded this research, I became convinced that multidisciplinary leadership research is necessary now, more than ever before, in order to address the complex challenges faced by leaders today. Opportunities abound for interdisciplinary research that crosses disciplines and paradigms as we seek to support leaders who wish to serve the common good to the best of their ability.

Greater opportunities existed to use narrative inquiry to explore leadership in the field of public administration (Ospina & Dodge, 2005). Using narrative inquiry also addressed a gap in the public administration scholarship (Ospina & Dodge, 2005) by soliciting the lived experience of leaders. The use of narrative inquiry privileges the teller's experience and creates an opportunity for me to inquire more fully into the nature of their lived experience. This particular study filled a gap in the literature because it offered the following: a qualitative study on public sector leadership experiences, an additional research contribution to relational leadership scholarship, and research that reflected the unique perspective of the public sector. This research contributed to the literature by using a qualitative approach and presenting findings that are of practical use to public sector leaders, specifically in the areas of values-based leadership and relational leadership.

In choosing to explore values I did not select ethics, as I found significant debate in the literature about the ethics and ethical leadership in relationship to values and virtues (Cameron, 2011; Eisenbeiss, 2012; Van Wart, 2014). I selected values because, as Van Wart (2014) noted, ensuring organizational expectations are understood through such activities as ethics training can result in "the low road approach or the compliance model" (p. 31). In conducting research that could offer an approach that extended beyond compliance to commitment (Senge 2006), I chose to focus on personal values. I also recognized that in the growing literature in positive organizational scholarship the highest form of values has been noted as virtues (Bright, Cameron, & Caza, 2006; Cameron, 2011; Chun, 2005; Manz, Cameron, Manz, & Marx, 2006).

The combination of exploring public sector leadership and narrative inquiry into the specific values that assisted these leaders in navigating challenging situations offered a unique opportunity to advance knowledge and assist future leaders to sustain themselves in times of challenge and beyond. As a result of this research, the possibility exists for these leaders to continue in the work that initially drew them to the public service, rather than exiting the field, where their service and stewardship of the public good would be diminished. Leaders working in these sectors will have the results of this research to refer to, when they encounter the inevitable challenges associated with their leadership tenure. The research results came from their peer group and were grounded in the scholarship, serving as a pragmatic bridge between theory and practice (Shields, 1998). I used narrative inquiry as my methodology and narrative interviews as my method so that current and future public sector leaders will have guidance from colleagues who have walked in their shoes.

Values and the Case for Building Sustainable Leadership

Ferdig (2007) identified a requirement for us “to rethink the nature of leadership. What must leaders begin to do to affect the magnitude of change – from deeply personal to broadly political” (p. 26). Values are at the level of the deeply personal nature of leadership and we experience the role of values in our day-to-day lives (Burns, 1978; Rokeach, 1973). Kernaghan (2000) defined values as “enduring beliefs that influence the choices we make from among available means and ends” (p. 95). The focus of my research was to explore the role that values play for leaders to sustain themselves, particularly in times of challenge. As Van Wart (1998) noted, there are individual values, professional values, organizational values, legal values, and public interest values. For

the purpose of this research, the role of individual personal values was the focus.

Individual values are the personal core values developed as a result of influences of early life and experiences and have an impact on behaviour choices. Professional values are typically linked to a specific profession, such as engineering or human resources. Finally, organizational values may have been identified by the organization. Within the field of public administration specifically, Van Wart (1998) pointed out “there may be no more important task in today’s turbulent environment than to provide the means to clarify values, support values” (p. xviii) and to put in place systems for monitoring and compliance.

My research question explored the role that values play in sustaining leaders as they navigate challenge. Leadership sustainability was articulated by Turner (2007) as “the very idea of ‘a lifestyle designed for permanence’ (to reiterate E. F. Schumcher’s precise phrasing) implies the existence of a sustainable community in which it can function” (p. 398). The intention for this research was to assist public sector leaders with building sustainable leadership capacity. Sustainability occurs within the context of community and the support that exists when we cultivate community. As Block (2008) suggested, we need to look at the way communities “create a wider sense of belonging among their citizens” (“A Future Distinct,” para. 2). What additional opportunities exist for public sector leaders to build community with the potential for creating a greater sense of belonging for themselves, those they serve, and the broader community? In summary, I defined community as a collection of people, in which I can feel a sense of belonging and experience the reciprocity of contributing to and receiving the exchange of

gifts. The combination of individual values and community offer the possibility of sustaining leaders as they navigate challenge.

Summary

I approached this research with an inquiring mind at the heart of my writing. This research was conducted as I stood on the shoulders of researchers and leadership experts that came before me. Ultimately, I wanted to ask great questions, listen intently, honour the data I was gifted with, and share a great story. Along the way, I anticipated experiencing doubt, uncertainty, and ambiguity. While the path of qualitative research was mapped by those before me, the opportunity to advance knowledge of values-based leadership using narrative inquiry as the methodology continued to be a rich environment for discovery and exploration. The research question I investigated was what role did personal values play in sustaining leaders as they navigated challenging situations?

In the next chapter, I provide further detail on the key concepts of public administration, public bureaucracy, public servant, public interest, public sector leadership, and values. Also the construct of the heroic leader, which has also been referred to as traditional, male, and hierarchical (Fletcher, 2004), will be explored. This dominant leadership paradigm is being challenged as alternative approaches are being offered within public sector scholarship particularly. A review of the relevant literature in public sector leadership, values-based leadership, and relational leadership is paramount. The link between leadership, values, and the culture of organizations is addressed. Finally, I consider the sustainability literature as a potential resource for leaders who are seeking to sustain themselves while operating in our 24/7 highly interconnected, complex, global environments. For leaders who are seeking to move beyond the heroic

model of leadership, in which one single individual is identified as the leader (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007; Fletcher, 2004) and to provide a foundation for this research question, three theoretical leadership theories that I explored further in the literature included public sector leadership, values-based leadership, and relational leadership. The challenge in today's operating environment is leadership sustainability. The sustainability literature offered a conceptual framework for exploring sustainability of our public sector leaders.

The literature review follows with a chapter that provides an overview of my methodological approach and then articulates this approach in greater detail. A background of my narrative journey as a researcher follows, before I identify my ontological and epistemological orientations. I articulate my research design, which outlined my approach for recruitment of participants, use of a field notebook, initial contact with participants, research interview, transcription approach, and group interview. My approach for data analysis for both the narrative interviews and group interview is included. I identified the specific approaches used to support research rigour, followed by my commitment to researcher reflexivity, identification of expected outcomes, research implications, and my personal motivation in conducting this research. I explored in detail the ethical considerations for my research.

Following the chapter that outlines my methodological approach, I introduce the narrators through the use of vignettes that share their narrative journey while navigating challenge. The next chapter articulates the collective values that were identified and explored during the group interview. This chapter also explores the possibilities for using collective values to move beyond the heroic view of leadership to release the hero in

everyone. Finally, I conclude the report by integrating the specific recommendations intertwined with comments from the participants and relevant literature that will support building sustainable leadership in the public sector. In the next chapter, I begin by reviewing the relevant literature that will build the foundation for this research.

Chapter 2: Beyond the Heroic Leadership Perspective: Review of Relevant Literature

I open this chapter by reviewing some of the key concepts that inform this research. To move beyond the heroic perspective of leadership, I began by interrogating the alternative perspective in leadership literature as a way of informing myself of the threads that are less encumbered by the traditional and hierarchical assumptions of one heroic leader, masculine in approach, and who has the answer, which are embedded in public sector leadership theory. Also, the alternatives perspectives leadership offers a stronger focus on values. While progress has been made in many sectors, there remain pockets of practice in which the following statement, made decades ago, continues to hold resonance. According to Allison (1969), “Government consists of a conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely allied organizations, each with a substantial life of its own” (p. 698). However, one of the challenges today within the current complexity of the global challenges we face is that no single agency has sufficient power to achieve significant objectives without involving others. There are instances in which this model is being challenged (e.g., the Healthy Child Manitoba Act, 2007). This act established a central cabinet committee to which all ministries must coordinate their initiatives involving children (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2002). There is a dedicated separate secretariat structure supporting this work. The partnership includes, Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, Manitoba Family Services and Housing, Manitoba Health, Manitoba Justice, and Status of Women. Also, in Ontario, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (Government of Ontario, 2008) is another example.

The type of public leadership that can work in these interconnected areas of public policy is not well understood (Luke, 1998). Insight offered by Kouzes and Posner (1995) suggested that opportunities for clarifying shared values, which “provided the common standard by which people could calibrate their decisions and actions” (p. 212), inspiring a shared vision, and fostering greater collaboration could support leaders operating in these complex environments, where no one “heroic” individual can possess the knowledge, skills, and capacity to address these complex issues by themselves. Just as the alternative perspectives in leadership literature were grounded in values, this section continues with a review of relevant literature that examines post heroic approaches to leadership and the greater opportunities that exist to reduce the presence of hierarchy, increase stakeholder engagement, offer further opportunities for more fully serving the collective interest, and take a longer-term view. I explore post heroic approaches to traditional public sector leadership, including values-based leadership and relational leadership. The opportunity to place a great emphasis on values in public sector leadership to support leaders as they navigate challenge is the question at the heart of this research. I conclude with one path to leadership sustainability, which includes choosing values, relationship and community. I begin below with a review of the key concepts that inform public sector leadership.

Key Concepts

Public administration. Public administration “refers to a field of practice (or occupation) *and* to a field of study (or discipline)” (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999, p. 6). Public administration also includes the relationships between and among different stakeholders that include, first, “the government, Parliament and the judiciary; second,

major actors outside the state apparatus, political parties, interest groups, and the media; and, third, the public in their attitudes towards government in general and the public service in particular” (Gow, 2004, p. 4). Public administration includes policy development and policy implementation. Examples of challenges that are represented in public administration include public service accountability, budgetary process, and contracting out (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999).

Public service accountability addresses many issues including the level of scrutiny of decisions experienced by employees and public sector leaders who have their recommendations debated in public forums. The budgetary process has significant involvement from taxpayers who expect to know how much is being spent on what priorities. Finally, contracting out involves an increasing number of partnerships with private companies who have the technical expertise to build a new hospital, or the efficiencies to provide a first level of customer support for questions about a specific public service. Increasing availability of news through multiple channels, results in increased media scrutiny for the individuals who work in these fields of practice. With the challenges associated with navigating new private-public partnerships, and contracting out, the field of public administration operates in an environment of increasing ambiguity and scrutiny (Barker, 2008).

Public bureaucracy. The practice of public administration is carried out using the public bureaucracy, an organizational form that enables the practice of public administration to occur. In contrast to the private sector, the public bureaucracy has a significant emphasis on accountability (Aucoin, Smith, & Dinsdale, 2004; Busch & Wennes, 2012; Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999); for example, within the context of public

bureaucracy, there is accountability to tax payers, to the citizens, and to legislatively mandated safety standards. Specifically, public bureaucracy is the “system of authority, people, offices and methods that government uses to achieve its objectives” (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999, p. 6). The public bureaucracy has the accountability for stewarding the financial resources that are made available through the collection of taxes.

Public servant. Public servants are tasked with taking the actions that carry out the decisions made by their political leaders. A public servant functions as a “delegate of their Minister” (Kernaghan & Langford, 2014, p. 94). Historically, public servants carried a level of anonymity in the execution of their duties (Barker, 2008; Langford, 2014; Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999). Public servants are guided by standards of conduct and are expected to conduct themselves as nonpartisan representatives. Beyond fulfilling the standards of conduct that are included as part of their roles, many public servants are also guided by personal values that drew them to a career that would contribute to the public good.

Public good, public interest, common good. Operating in the public interest means making society better. The “overall mission of public administration is service to the public” (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999, p. 7). The foundation of service to the public is a key differentiator for leaders working in the public sector and emphasizes the importance of avoiding the layering of private sector leadership literature onto the public sector. How often has the media reported of instances in which this has occurred and the result is “disgruntled executives offer solutions developed for business success, only to find those solutions woefully inadequate in the civic sector” (Chrislip & O’Malley, 2013, p. 1). The integration of leadership research that supports the public sector leader in sustaining

themselves so that they can be of service to the common good was a key motivation for this research so that alternatives to offering solutions more appropriate to the private sector can be avoided.

Public sector leadership. As Althaus (2013) has noted, within public sector leadership and leadership broadly, no singular, all-encompassing model or framework of leadership exists. The impact of the absence of a shared model of leadership is that a diverse set of potentially conflicting leadership approaches are being used, resulting in the possibility of departments and ministries operating at cross purposes.

Relationship is one common element of public sector leadership. Leaders work with others to accomplish the objectives of their departments. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) stated, “Leaders mobilize others to want to struggle for shared aspirations, and this means that, fundamentally, leadership is relationship. Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow” (p. 30). Research about leadership is also about relationships, as leadership does not happen independent of relationships. Leadership involves relationships with followers, with stakeholders, and ultimately with the community. Public sector leadership is defined as using leadership skills and capacity, such as influencing, inspiring, and collaborating with other leaders and followers to pursue the public good (Lawler, 2008). Key differentiating elements of public sector leadership include operating within a political context in service of the public good, with codes for conduct that are intended to ensure appropriate standards of stewardship of public resources.

Values. Values theorists have diverse viewpoints on what the most appropriate definition of values includes. There are several definitions of values. Values have been

described as a socially or personally preferable mode of conduct (Rokeach, 1973) and “desirable modes of behavior” (Meglino & Ravlin, 1988, p. 351); also, in the *Strong Foundation* report, Tait (1996) proposed, “Values are enduring beliefs that influence attitudes, actions, and the choices we make” (p. 4). The values definition I used for the purposes of this research, which was completed in the public, health, and education sectors, was offered by Kernaghan (2003): “Enduring beliefs that influence the choices we make among available means or ends” (p. 711). Personal values such as compassion, integrity, and honesty are a result of many variables including our background and life experiences. They shape the criteria we use to guide our behaviour, make choices, and set priorities for how we conduct ourselves in relationship to others (Sharer, 2013). The linkage between values, professional relationships with colleagues, and the added complexity of political influence reinforces the complex and sometimes competing environment where the work of the public sector leader operating in service of the common good occurs. Values are also noted as either terminal values, which focus on something individuals strive to achieve such as wisdom, or instrumental values, which are behavioural such as being honest (Busch & Wennes, 2009; Diochon & Anderson, 2011; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Rokeach, 1973).

D. E. Larson and Hunter (2014), in their study of educational administrators, noted, “Secondary administrators broadly defined the ‘political’ realities in mandates as that which most often causes them to experience conflict with their core values in day-to-day decision-making” (p. 85). The political environment within which public, health, and education sector leaders work results in values-based challenges that need to be navigated. The role of public sector leader as a model of values-based leadership will

serve the public sector in the 21st century, as complexity, speed of change, and the need for cross-boundary collaboration increases. Public sector leaders, in particular, are often called to work in the public sector and to serve the public good (Althaus, 2013). Van Wart (2014), in his review of six styles of ethical leadership included a discussion of integrity, which specified that, “in the public sector, principles are expected to include dedication to public service, commitment to the common good, dedication to the law of the land, and other civic virtues” (p. 30). Busch and Wennes (2012) also noted personal integrity as one of the most important personal qualities for staff in their quantitative survey involving 155 leaders in a Norwegian municipality. Within the complex public sector environment, and with the increasing pace of change, grounding leadership in personal values in addition to the public sector values will offer public sector leaders crucial guideposts. These guideposts assist with policy development, policy implementation, and people management in an increasingly ambiguous environment. Standards of conduct are challenged to anticipate the changes that public sector leaders are facing.

The Interconnected Elements of Public Administration

The field of public administration (PA) consists of many interconnected elements. To describe the interconnectedness of the various concepts articulated above, the metaphor of a tree may be of value, as both the field of PA and nature are living systems. See Figure 1 for a visual of this metaphor. The tree exists within a larger public context. The political environment is the ground that the tree grows in, and it offers the soil and nutrients to the tree. The trunk of the tree is the public bureaucracy and provides the foundation and structure for the major branches that grow out from the trunk. Each major

branch represents the key areas of focus for the public bureaucracy, such as health, education, and public safety. As each of these branches grows, the large direction oriented branches, such as health, begin to transform into many smaller branches, which could represent operational or service delivery units such as hospitals. The leaves and the bark of the tree represent the people who are the public servants, providing the major acts of service to the public. The public servants who work in the public bureaucracy are represented by the bark of the tree trunk because their role shapes the policy development and implementation that affects the public servants who deliver the services on the outer branches. This tree metaphor helps to place the key elements of the field of PA in perspective. See Figure 1 for an image that was created to explore the metaphor articulated above.

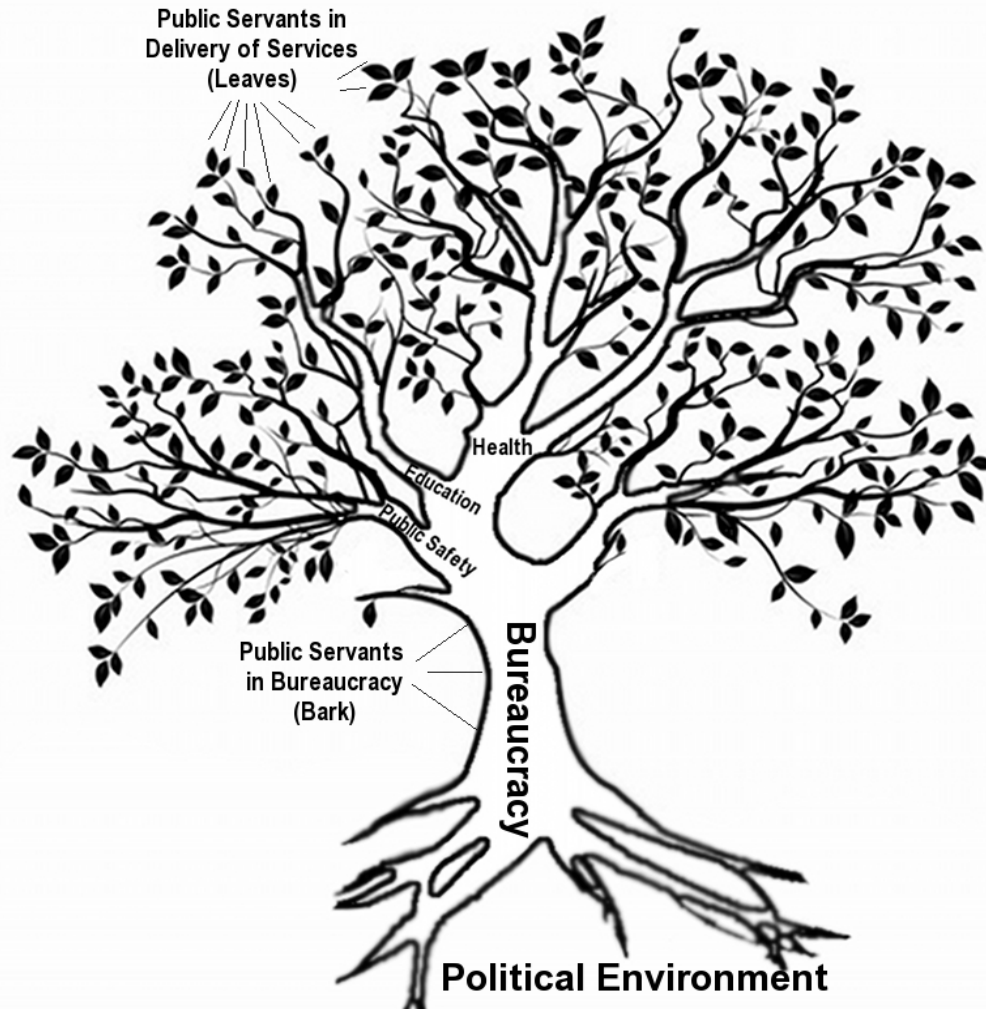


Figure 1. Conceptual tree image of the public sector.

In the next section, I draw on the alternative perspectives of leadership literature as the diverse perspectives that are explored offer approaches that have not been emphasized in the dominant leadership discourse. Key contributions and themes in the literature are identified. Values that inform each of the alternative perspective are summarized below in Table 1. The exploration of the alternative perspectives in leadership are offered as windows of possibility as public sector leadership can benefit from further integration of some of the values and perspectives that are shared. Specific opportunities are identified in the next section.

Beyond a traditional heroic view of leadership: alternative perspectives

explored. Reviewing the alternative perspectives in leadership literature offers additional considerations for the dominant traditional models of leadership in existence today. First, dominant and heroic leadership models could benefit from stepping beyond influence, specifically dyadic influence that is relied upon in more traditional leadership models that place emphasis on position and role; for example, attending to gender presents an opportunity to step beyond the heroic leadership perspectives that are offered in traditional leadership development (Larson & Murtadha, 2002).

Rusaw (2005) suggested that one path forward includes looking more closely at the masculine assumptions and values that underlie many of the “traditional” theories of leadership development . . . the assumptions and values identification may be used to trace the ways in which organizations are structured and how work is divided up, supervised, rewarded, and carried out. (p. 390)

In the public sector, the legacy of masculine models, which emerged during the “great man” era, suggested that leadership was focused on a single individual who was often male (Raffel et al., 2009). This era contributed to the reinforcement of the heroic view of leadership. For example, as part of a women’s leadership development program, Sinclair (2009) observed, “I don’t think they had been offered a single example of a woman leader in all their discussions. Further, the model of leadership with which the group was presented was masculine and firmly heroic” (p. 274). The public sector offers an environment that could benefit from additional opportunities to incorporate non heroic views of leadership. Within the feminist leadership literature, Rusaw (2005) noted,

“Feminist theory is concerned with the quality of ‘care’ in leader ethics and relationships. Care refers to compassion and a social responsibility to help others” (p. 388). Particularly within the public sector services such as social development and child and family services, care and compassion are present. The question that remains is how might these values be extended beyond departments and ministries that hold responsibility for social services to more broadly reflect service delivery throughout the public sector. C. L. Larson and Murtadha (2002) reinforced this perspective when they explored the ethic of care as “rooted in concerns for relationships rather than roles” (p. 140).

Second, moving beyond heroic leadership invites leaders in the public sector to place role within the context of relationships, rather than role at the expense of relationships. In contrast, the masculine models of leadership place an emphasis on positional power, attachment to role-based definitions of leadership and the absence of the explicit values of “care, human dignity, love, justice and equity” (Larson & Murtadha, 2002, p. 144). Perhaps the consideration of the diverse perspectives offered in the literature on alternative perspectives in leadership will assist in the shifts needed to move public sector leadership from a dominant masculine hierarchical view of leadership towards a more collaborative approach to leadership, which will be of service as the public sector seeks to address the complex issues such as globalization, technology, and reduced workforce. An important caution is to avoid the conclusion that generalizes all men as operating from these masculine models, which only serves to reinforce the stereotype of heroic leadership. There are examples of women who adopt this approach, viewing it as an opportunity to accelerate their career progression. There are also

numerous examples of men who adopt a less hierarchical, more collaborative approach to leadership that embraces the ethic of care described above.

A third way of moving beyond a heroic style of leadership is identified in the Indigenous leadership literature. Young Leon (2012) reported that within the Cree first nation “elders define leaders as *skabayos* (helpers) who remember core cultural teaching, which contain community values” (p. 51). The Indigenous leadership literature included several examples of the concept of stewarding teaching, language, and practices (Bordas, 2012; Jacob, 2012; Young Leon, 2012). With the context of a democratically elected government, often public sector leaders who, depending on their length of service, may also be stewards of these community values for their direct reports and the politically appointed ministers that they report to. This aligns with Kenny (2012), who noted, “Often, communities choose leaders because of their integrity, their accomplishments, and their specific attributes and skills. These leaders serve because of their commitment to the community, not because of any desire to have position or power” (p. 6). These are a few examples from the literature that challenged the traditional approaches to leadership. I have summarized these themes in Table 1.

The challenge of integrating alternative perspectives and accompanying values. The current challenges of shifting large, bureaucratic organizational structures such as the public sector from a hierarchical focus on traditional and positional leadership are numerous. In the past, traditional positional models of leadership granted authority to a leader based on his or her positional role within the hierarchy of the organization. Other positional leaders granted this authority to their direct reports, and individuals who were assigned to this positional leader complied with the positional leaders stated authority.

Specifically, “the preoccupation with masculine models has ignored the contributions of feminist-based leadership in the public sector” (Rusaw, 2005, p. 386). These feminist contributions include a concern for others, an emphasis on interpersonal relationships, and a collaborative approach, as articulated in Table 1. Some of the key differences in traditional public sector leadership, such as the emphasis on positional leadership, are offered as a particular challenge:

Very often western models are rooted in *positional* approaches, despite their assertions to the contrary, whereas Indian¹ models are more concerned with *persuasive techniques*, and while western approaches are almost always individual in form, American Indian models are much more concerned with how different forms of leadership – individual or collective – in different circumstances can serve the community rather than enhance the reward and reputation of their individual embodiment. (Warner & Grint, 2006, p. 240)

As described above, persuasive techniques such as influencing, negotiating, and collaborating place a greater focus on the relational aspects of leadership. Another alternative perspective that supports service to community is the activist leadership perspective. Activist leadership occurs as a result of

definitions of problems [that] arouse concern and attract attention by linking problems to ideologies and values. In turn, ideologies and values stimulate and

¹ This wording was taken directly from the text. Canadian literature would more commonly use the terms Indigenous or First Nations.

channel activism within government and active efforts to influence government from outside. (Weiss, 1989, p. 116)

Within the public sector context, the activist leadership perspective is experienced within and outside of government in a variety of forms including the public policymaking process. Smith (2003) reported, “The most common way for both special and public interests to be pursued is through advocacy — voicing support for specific values, views or policy outcomes” (p. 25). Activist leadership literature placed less emphasis on heroic leadership frameworks and emphasized the grassroots engagement with community. This approach could be helpful if strengthened within the public sector, to accommodate the greater interest that citizens have in offering input to policy development and government decisions that are going to affect them (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999).

Authors of Indigenous and multicultural literature asserted that we need to move beyond the western model of multiculturalism. In particular, an opportunity exists to embrace diverse perspectives more fully. As Jacob (2012) asserted, “From a critical Indigenous perspective, multiculturalism is not enough because it embraces a surface-level celebration of ‘difference’ that ultimately promotes assimilation into the dominant culture rather than taking Indigenous perspectives and forms of knowledge seriously” (pp. 181–182). Increased value of diverse perspectives would honour and celebrate the diversity reflected in the Canadian population. Young Leon (2012) noted, “Their stories and experiences challenge colonial historical narratives and highlight the need to develop a critical consciousness among Indigenous leaders, one that moves beyond the agendas of assimilation or decolonization” (p. 62). Once again, the alternative perspective in leadership literature emphasized the limitations of the heroic leadership model. Also, the

history included stories of events such as the sacred Sun Dance being banned (Cuthand, 2007) and the losses to culture and history that have occurred as a result. Honouring the history of Indigenous and multicultural populations emphasizes the value of moving beyond the dominant western models of leadership, paying close attention to the artifacts of colonization, and sharing the stories of suffering in order to create space for healing within community.

Despite the indication that shifts are occurring, several challenges to traditional public sector leadership are reflected in the Indigenous and multicultural literature. Some of the challenges are anchored in personal leadership experiences and the impact of history. The multicultural leadership perspective places an emphasis on inclusivity and generosity, as described in Table 1. Jean-Marie, Williams, and Sherman (2009) shared the experiences of senior Black women participants and documented how the “transcendence of racial and gender stereotypes became the impetus for developing a leadership style that is inclusive, builds consensus, and is collaborative” (p. 573). These documented challenges explore the context that has influenced multicultural and Indigenous leadership perspectives. For example, the western emphasis on positional leadership is considered in contrast to the role of persuasion more commonly experienced within the multicultural leadership literature. In the next sections I identify the opportunities that the alternative perspectives in leadership literature offered that could benefit public sector leadership. Specifically, opportunities to reduce the presence of hierarchy, increase stakeholder engagement, additional opportunities for serving the collective interest, and taking a longer-term view.

Greater opportunities to reduce the presence of hierarchy. Follett (1995)

suggested there are three kinds of leadership: “the leadership of position, the leadership of personality and the leadership of function” (p. 174). In her talk, she advocated for the leadership of function for modern organizations. She defined a leader who, through his or her actions, develops the leaders under them. Luke (1998) articulated a need for public sector leaders to move towards a reduced emphasis on hierarchical leadership and a greater emphasis on interorganizational public leadership. Further guidance was offered from the Community Leadership literature, as Kirk and Shutte (2004) described the importance of collective empowerment in their work in community leadership. Specifically, they offered,

Collective empowerment comes from the interconnection of individuals in all parts of the system who have a clear conception of their roles. Through the process of collective empowerment individuals develop fruitful relations with others, and clarity about purpose, meaning and value in their work. (Kirk & Shutte, 2004, p. 242)

A shift from the focus on the individual to the focus on the collective is transformational. The literature suggested the possibility of greater flow and flexibility and aligned with the work of Nasmyth (2011), who documented the guiding principles of high-performing groups that functioned without a formal or positional leader in his qualitative study, which included interviews with 13 research participants.

Opportunities for greater stakeholder engagement. A key role for public sector leaders is to initiate, maintain, and manage many complex stakeholder relationships. Stakeholders can include the individuals who receive services, taxpayers,

politicians, business interests, employees, unions, and stakeholder interest groups (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1999). Navigating these relationships adds to the complexity of the role of the public sector leader. In one specific example, while public sector leaders are not elected politically, and one can suggest that they are not political, long-serving public servants should have developed an appreciation for the political context within which they operate (Althaus & Wanna, 2008). The challenge of navigating within the political frame versus taking a longer-term view was captured by Shendo (as cited in Boras, 2012) who, when referring to the political frame, offered, “The only responsibility is to you as a voter, because you can vote me out tomorrow. The Jemez leader has to be responsible for the community, for the future, and for the natural world in which all people live” (p. 16). What benefits might be available to public sector leaders who actively engage with community in service of broadening stakeholder engagement with a view to being able to more fully represent community to political leaders?

Greater opportunities for serving the collective interest. Values-based leadership invites leaders to lead through change and challenge through inspiring values (O’Toole, 1996). Oreg and Berson (2011), in their quantitative convenience sample of 120 schools that included 75 responses from schools in the Israeli public school system, noted, “Only the inspirational leadership sub-scale yielded strong significant results” (p. 648).

The alternative perspectives in leadership literature offered us additional guidance on approaches that support the collective approach. The multicultural and Indigenous leadership literature offered public sector leadership the possibility of choosing the collective over the individual, acknowledging the spiritual principle of

interconnectedness, and learning the lessons from elders who invite us to honour our history as we come together to cocreate our future. Sinclair (2007) reminded us,

Leadership can liberate us from confining or oppressive conditions – imposed by structures, others and ourselves. Rather than being used as a means to compel compliance and conformity, to dominate or prescribe, leadership can invite us to imagine, initiate and contest. (p. xix)

Through the emphasis on reducing hierarchy with the public sector, the vision articulated by Sinclair (2007) above would have a greater possibility of being realized. Specifically, opportunities for greater dialogue, collaboration, and capacity building could be generated.

Opportunities for taking a longer-term view. Another potential influence of the Indigenous and multicultural leadership literature on public sector leadership is the seven-generation rule. As Bordas (2012) pointed out, “It is the solemn responsibility of leaders to ensure that children have the resources and preparation to live a good long life” (p. 56). Imagine what might be possible for public sector leadership if the work of the public interest, incorporated the seven-generation rule as a foundational element of their leadership and the decision-making process. The challenge within today’s public sector environment is for public sector leaders to become true stewards of the seven-generation rule.

I have broadly reviewed the challenges and contributions offered by the alternative perspectives in leadership literature, within the public sector context. I summarize the main themes below in Table 1.

Table 1

Themes From the Alternative Perspective in Leadership Literature

Category	Theme	Sources
Gender	Collaborative Interpersonal Concern For Others	Rusaw (2005) and Sinclair (2007)
Indigenous	Interconnectedness Generational Story Historical Perspective	Cuthand (2007), Kenny (2012), Jacob (2012), and Young Leon (2012)
Dispute Resolution	Neutrality Justice	Kuttner (2011)
Activist	Social Justice Advocacy for Others	C. L. Larson and Murtadha (2002), Smith (2003), and Weiss (1989)
Spiritual	Alignment With Internal Values	Kenny (2012) and Sinclair (2007)
Multicultural	Inclusiveness Historical Perspective Generosity	Bordas (2012) and Jean-Marie et al. (2009)
Community	Collective Empowerment Concern for Others	Kirk and Shutte (2004) and Pigg (1999)

The following section will review three areas of the leadership literature: public sector leadership, values-based leadership, and relational leadership. Figure 2 highlights the key contributions of the three areas of the leadership literature, which are explored more fully below. The figure served as a conceptual framework to guide the literature review and is used to highlight the key themes from these three leadership domains. Also the figure identifies the possibilities that exist at the points of influence and intersection of these domains. I used the three leadership domains described below to explore the

question posed by this research study: What role do personal values play in sustaining leaders as they navigated challenge?

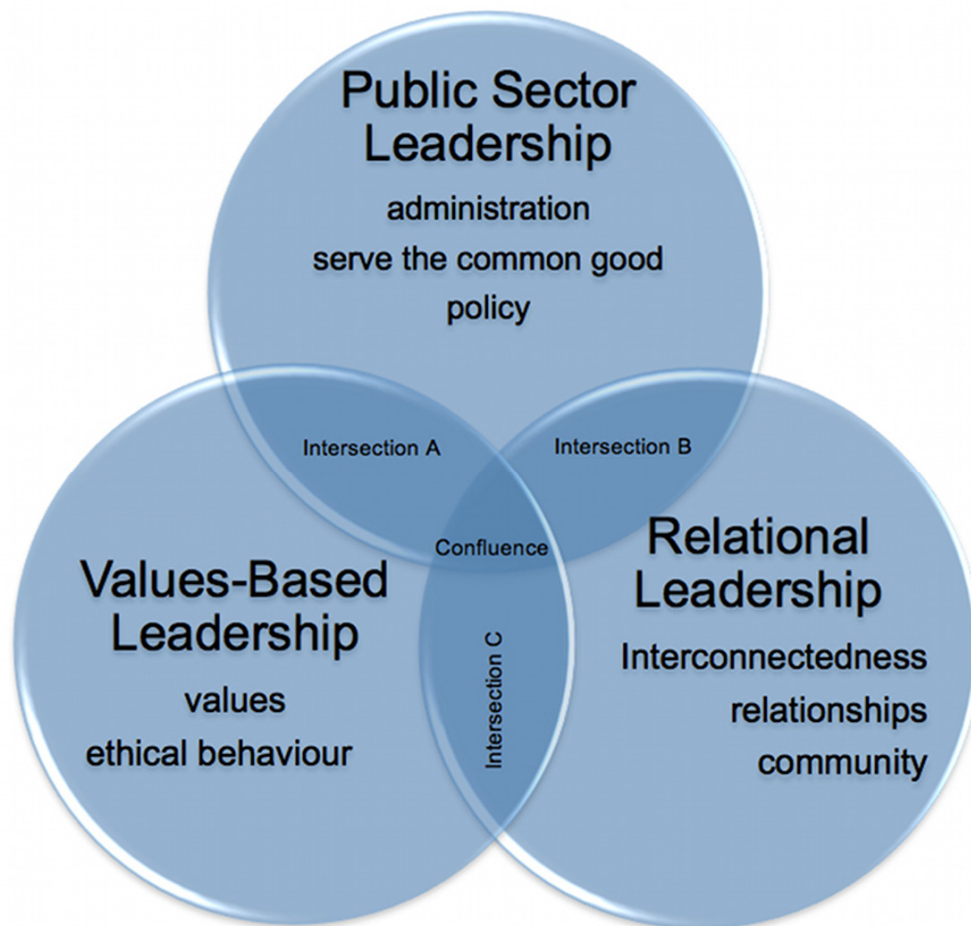


Figure 2. Conceptual framework: Public sector, values-based and relational leadership literature contributions.

Note. Intersection A: Public sector leadership & values-based leadership: Public sector stewards.
 Intersection B: Public sector leadership & relational leadership: Collaborative public service.
 Intersection C: Values-based leadership & relational leadership: Aligned stakeholder engagement.
 Confluence: Self-sustaining public sector leaders dynamically leading with heart and mind connected.

Public sector leadership. Public sector leadership received less attention in the research literature than private sector leadership (Raffel et al., 2009; Trottier, Van Wart,

& Wang, 2008; Van Wart, 2003). One of the challenges faced within public sector leadership is that the research momentum, which has been specifically focused on public sector leadership, has been documented only since the late 20th century (Raffel et al., 2009). The additional challenge that exists is that efforts were made through the advocacy of new public management to reform the public service. Specifically, there have been initiatives to layer private sector leadership literature on to the public sector, without acknowledging some of the key differences that exist between these two complex environments. For example, private sector's emphasis on corporate profit contrasts with the public service emphasis on maximizing service delivery while efficiently using public funds (Berry, 2009). As D. Johnson (2002) asserted, leadership "stands at the heart of good governance, meaning that leadership is vital to the fulfillment of accountability within government" (p. 627). However, public sector leaders have unique opportunities to distribute the delegation of accountability more broadly within the public sector. For example, as Amar, Hentrich, and Hlupic (2009) offered, "Leadership is not really about delegating tasks and monitoring results; it is about imbuing the entire workforce with a sense of responsibility for the business" (p. 23). The challenge for public sector leaders in our ever-changing world is making this shift amidst traditional practices of leadership.

Public input processes are facilitated by a broad understanding of the leader's role of fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholder groups, facilitating transition, and leading change. With these tools, leaders are able to identify key milestones in the public policymaking and implementation process that support the public policy agenda. As Luke (1998) offered, "Because contemporary organizational leadership models are based on hierarchical authority, they cannot be transferred easily to the non-hierarchical contexts in

which public problems exist today” (p. 22). Nonhierarchical contexts include cross-ministry collaboration, child welfare, and partnerships between government and external partner agencies. Currently, the requirements of communities and the public policy process are less well served by traditional public sector leadership frameworks.

Public Leadership does not engage followers; rather, it involves collaborations, audiences, and other self-organizing groups. In pursuing the public interest, effective leaders are forced to become “leader-followers” simultaneously. Public leadership shifts, changes and is shared at different times by different people in different organizations. (Luke, 1998, p. 32)

While the above was documented in 1998, more progress could be made to fully honour what Luke was proposing. Pigg (1999) advocated, “Because the purpose(s) are established in interaction between leaders and followers, each person in the relationship recognizes and values the purposes of others” (p. 207). As noted above, the public sector leader who places a reduced emphasis on positional authority and a greater emphasis on relationships and values will create additional capacity for using leadership to draw on the expertise of colleagues and direct reports in service of the common good. This will be explored further below.

Senge (2006) offered, “Business theorists tend to emphasize service to followers; political theorists emphasize citizens; public administration analysts tend [to] emphasize legal compliance and/or citizens” (p. 218). This point of differentiation of emphasis within the private and public sector was further emphasized by Kernaghan and Siegel (1999), who stated, given the role of the public servant to devote “one’s life to the service of the country, the affairs of the state, public purposes, great or small and to the public

good,” (p. 11), what might be possible if public sector leaders used values as an approach to focus more explicitly as servants to citizens and the public good? Van Wart (2003) noted that while the principles of servant leadership were available in 1977, until recently this approach “did not receive mainstream attention” (p. 217). In present-day society, servant leadership exists when traditional hierarchical organizational structures are replaced with those that promote shared responsibility and decision making. Barbuto and Wheeler (as cited in Sipe & Frick, 2009) “believe a calling to serve is a deeply rooted, values-based impulse” (p. 36). Unfortunately, amidst the often time-sensitive issues that face public sector leadership, the calling to serve may be forgotten. The challenge articulated by Sipe and Frick (2009) is “to think of one as a servant in today’s highly-competitive, consumer-based culture is counter to prevailing wisdom, but the imprint of the call still resides in the quiet places of the heart” (pp. 36–37). This call also invites public sector leaders to steward the common good. Hamilton and Bean (2005), in their discussion of one aspect within a larger qualitative study of a private sector organization, examined the impact of a servant leadership development program that was applied to a company that was acquired. They discussed challenges with implementation of the servant leadership approach amidst cultural differences between the acquiring and acquired organization and highlighted the need for cultural appreciation of different contexts in engaging in leadership development efforts (Hamilton & Bean, 2005). In another quantitative study, Chun (2005) explored virtues in organizations and surveyed 2,548 customers and employees in seven British firms, which included several private sector organizations and two nonprofit organizations. In that study, Chun identified the following virtues: “Integrity, Empathy, Warmth, Conscientiousness, Courage and Zeal”

(p. 281). Chun asserted that the results of her quantitative study would be of assistance to managers specifically in the process of strategic planning. Vrangbæk (2009) conducted a quantitative study that included 2,000 Danish public sector respondents in answering the question, “What is the significance of the following values in the daily work of your organization?” (p. 513). The results identified the top values as “innovation/renewal, independent professional standards, accountability to the society in general, public insight/transparency, and judicial values/due process” (Vrangbæk, 2009, p. 513). In presenting the key findings, Vrangbæk stated, “The pressure for change and innovation seems to be high throughout the organizations and at least in terms of values and rhetoric we are looking at a public sector very far from traditional images of stagnation and conservatism” (p. 520). As they seek to balance the competing demands, interests, and values of their work, public sector leaders may also consider the possibility that values exploration is a viable approach for facilitating greater collaboration in their complex work.

Another model offered within the public sector leadership literature is transforming leadership, which Burns (1978) described as “whatever the separate interests persons might hold, they are presently or potentially united in the pursuit of ‘higher’ goals” (p. 425). This emphasis on higher goals was elaborated by other scholars such as Luke (1998) who investigated transformational leadership as part of his work, and he stated, “Transformational leadership involves a leader drawing followers out of a narrow, parochial interest into a ‘higher’ purpose” (p. 25). Public sector leaders by staying connected to their higher purpose would serve as powerful role models to their followers. Van Wart (2003) asserted, “There is a striking need for a comprehensive

leadership model that integrates transactional and transformational elements” (p. 225). Also, Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2003) cited the 1999 work of Valle, who suggested that public sector leaders must similarly adopt transformational leadership practices as they seek to inspire and create adaptive organizational cultures by conveying a clear vision, communicating effectively, and motivating others to achieve the organization’s goals. Moreover, Parry and Proctor-Thomson reported that the influence and impact of the public sector leader on his or her organization may be greater than that found in the for-profit arena. Specifically, the authors reported that, while organizational culture and climate tend to have a greater impact on leadership than they do on the overall organization or work unit performance, an assessment of public sector organizations found that it was “the leadership by people that has the major impact on organizational/work unit outcomes” (Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2003, p. 395). The authors recommended public sector organizations continue working on their cultures to further encourage people to demonstrate leadership. Success within public sector leadership may be fully realized when honouring both of these elements occurs systemically throughout the public sector. Embracing this both-and possibility may serve to honour the dynamic tension of the historic value of transactional leadership while also recognizing the value of transformational leadership (Trottier et al., 2008). Van Wart (2003) continued by asserting the need for “empirical research to test the strength of relationships under various conditions and over time” (p. 225). Many of the above studies focussed on quantitative research and private sector organizations. My research explored these areas as they related to leaders navigating challenge within this relational context,

while honouring the historic value of bureaucratic leadership. In the following section, I review the key elements of values-based and relational leadership.

Values and Leadership

As public sector leaders progress through their careers, the values that enable decision making (Kenney, 1992) also serve to build trust and credibility that support a healthy and strong democracy. Public sector leaders can also draw on the dispute resolution leadership literature to further inform their values-based leadership practice. Within the dispute resolution literature, conflict specialists could include mediators, negotiators, and other professionals who assist individuals who are in conflict with each other. For example, Kuttner (2011) noted the potential for conflict specialists to engage in a values self-assessment in an effort to recognize that

the conflict specialist's internal compass will enable her to set her ethical boundaries in a manner that would free her to maintain a certain set of values or standards, taking a more active role in coaching people to voice themselves.

(p. 119)

The field of dispute resolution traditionally specifies the importance of being neutral.

The multicultural leadership perspective places emphasis on the collective over the individual, honouring diversity, and learning from the past. According to Bordas (2012),

The first step in integrating the leadership practices of communities of color into an inclusive and multicultural form is exploring a number of core values that are keystones for these cultures. . . . Values also define the range of people's choices,

identify what is good and desirable, and give definition to a society's culture.

Leadership, therefore, reflects cultural values and societal norms. (p. 17)

Exploring and identifying core values that align with society will assist in advancing leadership practices. Perhaps adoption of these shifts will strengthen the possibility of confluence identified in Figure 2.

In order for leaders to be successful within the public sector environment, our understanding of leadership needs to move beyond simple dyadic and group influences, to focusing on individual and shared values, particularly those values that sustain people in challenging situations (Bright et al., 2006; Larson & Hunter, 2014; Page, 2011). Enduring values that are clearly defined and aligned with organizational values offer leaders important guideposts for communication and decision making (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Bright et al. (2006) engaged in semistructured interviews with 25 people from two organizations, which included a private healthcare organization and a multinational consulting firm. Subsequently, 18 organizations representing 16 different industries participated in that research, and all but two of the organizations had downsized within the previous 5 years (Bright et al., 2006). Of the 1,427 surveys distributed, Bright et al. received 820 completed questionnaires. The researchers empirically examined the role of virtuousness as an extension to ethics in organizations, and one of the findings that they identified was as follows; "Employees who observed evidence of virtuousness in their organizations clearly viewed their organizations as less affected by the usual long-term, negative effects of downsizing" (Bright et al., 2006, p. 262). My study explored leaders as they navigated challenge with a desire to identify what personal values sustained them confronted challenging situations in their leadership. D. E. Larson and Hunter (2014)

conducted a mixed-methods study that included a survey completed by nine participants who were educational administrators and were undergoing mandated change in the education sector. Following completion of the survey questionnaire, the researchers conducted four qualitative interviews with participants who completed the survey (Larson & Hunter, 2014). The qualitative research techniques employed included constant comparison and coding (Larson & Hunter, 2014). D. E. Larson and Hunter (2014) noted, “More than half of the participants’ decisions were based on core values and beliefs, which required value judgements” (p. 71).

Within values-based leadership, there is also the category of ethical leadership, which I found documented in the literature by itself and demonstrated elements of other leadership constructs. For example, “The dictionary describes character as ‘the qualities that define who we are.’ . . . People of character who operate in a principle-centered fashion and use highly developed moral reasoning as the basis for ethical decision making” (Sipe & Frick, 2009, p. 19). Ethical values are a subset of the broader values-based leadership literature. In addition, Van Wart (2003) summarized servant leadership as placing “emphasis on the ethical responsibilities to followers, stakeholders, and society” (p. 218). For the purposes of this research, the primary focus remained on values-based leadership. Values play a significant role in the formation of culture within organizations. The next section briefly identifies the relationship of leadership, values and culture.

Leadership: Values and the influence on organizational culture. Culture consists of “the underlying values, beliefs, and principles that serve as a foundation for an organization’s management system as well as the set of management practices and

behaviors that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles” (Denison, 1990, p. 2).

Culture shifts occur as changes in values are anchored in the organization. Values are essentially the foundation of organizational culture. Schein (1984) provided a more detailed definition of organizational culture:

The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptations and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 3)

Organizational culture is transmitted and reinforced by organizational structures, practices, and people. As a result organizational culture matters deeply to people and can be quite resistant to change. “Anthropologists have a saying: ‘Whoever tells the stories defines the culture’” (Sipe & Frick, 2009, p. 75). As organizational culture is taught to individuals joining the organization, it gets reinforced through story. In essence we learn about culture through the act of sharing stories (White, 1999). According to Sipe and Frick (2009), “We behave the way we do because of our *values*, which in turn are based on even deeper *beliefs*. For permanent, even joyful, changes in behavior, successful companies link changes to widely-held values and beliefs” (p. 182). Reinforcing these values by aligning structure, policy, and reward practices create an opportunity to shift complex and diverse organizational cultures such as the public sector. As the impact of values in shaping organizational culture, Andy Grove (as cited in Sipe & Frick, 2009), former Chairman of Intel, was credited with saying, “Culture eats strategy for lunch

every day of the week” (p. 133). Culture can also serve to resist efforts to shift it without explicit links to organizational values.

While general concepts regarding defining organizational cultures may apply to both for-profit entities and the public service sector, Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2003) noted the potential of an “uneasy tension” (p. 378) in the latter. This may be primarily caused by conflicting priorities; the need to balance opportunities to modernize potentially outdated bureaucratic approaches to enhance flexibility and innovation, while maintaining the standards and procedures necessary for quality civic service that addresses the needs of a broad range of stakeholders. The authors suggested it may be best for such organizations to avoid pursuing radical or revolutionary change, instead aspiring to a “culture of best fit” (Parry & Proctor Thomson, 2003, p. 379) in which some of the values and aspects of a transformational culture are incorporated along with transactional cultural characteristics that enable the agency to continue fulfilling its primary mission and serving its stakeholders.

Each of the above areas of leadership literature offered contributions to public sector leaders navigating today’s complex and interconnected environment. An area that could benefit from further investigation is to explore what these leaders are doing to sustain themselves, particularly as they navigate challenges that touch them personally, and could be experienced as draining, exhausting, and potentially unaligned with their own personal values. In the next section, I identify a few of the concepts emerging from the relational leadership literature that supported further exploration as part of this research project.

Relational leadership – “relationship is everything.” Patrick McCarthy (as cited in Sipe & Frick, 2009) said, “A relationship is everything. It’s a heart experience. Most companies are head experiences – bean counters are running them. When the heart is running them, it becomes exciting” (p. 167). In reflecting on leading with heart, the relational leadership literature offered a potential for exploring the possibilities that are cocreated among individuals who come together to work towards a desired outcome. Leadership in this approach is more fluid. The work of Ospina and Sorenson (2006) explored the relational leadership literature through a constructionist lens. Specifically, constructionism views reality as the result of the interaction between the subjectivity of an individual and an external world (where other subjectivities also reside). However, this world only becomes a social reality (socially meaningful) when it is interpreted *in relation to other subjects*. (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. 16)

The assumptions presented in this chapter included that “leadership is intrinsically relational and social in nature, is the result of shared meaning-making, and is rooted in context or place” (Ospina & Sorenson, 2006, pp. 188–189). Within this construct, leadership is cocreated, can be occupied by anyone within community, and invites us to move beyond the more traditional leadership approaches. Expanding on Figure 2, the relational approach invites leaders to recognize that leadership happens in the space between individuals, as meaning making is coconstructed (Barrett, 2015; Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012). This approach supports a growing presence in the literature of the view that leadership is a process (Lawler, 2008; Ospina & Sorenson, 2006; Raffel et al., 2009).

Exploring this approach requires the ongoing checking of mental models to ensure that prevailing, deeply held traditional models of leadership are revisited and updated. Senge (2006) defined mental models as “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (p. 8). For example, the assumptions embedded in how we define leader and leadership begin the exploration, because this definition will influence the choices we make about who qualifies as a leader and what are the criteria being used to describe participants and to select the participants for the research. In the final section, the opportunities to create more sustainable public sector leadership through connecting leaders to community and their values are explored.

One Path to Leadership Sustainability – Choosing Values, Relationship, and Community

As Ferdig (2007) reminded me, “We must first acknowledge sustainability challenges, learn their origin and meaning, and then develop appropriate skills and courses of action to meet those challenges” (p. 30). What if the very sustainability challenge that needs to be addressed is leadership sustainability? Values can play a role in sustaining public sector leaders as the speed and pace of change continues to accelerate. Leaders operating from core values will have the opportunity to create space to nurture the leader within as they serve the common good of the many communities in their sphere of responsibility. Rather than choosing one or the other, Wheatley (2005) offered guidance on the power of *both-and* thinking: “Life requires the honoring of its two great needs, not one. In seeking to be a community member, we cannot abandon our need for self-expression” (pp. 48–49). Greater possibilities exist within public sector leadership to

honour self and other, rather than other at the expense of self, or self at the expense of other.

Caine (2010) stated, “I was reminded of Bateson’s notion that: ‘Learning to know a community or a landscape is home coming. Creating a vision of that community or landscape is homemaking’” (1994, p. 213). One strategy for creating a greater sense of home for public servants is embracing community within the public sector. As Honore (2004) stated, “It is no accident that the word ‘companion’ is derived from Latin words meaning ‘with bread.’ A relaxed, convivial meal has a calming, even civilizing, effect, smoothing away the smash-and-grab haste of modern life” (p. 71). A lost opportunity within the public service is community celebration and recognition. As a result of extensive media scrutiny, the sustaining of relationship and community has taken a back seat to greater monitoring of celebratory events based on their appearance when reported in the media. As Wheatley (2009) stated, “Community, the web of our interconnections, the safety net of caring that we extend to one another when life is hard” (p. 1). As identified in Figure 2, I offer that this relational safety net supports leaders when life is hard, sustains leaders when life is overwhelming and celebrates leaders, when they forget to do so for themselves.

Summary of Literature Review

The alternative perspectives in leadership literature summarized above offer alternatives to the current frenetic pace of public sector leadership. Embracing community, reflection, and the principles of taking a longer view all serve to support greater leadership sustainability. The opportunities to step beyond the traditional models of public sector leadership, and step into the possibilities offered by integrating values-

based leadership and relational leadership, offer a path forward for public sector leaders. Public sector leaders can sustain themselves, while building leadership capacity in others as stewards of our collective values and future. As Figure 2 suggested, public sector leaders have the opportunity to balance the many competing demands and interests that exist, through achieving greater alignment with the values that brought them to their work.

My goal is that this research project will offer public sector leaders a values-based approach to sustaining their leadership practice while navigating challenging situations. This research offers one path for leading with heart that may sustain our public sector leaders. The following section explores my qualitative methodological approach for this research.

Chapter 3: Qualitative Methodological Approach

This chapter shares my research focus, methodological approach, and my ontological and epistemological positions. It also identified ethical considerations, data recruitment and collection, proposed approach for data analysis, researcher reflexivity, and my personal motivation for conducting this research.

Research Focus

The identification of core values, beyond espoused ones, that guide and sustain leadership practice and performance in the public sector was examined in detail. Espoused values are those that may be posted on a corporate website or included in organizational materials, and may differ significantly from values that are practised daily by leaders within organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Schein, 2010). In some cases, senior public servants may commit to a course of action that may include personal sacrifice and/or job loss (Chase & Grant, 2010). This research is going to assist leaders to develop a stronger connection and understanding of themselves and their values as they navigate the challenges they face. The conceptual framework that informed this research was based on the growing literature that explored the role of values in leadership (Barrett, 2010; Copeland, 2010; Hall, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2007, 2012; Langford, 2014; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; O'Toole, 1996; Schwartz, 2012; Senge, 2006; Van Wart, 1998, 2014).

Research Methodology

Methodological overview. I selected narrative inquiry as an appropriate methodology, as it was particularly well suited to the interdisciplinary nature of the topic (Burns, 2005). The use of narrative interviews as my research method allowed for thick,

rich description (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Riessman, 2005), as leaders shared their stories of navigating challenging situations. Second, I used both narrative analysis and analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995) to enhance the rigour of data analysis (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Third, one group interview (Frey & Fontana, 1991) was scheduled on May 11 to share preliminary research findings with the research participants and continue the process of meaning coconstruction that supported a triangulation of methods. More than one form of collecting evidence was used, and more than one interaction with the research participants took place (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Subsequent sections outlined these methodological processes in greater detail.

Research questions. The purpose of the study was to explore the role that personal values play in sustaining leadership during challenging times. I explored the following overarching research question: What role do personal values play in sustaining leaders during difficult periods? I asked the participants to describe a time when they navigated a challenging situation as a leader. I also used the following potential follow-up probes: What was important to you in that moment? How did it feel to make that decision? What other considerations might have influenced your decision?

The following sections explore the specific research methodology of narrative inquiry. Also the method of narrative interviews that enabled me to investigate this overarching research question is explained in further detail.

Specific Research Methodology

Narrative inquiry methodology. I was excited about using the narrative inquiry methodology because it is an interdisciplinary methodology, drawing on such disciplines as social sciences, the humanities, and literature (Riessman, 1993; Saldaña, 2013). I

decided to employ narrative inquiry because it invited me to honour the voices of the research participants and myself as the researcher.

Stauffer (2014) addressed the three theoretical strands of narrative inquiry. The three pathways she identified included the work of Jerome Bruner, who described narrative as a uniquely human approach to knowing. Specifically, Bruner (as cited in Stauffer, 2014) suggested, “Narrative forms of thought have to do with ways in which we make sense of lived time, deal with the ambiguities of daily life, and construct our conceptions of ourselves” (p. 166). The second strand followed the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), which stemmed from the focus on experience documented by Dewey. In their view, narrative was both method and phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Stauffer (2014), Clandinin and Connelly sought “to understand how people use story as a means of interpreting experience, how they construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences, and how people live and relive, and tell and retell, their stories” (p. 170). Finally, the third pathway, based on the work of Bakhtin came from the work of literary nonfiction and sought to raise questions through storytelling to facilitate conversation about current experiences or issues of importance.

From these diverse pathways, Stauffer (2014) identified five elements of narrative scholarship that are commonly shared (while perhaps still being debated). First, narrative scholars are aligned with qualitative research, conduct research within a humanistic social construction, and seek out stories about the human experience. Second, narrative researchers work in relationship with individuals over time. The important element here is research that involves only one point of contact does not achieve the research goals of narrative inquiry, regardless of the pathway selected by researchers. Specifically Stauffer

(2014) offered, “One-time encounters are flimsy grounds for narrative work . . . the researcher is personally engaged in an ongoing relationship of trust with the participants that affords them a space in which stories – including disturbing ones – can be told” (p. 177). Third, the relationality of narrative scholarship uses narrative data, which could occur in a variety of forms, such as letters, written stories, and journals, to provide a few examples. Fourth, narrative data are interpreted or analyzed. The fifth common element in narrative scholarship, although widely varied in approach, is the writing that takes place to share the data and interpretation.

The three pathways and the five common elements offered insight into the diverse and contested terrain of narrative inquiry as a research methodology (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Stauffer, 2014). For the purposes of my research, I worked within the pathway first identified by Jerome Bruner (1991), who suggested, “The central concern is not how narrative as text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality” (pp. 5–6). This approach aligned most closely with my study, which explored the experience of leaders who navigated challenging situations.

Narrative interview method. I selected narrative interviews as my method. It aligned well with my research topic, as both narrative interviews and leadership honour the relational interaction between and among-human beings (Josselson, 2013; Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012). In order to capture the richness of participants’ experiences, I invited them to share their stories with me. This oral storytelling approach enabled me to be a deep listener in the evolving conversation (Riessman, 2005) and helped me to understand

individuals' experiences of being leaders and living their personal values in challenging situations.

Narrative interviews are a coconstruction between the researcher and the participant. As Josselson (2013) noted, "Although reality is co-constructed, we can reach some understanding of others' experiences of their lives" (p. 2). This approach allowed me, as a researcher, to step beyond my own knowledge of leadership and to more fully explore the meaning that my participants made of their leadership experience amidst challenge. Through these narrative interviews I had an opportunity to check my mental models (Senge, 2006) by learning from and with the participants in my research. A component of the narrative interview method is the both-and of content and structure. Specifically, the content of the narrative, and the way the narrative is conveyed (Josselson, 2013).

I aligned myself with the approach used by Josselson (2013); the metaphor of "moving with" (p. 97) the participant in the research interview resonated strongly with me. I had an experiential opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of what "moving with" meant, when I was asked to partner up with another workshop participant at a workshop session with Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich. In the exercise, we were asked to stand beside our partner, place our right feet next to each other, and place our right hands together. We were then asked to close our eyes and move in whatever way suited us both. We were informed that the exercise would take approximately 3 minutes. This experience offered me a powerful metaphor of how I wished to move with the individuals I interviewed as part of the study. I experienced myself feeling grounded and free at the same time. While I do not recall the specific words used when we debriefed

the activity, I do remember that there was a range of experiences and observations offered by my colleagues who participated in the activity. This was a powerful reminder to me that my experience was not the experience of other, and I carried this reminder with me into my research. As I sought to move with the participants, I stayed open to the interview experience and viewed myself as a dance partner, rather than an interrogator (Josselson, 2013).

Hermeneutics explored. Hermeneutics is a vital element to the narrative interview method, because it is “the theory of interpretation” (White, 1999, p. 8). Haverkamp and Young (2007) defined philosophical hermeneutics as “understanding is an active, constructive process. Meaning is created through the process of understanding what occurs between researcher and participant” (p. 277). My field notebook, which I discuss later in this paper, supported me as I sought to remain aware of what occurred between my participants and me. Specifically, Bruner (1991) offered, “*Hermeneutic* implies that there is a text or a text analogue *through* which somebody has been trying to express a meaning and *from* which somebody is trying to extract a meaning” (p. 7). It was important for me to be mindful of this circular process of meaning making as part of my research. As part of defining the hermeneutic circle Bruner emphasized the importance of the interdependence that exists within narrative. He said, “a story can only be ‘realized’ when its parts and whole can, as it were, be made to live together” (Bruner, 1991, p. 8). I experienced the hermeneutics of my understanding of this concept as it related to my research. For example, I engaged in ongoing meaning making as I deepened my understanding of what hermeneutics means, and what it meant to my research.

Josselson (2004) explored the relationship of the hermeneutic interpretive approaches to narrative, initially articulated by Ricoeur as the hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of suspicion. Specifically, Josselson (2004) reframed the hermeneutics of faith as the hermeneutics of restoration. The hermeneutics of restoration operates from the assumption that the interview participants are the experts on their experiences (Josselson, 2004). As the researcher, operating from the hermeneutics of restoration required that I listened deeply to the participants so that I honoured participants' stories.

Narrative researcher journey. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discussed the importance of researchers identifying their narrative beginnings. This section explores what drew me to this specific research methodology.

I have been working in the area of leadership and leadership development since the 1980s. In the early 1990s I facilitated a workshop titled Leadership in the 90s for university students who wanted to become student leaders. I worked in residence life at universities for many years. I was responsible for staff training for resident assistants and their supervisors. As part of these roles I was also responsible for recruitment and interviewing for staff. Following my career in student services, I shifted to human resources (HR) work, and I became responsible for overall recruitment of staff across the organization. I advocated for a process called behaviour description interviewing.

My assumptions are that leaders who navigate challenge have a set of core values that anchor them in situations in which there is likely no one right answer. The documentary, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (Gibney, 2005) was my wake-up call of what can occur in environments where leaders are not operating by a positive core set of values. My interest in this research topic was to support values-based leaders,

rather than exploring those leaders who do not operate from positive core values. My further assumption was that the leaders who work in the public health and education sectors were less likely to be driven by potentially limiting values, such as greed and power (Barrett, 2010).

I have a strong desire to make meaning of values. I make values-based choices, regarding teaching, client work, and consulting. I am curious and want to know more about the choices that others make. I have an emotional investment in doing meaningful research and making a contribution to the leadership field. I would love to be part of the process that transforms the leader–values relationship so that all leaders commit to articulating their values and living by them and invite others to hold them accountable to the values they espouse.

In my current work as an organization development consultant, I am responsible for leadership development and for coaching leaders who are navigating difficult periods of change in their organizations. As part of my practice I returned to teaching, and I have been teaching in the Master of Arts in Leadership program at a local university since 2008. In this time, I have become more and more immersed in the work of values and values-based leadership (Barrett, 2010; Hall, 1994). I facilitate a session on values-based leadership with all of my teaching. Values are incorporated in many sessions I facilitate on change and on leadership. I brought my passion, a strong commitment to leaders, and leadership to this research. I also brought my own values and caring for the work that I do. I wanted my research to make a difference in the world. I saw a particular opportunity to make a difference to PA scholarship (Ospina & Dodge, 2005; White, 1999). I briefly explored the possibility of incorporating a quantitative approach to this research.

However, due to the research question that I asked, and the strong desire that I had to fully explore this terrain with the participants by asking probing follow-up questions, I soon realized that the a quantitative approach did not offer a fit for the research and more specifically my research question. In particular, the field of PA has operated from a scientific paradigm for an extensive period of time, and I believe I have a contribution to make from an interpretivist, social constructionist, and pragmatist paradigm, terms which I explain further in the next section.

Ontological and Epistemological Positions

In this section I articulate my ontological and epistemological positions.

Ontologically, I identify with the interpretivist paradigm as it acknowledges that values are present and inform many decisions including but not limited to choices of data gathering process, data analysis methods, and choice of format for sharing findings (Lincoln et al., 2011). Also, as Riessman (1993) asserted, “Nature and the world do not tell stories, individuals do. Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations” (p. 2). Individuals tell stories, and in choosing to conduct research that collects the lived experiences of leaders, Gergen (1999) noted, “researchers now seek means of extending the platform of admitting more voices to the conversation, and generating understanding through exposure to the first-hand accounts of people themselves” (p. 95). The alignment between my method of narrative interviews and social construction offered a wonderful opportunity to broaden the range of perspectives into leadership scholarship. The challenge and the opportunity that exist for a researcher operating within the interpretivist paradigm is recognizing that the participant is making

meaning of his or her experience. As the researcher, I engaged in meaning making, as I stepped back and included theory as part of the research.

I am also aligned with the constructionist approach to research. Specifically, constructionism views reality as the result of the interaction between the subjectivity of an individual and an external world (where other subjectivities also reside). However, this world only becomes a social reality (socially meaningful) when it is interpreted *in relation to other subjects*. (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. 16).

Also, the constructionist paradigm honours both the voice of the research participant and the voice of the researcher, which creates the container for the coconstruction of meaning throughout the research process. Bruner (1991), in defining the hermeneutic circle, emphasized the importance of the interdependence that exists within narrative.

As Haverkamp and Young (2007) stated, “Researcher values are assumed to influence the research process, although the researcher is expected to examine and understand how his or her values, personal beliefs, and characteristics have influenced the coconstruction of meaning” (p. 268). Through the process of ongoing reflection, I engaged in regular self-examination and understanding of my role as a researcher. I provide further context on my personal motivation for conducting this research later in this chapter. Finally, I have a strong affiliation with a pragmatic approach, which is explained below.

At heart, I embrace a pragmatist perspective, because I seek to have my research advance knowledge, contribute to greater understanding, and make a practical difference in the world. According to Shields (1998), “pragmatism is the philosophy of common

sense. It uses purposeful human inquiry as a focal point” (p. 197). My paradigmatic position was informed by my strong desire to honour the research participants as they shared their stories. I believed and continue to believe the participants are the experts in their experiences (Josselson, 2013). As a result, I selected narrative inquiry for my qualitative research methodology, because narrative researchers invited the research participants to share their story (Chase, 2005).

From an epistemological perspective, I believe that individuals make meaning through stories. Inviting research participants to share their stories supported the sharing of a holistic narrative and helped avoid reductionist outcomes (Josselson, 2013). Ultimately, the combination of our interaction yielded cocreated findings, which would not be the same had either one of us not been present to the narrative interview. Within this paradigm I was encouraged to honour the voices of the research participants and myself as the researcher. I feel at home philosophically with this approach.

Specific Research Design

The following research design was first and foremost informed by my research questions and my research objectives. Below I offer a preliminary outline of the process I followed to recruit research participants, collect data, and analyze the individual research data and the group interview data.

Recruitment and data collection. I chose to recruit 11 participants because this number resulted in rich data collection (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Snowball, chain, or network sampling, which required access to individuals who had knowledge of participants who met the inclusion criteria for my research, were used (Glesne, 2006). The following actions were taken. I drew upon an

extensive network of individuals involved in leadership development for participant recommendations to recruit leaders who navigated challenging situations in their leadership roles. Appendix A includes the recruitment letter that identified the following criteria for selection: leaders working in the health, education or public sectors who can articulate values that guide their decision making and have navigated a self-defined challenging leadership experience. My colleagues work primarily with leaders, and their assistance in identifying potential research participants were valuable to me. Finally, a local university where I teach sent out an invitation to alumni of the Master of Arts in Leadership program. Inclusion criteria for the participants included senior and executive leaders, currently employed in the public, health, and education sectors. These participants have over 5 years of leadership experience within a complex organizational setting. Potential referral sources received a FluidSurveys™ (2015) link, which outlined in further detail the inclusion criteria, details of the study, and a copy of the informed consent documentation. The FluidSurveys™ link included an email address for potential participants who wished to send an email to indicate interest in participating in the study. This approach ensured that no data were inputted into the FluidSurveys™ link by the participants.

Initial contact and interview procedure. These participants had the opportunity to indicate their interest in learning more about my research study by emailing me. My follow-up contact by email to establish initial rapport and schedule an opportunity for us to connect by phone to review the study then occurred. During this initial call I reviewed the inclusion criteria, spoke briefly about the study, and invited potential participants to ask any questions they had. Also I asked the participants what drew their interest to

participating in my research. Some information about me and what excited me about this research process was also shared with the research participants (Josselson, 2013). This was in alignment with my philosophical approach, which was to view my participants as coresearchers in my study. As part of this initial conversation, the interview was scheduled at a mutually convenient time and place. Following our initial contact by phone, the participants were sent an interview confirmation email with the Information and Informed Consent letter to review, sign and return to me (see Appendix B).

Research interview. I conducted interviews by Skype™ (2015), phone, or in person, at the preference of the participant. For interviews that occurred using Skype™ or phone, participants were asked to return a signed copy of the informed consent letter in advance of the interview. Following an initial greeting and informing them of the interview process, I explained to the participants, “I am doing this research through the University of Victoria. To fully honour our research relationship, and your involvement, this consent form is a necessary component of our relationship.” Key elements of the informed consent letter and the criteria for participation were reviewed. Specifically, I highlighted the priority on anonymity. I asked them to share anything with me from the informed consent letter that was unclear and if they had any questions for me. I expressed my appreciation for their willingness to participate in the interview process. I asked participants if they were comfortable proceeding with the research interview. All participants completed the informed consent letter and proceeded with the research interview. The recording device(s) were turned on. I shared, “I really want to talk with you about your story.” Appendix C includes the semistructured interview protocol, which I used to guide me as they shared their stories in 1- to 1.5-hour long interviews. To

address my overarching research question with the participants, I began by asking, “Please share your professional background as it related to the narrative you plan to share.” Then I asked, “I’m interested in exploring your experience in navigating challenge as a leader, please share with me your story as it relates to your experience. You are the expert of your story and I look forward to learning from you.” Following this initial question, participants were invited to describe a specific time when they navigated a challenging situation as a leader, and I encouraged the sharing of that one example, through active listening, appropriate use of silence, and follow-up probes to learn more about their specific example. When the participant completed sharing the story, and before concluding the interview, I invited the participant to share any final thoughts. Participants were thanked for gifting me with their story. Next steps following our research interview included preparing a narrative account and returning it to participants for their review and input. Following completion of the interview, I journalled in my field notebook, as described above, or I audio recorded my reflections. A follow-up email of appreciation was sent to each participant.

Limitations of the recruitment and interview procedure. The recruitment approach did not include methods that would have encouraged involvement of participants from diverse backgrounds. Also, I did not ask specific demographic details of participants in the interview. As a result, I did not collect data on the ethnicity of the participants. Future study could address these potential limitations.

Transcription. A professional transcriptionist was hired and signed a confidentiality agreement. All interviews were transcribed, so that I could systematically review all of the interview data I received. The transcriptionist signed the University of

Victoria confidentiality agreement as a proactive measure to honour and protect the confidentiality of the participant data in this research project. See Appendix D for the confidentiality agreement. Following completion of the interviews with the research participants, I analyzed the interview transcripts. I describe the process of analysis in further detail below.

Group interview. When the individual narrative interviews were completed, a group interview was scheduled. Prior to the group interview, all participants received an account of their narrative interview. Also, preliminary identification of values from the narrative interviews were summarized and sent to participants for their input in advance of the scheduled group interview. The group interview was scheduled to facilitate dialogue on the initial findings with the research participants who were available to attend. Preliminary findings in the form of a description of values identified using the definitions offered by the participants was prepared. In advance of the call, an email with the preliminary findings was sent to each participant, with a request to identify up to five values that sustained them as they navigated their leadership challenge (see Appendix E for the attachment). Nine of the 11 participants provided their input in advance of the call. The call explored the values that had received four or more votes from the participants. In advance of the call, participants were sent an invitation with further details. Participants were asked if they were okay with their first name being used on the call. All participants agreed. Six of the 11 participants were available for the group interview. I facilitated the dialogue and served as the timekeeper to make sure that the call was completed within the time allotted for the group interview, demonstrating respect for the participants who attended. Each of the collective values that were

identified as part of the preliminary data analysis was reviewed, along with the definition of the value that was also identified as a result of the interviews. Participants shared their comments and input on these four collective values as they related to the overarching research question. Specifically, the research participants were asked how this value sustained them in their leadership as they have navigated challenge. This inquiry and dialogue process was completed for each of the four collective values. Group dynamics were managed by asking each participant to comment on each round and inviting people to offer their reflections if I noticed that someone had not participated. All participants were invited to share their input so that the potential downside of only hearing the voice of a dominant participant could be avoided (Frey & Fontana, 1991). The group interview concluded by asking for any closing comments the participants wanted to offer as a result of their experience and our dialogue on the preliminary findings. I offered deep appreciation for their assistance with and support of my research before concluding the call.

The combination of individual narrative interviews and group interview offered a triangulation of methods, as I sought to identify points of convergence, explore the preliminary research findings, and identify what disconfirming evidence or add-ons might surface from the group interview (Frey & Fontana, 1991).

Field notebook. I used a field notebook for my reflection throughout the recruitment, interview, and data collection process. Narrative inquiry as a methodology acknowledges that participants engage in meaning making about the researcher during the interview process. To honour myself my field notebook allowed me to surface my own meaning making process during the research interviews and the research.

The field notebook also allowed me to keep track of my relationship with the participants. I had individuals who participated in my research, who I knew and who knew me in another context. I was mindful of honouring their participation as a research participant in my study and while my connection with my participants was in the past, I reminded myself that this previous context could influence and impact our research relationship. Through a disciplined practice of journaling or audio recording before and after each contact, I maintained my own awareness of myself as a researcher in relationship to the participants in my research. I asked myself the following questions: What were my thoughts and feelings about the interview participant? What assumptions did I have about the interview participant? What was I curious about as I reflected on our upcoming interview? What anxiety was I feeling as I approached this research interview? What was my experience like in the interview? What did I learn? Further information about my reflective practices as a researcher is articulated in a subsequent section. Below, I present the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) described two types of analysis: narrative analysis, which seeks to identify the plot of an individual narrative, and analysis of narratives, which seeks to identify themes across a series of narratives. For the purposes of this research, I conducted both forms of analysis, as I believed each form would offer me different data. Specifically, narrative analysis offered me the opportunity to capture each of the narratives shared by the participants in a coherent manner. Conducting an analysis of narratives using the process of thematic analysis allowed me to identify the collective values identified across all of the narrative interviews. This second form of analysis

enabled me to identify the relationships between and among each of the narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). Each of these forms of analysis builds on the work of Jerome Bruner (1991), who identified two types of cognition. The cognition best suited to narrative analysis is narrative reasoning, which seeks to identify the plot of the narrative. The cognition best suited to the analysis of narratives relies on paradigmatic reasoning. Paradigmatic reasoning seeks to identify the themes across the narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). Polkinghorne (1995) emphasized the unique feature of analysis of narratives is its reliance on a specific type of diachronic data which is the storied narrative and includes personal autobiographical accounts.

Narrative analysis, as articulated by Polkinghorne (1995), seeks to identify the plot of an individual narrative. Eleven narrators participated in my study. Following each interview, I read and reread the transcript. Following several reviews, I prepared a short (approximately two-page) vignette that was intended to capture the leadership journey as the participant navigated challenge. The vignettes retained the journey as told by the narrator, in his or her own words. What did not appear in the vignettes were specific details regarding the narrator's organizational context, proper names, or specific names of the narrator's spouse. This approach allowed me to anonymize the data while capturing the essence of their leadership story.

Each vignette was returned to the narrator, along with several reflective questions, as an opportunity to solicit further input on the narrator's experience of reviewing the account. Returning the narrative account to the narrator also allowed me to confirm that I had captured the key elements of the narrator's leadership journey. The reflective questions included the following: Does the above narrative account capture what was

important to you and your leadership based on what you shared? Are there further insights that occur to you as a result of reviewing this narrative account? Are the values that you articulated as being important to you reflected in the account? Are there additional values that were present for you that weren't included? Are there further reflections on what sustained you during this period? Did we together capture the essence of the story? Recognizing that confidentiality and privacy is a priority, is there material that is included in this narrative that you would be uncomfortable having included in the final report?

All narrators responded to the narrative account I sent out by email. In some instances the response was an affirmative yes. In other instances the narrator wished to emphasize a particular message that they felt had not come through in the interview, or they wished to share some additional reflections. In instances in which a more detailed reflection was shared, I included it in Chapter 5, as a way to fully honour what the narrator wanted me to understand or appreciate more fully in terms of importance. Adopting this approach allowed me to leave the initial vignettes as they were sent to the narrator while honouring what data I might have not fully captured at the time of preparing the vignette. I also remained curious about whether future readers of these narratives would experience connection to one of their own narratives in the accounts that have been captured.

Narrative analysis. I selected narrative analysis because I wanted to capture rich description in my narrative accounts (Riessman, 1993). This involved moving beyond reporting the facts included in the transcript to describing in rich detail the setting, the participants, and the experience as shared by the research participant. I fully engaged in

the interview process, with the goal that the research participants would feel as though I had captured their story completely (Creswell & Miller, 2000). To accomplish this objective of rich thick description, the following process offered by Riessman (1993) was used for narrative analysis. Following a primary experience, five somewhat overlapping levels of representation were articulated for the benefit of more fully appreciating the research process and they included:

1. Attending to the narrative, which included the selection of the specific details and observations by the narrator.
2. Telling the narrative, which was followed by the telling of the narrative to others (such as the interviewer).
3. Transcribing the narrative.
4. Analyzing the narrative.
5. Reading the final narrative—readers may be the narrators, as well as other interested parties (Riessman, 1993, pp. 8–14).

For the purposes of this section, my focus was on the fourth level, analysis of the narrative data. Saldaña (2009) offered the following guidance: “Narrative coding is appropriate for exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions to understand the human condition through story, which is justified in and of itself as a legitimate way of knowing” (p. 109). I was honoured to receive the gifts of the stories offered by the participants and to understand the human condition that my participants sought to share with me. The first part of the findings is presented in Chapter 4 with the narrative analysis that was conducted to yield the narratives in the vignettes that are presented.

First, the entire interview was played to capture narrators' sharing of their stories and honour Level 2 of narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993). Second, following completion of the transcription, the multiple transcription review process began. Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, and Bertsch (2003) documented a series of steps for "systematically attending to the many voices embedded in a person's expressed experience" (p. 157) that honoured the relational nature of narrative. The process documented by Gilligan et al. (2003; see also Gilligan, 2015) offered a systematic approach for interpreting qualitative interview data. The series of steps that I used in this study included listening for the plot, developing *I poems*, and composing an analysis (Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan et al., 2003). The first step involved two elements: "(a) listening for the plot, and (b) the listener's response to the interview" (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 160). The first element involved attending to the key aspects of the story, the larger setting in which it was shared, and what was unfolding in the story plot line being shared by the teller. Gilligan et al. (2003) referred to each review as an act of listening rather than reading, to emphasize the value of listening to the voice of the storyteller. The second element involved making explicit the listener's reaction to the narrative being shared. This process aligned well with honouring both the researcher and the research participant throughout the process of narrative analysis, as well as documenting the process of meaning making and interpretation, which, as previously noted, is presented in Chapter 4.

The second listening step involved the creating of I-poems from the narrative interview transcript. This step "focuses in on the voice of the 'I' who is speaking by following the use of this first person pronoun" (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 162). By completing this step, the researcher listener focused on the first person voice of the

narrator to both hear the “participant’s first-person voice – to pick up its distinctive cadences and rhythms – and second, to hear how this person speaks about him- or herself” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 162). The process involved documenting every use of the pronoun “I” within a specific passage and the verb that accompanied it. The second requirement is that the order of the use of the word “I” be maintained as it appeared in the research text. This process helped the researcher listener focus in on the “I” messages being offered by the research participant. The process was adapted for the purposes of this research, to prepare an “I” narrative for each of the participants. The essential difference was that the entire transcript was harvested to prepare the narrative, rather than focusing on a specific passage of the transcript as articulated above.

After completing the first two steps of the listening guide process, an analysis was composed, which involved reviewing the text and the output from the multiple reviews of the interview data. Then, “the researcher . . . pulls together what has been learned about this person in relation to the research question” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 168). Each transcript was reviewed and edited to remove organizational context and identifying information so that the narrative account returned to the participant was anonymized. Also the narrative accounts captured participants’ “I” narratives as they described their leadership journeys through a challenging situation. The above approach was used as a strategy to enable me to stay close to the research participant, the narrative, and myself as the researcher, while honouring the complexity of what was being shared.

According to Riessman (1993), “meaning is collaboratively accomplished, involving teller, listener/analyst, and reader” (p. 42). I viewed the research participants as collaborators in my research. With each of the individual narrative interviews, the

narrative account referenced above of the interview was prepared and emailed to the research participant for their review and input, along with a few reflective questions. All participants replied to the email that included their narrative account. A concise account that captured the essence of the narrative interview was prepared as an alternative to returning a lengthy transcript to the participant for their review, which could be viewed as a further imposition on their time.

Returning the narrative account to the research participants accomplished two objectives. First, this approach enabled me to engage the research participants in the output of the meaning-making process that had unfolded as a result of multiple transcript reviews and the narrative analysis process. Second, the input from the research participants helped me to confirm that I heard the elements of the story that were most important to the research participant. I also had the guidance of other researchers who have explored leadership using narrative analysis (Chase, 1995; Johnson, 2009; Juntrasook, 2013; Nasmyth, 2011).

Sharing this account with the research participant served as an affirmation to them of being heard. Engaging in narrative analysis with each research participant, the narrative account privileged the teller's story. Finally, conducting this analysis, challenged me to holistically capture the essence of each narrative shared by the research participant before moving on to the next phase of analysis, which included identifying the themes across all the narratives.

Analysis across narrative interviews. I conducted an analysis of the narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995), for the next stage of analysis. I used the original interview transcripts. This form of data analysis was employed to identify the key themes and

values that were found across and among the multiple narrative interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). Specifically, the following six-step approach was systematically adhered to:

1. Complete a transcription followed by reading and re-reading the transcripts to note preliminary ideas.
2. Systematically identifying preliminary codes.
3. Placing appropriate codes together to identify potential themes.
4. Working with both all of the data as well as the specific coded extracts to generate a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Continuing the process of analysis to further define the specifics of each of the themes that has been identified. Begin to explore the larger story that is identified as a result of the thematic analysis. Determine the definitions and names for each of the themes.
6. Select the final extract examples, conduct final analysis of the key extracts, link these extracts to the literature, the research questions and produce the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) also provided further detailed guidance on navigating the three phases of research, which included (a) approaches for the researcher to use to familiarize themselves with the data; (b) a process for generating initial codes; and (c) a process for searching for reviewing, naming, and finalizing themes. The process of identifying preliminary themes by “pawing” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 94) through each transcription began. This process included interrogating the data and beginning to select

transcript texts to identify the patterns (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). NVivo qualitative research software was used as the repository (QSR International, 2012) for the data. Each transcript was edited to focus in on the narrative interview and then imported into NVivo. Each transcript was reviewed in its entirety a minimum of two times. A preliminary mind map of codes was identified as part of this initial process. Saldaña (2009, 2013) offered that coding is in and of itself an interpretive act. The process of researcher as interpreter began early, and it was important that I follow a systematic process. The preliminary codes were then identified as nodes in NVivo and excerpts from the transcript texts were coded to the nodes. I continued to review the preliminary list of nodes and added new nodes until I was confident that I had identified the key codes.

Also as Braun and Clarke (2006) asserted researcher reflexivity is a crucial component of thematic data analysis because, even with the above helpful structure, many decisions and judgments needed to be made throughout the data analysis process. I offer further examination of researcher reflexivity below. Examples include the role of researcher judgment in discerning disconfirming points and identifying themes based on how often it showed up across interviews or how present the potential theme was when described in interviews. Other researchers have also explored leadership and values using interviews and analysis to identify key themes (Diochon & Anderson, 2011; Larson & Hunter, 2014).

Recording of interviews, the narrative analysis, analysis across narratives, and thematic analysis combined provided me the opportunity to systematically review the narrative interviews and conduct a robust process of data analysis. I used this process to identify the collective values that assisted leaders in sustaining themselves while

navigating challenging leadership situations. To strengthen the credibility of this qualitative research study, a follow-up group interview with research participants was scheduled to share preliminary findings, which I outlined in further detail below.

Group Interview Data Analysis

Upon completion of preliminary analysis, the research participants were invited to participate in a group teleconference using BlueJeans (2015), which is a computer-enabled technology that allows participants to access a group interview by computer or phone. Participants were sent log-in information and audio-calling information so that we could have a dialogue about the preliminary findings. To prepare for this call, a chart of the values that had been named in the interviews was compiled. The initial list included approximately 30 values, with definitions using the participants' own words. In the next round of analysis each value was audited to determine if the value had been linked to sustaining the leader as they navigated challenge. With this question as a criteria for inclusion in the preliminary findings list, the compiled list was reduced to 16 values. Each participant was sent this list of values in advance of the group interview along with an email invitation to provide input in advance of the group interview. See Appendix E. The participants were asked to identify up to five values that sustained them as they navigated challenge. See Appendix F. Participants were asked to return their input to me prior to the group interview. See Appendix F for the document that was sent to the participants. Nine of the 11 participants provided their input in advance of the group interview. Four values received four or more votes from the participants who responded. These values were reviewed during the group interview in relationship to the research question.

The group interview supported three objectives. First, it allowed me to engage in a second member checking opportunity with the participants. Second, it represented triangulation of methods as I engaged the participants in both an interview and a follow-up conversation about the preliminary findings. Third, it supported my desire to work with the research participants as collaborators in my research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). One group interview was scheduled to accommodate participants who were in different time zones. Six of the 11 participants were available for the group interview. See Appendix G for details of the process for the group interview. The group interview was audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Thematic analysis of the group interviews, using the process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was undertaken to identify what additional information was offered during the group interview with the research participants. The same criteria described above to complete this analysis were used, including pawing and sorting (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I continued to review the data until, as the researcher, I was satisfied that I had identified disconfirming evidence, such as contrasting or conflicting data articulated during the group interview. Also, I honoured with integrity the stories that were shared by the participants. I also checked that the participants' stories aligned with the key themes that I had identified as a result of the rigorous and systematic data analysis process. I used the following tools to support me in serving as an informed and reflective researcher throughout the research study.

Research Rigour

The methodology of narrative inquiry was used for this study. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2005) discussed two forms of rigour. One form of rigour is associated with the

method that I had used. I applied narrative inquiry—in combination with the qualitative research elements of narrative interview, narrative analysis, analysis of narratives, thematic analysis of group interview—and researcher reflexivity to contribute to overall credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity of my final research report (Lincoln et al., 2011). The research included elements that were designed to contribute to research rigour, such as sharing the narrative account with participants that honoured their stories and also supported the member-checking process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Other elements addressed elsewhere in this research included utilizing more than one point of interaction with the participants, taking field notes (Josselson, 1995) specifically for maintaining awareness of myself as the instrument of research and my relationships with my participants, and analyzing the data using both analysis of narratives and narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Researcher Reflexivity

Senge (2006) stated, “When personal mastery becomes a discipline—an activity we integrate in our lives—it embodies two underlying movements. The first is continuously clarifying what is important to us” (p. 131). Also, Senge identified another practice that supported personal mastery, which was “continuously learning how to see current reality more clearly” (p. 132). I used my mindfulness, meditation, and journaling practices to support my desire to see my research, my participants, and myself more clearly. By engaging in dialogue with myself through these practices, my journey of personal mastery continued as I conducted this research study. By continuously reflecting on and clarifying my position as a researcher throughout the research process, I was able

to more fully understand the interpretations I identified in relationship to the participant interviews (Josselson, 2004).

To support this research, I also reflected daily on a value such as wisdom. I learned from this experience to appreciate the importance of understanding the meaning that people make of the values they name. As a result of the learning from this practice, I incorporated the practice of asking the research participants to define the values they articulated in the interview, using their own words.

In addition to the above disciplines, I maintained a research journal to record my questions, thoughts, reflections, and experiences with my research and the research participants. I also completed a research log of my daily research activities (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Outcomes

The participants in this research had an opportunity to share a challenging leadership story, be heard in sharing that story, and receive a narrative account. The participants also had the opportunity to participate in a group interview in which they were able to share, in dialogue, their experiences with these leadership values. I also wanted the research to be helpful to leaders in the future and contribute to the body of values-based leadership knowledge in the public, health, and education sectors. I plan to write a book, offer training, make presentations and further advance knowledge through peer-reviewed publication of this research.

Research Implications

Through this research, I sought to assist leaders who wished to move beyond the heroic model of leadership to discover alternative approaches to sustaining themselves as

they navigated challenging situations. I wanted to solicit the narratives of leaders in support of offering research that would be viewed as practically beneficial to practitioners while also making a contribution to public sector scholarship (Ospina & Dodge, 2005).

I conducted my research from an interpretivist and constructionist approach. Also, this research offered a methodological contribution to public sector scholarship by using narrative inquiry as the methodology and narrative interviews as the method to explore the experiences of leaders who have navigated challenging leadership situations. There is wisdom to be harvested by the leaders who work in the public, health, and education sectors.

Personal Motivation

In my early career in student services and HR, I gained rich and varied experiences conducting interviews. In my HR role, I advocated for a process of interviewing, which was called behaviour description interviewing. This position strengthened my listening skills. It also enhanced my skills for inviting the applicant's story in interview situations, which were typically anxiety producing for the individuals being interviewed. These experiences have provided a solid foundation for serving as a deep listener and have prepared me well for undertaking this research project.

This research offered me the unique and rich opportunity to explore an area of long-term passion, as I sought to more fully understand the role that values play in leadership. I was enriched by the privilege of working with these research participants as we learned together. My listening skills and my capacity as a researcher were strengthened. I hope to be a better consultant and educator to the leaders I work with as a result of the research.

Ethics

I completed the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board proposal and complied with all requirements for engaging human participants in this research. My research offered minimal human risk to participants. According to the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010), minimal risk research is defined as

research [that] can be regarded as within the range of minimal risk if potential participants can reasonably be expected to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research. (p. 23)

The information and consent letter is in Appendix B. I also completed Research Ethics applications for a local university where I teach. Finally, I had a participant who expressed interest in participating in my research, and I completed the organization's prescribed operational and ethical review process so that this participant could participate in the research. Beyond the requirements of the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board, I conducted my research with integrity, appreciation, caring, and compassion for the participants who agreed to be part of my research.

I recognized that due to the leadership positions that my research participants occupied there would be sensitivities regarding what participants shared, particularly in the group interview. I also was sensitive to how the data would be captured and how the information would be reflected in my research. Initial conversations with each participant

by phone or Skype™ (2015) offered an opportunity for rapport building, as I tried to understand their specific concerns as they related to participating in this research.

Ethics in Data Collection

Josselson (2013) offered the following definitions of anonymity and confidentiality to guide my ethical responsibilities as a researcher. Anonymity included, “never use their names or the names of people in their lives” (Josselson, 2013, p. 14). To address this concern, each participant was assigned a numerical identifier in my final report. Josselson (2013) also offered the following directive to maintain confidentiality: “You will not disclose anything about them that could be traced to them” (p. 14). As I reviewed the strategies I was using to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participant data, I solicited input from the participants about additional sensitivities they identified. Also I asked the participants to share what concerns they had for participating in the group interview. Each individual who participated in the group interview was comfortable with his or her first name being used. No other identifying information was referenced during the group interview.

Some participants wanted anonymity. I also anticipated that confidentiality would be an issue for many, if not all, participants. Specific participant data collected included the sector where they lead or led, position and level held, gender, values identified, and data about the challenges they faced and overcame as leaders. I coded participant names and filed them separately in a locked filing cabinet. I took steps to store the research data on University of Victoria servers. Numeric codes were used whenever I referenced participant comments. The transcriptionist downloaded the audio file to her computer and

she used it in the transcription software only for the duration of time it took to complete a transcript. Immediately following completion the audio recordings were destroyed.

Relationship Between Researcher and Research Participants

While amplifying the voices of the research participants, I worked hard to balance fully honouring myself as well. The relational nature of qualitative research acknowledges the humanity of the interactive process. As I sought to “move with” (Josselson, 2013, p. 8) the research and the research participants, my research journal was a crucial source of support for reflection as I sought to honour my desire to write in a way that balanced self and other. The research interviews and the narrative accounts honoured the research participant. My field notebook assisted me to recall what I experienced throughout the research. The ongoing practice of journaling, served to honour myself more fully than if I had not adopted this practice. Each interview resulted in the recording of my research reflections about the interview experience, and my experience as a researcher during the interview.

I was mindful that my area of research was going to be asking participants to review challenging events in their leadership journey. As Josselson (2013) noted,

A good interview results from the emotional and psychological interaction between researcher and participant. When people are reasonably assured that what they disclose is confidential and they then feel the interest and acceptance of the interviewer, they usually warm to the situation and take the opportunity to speak at a depth that may be quite surprising to them. (p. 5)

I wanted the research participants to experience their participation as one of coresearcher in the study. I intentionally crafted a research design that offered a minimum

of three touch points with the research participants. Ultimately, I hoped that in sharing their stories participants would have an affirming experience.

It was important that the relationships that informed my study were transparently visible to anyone involved or anyone who reviewed this study. The importance of showing up in alignment with my values as I conducted this study meant that all of these relationships needed to be treated with respect and honour. The concept that Josselson (2013) explored was the research interview as a metaphor of a dance: “My approach to interviewing describes a way of *moving with* the participant and trying to ask as few questions as possible” (p. 8). As a researcher I wanted to partner with my interviewees in such a way that the research participants felt that they were the central figures in the story that they were sharing (Josselson, 2013). I remained connected to the heart of this research study so that my coresearchers and I enjoyed the dance as this research unfolded.

Summary

This chapter documented my methodological approach to this research. I explored in detail my orientation as a researcher as I addressed my specific methodology, method, ontological, and epistemological positions. I also articulated my specific research design for participant recruitment, interview, and group interview. I identified my approach to data analysis and identified the specific elements of my design that would support research rigour. I also discussed researcher reflexivity and my personal motivation. Finally, I examined the ethics associated with my research.

The outcomes of the research are presented in the following chapters. Specifically, the narrative analysis, which includes the vignettes of each participant, is

presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, the analysis of narratives, which includes the key themes, are presented. Also, the collective values that were discussed during the group interview are shared. As part of identifying the final themed value a definition of the collective core value, along with supporting thematic data analysis was documented. Using this approach honoured the participants' stories first before my interpretation of the data was included. Chapter 6 presents what I learned about building sustainable leadership. Also, Chapter 6 served as a means to synthesize what I learned about values and public sector leadership in relationship to my research question and includes recommendations for moving forward.

Chapter 4: Findings – Narrative Analysis

In this chapter I present the results of the narrative analysis that was completed for each of the individual interviews. As Polkinghorne (1995) articulated, the process of narrative analysis seeks to identify the plot of an individual narrative. Through the process of narrative analysis, each interview is individually captured to honour the voice of the narrators. As described previously in the methodology chapter, these vignettes seek to capture the leadership journey of the narrators as they navigated their challenges. Some of the material was removed in order to focus specifically on participants' leadership journey. However, all excerpts are the words of the participants. With the exception of removing words or, as previously discussed in the methodology chapter, changing from an individual's proper name to a generic reference such as my wife to assist with preservation of the participant's privacy, no other changes were made.

Prior to each vignette, I provide a brief introduction and a title. The title for the vignettes was determined as part of the interview. For example, in each of the interviews I asked participants if a particular symbol or artefact characterized their experience as they navigated their leadership challenge. Each participant identified something that resonated for him or her. With most of the vignettes, I incorporated either the symbol or a phrase from the interview that had strong resonance. I also included one or two key values that the participant had included in the interview to come up with the title for the vignette. Prior to sharing the vignettes I present Table 2, which summarizes the leadership challenges faced by the narrators.

Table 2

Summary of Leadership Challenges Experienced by the Narrators

Participant	Sector	Type of Issue	Leadership Challenge
1	Education	Program Participant Intervention	Communication: Ripple effect of conversation
2	Public	Implications for Career	Impact of election cycle
3	Health	Communication with Senior Management	Advocating for rural consideration in a bureaucracy
4	Education	Relational/Personnel Issue	Addressing performance and building community
5	Education	Individual Transition	Difficult career choice; positive change in career trajectory
6	Health	Organizational Issue	Long-term career; Organizational divorce
7	Public	Personnel Issue	Performance issue and learning acceptance
8	Public	Influencing Senior Management/Team	Protecting the team; intervening with the boss
9	Health	Individual Transition	Maturing as a leader; compassion for self along the way
10	Public	Relational/Personnel Issue	Restructuring and resistance
11	Education	System/Restructuring	Restructuring and loss of autonomy

The 11 narrators chronicled challenges they experienced in BC, elsewhere in Canada, and Pakistan. The self-defined leadership challenges ranged from those that were currently being navigated to challenges that had occurred in the 1980s. One participant was fully retired. Two other participants had retired from their primary work in the public service and education sector. However, they continued to contribute to these environments as contractors. One other participant shared an experience that occurred as

part of a 1-year leadership assignment. Several of the participants had careers in excess of 15 years with the public service, education, and health fields. Two interviews were completed using Skype™ (2015). One interview was completed by phone. The remaining eight interviews were completed face to face at mutually convenient locations. Three of the participants were recruited through snowballing (Glesne, 2006). The remaining eight participants were alumni of the Master of Arts in Leadership program and responded to the invitation that was sent out on my behalf by a local university. Eight participants were women and three participants were men. I am deeply grateful to the participants who shared their narratives of leadership challenge with me. In the next section, I look forward to introducing you to their stories.

Introducing the Narratives

Narrator 1. This participant is working at an educational institution in a leadership position to develop and pilot a volunteer program involving students. This new role was a shift from the private sector world to education. This leader's challenge resulted in an intervention with a group of individuals who were in the program and who had prompted a set of unintended consequences as a result of a conversation they had with a colleague. The challenge of getting back on track with the individuals and the positivity associated with the pilot project, called for an intervention with this group of students to have a learning conversation that would create the opportunity for both the people enrolled in the program and the program coordinators to be heard. With the help of sharing and curious questions a more complete understanding of the situation resulted. Going forward, this leader felt she had navigated the challenge in alignment with her

values as a leader. At the time of the interview this challenge had been navigated within the last 2 months.

Narrator 1: “Pulling back the curtain on illumination.” It’s pulling back the curtain on the situation, but then also pulling back the curtain in terms of my reaction to it, who I am in the situation. So we could have gone through the entire process with the curtain down and just gone through it, but when we pulled it back there was an entirely different story behind it. There was my set of values that I was going to lead by. In the journey of my evolution of my values, it has transformed itself again this past year to the word “illumination,” which is this sort of all-encompassing word for me. Both it’s a give and take word, so when I have the ability to illuminate someone it illuminates myself. And so it was sort of this beautiful moment where we together illuminated each other, and I was able to see their perspective, I was able to bring them into my world and show them what had happened in my eyes, and they were able to do the same for me and talk about their concerns and we were able to move on.

I think that initially it was fear. There was this initial moment and I had to really look at that fear that was in front of my values. And I had to step through that fear to who I was as a leader and what I believe in and what I believe I am capable of because in the end, when I am leading, it has to sit right with me. If I am leading from my values I can feel it, and I knew that I was feeling the fear in that scenario. That was sort of the story that I had to work my way through to get to the point of making the decision to take action that was going to align with my values.

And I think that is really the emotion that I have to step through that initial one and then get to—as I navigate through it, I can feel it almost like one of those divining

roads. I can feel which way feels right for me and which one doesn't, but I have to move past that fear. And that doesn't mean that when I feel a certain situation is the right choice, it doesn't mean I feel blissful and content and comfortable. It can mean that's an uncomfortable thing that I now have to face, but I sort of gutturally know that it's the right thing that I need to do for me based on all of the facts and all of my experiences and then my belief system.

I also have a value in me of fun and lightness and I brought that to that project. We had a great time doing it and it felt like I was wearing a weight vest going into the project now and I knew I couldn't—that it couldn't be like that, because those aren't the opportunities that I seek in my life to feel that kind of weight. And so that certainly was a driving factor not to just take what we had heard in terms of a complaint at face value because we couldn't—the pilot would not have survived had we kept that kind of a weight on it the entire time. So that value of, fun, light and energy or whatever we want to call it, it was a huge motivating factor to figure out what was going on to get us back to where we are and get us in a place that sat well

The turning point for me was that interaction. I had to step back and sort of get out of that immediate reactionary mode and take a night and have it sort of sit with me to formulate what my next steps were going to be and the order that those needed to happen in so that this was going to sit well with me. I saw that there was a learning opportunity and I also wanted to connect on a human level. The insight was small drops, big ripples, because the situation had caused a lot of stress and a huge amount of work. I wanted to bring them into my world and let them see, this was my journey.

It was likely the first time that I really made the conscious connection of values-based leadership. I certainly have been aware of it, but I haven't had as many opportunities to play around with it in that kind of a setting and be able to make my own decisions in terms of how I am going to react. And so the learning is to—just like in life when I'm navigating life and something is not sitting well with me with a partner or a family member, to have those types of conversations. The same goes for work and being a leader. You need to have that connection to self and who you are and lead from that. That satisfies me as an individual and makes me feel like what I am doing is worthwhile and I feel connection with myself.

It was the ah-ha moment when we realized that there had been a miscommunication and it was at that point we were talking back and forth without realizing it and you could almost see the candle on either end. Like, I'm talking, it's not lit on their end. They are talking—it's not lit on my end. And then when we realized that there was this whole other opportunity here for learning, it is like it lit and we were able to see each other's perspectives and, we both had these lenses, we both had these video cameras up showing each other our stories and learning from them. And that was that moment of illumination, and I certainly felt it at that point, this was a value and then when I reflected upon it, I realized that it lit that spark for me. So for me, the moment of illumination happened when my fear slipped away because I saw their lens and was able to create this moment, this mutual learning opportunity.

I could have navigated that entire situation without having this direct conversation and it would have been very simple and easy to do, but it would not have honoured this value of helping people help themselves, and illumination. I was going into that

conversation thinking that potentially a complaint had been lodged, and so it was within that conversation that this value really began to emerge, and almost consciously. Often times my values are sort of just a physical manifestation. If I am feeling something is a little off, it is likely a misalignment with my values, but in this conversation when we all had this ah-ha moment that there had been this incredible miscommunication, it was this opportunity for illumination where I realized that I could provide this perspective of my lens and my world of what had just happened, which created an incredible learning experience for them, but also lights me up because I am able to provide that and vice versa. They told me their story. So we had this exchange of stories, both of us gaining insight into each other's world. It was a turning point. I felt completely in line with my values as a leader and also with my success in navigating the situation.

Narrator 2. This individual worked as a hospital nurse earlier in his career in another country. When he arrived in Canada his career shifted into work in community health and then health administration in the public sector. He worked for many years in the area of health promotion and in his leadership capacity, experienced a shift in his career trajectory as a result of being responsible for a program that underwent significant change, following an election. The program shifted to a ministry with a different philosophical approach and different superiors. This resulted in several challenges, which culminated in a decision by this leader to seek another leadership position that offered greater alignment with his values. At the time of our interview, this challenge had been navigated approximately 8 years earlier.

Narrator 2: "Holding the questions as I stood for authenticity." Change is part of what you plan for. The difference in this one was the shift to another ministry and the

apparent reframing of the whole initiative, so before we could move forward because we had built relationships and models with other partners on one premise, so if we were going to change, then we had to be clear on what our future expectations with them would be. Intense, yes, but not too unexpected. But it was that shift in the value of the program and its direction—that was probably the most critical aspect. So it was really a case of clarifying and having the whole initiative restated, but many opportunities also to ensure that whatever decisions are made, were made with all the information that they could possibly have to help make that decision, so it was our job to package that.

On a personal level, major impacts. Just the shift and you work on a program that you particularly believe in, so it was uncertain as to even the point of the skill sets I would take to that table were unknown at that time, so it was a great sense of uncertainty as different sets of values, which all came into play in the new ministry. There was also a sense of vulnerability for myself and the whole team in that initiative, so it was a challenging time. There were three areas I needed to look at on a personal level. Is this where I want to be, so from a career point of view? Second as a public servant to think about the appropriateness of what was happening, and the third from the program point of view. It is the reshaping of direction, so I had to consider all of those areas. Also, my staff had similar backgrounds to me so I always had to ensure they were in the best possible place for them, so it was a very serious time of looking at what options I might need to bring into play.

I wasn't giving up on anything. It was really is there anything we can do to help reshape this? So I did move to have a confidential conversation with the public service agency about what I felt was compromised—the public service. Better to say it out loud

then keep it in and to try to help. Again, influence the direction that was being taken. And the third on a personal level was to start examining what options I might want to have. Was this where I want to be and it came down to if the program shift is delivered then so be it, but what are the other options I can look at? There wasn't necessarily one thing to do. And then working with staff as well, I always had to ensure that they fully understood what they needed to be thinking of.

I think on a personal level it was the biggest one. It was a different set of values in the room. I had been accustomed to working in an environment with trust and value, just human value of one another. It was a very cutthroat, business-like approach, which I found conflicted with how I saw things, so that was a very profound experience coming out is just having a sense of vulnerability actually, in that environment. I felt there was no one there that I could feel would support me in a difficult time, or even in a good time, it was just no sense of who you were within the sense of the team. In fact, there were no team; it was a bunch of folks that had a respective role. So it was that that I took away and that really flavoured how I then was able to work from that point.

The supports I had around me on a personal and professional level were very important because the sense of vulnerability was very strong, so to feel that I hadn't changed but the world had I was in, was good to have that sense of support was there. My wife, the family supports were there, but interestingly it's the personal supports, not necessarily the professional positions, so colleagues at different levels. It didn't need to be a director or it didn't really matter. It was just people who over time we had built trust with. It is like there is an unconditional support that I didn't have to explain necessarily what was going on. There wasn't an awful lot of that, but it was there. They were like-

mindful, the people with the same set of values and so on. But also people I might of thought of as mentors that were a bit seasoned as well to give some guidance, not just to listen and empathize, but they also needed to touch base with folks and might just help me find some insights into things, so in that way I was fortunate as well. But they were people nurtured over the years, have long-term experience that you can go to every quarter or something just to have coffee with them and share ideas.

Well the loneliness would come to mind. You would feel very alone and in that time because it was also coinciding with an environment where in a new ministry a long-term senior person was walked out. It was that kind of behaviour that died a long time ago. But people who had no idea that they were no longer wanted; it was simply just walked out that day. So it created that environment of fear. It was very old school authoritative type environment, so I think I was fortunate. If someone didn't have those supports then you would feel very alone and very afraid of being walked out the next day, particularly if you let it show. You had to be careful what you said. It's about the integrity and authenticity, and it was a risk to show either. I mentioned earlier about the risks of being authentic and I just did. I was authentic and honest and let the cards fall as they would. I wasn't about to compromise that. I would have just not felt happy. And again the staff I had to deal with were of the same mind, and at the end of the day we had a job to do, so it was finding that. I do have to say that I think it was less than a year that I found something else to move to, so it was really a pivotal point in moving a career into something. But I had known that if I relinquish some of those things, I had to live with myself at the end of the day. And I also continued to feel compelled to help folks understand this is the public service, so in gentle ways and educational ways of trying to

influence things from within, with some success, but not a huge amount. Authenticity is to me one of these kind of foundational pieces. Being true to who you are and be authentic in all situations. To me I try to reduce the world of surprises so this is about the only thing you can control is yourself, so just being consistent in how to deal with things.

Well it's not to negate the emotions were there, it was a difficult time, but the supports at home and again the root was really having a family life and a home life which really held me in good shape because that was the strength to withstand that. And stepping back of depersonalizing the initiative, what was going on around me. It wasn't because of me, it wasn't about me, it was in spite of me, so it is just really appreciating that. It didn't mean it was any less impactful, but it wasn't my failure, it was getting back to those senses that it wasn't even something I could have done differently. Those three things, I think they are kind of the three areas that would suggest that your own personal wellbeing—the integrity of your position, your role, and then the third is the program that you really care about. Think about those three things and if you are seeing any of them become a bit unglued because of the change, reach out and find someone who can support you through that.

It changed my career. Up to that point I was on a different trajectory. I moved into that and it caused me to redirect, which, you know, some regrets but it wasn't a bad thing. But, yeah, it was a pivotal point in my 40-year career that created a marked shift in where I thought I was going. A big question mark comes to mind. Working in a world of ambiguity. A very ambiguous environment that really had to form your own direction, but you couldn't influence it. So it is embracing change. There is nothing I can't address. There shouldn't be anything I can't look at. And I may not know all the answers, but it is

about having direction and creating. There is nothing that can't be looked at and you find a sense of direction and that's where I kind of fell back on that. So it wasn't even feeling the vulnerability, it was just a matter of fact. I've got to set my own direction here. No one else can do it for me. But it is something that I do in every situation is always look for a way forward. Find your values, if you don't know them. Really take stock of what you find is important. Really what it comes down to is find out what makes you tick and what is it that makes you feel strong, what is it that upsets you? Think about it and talking those things through I think goes a long way to finding ways of understanding when it is happening. You know, get insights into your own behaviour.

Narrator 3. This participant had worked in the health sector as a practical nurse and a para medic. At the time of the challenge, he was a chief for an ambulance service. His specific challenge involved representing the localized interests of his employees and his detachment in his interactions with upper management who were issuing broad directives to all detachments. He was retired at the time of the interview and had reflected back on a specific leadership challenge that had occurred approximately 13 years earlier.

Narrator 3: "Don't turn your back on your heart – leading with courage and integrity." "You are always doing so much. You are never still. You need to learn to meditate." He said, "Tell me tomorrow what you are going to meditate for the next 5 years." So I thought about it overnight, and we had just learned a lesson about the seven sacred teachings of the Anishanaabe people—truth, faith, honour, generosity, justice, humility and fortitude. I said that is what I will meditate on and I'll breathe in a thought and I'll breathe out another one. And I'll breathe in and slowly I was breathing in all of them and breathing out all of them and just kind of running them through my head as if

counting. And then I would keep a journal and write about what truth meant to me. It was really interesting to go through that process and learn about these things. I incorporated them into my management style, into my leadership style, and said, “If I live the truth, if I am the truth—not my truth—but THE truth”—and it can be, “Yes, the truth as I know it,” but I can’t get all dogmatic about it and say I am the sum total of knowing and do whatever with it. Truth is profoundly important and it works every time.

Let’s hold on to these basics. How does faith work, and how does honour work, and a really big one is humility. This isn’t about me, and it’s not about you, and it is everything about us. It’s making the work important, but not ourselves. What happens when you make yourself important, you get distracted and you make mistakes. And when you make yourself important, you get distracted and you get hurt. “What I would like you to do is let’s have agreements. So we are going to agree in the morning when we show up at work that we can or cannot be present. And if you can’t be present, let me know because I can be present for both of us, I can watch over you, me and the patient, and I know that you can do that for me.” But there is agreements that we need to make and modern industry works—you know, we’ve got collective agreements, but we don’t have individual agreements, we don’t have respect for each other. And mostly we agree not to have agreements. Not that we agree not to agree, but that “I don’t want agreements because I don’t want rules, I don’t want expectations to live up to.” We are so much better off with agreements. If you want to go to the Vegas one—what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Okay, so we’ll have confidentiality and we’ll have confidentiality to such an extent that “I promise I won’t come to you tomorrow and say what about that, but you can come to me tomorrow and say I’d like to talk more about that thing I talked to you

yesterday about.” But I can’t go the other way around, so we have this double confidentiality that “I won’t be on your case, I won’t judge you,” and that we will trust each other enough to try and do that—the QI [quality improvement] at the end of the call, the bumper talk if you will, the drive home talk. This is the “how could I have served you better?”

But the seven sacred teachings I think held best—and I never told anybody about them and it was always don’t ask, don’t talk, show me. You can’t all be John Wayne, right, otherwise no one is saying the words, and I’ll go into the spiritual part about the word is that breathe life into our leadership through the words. And that’s how god had a vision, that he breathed life into it. And one of the first words in the Bible and I keep telling these guys, “I’m not a Christian person, but in the beginning there was the word, and it was good, and all that god had to do was say it and it happened.” I keep on telling—“And that’s all you need to do too. You need to say it over and over and over again.”

My challenges were with my management because they didn’t listen. All my nasty letters were in support of my crew and this one particular situation was—I had been a proponent of automating the scheduling system. And then I came to a rural location. I started our own scheduling system where the family was invited to the station once a month to work out the schedule—and that’s wives and kids and family who come to the station and say, “I want that, that, and that.” Based on your seniority, you get to pick two first shifts and two-second shifts, and then it goes to the next person. So the wife would be sitting there and, “Oh, we’ve got holidays there,” so they were keepers of their own calendar, the family was involved. The reason why we needed an automated scheduling

package was to have autonomy or anonymity really from the schedule—just spits them out, that’s the way it works. You know, “I never touched it, I’m not playing any favourites Little Johnny, this is the shift you got based on the amount you put in.” The way I did it, there was no grievances because you picked it. You got nothing to say. I gave you all of the options and possibilities to pick the best possible shift you could for your family. Not just for you, but for your family. So people got to have the vacations they wanted, they got the hunting trips they wanted, they got everything they wanted because they were involved.

So finally the Ambulance Service automated it and said that every station will have this. I said, “I have a better system, I’m not doing it.” They said, “Yes, you are.” And I said, “Well you are going to have to come and take me out of this station because no, it’s not happening.” So the Executive Director shows up at my door and says, “I need to take you to lunch.” He says, “Explain this to me.” So I explained it to him, and he said, “Cool, this has been a good meeting. Be nicer with your emails,” and then rips up the letter he was going to give me of discipline. Cool. “I can be nice. You guys be nice. Listen to us, and don’t tell me you are listening to me. I’ll tell you—and so some days down the road, a new directive came out that said rural and remote stations will be allowed to schedule themselves, if you feel the need to use this system, you can use the system, or if you have a system that works in your community—bingo. So, it was very successful but, you know, I had to make a big noise to get it done, and I had to be brave, and I had to show courage for my people.

So it’s about integrity, it’s about courage and integrity, and has little to do with me and my ego, but everything to do with me and my—I guess courage—my leadership.

Yeah. You know, this thing that I hold so dear that if I want people to follow me, I'm not going to compromise my integrity.

Integrity. This is easy. My coaching style is heart and wisdom and I tell people that there are two leaders in your body—your gut and your heart. And your gut will always tell you no, and your heart will always tell you yes. Your brain can do the planning and the logistics, but don't follow it, it's stupid, it will waste your time. Follow your heart and have your brain organize what your heart tells you. And so that's the integrity part where you don't turn your back on your own heart because that's your soul. I believe that there is a heart mind and that there is some connection. And it never fails me. It doesn't tell me lies. It always helps me coincide whatever I'm doing with truth because truth is in the integrity. The humility is in the integrity. If you look at the seven sacred teachings, truth/faith/honour/generosity/justice/humility/fortitude—that's integrity. If you hold true to these things, that you will never have to say I'm sorry. You know, I did the best I could based on these things. This is the backbone; these are my writs.

Courage. Well courage is seeing the danger. Understanding the danger and going forward. And for me, it's assess or plan/step/assess/step/assess/step/trust/step/trust/step/trust and that you learn to trust yourself, you know, because it is lonely—leadership. You bring people into it. Create a network. Find a friend. Get a mentor. One of the things—because I am alone, it was especially hard for me and if I had a stronger support group, I wouldn't have to write the nasty letters, but I always came off, you know, I brought the fight rather than bring the work. And this is what I tell my union leaders too, I said, “Stop telling me you are going

fight for my rights. I don't want you to fight for my rights, I want you to work for them," because the energy of the fight comes into the office and then the manager turns in to Dr. No and everything is no from that point forward. So as leaders we have the work to do, we have no fights to fight. We are warriors, but we are not fighters. The fight is the last thing you do, not the first thing you do.

You know, you bring people into it and they try to get an understanding of it and then you can't do it, they'll go, "You went back on your word"—"No, I didn't go back on my word. The game board was changed on me and now we have to do something different, but we are going to do it from the same place. We are going to do that from that same place in your heart." I'm on the line. I'm putting the food on my family's table.

Truth. Well you can go back to integrity and courage and wisdom. Where truth came from in my life right now is with my fiancée. And so one of the things when we finally got together that we did was we made agreements, and the agreements were that we would be truthful. We would be the truth. To the extent that it was possible, we would be the truth. Tell the truth—just everything. Our life would be truth.

About leadership. About values. And agreements. Yeah, I think that we need to have agreements with our handlers, and I think this society agrees not to have agreements, and we would be a better society if we agreed to.

Narrator 4. This leader works in higher education. She was a teacher in a variety of educational environments before moving into more senior leadership roles within a postsecondary setting. In her situation she had moved into a leadership role from a faculty position and had worked with the faculty colleagues in her department for several years. Her specific challenge explored a performance and interpersonal challenge with a

faculty member in her department. Her work in defining an alternative approach to leadership rather than operating with the more traditional and hierarchical leadership approaches that surrounded her was also explored in the interview. She also had an overarching vision of building community within her department and the broader organization where she worked. At the time of the interview, she was in her second 4-year term and the challenge had been experienced during her first term in her leadership role.

Narrator 4: “Shining the flashlight on learning in community by honouring compassion and diversity.” I have always known I wanted to be a teacher in education. I just fell in love with that context so opportunities arose and I wove my way into them, and here I am. I ended up in a leadership role.

In the beginning I think the place had been allowed to sequester. It was quite static and it was just kind of rolling along because of a lot of different situations and factors, but the issue for me was that people were just very fractured, it wasn't antagonistic; it was just a lot of isolation. There was a lot going on in this little community that we have, but I felt like over time—I keep using the word relentless—persistent—I think you just have to keep working at it and those little discoveries along the way of being more explicit and giving people time to trust me and each other. I'm really confident with the structures I put in place, which were all designed to build community. I would say about three years before I felt like, looking around going, “We are doing alright. We are a family.”

I have had some really challenging relationships. Over 4 years with one, I felt like I was just so vested and bending over and spending hours and hours. I would work with

this individual, and I really loved this person, you know, I feel like we were arriving at some great solutions and that he was really participating, and then it would be a week he would kind of flip it back to me. I remember a meeting where he was literally just trying to make fun of me. I think he really thought I was quite unintelligent. And then he tried to out me online. He pulled up the actual email I had sent, which was excellent because in the email he had actually misread it, and it was saying the absolute opposite of what he was charging me as saying. I could totally understand why he had these kind of biases against me, I just kind of got it, and I saw myself as kind of having the task ahead of me of just showing/demonstrating, helping people understand, I'm not afraid. So it was an opportunity to illustrate again where I actually stood and where I actually was, and then to do it in a way that demonstrated compassion, and I wasn't making a fool of him, which anyone else could have easily done, and I knew would have been the exact opposite of what needed to happen. Not just for him, but for everyone else, right, they don't need to see that. I've dealt with different, challenging personalities in the past. I'll try a new tactic, and just every time I would kind of get burned. But, at the same time, I just stuck to what I believed in and stayed, I thought and I think, pretty legitimately values based. I didn't start slagging or getting engaged in that conflict, just kept staying cool and above board and working with that person from a place I know from which it would be productive to work. And eventually he left. You just coach and coach and coach and you are hoping, you are growing, but at the same time it was like that's alright. I think it ended as it should have and he is going to have that really challenging life of his into the future and that's okay. What I learned through all that was to be strong in who I am and help people the way you know how to help them and it will unfold as it should. We want

to be a community, which demands that collaborative openness, listening, caring for each other.

This is probably a theme in my life. I use the word “burned,” but it is like a broken faith in humanity. I have so much faith in people and then to get—it is kind of a betrayal. I realize people are not actually that person in the right light. I really thought I was trusted or that I really trusted that person. And then to have it just flip right back—but, again, as I matured and I have grown over my life, I realized it is not that they are bad or mean or anything. It is just they have just filled out these strategies that are defensive, and to just be compassionate. The compassion piece was critical because I could easily engage. If I am stressed or tired and juggling so many things, I am human too, so that would be a natural tendency to engage in something, but realizing that they are just people and everyone is struggling away with their own challenges and to just be compassionate. It doesn’t mean you need to roll over and compromise all your values, but to just be compassionate and I think that is how it ended up unfolding so well for us and for him, but it just kind of resolved in a way I think because I just kept loving him up. That was the key. It comes right back to being a teacher. I wouldn’t be a teacher if I didn’t believe every little kid had magic in them, and potential. Everyone has something to give and contribute, so I think it all just drills down to that for me and to just work hard to try and to facilitate that unleashing/unlocking and clarity for people.

I value diversity, but embodied within that is—and interestingly, like competition has always been really important to me, but because to me those two things embodied, individual capacity in concert with others. It’s never one or the other. I’m not an individualistic or collective. To me it is systems and that diversity depends on the

integrity of the individual factor element. It is so important to develop each and every little kid because that makes our society stronger and you can give a lot of lip service to that, but I experienced it so often that I think I just get it deeply.

It's always community, right. It's always relationships and people around you, and it also highlighted for me how little I had here and so I needed to get to work on building that. But then as I realized I'm still really lonely, I realized, "Okay, what it is you really need?" And so that was some good deep soul searching, because I realized that I hadn't actually committed very hard and a lot of it was fear and the challenges I had faced so far and not feeling very welcome, so I just had to kind of explore that a little, which was great, and it is all about being ready to do that. Yeah, it was good and it was great to finally feel like, "Oh, yay, I can do it. I can commit," and to start to really honestly, authentically try to build those relationships here, and that meant bearing more of myself too.

A constellation of values starts to emerge, and they all hinge on certain beliefs. Compassion but also respect, respecting each other. Without that you are not going to understand or grow or be willing to listen. Everybody has a different view, but that ties to compassion because you need to be compassionate, that everyone has come from a different place too, so you can't just assume they can come around.

Respect is critical, but also the compassion is linked to that and out of the diversity piece, I mean I have been challenged on this a few times. I think I have a really deep belief in growth. But it isn't even necessarily about growth and development—I guess that's the educator in me that I just believe—but I know having worked with thousands of people on this and drilling them down to what is most essential and

important to you. It is purpose. If I don't have meaning and purpose in my life, if I don't have that role to play—and it is not even the role—it's if I don't have something to contribute, if I'm meaningless I'm done, and so that's what I believe in, right, that everyone has something in them, that burning fire, that purpose, and they obviously—and here is the respect piece—they all have something to contribute because they are just unique and there is only ever going to be one of them so therefore they must have something and we just have to figure out what it is together, right. And we fail them when we don't help them get it out because it is not just up to them, obviously. Everyone is a little kid inside. I think it comes down to that. It's not even about growth, but just purpose and then the opportunity to enact/express/share your magic somewhere, somehow.

Narrator 5. This leader had worked in the private sector early in his career and then he had moved into education as a teacher. He had taught in a traditional high school setting before moving into educational administrative leadership roles. He had held a variety of leadership positions in both the traditional academic and continuing studies departments. He had worked at a number of different educational environments during his career. This situation had occurred during the application process for a leadership role. The particular challenge he articulated had occurred much earlier in his career. At the time of the interview the challenge had occurred approximately 35 years earlier.

Narrator 5: “Release the rope of security to step out and make a difference.” I applied for a new position and, the responsibilities would involve looking after all the night school general interest programs, and I was successful in obtaining it. I was then asked to resign my present position, which meant giving up over fifteen years of seniority

in the system in order to take this new position. And, of course, one of the things that you are always told to do from your union federation is that you call them. So I have this vision of me standing in the classroom on the phone talking to the head guys who were just telling me, “This is nuts, do not resign, do not take this position—do not, do not!” And I thought, “Well maybe I can see if I can negotiate something here,” so I go down to the head office, to the personnel department, I present my case, I present it in the way that other teachers were given opportunities to move over into industry and to try it, but weren’t losing their seniority, so why would this not be something that I could do? And the end result of that was a definite no.

So I remember riding home and I remember riding the bus, feeling that I had lost a part of my soul. That seems very strong, but I just remember this huge impact of having worked all this time as an organization man and whatever, and then realizing that you just have to look out for yourself. And so after much thought and angst and all kinds of things I said, “I’m going to take it.” So I took it. So over here was an opportunity to have some administrative experience. I mean I knew all along I’m not a risk-taker so it was a horrendous sort of decision to make, but part of what led up to that was I was sort of getting tired of teaching and I was ready to do something else.

So, maybe I wasn’t the right person for that job, and if I wasn’t they’d have to fire me because there was no place for me to go. It was gut wrenching, which has been dulled over all these many years. It’s the lack of security, and I guess the other pieces about not feeling, fairness, not being treated as I thought I should be. The positive part of all of that in years hence is realizing that decisions are not always as simple as they appear and there is always more to the decisions than you normally know about. And I also tried to

be, when decisions were being made that were sort of awkward, to be able to tell as much as I possibly could because I knew what it was like to not have that.

Sometimes your values become evident to you when they are not present. So if security is a value of mine, I really felt it when it wasn't there. I found that interesting. What were the core values that guided, and I was saying wanting to make a difference, that sort of learner-centred approach. I guess there was courage and this self-actualization, this finding meaning in life for me and that was part of my midlife crisis was the fact that really, is there not more to this? Security. This huge responsibility I felt to be accountable to my family financially was important to me. I guess that is part of the whole security thing. I guess the longer I was in the role and I thought, "Yeah, I can do this role," but when I didn't know what the role was, that's what the unknown was.

Is decision making always around values? And one of the questions I ask myself here is that do you know what that value is in the moment, or does it only emerge on reflection, and do they become more visible when we don't have them? I mean that's my whole thought process. So I was trying to say, "Okay, what was it that made me okay with?" because it certainly wasn't security. I trembled about it because the other thing was I had a family. My wife wasn't working, she was going to school, and I had financial responsibilities, and I was throwing all of this out to do this and what if they fired me. You know, I think more about it was the fact that I wanted to do something different, I wanted to make a difference, and also I was so learner centred versus organization centred. And I also saw all kinds of people. I even taught adults that came back into Grade 13, and I thought, "Wow, isn't that wonderful." And I thought, you know, it is not

about dropping out, it's about stepping out, and there needs to be a system there for them to step back in too, and I felt very strongly about that.

By taking this new position, I stepped out of the regular system, I wasn't part of this, and when I moved to another board as a superintendent I returned to the regular system by assuming responsibilities for credit programs, because then I became responsible for credit programs and whatever. And the feedback that I got from my colleagues was that I had a very different perspective on the issues. And when I reflected on that comment, it was because I stepped out, and so here was this parallel of me stepping out and stepping back in, in the same way that so many adult learners who stepped out. When they step back in, they had all kinds of experiences and skills that enriched the class that they stepped back into, as well as themselves because now the learning was more relevant to them because they knew the relevancy. And the other fascinating quote, by the way, that came from this interview with Kevin Costner, and he said, I wrote it down here, "Doing the right thing when it's the hardest is the closest measure to who you are." And I just read that over the weekend and thought, "Wow." It's my life. If I hadn't made that decision, I would probably be very unhappy today.

I think it was wanting to make a difference and knowing that I'd had this experience with adults and because it was within a system based on children and adolescents, I felt that I had a burning desire to make a difference, and I felt that that would give me a better opportunity to do that because it was a unique sort of situation. I think we all have a basic need within us to make the world a better place, and sometimes that is easier to do than others because of a whole variety of factors. I guess because, I didn't start off in education, I started off in industry. I started teaching the technicians

that worked for me because they wanted to improve themselves and that's what made me want to teach.

Courage. I guess having the guts to do something that needs to be done and it's counter to what everybody else is telling you to do and may not make sense financially and all kinds of things.

Learner centred. Well that means to me that what you provide a learner is what the learner needs, rather than what the institution has created. I used to use this analogy about the institution prepares a meal and puts the food out and that's all you are going to get. For me, it is sitting down with the person and saying, "What would you like to eat? What kind of food would you like?" And then I go and make it and bring it back. A lot of people weren't successful in school because they didn't see the relevancy of what it was they were learning to what their future needs were, and so for adults it is so important that you address that.

I felt really supported, was able to do unique things, which was another plus because there were no rules. I didn't have to check out a number of things and none of these people I dealt with were unionized, and all kinds of other things. It was very freeing. Follow your gut. I would share, you know, saying that, "I had that difficult decision to make and if it is of comfort to you, it was one of the best things that I did," because I think sometimes when you aren't a risk-taker you hang on to what is known to you and it doesn't always serve you best.

Before was just—well, the life before was exciting and whatever at the whole beginning, getting your head around being a teacher and all of that. But then it started to dull because I don't think I was being challenged. I remember standing at the front of my

lab one day teaching the periodic table and I thought, “Ugh, why do I have to do this one more time?” So I was getting to that point, and that led of course to this whole midlife crisis part about what is the need—surely there is more to life than this. And then that middle part I felt like a ball with daggers sticking in me, that decision part, that’s what that felt like. And then after that was this beautiful sunrise of the beginning of a new day.

Narrator 6. This leader had dedicated her career to her organization through the ups and downs of many challenges. She had selected a challenge that was significant in the organization’s history and her career. The interview focused on harvesting the values and the leadership called for as the challenge was navigated. We also explored the additional proactive values-based actions taken in the years that followed. At the time of interview the challenge had been navigated approximately 2 decades earlier.

Narrator 6: “Bringing out the hero in everyone through responsibility, respect, and caring.” As I moved through leadership—into more leadership roles, it became apparent that my goals in terms of values were things that I wanted to influence. I wanted to influence people and influence how things are being done, so the opportunity to influence and the opportunity to influence based on values. Probably the single most important touchstone for me every single day and in every single interaction is that you go back to the touchstone of your values, whether they be your values in how you work with clients, or its your values on what is a healthy workplace, or your values on what is a global world that you want to see? What I have found over the years is that if people don’t come in with an extreme desire to do their best and a deep commitment to actually helping people through whatever task, they leave because they can’t stand the place. They can’t stand how focused it is on trying to do good things.

I had to do a deep dive into my values. I had to do a hugely deep dive. I truly believe that most people will do the right thing if they are given the right information and they are given an opportunity. And that has been born out again and again and again so part of my job on the job and off the job—was to give people information, give them the opportunity to be the best they could be. What shifted for me is assuming that there is sort of a hero in everybody and how do you bring that out.

Some of the impacts are that impact of principles and minimum standards. We have principles and minimum standards. A commitment to codes of conduct and standards of care and interaction The impact of standards, the importance of every individual, every family, every community—this is another huge one—the importance—so if you think of that, the importance of the client, the importance of those standards and making sure that even if someone is at risk or less fortunate, that you are still applying the absolute highest in standards. Now, unfortunately, that costs money and organizations—we do, we get hit hard, and I have no apology for the fact that we spend money in providing a quality of care to our clients, to our patients, to our workers, and to our volunteers.

I was dealing with this last week—where you have people in finance or people in a specialty driving the values of the organization rather than the values of the organization. So the legal department can start driving the response rather than the leadership driving the response. You can have an organization of someone really strong in the legal department or strong in the communication department or strong in finance suddenly find that that department is driving the intent of the organization rather than the organization's values driving it and them supporting it, including the leadership.

The other big one, was systemic issues. You had a lot of good people trying to do their best and doing incredibly good work in each of their roles, and the organization still ran into this problem because they got caught in a systems issues. And so one of the learnings I would say is systems can trump values sometimes. Systems can—if you are in the wrong system and everybody can be trying to be work from values-based, if your system is not allowing those values to be expressed, your systems can trump values. At a certain point the system was on a track. And unless you can get someone who has not only the ability to see the systems, but also to name it, but also to change it, because you have a lot of people who can see those systems, but if they are not in a position—and not even an individual person, but have advocates around to change, it's very hard to bring around to a different outcome. It was recognizing the responsibility that we held—a huge responsibility that I have never forgotten, huge responsibility, and also recognizing just that the systems—other things too, but systems is probably the easiest way to sort of summarize it—is how you can get caught in the systems and culture and just start acting without thinking about it.

What prevents it is each and every one of us in the organization. I mean some things aren't their job—but there are some basic things that are everybody's job around a healthy workplace, around respectful relationships, and those are inescapable for every single person. And so the only thing that can prevent it is us going at it every day.

I have been very privileged to have education and be exposed to things to reinforce these concepts, is that in every situation you have to go back to the principles. Not only because it can safeguard integrity, but also because it opens up creativity. If you can get back to the principles and say principle-based negotiation, getting to interests,

getting to needs—as soon as you can go back to that, it can root you in your values and in your integrity, and it can also put you in a place that allows for more creativity, which is fun.

And so I think rather than say how do you avoid it, it's more about how do you create a culture of values? How do you create a culture of people working within a system, because we have to work within a system, but at the same time questioning the system in a healthy way? How do you create a values-based piece? And I guess the other way, of course, is sort of the self-evident one is I try to live it every day, so I am always going back.

What I love to do is watch people that watch how you can work together and do something more than what you can do by yourself. And when you work on a principles-based—I love it when people come up with the solution that I haven't thought about, but what we have anchored in is our values and our principles, and then hopefully when they go away and they are working with their staff they take a similar approach. A nonnegotiable value for me is I think from this one is the recognition of the responsibility that we hold. The privileged place that we are in, and the responsibility that we hold to people.

So receiving that message of trust and making sure that we earn it is really, really, really important to me. And then the values—and my work style was, as I say I like to get things done, and so my first tendency is not to question—sometimes I question things. And so it took awhile for me to learn the skills of questioning leadership in a way that was comfortable to me.

We recognize strength in everybody and so coming from that strength-based approach and seeing every single person. Every individual, every family, every community has strength. Every culture certainly has strength and you come in respecting that strength from the individual, the family, and the community and it completely changes your conversation.

I think what you do is you go back to what is important and you just start working from that nub again. Hit the bottom and then build up. So we hit rock bottom and then gradually built ourselves up. As you build up, you have to keep sight. And I can see, as we get further away from it you can lose sight of it, and so it is a really good question. How do we make sure we keep sight, and I think how it is is you build in those values and you hold yourself accountable to those values continuously. We need to equip our people with the capacity to do this because they are all good people, they are all working hard, and I believe that—I know some of the values that can help them in guiding them.

I spent a lot of time on self-reflection. There are so many things I still loved about the work, about the organization, I loved about the principles. I felt that people needed a channel through which to channel that part of themselves, and that is part of what we do. We are a channel through which people can direct their generosity and their caring for others. And I thought that we still needed to be around—or else I would have gone “fine,” let the organization fold. But I actually believed the organization had and still does have an important role.

I have a sick enjoyment of challenge. What sustains me as a leader is—I still go back to the same things is that being able to work with people when you are working from sort of a values base. Is being able to work in a group where you start with that

place and can build up from it. Is being able to identify and recognize and celebrate when people do things that are wonderful like that, when they operate from a values-based approach and a caring approach.

And it comes back to two other things: Is the privilege and trust that people have placed in us, and is the deep, deep belief—deep belief that has been continually reinforced—is people need to have ways of showing that they care for others. And you can do it in little ways within your family and your community, but you also need to do it in ways that maybe can't directly touch those people.

I think responsibility would be the first and foremost value. It is related to the privilege of serving and all those things, but I'd say responsibility is the one that comes up most strongly. Responsibility to the people that you serve. Responsibility to the people who support you. Responsibility to your mission, to your employees—it is so many aspects of it.

Narrator 7. This leader had worked for many years in politics. At the time of the interview she was working for an international organization overseas that was committed to improving civil society within this country. Her organization was building capacity with the younger generations through an intensive 4-month training program that would then enable the participants to return to their home communities and offer this training to community members. The challenge that she articulated had occurred 5 months earlier.

Narrator 7: “Balancing the scales of justice with fairness and acceptance.” The current job that I am in opened up just short of 5 years, which is a long time. It doesn't feel like a long time to me, but it is a long time compared to the amount of time that others stay. I love what I do, and I love the people that we work with.

What drew me to it in the beginning was that a lot of the work that we do is training and I have always loved to train. I love the concept of sharing experience and skills with others and helping them to develop skills and seeing people feeling so empowered when they learn new skills and they are able to go out and practice those. The level of confidence that people gain when they go through a lot of our programs is really overwhelming. People find a home, they find a community, they learn skills, they learn to feel empowered, and they gain confidence and all that kind of stuff happens in the kind of work that we do. And, I get to continue to do it here over and over and over again, but in addition to that there is so much to do here and there is such a hunger for it. I am in a position to be constantly dreaming up new ideas and ways that we can help people. How can you not continue to feel inspired when people want to—they want to be engaged and they take the opportunities. We spend a lot of time with young people here and, of course, young people are the majority of the population. The training and working with us over a period of time that they really gain the self-confidence, but also the skills to be able to put behind that self-confidence.

Well maybe I should tell you about one of the most recent challenges. We have a program in which we take young people and over the course of 8–9 months, we put them on a sort of like temporary honorarium contract with us and pay them a fairly decent salary for that time. But throughout that time we give them not only intensive training, but we connect them so that they can work as professional staff at the same time we are also helping them to develop the skills to do that. We discovered in December that one of them had been falsifying all of his reports for the previous 3 months and that he had not done any of the meetings that he said he had. We terminated him and his response was to

go and get a lawyer to write us a letter threatening legal action and demanding that we reinstate him. In the end because the organization is more important than my values when it comes to the time—it is a particularly tense time right now so I had to negotiate. And then he goes away and he does nothing further. I don't have total peace about this, but I have to let things go. It allowed me to just take a deep, big breath and move on. It is more important that the organization and the amazing people in it, and the amazing people that we work with who so want our help, survive than we penalize this one person for his actions?

The values for me are about honesty and integrity and fairness. I want it to be fair. I want it to be fair for people who are doing their best, and it offends me when people who are not doing what they should be doing get benefits that those who are doing their best, do not.

Honesty for me is about—it's not just about telling the truth, it's about trying to be honest with yourself, about trying to be open and honest with others, but honest not in just talking, but in the way that you deal with one another. That you deal with one another in an open and—that you are good with others. That you behave in ways that are fair and are honest. This is interesting, because I am always challenging young people when we are doing the training to define their values, and now I am finding myself having difficulty. The fairness piece is all about treating people fairly in work, in pay, in the way that we deal with them. Integrity is for me a lot about—I have to walk the talk. I talk to our staff and I our partners and our participants about a whole lot of things, and it means that I need to be what I am talking about, and I need to act what I am talking about.

Fairness. People all the time try to get me to give them exceptions. And there are times in my heart I kind of want to say, “Oh, I would really like to”— If I do that, then how could I say to myself that I can’t do that for every other person in this organization? We’ve got about 55 staff. I just have to live with that all the time.

Those have always been my top values. I think, however, the fairness value has kind of made its way to the top where it might not have been at the top before. I don’t know that for certain, but I just find the fairness value being challenged so often that the more that gets challenged, the more important it becomes to me. I think the other thing is it is not even just in my work, but there is unfairness, like gross, gross unfairness everywhere in this country—everywhere. And it is so in your face.

I find myself feeling this way from time to time about a lot of different things that I see here, or I hear about from our staff. Just this—it’s like this sadness that it has to be this way sometimes. I just think it is so sad that people have to live in a context that they don’t have a framework they can depend upon, they don’t have a justice system they can depend upon, they don’t have an education system or a health system, or anything that they can depend upon. And sometimes for all of the presence of family living in each other’s back pocket, sometimes they can’t depend on their family either. And so a lot of things just make me sad. Sometimes you just have to be willing to accept things that you deeply don’t like. And it is hard for me because, you know, I don’t tend to feel things in a mild way. I tend to be very passionate about my feelings, one way or the other.

I had some incredible mentors who said things to me that I have repeated thousands of times to others. And people who helped me to really define how I approach life, how I approach my work, and two of my biggest mentors are now deceased, but I

can hear their voices in my head. One of the things that my mentors when I was younger really helped to do was to find ways to find my own way, find what worked for me. And so I tried to sort of pay that forward, if you will, with others. And there is certainly—there are people that I learn from all the time, but it is not quite the same as those people that mentored me when I was younger. And even if I think about—my husband would laugh if he were to hear me say that he is a mentor, but there is so much over the years—and I hope in every successful partnership that this is the case—that I have learned so much from him and I think he would say that he has learned so much from me about how we might approach life, approach our work.

What's most important here? What's most important is that the work that we do continues to survive. The work, the service that we offer to the young people and the women and the marginalized groups, that that service is still available to them and that we can continue to do the work, to assist them to find a way forward to improve their communities, to improve eventually/hopefully, their democracy.

Acceptance means that I will agree to something that I think is wrong, for the greater good—continuing to be able to do the work that we do and the service that we offer to all of our partners.

Scales of justice. I sort of see on one side this person who is challenging us to give him something even when he does not deserve it, and on the other side I am looking at the organization and our work and so I have to balance those two, and hence make a decision that puts them on an equal par that they are as important as my desire to not allow him to get what he wants. Balancing what he wants against the importance of our work.

A lesson I have learned several times here. Is that despite how much it really, really disturbs me, there are times where I just have to accept. I can't change the fact that somebody could ultimately really hurt the work that we do by threatening us this way, and so I have to have the serenity to accept that. I don't like it, but I can live with it. As I said before, the greater good is more important than my desire to see this being done—my desire to see this being done and what I see as a fair way. Yes, I guess it has in some respects because I accept a lot of things that are very, very hard to accept. You could drive yourself crazy here otherwise. The things that I see here and hear about every day, if you take every one of them on and just not accept them, it can make you crazy. I think that each time I get challenged to accept something that I so desperately not want to accept, I do feel like I grow up a little bit more. I do feel like I mature a little bit more each time I learn to accept things that I really don't like. Well, just learning a little bit more maturity to accept things with that I am unhappy about.

Narrator 8. This leader had worked in the public service for many years. Her current career was influencing leaders and building capacity with the leaders in her client organizations to move specific priority initiatives forward that would support greater adoption of lean processes within government. At the time of the interview the challenge she explored had occurred approximately 21 months earlier.

Narrator 8: "Empowering the heart of the work." My role is I train and I facilitate, but the key to what I do is I empower other people to make positive constructive changes in their lives in a way that is both tangible and intangible, intrinsic and extrinsic. I show them how to use data as a way to validate what they think and feel, and then through that empower them to identify possibilities for improvement and then

show them how to manage that change so that they can be a positive influence to the other people around them—to their stakeholders, to their clients, to their coworkers.

I am a very nonjudgmental person. It was interesting when I started doing the university program, one of the first exercises I had to do was write my values, and it was incredibly hard for me. And the reason why was because the values that I had been telling myself were my values, were not my values, they were the values of my parents, the values of my husband, they were the values of my in-laws. All of these people who I felt inferior to and that I felt I needed to be something for. I allowed their values to dictate or to define who I was or what I did, or the way I looked at what I did. And it was amazingly challenging to write my own values, but once I did it unlocked so much about myself and one of the things that is fundamental to my values is a lack of judgment. I have this balance of being nonjudgmental on one side, but then being validating on the other side.

And the other thing about me is that one of my core values is authenticity. I'm an incredibly authentic person. I work very hard to be authentic. I don't lie, and I have never really been able to lie. I have no filter. And that makes me very raw, and it makes me very vulnerable, which is another thing that elicits trust in other people. We don't honour those things in our society; we honour solutions. And so because people share those things with me, I have an opportunity to help them construct their own solutions. For a long time I did not have a very strong self-esteem, and it was because I was judging myself by values that weren't mine, that I was unable to live, but it was like I had this rule book that I had to live by, but I didn't write the rules.

It's about my relationships to other people that I get the most energy from and that I find the most rewarding. Trust is one of my values. Trust is one of the things that I focus on and I put out and I take back. I will trust first. My nature is what helps me to overcome my tendencies and my behaviour. I know my strengths and weaknesses. I am a person who invests in everything that I do. I'm an all or nothing kind of person, which is good and bad. I'm not a moderation. I trust the process of what I do and I also believe that the wisdom is in the room and you need to honour what happens in the room and not take it away and control it and make it perfect. The only thing that I can control is my own reactions and behaviour. Control is something that is very against my values, and perfection is very against my values. I avoid perfection. I avoid control. It's not about power over other people. It's about empowering other people. That's the part that I get off on.

Empowering others is something that is incredibly important to me, because empowerment does not take away from me, it only adds to you. I believe that we achieve greatness through interacting with others, that's why I do what I do. When I think about the challenges I have at work, the challenges I have with other leaders, is when they are selfish, when they are self-serving, when it is about their power and control over what is needed by the rest of the people.

I am very protective of the creativity and vulnerability that people go through when they are doing this work, as they are incredibly vulnerable because they have these ideas and they are afraid nobody else will like them. And so a big part of why I am good at my job is because people trust me and that I can create an atmosphere of trust quite

quickly. I'm good at bringing people to the table, I'm good at collaboration, I'm good at making people feel comfortable and welcome and valued—because I say those things.

Empowerment to me means creating the space for others to reach their potential and be constructive through my belief in their ability, through creating space, through encouragement, and my fundamental belief—I fundamentally believe in people. I believe in people's abilities. I believe in people's greatness. That is very core. To believe in people's greatness. They can see, I can feel like that just triggers emotion in me. It is authentic to who I am, so that's a big part of why I love what I do. Protecting the greatness in others. Being a person who is willing to trust that people will get to where they need to get to. I believe in people, I trust people, and I will protect them from people who will take away their power and make them feel less than they actually are.

Collaboration to me is the shared opportunity and responsibility to see things from each other's perspective. There are two things in collaboration that are very important to me and one is the ability to see a situation from another's perspective, which is why I do what I do. I always knew how important relationships were and how important relationships are to me, but that solidified it for me. The third piece of collaboration is the ability to co-create because people support what they create. Through co-creation, we can get to a place that we can all commit our energy to. I believe in the collective, I believe that what we probably agree on fundamentally is our values at the top.

I had a moment where I knew I am good at my job; this is what I am supposed to do. And I realized I'm using my degree, I mean it was this kind of moment where I had to make a choice on whether or not I was going to continue in this project, in this relationship, what I was going to do. And when I made the decision to stay, I also knew

that I had it within me to make it work. Like I knew I had everything I needed to begin with. I wasn't missing anything; I had the ability. The wisdom is in the room. I just decided I'm here for a reason. I believe things happen for a reason and sometimes it is to teach us a lesson, and so in that moment I trusted myself with the ability to do what I needed to do and that's what sustained me. And also my belief in what I do. Like who I am and what I do. And I try very hard to teach that when I teach. That it doesn't matter how you approach it, what matters is what is your goal?

One of the strongest things about me is my ability to love unconditionally, nonjudgmentally. Heart is really core to who I am and what I believe in because I believe in love first and foremost. It was my love for my family, my husband's love for me, my love for my mother and my grandmother, their love for me.

I think the fear of inadequacy interferes with our ability to think. I believe that inadequacy is crippling. It was for me. Feeling inadequate crippled me as a woman, as a person, as a leader, and made me resentful. So I think first off, believe in your own ability to do something. I think we have to be kind to ourselves first. We tend to be generally more willing to forgive the shortcomings of others and not ourselves.

Narrator 9. This leader worked directly in a healthcare setting. She had been with her organization for over 25 years, a significant portion of her career. The challenge she identified had happened during a difficult period in her life, and she did not receive the level of support she had expected from her organization. She acknowledged her role and accountability in the challenge she had experienced and she shared her learning. She remained with the organization following this challenging period. The challenge that she described at the time of her interview had occurred approximately 12 years earlier.

Narrator 9: “Nurturing the dragon fly of learning.” Well I have just celebrated 28 years with my organization. I have loved the work I do. The type of work I do is ever changing. It’s a wonderful job. I love working with the people I work with and I love meeting new people.

I would offer having an open-ended conversation, asking the question of whether or not this would be a road/pathway that I or you would want to take based on the reasons that you would have built up. You would have good reasons, not the wrong reasons for doing it. I wanted to prove that I could do something. I would have just done it better. I would have done it as a business proposal instead of an emotional proposal. Take out that reactive piece, take out the fact that I wanted to prove a point—why are you really going to do it, what are the reasons behind it, what is it going to give you in the end.

The absence of the support of my colleagues. I am very focused on team approach and as a leader it is very important to be working alongside with people, so there was a bit of disconnect there.

Never give up. When it gets really tough going, is to just—you will find somebody that is going to help you. We ended up having wonderful conversations and she helped me, she coached me, she mentored me. We spent hours on the phone and she was a wonderful mentoring coach.

The turning point to keep going? I guess it was I have to finish this no matter what. I took 3 months off to finish my paper because English was not my strongest forte and writing a thesis with all of its references and so on was extremely daunting and I was very, very insecure about that.

I learned I wasn't alone. You think you are the only one out there trying to handle chapters in your life that are difficult. I learned that I am not alone and you know what—this was the mistake you made, move on—but it wasn't really a mistake and it wasn't something that was really that bad, but it was perceived as being bad. That was just that emotional, immature chapter that I think I went through.

It is an amazing concept for people like me and like many others who have an issue with personal experience and baggage that they choose to keep dragging around, which then affects how they perform whether it be at a professional level or pursuing an education, or even pursuing a relationship. That's when I found out I wasn't alone I couldn't believe it. I was the one that had the issue. It was breaking through. It was an interesting way of breaking through a person's inability to see that you are not alone.

Making the commitment. Commitment was huge. To me it means if I say I am going to do something, then I will do it no matter what—or at least to the best of my ability. Every single day. I get up in the morning. It's all about the attitude. It's all about saying it is going to be a good day. I'm going to make it the best day and I am going to commit to doing my job to the best of my abilities.

Having the courage. Courage is having the ability to be honest with feelings and to be able to clarify those feelings to put in a meaningful way. Being transparent, honest, and reasonable. The ability to change—make changes where they are needed.

I applied for the manager position because our most recent manager stepped down. I applied. I got an interview. It was the most wonderful experience. It gave me faith again because I had had such a bumpy road. It was wonderful. I think it was just growing up. I have done a number of things. My leadership training has given me the

confidence to explore different areas, although working and staying in the same area of my passion, but I also branched out and used those leadership skills in other ways. It gave me the confidence to do some volunteer work and be on the board for a nonprofit organization and volunteering. I have also taken some power talk courses to overcome that fear of public speaking. At the interview, for example, I did an outstanding job. I was able to say what I wanted to say with a beginning, a point of view, reason, explaining, examples, and end.

I did a lot of reading and I started believing in myself. I do believe in walking the talk and so I developed this attitude—positive attitude—to make the best of what I am doing. There is nothing wrong with me. It was just believing that it was nobody's fault but my own. I have to learn how to get along with people, I have to learn how to cope, I have to learn how to take on a challenge, to make a change, to commit, and not react. I need to grow up. And I'm still learning—every single day. There are challenges every single day, but it is how we choose to embrace the challenge and how we react to it or don't react. I have learned not to react. That's one thing. I used to react. I was very reactful.

Transformation—I just love that word. It's like everything—it is going to change and you just have to go with the flow and embrace the change and be willing to learn. Every day it is about learning, it's about growing, and it is about sharing your knowledge with others to make them be the best they can be and I quite enjoy doing that because I think it is important for a lot of people, I think, especially in my sense is that the people that I work with, we all have a common goal.

I have learned to listen more than ever before. I have learned how to listen and just listen and just not have an opinion, unless I am asked for my opinion. I enjoy the listening and it gives me peace instead of feeling like I have to say something.

Was just getting on with my life—was that I had accomplished it, I had graduated, and so what is my problem? Like get on with what you are doing. Well I could go back and learn more actually because it was just a stepping-stone.

The commitment to saying that you are going to do something and do it—committing to that—also learning that—pursue your passions, being physically fit, eating well, learning—an ongoing journey of learning—those were the goals that I wanted and knew I needed to maintain and so that put everything into perspective. With a healthy body you have a healthy mind. With a healthy mind you've got everything else.

The dragonfly. A symbol about growth, change, courage and transformation, going from one cocoon and blossoming into something else. And the dragonfly has beautiful colours. It has an interesting lifespan and it is a beautiful symbol.

Narrator 10. This leader had worked primarily in the public sector throughout her career, which was over 20 years. She had worked both in a central agency as well as working within specific ministries. Her specific challenge involved the management of two direct reports through a period of restructure and change within her organization. At the time of our interview, she was actively navigating the challenge that she described.

Narrator 10: *“Gaining wisdom on my leadership journey.”* This is my 23rd year, and so I have grown up in the Public Service and that's really where the bulk of my career has been the last 15 years. I have been with this ministry for almost 2 years.

One of the things that is hugely important to me is accountability, like so important to me. I am there to help, I am there to facilitate through the process, I am there to be clear about expectations and what is acceptable and what's not, but more than anything if I can help share the impact they are having on others. It's very important to me that we have a respectful workplace.

One of the big things I learned is I have so much more to learn. I was emotional about it because ultimately it doesn't matter about me, right. I am here to support those guys in being successful. I am here to serve them and set them up for success and to help create that vision of where we are going, create the conditions that will allow them to get there, and be their champion, right, so that is my job, that's why they put me in a leadership job. This is where I think this is my job as a leader to try to help—again unpack it and peel that onion in sort of what's going on so that people can move forward. Curiosity is just a big one because I always ask questions. Peeling back the onion is a big piece, so curiosity is a huge value for me because I just think it is a great way to approach life in general.

Accountability one of the things that I think is very important is that people are given accountability and control over things, and their ability to make decisions. I want to be able to guide them and support them and understand where I need to potentially maybe step in or have input in something, but I think it is such a fulfilling part of a job to be able to—so it is the accountability, but the empowerment to make decisions. So accountability is such a core value of a team to me, that we all know, that we've all got our pieces, and we can be held accountable and trust.

Trust isn't a personal value of mine because I look at trust as a by-product, it comes from many, many things, so I don't hold it as one of my values. I look at it as if I do these things, it's my by-product, I build trust and then that brings a lot of other great things about, right. Being curious instead of being accusatory helps to build trust, like all those different things.

Respect for me is around a bunch of different things. I personally have respect for someone until they prove me otherwise, meaning that I value them for what they are bringing to the table. That they are there for a reason and they are participating—all good intentions, all those different things. That they are following through on things. All of those things I think are important and being very respectful of one another. I expect us to treat each other as professionals, very respectfully.

Compassion. It falls in that respectful category. Another word is “I care”—I care about you, I care about our branch, I care about this Ministry, I care about the clients we serve, I care to be curious and ask things. Being compassionate about is that understanding that it is not actually about me, it's about them. I think it is important as a leader that you care—is very important. Because if you care, and you are curious, and you are doing these other things, all kinds of great things can happen.

Another big one is the “art of the possible.” So I love the art of the possible because that is the innovation side of things. I just love that whole notion of “let's test out possibilities,” which is fun. I like fun. And that's where you get all the individual creativity coming out in people, which generally jazzes people up.

Success to me is both that they feel satisfied with the work they are doing, they are feeling good about the work they are doing, that they are achieving things, and that—

because we serve all the Ministry. I don't care if we are the best. That's not my goal to be the best, but I do want us to add value, that's why we are here. Otherwise, we could just go away tomorrow. That we are making a difference I think matters. What matters to our group is they feel their job is to make a difference.

Put all your assumptions aside, if I could have validated some of those things earlier, checking my assumptions would have helped me to have done that, because I lived off of those for a while. I was good at living off of them. So if I had paid closer attention to those, we could have resolved things quicker.

If anything, I always chalk up any of these challenges just helps me continually grow. I pack around for the rest of my life in my little suitcase of being a better person and having better knowledge of how to go about doing things.

Narrator 11. This leader had been with her organization for more than 15 years. She worked primarily as a teacher in higher education. During the course of her career she had moved into leadership positions with increasing levels of responsibility. She was experiencing the challenges associated with having information about pending change that was not yet available to members of the organization, and loss of autonomy as a leader, due to increased monitoring by executives within the organization. She was actively managing the challenging leadership situation at the time of our interview.

Narrator 11: "Leading through the neutral zone with respectful engagement and authenticity." I have been working in adult education really my whole professional life, for about 25 years. I've worked mostly in university and college settings. I have had some interesting steps in the journey, moving from peer to leader at one point, which

was—had we talked then, that would have been a really interesting conversation—there was a lot of change.

There are people who are losing their jobs. Long-standing programs will be cancelled because they don't make money. And not even they don't make money, because they don't cover costs—and there is a part of me is that maybe the time has come, but there is some really good programs on that list that have been more really sort of the public good as opposed to bringing in the cash to cover their full costs.

A low-grade stress the whole time and feeling quite inauthentic because I know these things are a process and I know they take time. Will I want to be there in an environment that is just really all about the finances and not about the goodwill aspect of community contribution. At the same time I also feel some empathy for those in senior leadership who are trying to balance the books, but on who's back?

This process has actually forced us to make some changes that we needed to make or we would have made eventually anyway, so it has kind of forced some things a little faster. I think it is going to be a busy couple of years just to wrap my head around that. Now, we have kind of lost all of our autonomy, so there is a lot of grieving. My colleagues who have just been around a lot longer were feeling the sting of the loss of autonomy and now being directed to do things that normally we would be making decisions on our own.

I'm in the middle of this process in a sense kind of being instructed, even just by my senior leadership to not share information until certain times and so on, and so hence that kind of walking in, knowing what is about to happen, but walking in with a sort of a calm, giving bits of information so people aren't going to be completely blindsided. I

think that has been the hardest part of it is the people part of it. I mean how do you support people through it?

I mean it is about respectful engagement. It's about how do you hold people's experience and people's truth—just hold it as their reality for this moment and support them in what is coming and what's next. And I am just anticipating there is going to be a lot of that kind of stuff going on.

What I found challenging seven years ago was—we still needed to produce, we still needed to do our work. At the same time my job was to support the staff—to support and challenge the staff because sometimes it's about holding people accountable. I really was just trying to create an environment where people could be supported and cohesive as a team.

Sometimes as a leader, it is a bit lonely. So what's important? I'm a communications person, so it is about respectful engagement. Really leaning into conflict when conflict happens. Finding out what is leaning into the relationship, like finding out what is going on and not shying away from those things.

I live my life with a strong value toward the social justice and contribution; sort of like community contribution. The challenge then for me is in leading a group where the driver is just financial. I have a huge value for authenticity and transparency and that has really been challenged throughout this whole process, it hasn't been a transparent process. Values are always so tough. You know, we live by them, they guide us, but they are not always easy to articulate.

Authenticity is, are my actions in alignment with my values. When I talk to my team about the changes that are happening, Authenticity is about alignment for me. I guess that's the piece in this that is challenging.

Community contribution. It's about letting people know what is happening that may impact their lives. Yeah. I think that actually ties to authenticity, transparency, and that commitment to community and connection to community.

Social justice. It is the piece around giving back. It's about creating access points for people who are interested in their learning journey and getting access to expertise. The social justice aspect of it is getting away from the mainstream and not assuming that everybody has the same access because they don't.

Respectful engagement. I just really believe strongly in communication and engaging with people in ways that honours each individual and in doing that believe that sometimes you've got to have tough conversations with people to reflect back to them, the impact of their behaviour on their colleagues. I have really learned to lean in to conversations because I know that for me it just builds, and builds, and builds and then it establishes patterns of behaviour. It is hard to change the pattern.

What sustains me. For me it's about meaningful work and meaningful engagement. Having a positive contribution to people's lives. That is the stuff that really feeds my soul.

Meaningful engagement is a weaving together of all those values that we have talked about authenticity, social justice, it's about contribution and giving back to society. And at the team level if I feel like the engagement is respectful on the team and people are learning and growing with each other and challenging and supporting each other to

move forward and strengthen their skills, that's all great. When I'm working with someone or they come to me with an issue, I love those kinds of exchanges where I'm learning something, they are learning something, and the end result is just a richer learning, a richer product, a richer engagement, where there is just some growth and some change happening. So that's definitely the stuff where my heart really sings.

The whole process feels a bit deflating. There is no sense of collaboration. It is just this sense of monitoring, but I just don't feel like in the long run it is going to be a productive use of my time.

Where we are at now is that neutral zone of the chaos. I think we are really going to get into a very uncertain time with likely some chaos in there. And then the final stage is probably a grieving and letting go and with some new beginnings. I think the hope is the dust will settle. My hope is that the next stage if we can benefit from some of the cleaning up or some of the tough decisions that might have been right decisions anyway, that we could actually move forward stronger. I think what will be hard for many of us is just if we continue to feel that being under the microscope continues to the level that it has been.

Get lots of sleep. I think it is so much self-care that is needed. That is the tough thing about leadership isn't it because you have to take care of yourself because part of your job is to support and take care of others. I think there is aspects of that that are true and what is hard about it is that has just been out of my control. So, what advice? Self-care, self-care, self-care.

Summary

This chapter shared the results of the narrative analysis I completed. Each of the vignettes of the leadership journeys of the participants amidst navigating their challenges was included. Attention was given to the “I” voice of the participants as they shared their narratives with me. In the next chapter, I share the analysis of narratives. I explore the key themes that were identified across the interviews. I also share the collective values that were explored in the group interview. Each of these values had been identified as part of a preinterview input process with the participants.

Chapter 5: Findings – Analysis of Narratives

This chapter identifies and explores the key themes that were identified as a result of completing the analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995). I begin by identifying the key themes. Having honoured each individual interview in the previous chapter, I then engaged in preliminary analysis, of the data across all of the interviews. I begin with summarizing what the participants shared about their experiences of leadership. Then I articulate some of the emotions experienced by the participants as they navigated challenge. Following this section, I explore the key themes of leading transitions, developing a strong values-based personal and professional network and pursuing personal mastery. This chapter concludes with the analysis of the group interviews, which explored the collective values that were identified by the participants. Appendix F includes the list of values the participants identified as sustaining them as they navigated challenge. To conclude this chapter, I shared final participant reflections on leading with heart.

Leadership Reflections

The participants shared their experience and lessons learned about leaders and leadership. In particular the participants identified the potential downside of the heroic approach to leadership. As one education sector leader observed,

Well when I look at, you know, the President of a university or a VP [Vice President] or a Director or any of these roles that we are presented with in this context, I often would kind of dismiss them and it is not something I would be ambitious for or ever strive toward because of how I perceive them to be and what they involved. Like studies I have done in Women & Leadership, you know,

women tend to actually not want to be a CEO because of how a CEO role looks—24/7, it's on-call all the time, or the suit and tie and the sort of posturing and puffed up approach to that posturing—is really is not something that is appealing or attractive to me. The constant travel, the schmoozing, you know, these are all very stereotypical attributes. But, I don't think those are real, they are just constructed typically by a masculine leader—I wouldn't say male leader all the time—but that masculine approach, and so let's imagine another style. (VIC 004)

One participant when describing the leadership associated with a restructuring situation she was involved with offered her reflections on the loss of autonomy that she was experiencing:

We have lost a lot of autonomy where we used to just run our own business and I would be in the hot seat with my Executive Director and her executive team usually around finances, usually budget meetings where I was in the hot seat. Now, we have kind of lost all of our autonomy. We are getting senior level administration—actually what I am doing just after the phone call with you is I am reviewing reports that are going up to the executive. They are going to go in and sort of financially review our accounts every month and look at our spending. And so there are parts of it that are a bit offensive in terms of kind of trusting that we'll do what we need to do, or not even really trusting that what we are telling them—because we can produce these reports for them, but no, no, no she wants to go in and get the reports herself as though what we would give her wouldn't be true? I don't know. Yeah, so there is a lot of grieving. (VIC 011)

This interview participant went on to use the metaphor of a porous balloon to further describe her experience:

The whole process feels a bit deflating. Even this exercise that I am just about to do, you know, going through these reports . . . so the Finance Director in this senior leadership position can do it herself next time. They just want to see if they are accurate, which means. . . . It is just this sense of monitoring, you know, where we used to have to give year-end projections—now we are having to give monthly reports on our finances and she will go in and take a look at our finances and say, “You said you were going to bring in X number of dollars in March, and you only brought in Y, what happened? You said you were going to spend X and you spent Y, what happened?” . . . It is just frustrating. So, you know, a balloon that’s kind of leaking. (VIC 011)

For one participant who received another piece of the story to his challenge about 2 years later, he was struck by the lack of awareness of the impact this information might have on him:

Now, there is a follow up to this story, which happened I would think probably maybe two years hence, and it was at a conference and she said to me, “Did anyone ever tell you the parameters around you taking that job?” And I said, “I don’t know what you are talking about. And she said, “Well, you know, we wanted a female to have that role and so we set up those parameters because we didn’t think that you would accept them.” (VIC 005)

In describing the experience of female leaders, one participant shared her experience with other women and herself when she shared,

They are very lonely and very alone and isolated and so how do we reach out and connect with each other better to support each other through that? But there are barriers to that because you are supposed to look strong. So you are always kind of navigating this crazy—like you say, that paradox—a real leader doesn't need anybody. And the trouble is if you do reach out too much or you interact at “the lower level,” which is so ridiculous to begin with, right, but if I'm interacting with people I'm not supposed to be interacting with, well then I don't have credibility, I'm not seen as strong, I'm not—it's crazy, right. So it is a constant shift that is required—a cultural shift in beliefs and assumptions and values too around what is leadership. And I think a lot of people really get it, but it is really hard to enact that in the current culture. And the culture is so strong, the expectations around a leader. And I went through it here too, right, where people are assuming things about me and expecting things, but then when I did that, they didn't like it, but they wanted it, but they didn't want it. (VIC 004)

As we attempt to identify alternatives to leadership that does not result in positive impact, this participant went on to ask these questions:

Well what is it then? If you don't want feminine/masculine what is it?” And they will say things like it is collaborative, it's openness, it's creative, it's not just THE leader. But what is it we crave? You know, we have to drill down on these things. What is it we get out of the one, the kind of idol that we look to? There is value in

it somehow for us so we need to unpack that and understand what it is we are actually craving. (VIC 004)

Opportunities to learn more about what leadership is were also shared by participants. This one participant talked about the joy of collaboration,

I really love in working with people is in the way that we achieve together things greater than we can achieve ourselves, so this whole collaboration and quick collaboration and collaborating in different times and collaborating under stress and this whole area of teambuilding and all of that sort of thing. The reality is like your teams change every 10 minutes and you don't get to choose your members, so the whole idea that appealed to me about that is how do we manage this?

(VIC 006)

In the next section, I highlight the reflections from participants on the emotions they experienced as they navigated challenge and the presence of heart in their narrative. May their reflections serve as a reminder of what is called for from leaders who navigate challenge while honouring their values and their emotions as they honour themselves and their leadership.

Leading With Heart: Honouring Emotion and Honouring Self

Several participants highlighted the emotions that they experienced as they navigated challenge. For some, they were in the midst of their challenge. For others they were reflecting back on an experience from their past that remained a strong memory. The emotions they articulated and experienced are articulated below. The range of emotions prompted learning, reflection, and action. For leaders navigating challenge, being prepared for the emotional toll that navigating challenge can take on a leader, and

being compassionate with the emotional impact is what prompted the inclusion of the following section and subsequent comments. In Figure 3, I summarize the emotions that were identified by the participants during the interviews. Following the figure, I explore those emotions more fully using the participants' comments.



Figure 3. Summary of the emotions participants identified during the interviews.

Emotional Impact on Self and Other

The range of emotions experienced by leaders who are navigating challenge take a toll on the leader who is navigating the challenge and also has an impact on those around them. The work of values-based leadership is never complete and the emotional experiences that we have inform the choices we make as leaders. In the interviews, some of the emotions that the participants articulated included fear, anxiety, anger, stress, and vulnerability. With regards to vulnerability, this participant commented directly on the

impact on self and other when he said, “There was also a sense of vulnerability for myself and the whole team in that initiative, so it was a challenging time” (VIC 002). The reference to fear, marked a choice point for one participant,

I think that initially it was fear. You know, like I think there was this initial moment getting these emails and I had to really look at that fear that was in front of my values because I could have very easily—and there was a scared part of me that wanted to just follow this other coordinator’s lead and nip this in the bud and get everything dealt with and just move on without having that difficult conversation . . . the fear is instant, it is right away, and if I let it, it’s fast.

(VIC 001)

Another participant commented on the fear she experienced in taking on a challenge that upon reflection she did not feel ready for:

I was a very troubled puppy. I felt very insecure, very unsupported, and hence the whole idea . . . was very—a good idea, but doing it was for me very frightening, and hence I did not participate as often as I should have. I was just going around in circles. I was frightened, I was insecure, I was feeling betrayed, I was very immature about the whole thing. (VIC 009)

A few participants commented directly on the anger and fear they experienced.

One participant said, “Anger, and anger is not an emotion I’m comfortable with” (VIC 008). This participant explained her emotion of anger in relationship to the individual she was angry with and the impact this individual was having on her team,

It was her style, and I was really angry at her, and I was kind of at this point where I’ve got other projects I could do, like I mean I was working on several

projects at the time, I had just chosen this one for my certification and I was thinking, “I don’t need this. This is completely against my values.” It was against my values to be that nit-picky to the point of derailing a project and deflating the people that I had spent months working with and empowering. (VIC 008)

Another participant spoke candidly about her own sense of surprise about the anger she experienced while in the midst of her challenge:

Every time we have another conversation we move forward, but there have been some very big ah-ha moments for me, and me really just going, “What is going on with me? I should be happy about that.” I am beyond frustrated and what’s going on here with me? It has been very interesting for me to sort of figure out—and there is some very specific important things that I value that aren’t happening and that is where that is coming—but this is me literally going home, “Grrr, I don’t understand why I’m feeling this way,” and trying to unpack that a bit, so it has been a different situation than I have ever kind of experienced. Yeah, this one has been one of the tougher ones that I have had . . . the interesting reflection in this one for me is I initially was like, “Oh, thank goodness. She’s made a choice, it’s a good choice, she’s happy and I don’t have to fire her because it is probably where we were going to go.” That quickly turned—I got really angry, which was very interesting for me. (VIC 010)

This participant went on to acknowledge the uncharacteristic nature of her emotional response as she offered further comments on what she was experiencing:

I got really mad, like it was very interesting because—so with performance issues as I usually talk about—I never take them personally. I am there to help, I am

there to facilitate through the process, I am there to be clear about expectations and what is acceptable and what's not, but more than anything if I can help share the impact they are having on others and have them see that from a different perspective, often their behaviour changes pretty quickly, like they didn't see that or they didn't realize that because they are dealing with their own thing that is going on, right. I never take them personally and that helps me be very compassionate, respectful, but clear, right. I always take that approach and not afraid to have the conversation either because often people are like, "Oh I gotta go give them heck for something." For me it is not that. It's what's going on, right. "How do we get to what's going on with you so I can help? What's my role going to look like and what's your role going to look like in this?" Right. So, yeah, this one was different for me that I all of a sudden got really angry. (VIC 010)

Living with the personnel challenge on a daily basis continued to impact this participant, who shared,

I found it very interesting how personally I took this one at some point. It came out of nowhere for me. One of the meetings that we had in one of my lower leadership moments, I actually got like really angry in a meeting—I never get, like it doesn't ever happen. I might get frustrated about something, but it comes from a place of passion because I want to see something happen, believe it, but it was interesting because I was angry at them, but I was also—like I was almost in tears, like I was emotional about it because ultimately it doesn't matter about me. (VIC 010)

Participants in the research also spoke about the stress they experienced. For example this participant said, “There has just been kind of that low-grade stress, I suppose, that has been hard. A lot of frustration and a lot of uncertainty” (VIC 011).

Emotions served to inform the subsequent choices that they made and offered wisdom as they moved forward. This participant spoke candidly about what it took for her to step beyond her initial emotional reaction of fear,

I think that is really the emotion that I have to step through that initial one and then get to—as I navigate through it, I can feel it almost like one of those divining rods, you know. Like I can feel which way feels right for me and which one doesn't, but I have to move past that fear. That doesn't mean that when I feel a certain situation is the right choice, it doesn't mean I feel blissful and content and comfortable. It can mean that's an uncomfortable thing that I now have to face, but I sort of gutturally know that it's the right thing that I need to do for me based on all of the facts and all of my experiences and then my belief system. (VIC 001)

The experience of this participant was one of accepting a decision that she needed to make in spite of her personal values,

It killed me to do that and this is the second time I have had to do this with someone . . . it offends me when people who are not doing what they should be doing get benefits that those who are doing their best, do not. (VIC 007)

The before and after experience for one participant was captured in these three excerpts from our interview, as this one participant first talked about the pain they experienced as they took action: “Some kind of inner core sort of strength that I didn't even know was there because I mean it's a pain. I think the pain has dulled, but I just

remember it was a horrendous decision” (VIC 005). This same participant further described their experience as “Gut-wrenching” (VIC 005). Finally, “how did it feel to make that decision, it’s terrifying in the moment, and then the best thing I ever did in retrospect” (VIC 005).

A common emotion that surfaced amidst challenge and in the reflections shared by participants was the experience of empathy for other. One participant offered, in expressing her wish for what would have been helpful she said,

Less pain and anxiety. Yeah, many days I went home just so frustrated with things, right, and I know they were too. If I am feeling it, they are feeling it, so that would have been nice to avoid half of that. (VIC 010)

Another participant explained a contributing factor to her having a difficult conversation was due to her caring for those involved,

One of my other values or—I don’t even know if I would call this a value—but I identify with the words “great hearted” and that’s probably that caring piece . . . so I know that was a factor as well, this feeling that I couldn’t leave these people feeling like this regardless of what their reality was. (VIC 001)

One participant described empathy as a value in her final reflection. This is what she shared:

I didn’t include one essential value that guides me daily. Empathy. I strongly believe and practice perspective taking, especially when I’m deeply puzzled, confused or angry about an interaction. Trying to see through the eyes of the other person is essential for adding clarity and empathy for why they may be choosing to behave in a certain way. I do not hold the truth. I hold a truth that can only

become more complete if I'm open to hearing and seeing things through another person's perspective. (VIC 011)

As I interviewed the participants and reviewed the range of emotions that they experienced as they navigated challenge, emotions served to highlight their issue and it wasn't that emotions didn't exist. Instead, it was that they moved through their challenge as they experienced these emotions and in spite of experiencing them.

Sustaining Leaders in the 21st Century

As leaders in the public, health, and education sectors, this research identified some key areas of leadership leverage that will contribute to greater leadership sustainability. Specifically, there are three key themes that were identified in the analysis of narratives that support building sustainable leadership. First, there is an opportunity to build leadership capacity for helping self and others navigate the transitions that are an inevitable part of moving through change and challenge; second, building a strong values-based professional and personal support network to offer listening, guidance and encouragement when facing the values conflicts that often occur as a result of experiencing a leadership challenge; and third to develop a continued commitment to and focus on personal mastery through learning, so that capacity as a leader can continue to grow and develop as individual careers result in assuming increasingly senior roles. Table 3 summarizes the key findings identified as part of this research, with each finding explored in detail below.

Table 3

Summary of Findings Identified in the Research

No.	Finding
1	Becoming a leader of transitions for self and other.
2	Building a values-based support network.
3	Exploring personal mastery and learning amidst leadership challenges.
4	Collective values that sustained leaders as they navigated challenges.

Finding 1: Becoming a Leader of Transitions for Self and Other

Leaders who work in the public, health, and education sectors are governed by predictable shifts that occur systemically as part of the election cycle, such as changes in government priorities, new government priorities, and shifting leadership priorities to name a few. Leading through these changes and being able to facilitate the inevitable transitions faced by the employees they work with would be of great service in the public sector context. People in the public, health, and education sectors are more likely to experience change and challenge as something that is being done to them.

Transition and transitions leadership. As I interviewed the participants who navigated challenge, I was reminded of the work of William Bridges (1980), who was referenced on more than one occasion, by more than one participant. In one of my early interviews, one research participant articulated a desire that his story had been appropriate for my research. When I assured him that it had, he went on to say, “It changed my career. Up to that point I was on a different trajectory . . . it was a pivotal point in my 40-year career that created a marked shift in where I thought I was going” (VIC 002).

I remember responding, “So I guess there was a before, a during, and an after,” to which he agreed. In a few subsequent interviews, I would ask participants the following question: If they were to name the chapters of their lives before, during their challenge, and following their challenge, how would the chapters be named? In my final interview, when I asked this question, prior to responding the participant said, “Interesting question. Before, what I am in right now, and after. My mind is going to William Bridges’ work” (VIC 011).

Shortly after the interview, I realized I had been gifted with the framework for sharing the leadership challenges experienced by the narrators. Below, I offer an articulation of the three phases of transition. Throughout this section I weave the narratives of the participants as they articulated their experiences in navigating the leadership challenges they faced. In Table 4 I summarize the key transition experiences described by participants in each of the transition zones of endings, neutral zone, and new beginnings (Bridges, 2009). Further descriptions are captured in participants’ comments below.

Table 4

Summary of Participant Leadership Experiences in Each of the Transition Zones

Endings	Neutral Zone (Challenges and Opportunities)	New Beginnings
Organizational Experience of Endings	Questioning	Positive response to application for new position
Relational Experience of Endings	Resistance	Making a commitment to a subsequent leadership term
Individual Experience of Endings	Confusion Choosing commitment Enriched Opportunities for creativity	

In this research, the narratives offered by the leaders as they navigated their individual challenges included some key messages and insight about transition. Each of the participants described a challenge that they navigated. Embedded in the narrative were the threads of the three transitions phases: endings or letting go, the neutral zone, and new beginnings (Bridges, 2001). The participant above had the following to say when I asked her what the names of the three chapters would be:

Before was definitely kind of happy, maybe not fully efficient, happy but not fully efficient. Where we are at now I think is sort of that neutral zone of the chaos, but I actually don't think that we are really fully . . . I think we are really going to get into the sort of—it is just a very uncertain times with likely some chaos in there. Yeah, and then I guess the final stage is probably a grieving and letting go and with some new beginnings. I think the hope is—I suppose my optimistic self—the hope is the dust will settle. . . . And actually maybe that's what the middle stage is called; it is sort of being under the microscope and being challenged and being the

puppets on a string—all those metaphors. So my hope is that the next stage is—it doesn't have to be a return to what was, but I think if we can benefit from some of the cleaning up or some of the tough decisions that might have been right decisions anyway, that we could actually move forward stronger. (VIC 011)

Below I use the framework to explore more deeply the challenges experienced by the participants in my research using their own voices. For example, one participant commented as she talked about the changes in her organization,

I have said repeatedly . . . that we really need to be prepared for the Human Resource support through the transition, because this is going to be hard for people and I'm hoping that they hear that. I will do my best in my sort of sphere and influence, but I think that piece is so often overlooked. (VIC 011)

Endings. Endings are the first phase of transition. There are no new beginnings without endings (Bridges, 2009). The work of the endings phase can be a process of grieving what was, identifying the specific things that are going to change and moving through the process of separation from the familiar setting and context. The descriptions of endings shared by the participants were often dramatic, characterized by language that offered some insight into the enormity of the ending that was experienced. I introduce several of the endings that were articulated by participants. The endings were experienced as a result of a range of external situations that impacted people at the organizational, relational and individual levels of the organization.

Organizational experience of endings. Endings are described in a variety of ways, and the language used offers some indication of the experience of the participants. For example, one participant described the following, “The organization broke into two and

we had the really challenging job of basically divorcing and so you are ripping everything apart” (VIC 006).

As one participant commented on the impact of loss of autonomy on her leader and the learning that it offered her:

She is a really neat woman and very supportive of women in leadership. I mean she doesn't always make the same kinds of choices that I would, but anytime there is a difference, I have just learned a ton around—So that's interesting—I never would have thought—could you not? So it has just been interesting to watch. I have also seen—she just looks completely beat down. Yeah. She has been through about 40 years and I think her role shifts in about a year and then she will probably retire about five years after that, but she is just very upbeat, optimistic, and she just looks completely beat down. So, yeah, we are definitely grieving, a lot of us are. (VIC 011)

In reflecting on the wisdom she was taking for herself from a previous organizational restructuring, she had this to share:

The thing that comes to mind is really taking the time to acknowledge the loss, taking the time to really be with that and hear that out because I think I didn't do that. Yeah, I just didn't do that last time and really I think that is what the behaviours that were starting to show up in the workplace were just a pushback at the change. And so I honed in on those as individual incidents that I needed to—like I wasn't going to let them slide, but by honing in them as individual incidents and not really thinking about the larger context of the pain that people were feeling, I don't think I was doing them or the situation the full justice that they

were. But, it's tricky, right. I mean there is—I never really studied leadership—so it is trying to figure out what the balance is of how to lean in and be with people and hear people out, and also hope that they are getting the support that they need outside of the workplace because you can't be everything for everybody. I don't know. But I think it is one of those things that goes back to that silly example of the game, right, like just—I know what happens when you kind of resist the “I don't have time for this now, I don't have time for this”—it doesn't go away, it is still there, right. So you really need to lean in and say, “Okay, let's look at this and how are we going to be as a team as we move forward.” (VIC 011)

The impact of the election cycle on the public sector was captured by one participant who said as he was talking about the nature of his challenge:

In about 4 years into it, the government changed. The premier moved on, a new premier came in, deputy ministers changed, new executive directors, ADMs [assistant deputy ministers] changed. In fact, most of the infrastructure changed. Not only in my area, but across government, and it coincided with some of the financial downturns across Canada, and the world. And [the program] was also then moved to another ministry and one of those changes in of itself would have been a challenge, but combined, it was cataclysmic for the initiative in that the original premise of [the program] started to shift. The premise was starting to move away from the original strategy, which then changed momentum and caused some redesign, reconsideration of the initiative itself. So since that, it is really indicative within that organization is that the inevitability of change is there, so the strategies are made and they don't typically withstand 3-year cycles, or 4-year

at the outermost, because that's the cycle of change within government circles, so that was the challenge . . . so it was really about regrouping and building the briefings and the business case to continue as it was, or change if the senior executive determined we needed to change. (VIC 002)

The sheer volume of changes resulted in transitions felt widely throughout government in the situation articulated above. In describing the organizational challenge being experienced by one leader, she shared:

I had a dream two weeks ago where I was walking into our building and I looked to my left and there was a man and a woman in a car and she was driving and he was just completing putting the silencer on his guns and so I calmly walked by him because I knew what was going to happen, I walked into the building—and then all of a sudden the building became like an elementary school—it had these different wings—and so I went into the elementary school and I went into one of the wings and I locked the door. Up until that point I had been calm, conscious, I see what is about to happen here, what can I do, I come in. And then as soon as I clicked the lock, my stress level escalated. And so I was lying in bed at 5:00 in the morning thinking, “What the—what was that about?” So I had all this empathy for those poor teachers who save our children but have to make choices about locking some people out—and then I realized, “Okay, but what does this mean for me in my world?” It is such a strong metaphor for me, it's about I'm locking the door to protect those I can, but I can't protect everybody. (VIC 011)

The dream offered her a vehicle for articulating how she was experiencing her organizational challenge. She was grieving the loss of autonomy and ability to make

decisions that would continue to grant clients access to learning that aligned with her values of social justice. In recognizing the limitations of her ability to transparently share information, in light of the instructions that were being made by senior leaders in her organization, she re-visited the dream later in the interview and said,

I think maybe that's why that dream for me was so profound, right, because on the one hand I'm being—I'm in the middle of this process sort of in a sense kind of being instructed, even just by my senior leadership to not share information until certain times and so on, and so hence that kind of walking in, like knowing what is about to happen, but walking in with a sort of a calm—you know, giving bits of information so people aren't going to be completely blindsided, like they know we are in audit, they know there is change happening, but there is just absolutely no sense of the scale of it, so I think that has been the hardest part of it is the people part of it. I mean how do you kind of hold—how do you support people through it? (VIC 011)

This narrator had experienced a previous situation where she had taken over an area that had experienced significant change, and as she joined the organization, she found herself addressing many challenging situations as she attempted to help the group move forward from the changes and focus on the results that were requested of the area. The wisdom offered for leaders navigating transition from this participant was

really taking the time to acknowledge the loss, taking the time to really be with that and hear that out because I think I didn't do that. Yeah, I just didn't do that last time and really I think that is what the behaviours that were starting to show up in the workplace were just a pushback at the change. And so I honed in on

those as individual incidents that I needed to—like I wasn't going to let them slide, but by honing in [on] them as individual incidents and not really thinking about the larger context of the pain that people were feeling, I don't think I was doing them or the situation the full justice that they were. But, it's tricky, right. I mean there is—I never really studied leadership—so it is trying to figure out what the balance is of how to lean in and be with people and hear people out, and also hope that they are getting the support that they need outside of the workplace because you can't be everything for everybody. (VIC 011)

In both the dream and the final passage, the narrator articulated a message of not being able to protect everyone, or to be all things to everyone. The message of finding the balance of supporting and ensuring that people have the support they need outside of work is one of many leadership challenges faced by leaders who are navigating challenges in their leadership and their organization while also assisting their employees with navigating the inevitable transitions that also take place.

Relational experience of endings. The relational challenges experienced by participants included personnel challenges. In this instance, the participant described a troubling issue that she acted on:

We discovered in December that one of them had been falsifying all of his reports for the previous three months and that he had not done any of the meetings—like he was very crafty. He had written some very good reports, but when we talked to the people to which he was assigned, they said, we haven't talked to him since the beginning of the program. And so we soon figured out that he had been working on his own, but taking a salary from us. So we immediately terminated him, but

his response to that was—I mean we called him for a meeting and talked to him and, of course, he denied it, but we already had proof by this point. We terminated him and his response was to go and get a lawyer to write us a letter threatening legal action and demanding that we reinstate him. Of course, there is not a chance no matter what he threatened me with would we have reinstated him because that is like a poison that says to everybody it is okay to cheat and steal, essentially.

(VIC 007)

In describing a personnel challenge, another narrator described her experience of the ending:

And eventually he left and it was interesting because I thought, “Oh god, after all that!” You know. You just coach and coach and coach and you are hoping, you are growing, but at the same time it was like that’s alright. I think it ended as it should have and he is going to have that really challenging life of his into the future and that’s okay. (VIC 004)

The ending of a troubled employee leaving the organization and bringing up unexpected feelings was shared by another participant, who offered,

I actually gave her a few options in terms of changing roles and a bunch of other things, and she actually came back and did some reflective thinking. I said, “I’d like you to come back in a week, I’d like to know what your decision is because regardless, we need to move forward with some changes.” So we met a week later and she said, “You know, I did a lot of thinking and you are absolutely right. I wasn’t happy, I haven’t been happy, and that has been coming out at work.” So she said, “I have actually decided I am going to leave.” So interestingly enough—

and she has another career that she is going to focus on, which is her passion, which is fantastic.

But the interesting reflection in this one for me is I initially was like, “Oh, thank goodness. She’s made a choice, it’s a good choice, she’s happy and I don’t have to fire her because it is probably where we were going to go.” That quickly turned—I got really angry, which was very interesting for me because I was like—and from a values perspective, yeah, I was mad at her and I wasn’t happy for her and I was like what’s going on there? So I did a lot of sort of reflecting around, “Okay, she is in a good place, I’m able to move on because she was causing a really bad interpersonal—her negativity was causing other team dynamic issues outside of just her and I.” And the more I thought about that is one of the things that is hugely important to me is accountability, like so important to me. And so where I think I am at is I am ticked off that she took the easy way out. That she didn’t take accountability for her actions and her lack of kind of stepping up. (VIC 010)

Individual experience of endings. The experience of individuals as they navigate job changes are articulated from a diverse set of perspectives. For example, this participant offered,

What I found was interesting is I went from significant impact and influence in terms of 26,000 employees in the Public Service to a Ministry, but peanuts in my mind, like it is such small scale, so that was a transition for me as well . . . because I worked in a corporate organization, like a shared service central kind of organization, again, everything we did we did from a broad perspective and

understood multiple stakeholders' perspectives and how—and having their involvement in how we would develop or design something was just always that's how we did things . . . one of the things I found challenging was this Ministry was very siloed. . . . Coming here everyone very much was in it for themselves . . . so that for me was just hard because I didn't think that way. (VIC 010)

Another participant who had an opportunity to take on a different role within his organization identified a difficult ending with job security in order to pursue an alternative career path within his organization.

Well, as it turned out, I was asked to resign on my position, which meant giving up 17 years of seniority in the system in order to take this new position. And, of course, one of the things that you are always told to do from your union is that you call them. So I have this vision of me standing in the Science room on the phone talking to the head guys in Toronto who were just telling me, “This is nuts, do not resign, do not take this position—do not, do not!” And I thought, well maybe I can see if I can negotiate something here, so I go down to the head office, to the personnel department, I present my case, I present it in the way that teachers were given opportunities to—a couple of years to move over into industry and to try it, but weren't losing their seniority, so why would this not be something that I could do? And the end result of that was a definite no. (VIC 005)

The language of endings shared by this sample of participants is dramatic.

Endings also include a range of emotions. Each of the above examples highlighted the importance of being able to sustain oneself as a leader amidst challenge, because beyond navigating the challenge itself and the endings associated with the challenge, endings are

also being navigating by direct reports, employees and other stakeholders throughout the organization who may be affected by the inter-connected aspects of the change and the transition.

Neutral zone. The neutral zone has several challenges associated with it. The challenges faced by leaders in the neutral zone was articulated by one participant who reflected:

I don't know what the future holds. I am not sure and that is definitely a shift for me because I wasn't seeing myself going anywhere. I feel like there is a puppeteer now—we are all puppets on a string that are just supposed to do what he says and he is not really even the person we report to, so it is a bit confusing to say the least. (VIC 011)

She also commented,

It's about how do you hold people's experience and people's truth—just hold it as their reality for this moment and support them in what is coming and what's next. And I guess I am just anticipating there is going to be a lot of that kind of stuff going on. I mean there will be pushback, there will be resistance, people's worlds are shifting. I mean my world has shifted already and I already feel the stress of that. Yeah, I don't know, how do you move forward? (VIC 011)

When she sent in her follow up reflection, she offered the following:

In retrospect, it might have been useful for me to spend the interview with you talking about the previous transition I went through. That, too, was a very rocky time, but I've had the benefit of time to process it and come to some deeper understandings about how I conducted myself and how I might do things (and am

doing things now) in the future with less angsts and fewer middle of the night interruptions to my sleep! (VIC 011)

The confusion that was being experienced is common, when the new state has not yet been realized. As participants spoke to the values that were important in supporting members of the organization that are moving through the neutral zone, one of the comments included: “I guess it is about respectful engagement. It’s about how do you hold people’s experience and people’s truth—just hold it as their reality for this moment and support them in what is coming and what’s next (VIC 011).

Personnel challenges are inevitable during a leader’s tenure, and in navigating this particular relational challenge, the participant clarified something for herself,

The values for me are about honesty and integrity and fairness. And they are so challenged by this kind of thing. It’s like people who work hard every day they don’t get the benefits that people who lie and cheat do. People who put their head down and do an honest day’s work—you know, they are getting paid, but so are these other people who have not done that and how is that fair? And, you know, the old saying, “life isn’t fair” and all that sort of stuff, but you know what, I want it to be fair. I want it to be fair for people who are doing their best and it offends me when people who are not doing what they should be doing get benefits that those who are doing their best, do not. (VIC 007)

One participant who reflected on her experience with the organizational challenge she shared stated,

That was the biggest values crisis that I ever had to manage and when I went through the assessment of “can I stay here, how do I deal with,” I think what

made me stay was several things. As I looked around I looked for the villains. I said, “Where are the villains?” Like where are these horrible people that I keep hearing about? And I have to tell you, yeah, clear incompetence, clear fear, clear lack of research. There is no doubt mistakes were made. What I never found was intent and what I found were people devastated—that’s what I found. People devastated by what had happened or what they had inadvertently been involved in, but I never found intent. I never found desire. I never found wilful negligence. (VIC 006)

Another participant reflected on her intention to renew her leadership commitment for a second 2-year term and said,

I can’t remember what provoked it, but probably just being confronted with the fact that you really will be in this position, and in a way feeling not like I was bullied into it at all, but that there wasn’t really anyone else I would be comfortable with in that role either, at the time. And knowing what I knew about what I wanted from the leader, I think that probably provoked it, realizing that I could probably provide that and actually it doesn’t have to actually look this way, although also realizing/recognizing that there would be barriers and challenges because the culture is such that the expectation has you will look a certain way and behave a certain way. But, I am always ready for that—a challenge. I think it was that—being confronted with the fact that the reality that I would probably really have to step into that role and make it work for me somehow. (VIC 004)

In choosing to take on a new role, one participant shared the nature of his neutral zone experience when he shared,

I stepped out of the regular system, I wasn't part of this, and then I stepped back in in [another school Board], because then I became a Superintendent again, responsible for credit programs and whatever. And the feedback that I got from my colleagues was that I had a very different perspective on the issues. And when I reflected on that comment, it was because I stepped out, and so here was this parallel of [me] stepping out and stepping back in, in the same way that so many adult learners who stepped out. When they step back in, they had all kinds of experiences and skills that enriched the class that they stepped back into, as well as themselves because now the learning was more relevant to them because they knew the relevancy. Whereas, as a teenager they didn't know, so I was reflecting on that actually. There was a parallel here between what I wanted for the adult learners and what happened to me that I really was unaware of until I had really reflected on it. (VIC 005)

Opportunities for innovation and creativity exist when navigating through the neutral zone and in the range of experiences that were recounted, this participant shared the following follow up to her initial experience of fear,

I was going into that conversation thinking that potentially they had lodged a complaint and so it was within that conversation that this value really began to emerge, and almost consciously. You know, a lot of the times—and this is likely because I have been doing so much values work as of late—you know, often times my values are sort of just a physical manifestation. You know, if I am

feeling something is a little off, it is likely a misalignment with my values, but in this conversation when we all had this ah-ha moment that there had been this incredible miscommunication, it was this opportunity for illumination where I realized that I could provide them this perspective of my lens and my world of what has just happened, which creates an incredible learning experience for them, but also lights me up because I am able to provide them with that and vice versa. You know, they told me their story. So we had this exchange of stories, both of us gaining insight into each other's world, and it was—like I said—it was a turning point, you know. I felt completely in line with my values as a leader and also with my success in navigating the situation. (VIC 001)

The neutral zone offers both challenges and opportunities for leaders who are able to navigate their own neutral zone phase of transition and support their employees in navigating their neutral zone. For example, neutral zone experiences could be leveraged for the potential creativity and innovation that is possible during this phase of transition.

New beginnings. The time of acknowledging a new beginning varies for individuals as they navigate transition. The connection to a new beginning may not come at the start of something, but after the start of something has been underway for a period of time.

This participant's sharing of her new beginning occurred when she received acknowledgment from her organization of an application that she had filed:

It was the most wonderful experience. It gave me faith in the [organization] again because I had such a bumpy road. It was wonderful because we have a new upper

manager who is brand new, he comes with a different skillset altogether.

(VIC 009)

As another participant reflected on her decision to renew her commitment to her leadership position she said,

it is probably pretty cliché, but I signed on for another term and I think in doing that everyone just relaxed completely because I think they realized that no one would sign on for another term if they didn't believe in us and love us. You know, because there is no reward in doing so, at all. I think that helped everybody—me too, right. The reason I did it was because I understood I needed to really commit more and stick it out. But 50% of the reason was also I had put a lot of work into it and I wanted to really just enjoy what was in place. I have done a lot of handing off in my life and I thought, “Okay, I'm just going to hold on a little longer and then hand off later.” (VIC 004)

Final reflections: The role of self-care in serving as a transitions leader. Table 5 summarizes the self-care strategies that the participants offered in the interviews as they reflected on what contributed to sustaining themselves as they led through challenge.

Table 5

Summary of self-Care Strategies Identified by Participants

Self-Care Strategies
Wellness: Rested, healthy, eating well
Identify appropriate self-care strategies
Reflective practice
Learning
Being kind to ourselves

The importance of caring for self was also shared as a nugget of wisdom to contribute to sustaining self as a leader, amidst challenge:

Recovery, like just to take care of yourself because the failings I have had and the mistakes I've made are all because—not all, but a lot of the time it is because I'm not intact enough, you know. I'm just kind of loosey-goosey or fractured myself and careless and so stuff comes out of my mouth that I shouldn't really have said. Not taking the time, care and attention to that, so to be more intentional, purposeful. But to be that way you need to be solid, healthy, rested, and then in doing that, like just taking care of that fundamental—and it is just seeing that little—the illustration of being intact, then the rest is stronger too. So putting the mask on in the airplane before you help others. But it is so true, you just look after that and then you are going to make better decisions and you are going to actually take on less craziness. We kind of know that but to really try to figure out a way that works for you because it is all about competing values. To me family, community involvement—I love like being so involved in something, this role happens with me for some reason, but whatever that's my reality, but what it does is it also competes hugely with my ability to just thrive and sustain. So I have to understand that and work within it somehow. So I think also words would be—take some time to figure out who you are and some of these strategies early instead of just coping. (VIC 004)

As this participant reflected on how her guidance operated in competition with other priorities, she went on to say,

We know all these things are so critical to thrive and you can't thrive 100% of the time, but it is pretty critical. So even knowing it, it competes against other values of mine also. I'd rather like kill myself, do too many things than take care of myself because that's more important to me, so I have to figure out a way to reconcile those and do that business in a sustainable manner and that's possible for—challenges/creativity. We often don't take the space and time that requires to come up with those creative solutions and I think that is what is definitely missing in all organizations—the space and time to be reflective purposefully and not just like performance review reflective. (VIC 004)

Perhaps what this participant most needed to hear, was this advice offered by another participant,

Get lots of sleep. Yeah. I just think it is so much self-care that is needed. That is the tough thing about leadership isn't it because you have to take care of yourself because part of your job is to support and take care of others and I don't mean that to sound in a sort of patronizing way. Even my dream of my job was to protect, like I think there is aspects of that that are true and what is hard about it is that that has just been out of my control. So, yeah, what advice? God—self-care, self-care, self-care. (VIC 011)

Another reflection on self-care was shared by another participant. She said, The commitment to saying that you are going to do something and do it—committing to that—also learning that—pursue your passions, being physically fit, eating well, learning—an ongoing journey of learning—those were the goals that I wanted and knew I needed to maintain and so that put everything into

perspective. With a healthy body you have a healthy mind. With a healthy mind you've got everything else. (VIC 009)

One participant talked about the importance of self-care when she said,

I think we have to be kind to ourselves first, and we are so much more willing to—at least I have found—we tend to be generally more willing to forgive the shortcomings of others, and not ourselves, or our expectations of ourselves are often unrealistic. I have a very good friend who has recently injured herself and she was fussing and trying to do too much and I said, “What if it was me? What would you tell me? Treat yourself like a friend and that will sustain you through challenge.” (VIC 008)

This participant offered as part of her follow up, “leadership is about empowering others to be their best selves. I am glad I discussed the notion of being good to ourselves” (VIC 008). Finally, one participant added this final thought in response to the reflective question, are there further reflections on what sustained you during this period? “Does walking dogs, nature and family/friends count? The chance to get away and recharge is huge” (VIC 006).

This section offers guidance and deeper insight into what is meant by transition, using participant comments from the interviews. Transitions leadership, the act of thoughtfully and intentionally assisting self and other in navigating challenges using the framework of transitions would build capacity broadly in organizations for leaders and their employees to experience greater sustainability amidst ambiguity, uncertainty and challenge. In the next section I explore the importance of a professional and personal support network.

Finding 2: Building a Values-Based Support Network

This section of the model addresses one particular challenge that leaders navigate when they encounter a difficult situation in their leadership. Several participants described navigating challenge as a lonely endeavour. I begin by sharing their experience with the isolation they described. As an antidote to the experiences of isolation and loneliness, a strong values-based network can counteract the experiences these participants articulated. In particular, moving beyond the heroic model of leadership may include the conscious choice to build, sustain and access this network during the inevitable challenges experienced in leadership. The interview data included many messages about the importance of having a strong network to help identify a values-based path forward that honoured the leader, their values and the difficult situation that they were attempting to navigate. I integrate their reflections on what a strong personal and professional support network looks like, based on their experiences.

Leadership is lonely. Several of the participants I interviewed commented on the loneliness associated with leading through challenge. As part of the data analysis process, I interrogated the data in an effort to understand more fully what was occurring for the participants. As one participant noted, “you learn to trust yourself, you know, because it is lonely—leadership” (VIC 003). Below I share some further excerpts from the interviews:

For this participant, the journey of leadership has come with insights about me as leader and we as leader and team. In her interview, she reflected,

And the team that is there now is oh my god they are just fantastic. They care about each other, they like each other, they have fun with each other. I say “they,”

like it is we, but it is really they because I also realize—and that was a shift for me as a leader—realizing sometimes it is not we. You know, sometimes they really don't want me to go for lunch with them and that's okay. I think that was an early leadership realization that—just like I don't really want to have lunch with my boss all the time, much as I think she is great. It's like sometimes as a leader, it is a bit lonely. (VIC 011)

While the participant above reflected that leaders may not be welcome all of the time, this participant reflected on the responsibility that she had for building community around her when she offered,

As I realized I'm still really lonely, I realized, "Okay, what it is you really need?" and recognizing that we have these great friends, but they are kind of across the organization, right, and so how do you—"What you really need is to build this here and what is that going to take?" And so that was some good deep soul searching because I realized that I hadn't actually committed very hard and a lot of it was fear and the challenges I had faced so far and not feeling very welcome, so I just had to kind of explore that a little, which was great, and it is all about being ready to do that. Yeah, it was good and it was great to finally feel like, "Oh, yay, I can do it. I can commit" and to start to really honestly, authentically try to build those relationships here, and that meant bearing more of myself too.

(VIC 004)

The realization that she had a role to play in building the authentic relationships that she wanted to cultivate. Finally, this participant talked specifically about the loneliness that occurred during a particularly challenging period,

Well the loneliness would come to mind. You would feel very alone and in that type—because it was also coinciding with an environment where in a new Ministry a long-term senior person was walked out, you know. It was that kind of behaviour that died a long time ago. But people who had no idea that they were no longer wanted, it was simply just walked out that day . . . if someone didn't have those supports then, yeah, you would feel very alone and very afraid of being walked out the next day, particularly if you let it show that this may not be—you had to be careful what you say. (VIC 002)

These leaders described a variety of ways that loneliness was experienced. To combat the sense of isolation that can be experienced as leaders navigate challenge in their work, the next section summarizes and explores the key themes from the data that results in a strong personal and professional support network. Table 6 below summarizes the key themes identified by the participants as they described their personal and professional support network.

Personal support network. As summarized in Table 6, the support of a strong personal network that included spouses, family, and friends was a strong thread throughout the interviews. Specifically, participants offered the benefit of a partner to discuss challenges with.

I love fellow travelers and to sound things off my husband. My husband is also a manager/leader and deals with senior people a lot, so he is great. We usually talk quite a bit about scenarios and manage/navigate them. (VIC 010)

Table 6

Values-Based Personal and Professional Support Network

Personal Support Network	Professional Support Network	
Who: Spouses, family, and friends	Who: Professional community of relationships: Colleagues at different levels, coaches, supervisor,	Who: Mentors
What: Identify patterns and potential solutions (by talking it through with a member of the personal support network) Sounding board offered	What: To listen ask questions, offer solutions To identify alternative perspectives on the situation Use a coach to understand my situation and to build an accountability action plan	What: Seasoned colleagues to offer guidance Role of mentors early in career
Responsibility of leader: to talk through the problem	Responsibility of leader: reach out amidst challenge; maintain connections with this network; authentically build relationships	Responsibility of leader: Ask for what help you need

Once again a significant other, family members and the opportunity to say out loud what the issue was, continued to offer relief,

I'm very verbal and so I had to talk it out with people and it evolved so fast, like it was such a fast moving week in terms of how things were developing, so yeah, I can't keep stuff like that inside. You know, I talk to my husband about it, talk to the co-coordinator, talk to my mom, you know, so that is part of how I navigated it. So it was sort of this verbal unraveling. (VIC 001)

The entire support network benefitted this participant, who said,

Well the supports I had around me on a personal and professional level were very important because the sense of vulnerability was very strong, so to feel that I

hadn't changed but the world had I was in, was good to have that sense of support—it was good to ensure that support was there. (VIC 002)

He followed up the above reflection by adding, that the professional support network was also valuable, when he said,

My wife, the family supports were there, but interestingly it's the personal supports, not necessarily the professional positions, so colleagues at different levels. It didn't need to be a Director or it didn't really matter. It was just people who over time we had built trust with and then they in turn could—it is like there is an unconditional support that I didn't have to explain necessarily what was going on. Few and far between. So, you know, there wasn't an awful lot of that, but it was there. (VIC 002)

His further reflection added the benefits that come from being able to express out loud the concerns, challenges and issues that are being experienced:

It is really talking though I find tell the same story and then you start identifying some of your own solutions—not asking people—it's just the ability to talk about it, so it is walking with my wife up the hill and it's really just having the ability to think out loud is that I find helps me centre on what the important elements are. Ninety percent of it is noise; there is 10% that I think I can actually work with—if that makes sense. (VIC 002)

The following reflection that was offered by this participant expressed the appreciation she experienced as a result of great questions:

Often it is to listen. Sometimes it is to ask questions that make me think about something from a different perspective that I hadn't thought about. Sometimes it

is to offer solutions that might, or in some cases not work—sort of all different alternatives to consider. (VIC 007)

Finally, the following reflection was returned with the narrative account, and it bridges both the personal and professional support network:

- Support of other colleagues and my husband to assist me in looking at as many sides or angles of the situation that I could.
- Professional coach to walk me through the steps to understand my contribution to the situation – the good and the bad – and to build an action plan and hold me accountable.
- Mentoring and support from my supervisor regarding options, approach and decisions along the way.
- My tenacity to work through this issue and find some sort of resolution. I do not like to create conflict but have no problem take it head on if I need to.
- Balancing my work and personal life, which means time for me . . . letting this go from time to time to focus on me and not letting it consume me 24/7.

(VIC 010)

This participant reflection offers a bridge to articulating the benefit of the professional network that also supports leaders when they are navigating challenging situations.

Professional support network. As participants reflected on the role of their professional support in sustaining them as they navigated challenge, the following reflections were shared:

It's always community, right. It's always relationships and people around you, and it also highlighted for me how little I had here and so I needed to get to work

on building that. Really committing—I think again I have been so lucky in different organizations—I kept harkening back and actually very seriously considering returning because I really crave community and it didn't exist here for a long time. So recognizing what did exist was critical and that is definitely what sustained me. Support of my leader for sure helped and other people who I had become friends with, but outside of my own little school, and so I guess recognizing that and then realizing I needed to build it closer to home, so to put some more energy into really building, what would that take and what does that look like, and I think that has been my second big project, right. (VIC 004)

With the awareness of the importance of building community, this participant went on to share her reflective action planning process for moving forward,

So it has been a real journey of opening awareness, so I don't think I was aware at all. I think I was just operating as I do, which is to get involved, right, and as I have gotten involved all over the place and overwhelmed myself of course, but I have made friends, right, and that I think was critical. Every time I did something out there I'd be like, "Oh my god, you guys are so great, thanks for showing up," so I would feel that support, right. But they are there because I had shown up for something for them and it was just all this wonderful mutual building of community. (VIC 004)

The support amidst challenge offered by a professional support network or trusted other offered solace. As one participant noted,

I felt like in terms of leadership that I was a failure in that for whatever reason I couldn't crack this nut. Like I just thought, yeah, like I really wasn't sure what to

do. So I had a lot of good conversations with some of my close colleagues to try to just strategize around how I might go about this in a different way and whether some of my approaches were actually, in their opinion, the right ones. I don't know, most of the feedback I got—I did get some other ideas around how I could go about doing things, but really about, “No, I think you are doing all the right things.” (VIC 010)

The importance of a work colleague who was also involved in addressing a troubling situation received attention from one participant who offered,

It was nice not to be in it alone and to bounce some ideas off it because it was a sensitive situation and it wasn't necessarily a meeting I was looking forward to, and so it was nice to have someone who was completely in that experience with me. You know, she knew all the background, she also had the same level of investment in it so it was great to have that support before, during and after. (VIC 001)

Participants offered additional reflections and wisdom, when asked what guidance they would offer that would be of service to a leader navigating challenge. The guidance included,

I have had to find the like-mindeds and align, and organize, and coordinate efforts, and share, right. Share what I'm trying to work on, try and find connection with others, “Can we make this more efficient and do it together?” Don't want to step on toes, you know. “Are you doing something like that too?” – “Yeah, okay well why don't we go together and ask for that,” so I am finding that's really critical and I wish I had started it a little earlier. (VIC 004)

The importance of reaching into your network while navigating challenge was highlighted by this participant who said, “once it really hits—I say reach out to someone or some people, not just someone, for your own self’s sake” (VIC 002). He went on to suggest leaders consider,

Your own personal wellbeing—the integrity of your position, your role, and then the third is the program that you really care about. Think about those three things and if you are seeing any of them become a bit unglued because of the change, reach out and talk to—find someone who can support you through that. (VIC 002)

This participant talked about the importance of maintaining connections with his established professional network when he offered,

I maintained my connections with my former life. They weren’t quite sure what I did, but yeah, I sort of maintained that and then had less of that as I developed more connections on the other side. I’m talking about sides. In a way it was, although it was the same organization. (VIC 005)

The following participant offered her reflections on a particular relationship that had served her well. The individual, a professional colleague and friend who understood the complexities of her work and had known her for years, also challenged her views and assumptions through their ongoing connection:

My best friend, we have been friends for many, many years—I met her even before I met my husband—and she now is a country Director for her organization in another country, and she and I like talk all the time about lots of things, and she is now and she has always been able to accept things that she doesn’t like and move on and say, “This is really awful and I hate it, but that’s just the way it is

and so on we go. Yes, of course I am disappointed about it”—but she just moves on and I have always thought, “This is so amazing that you can do that! I wish I could be more like that.” (VIC 007)

The importance of these networks to combat the sense of loneliness that these leaders experienced as they navigated challenge, underline the importance of ensuring that leaders have well established networks in place to support them personally and professionally. One specific support network that participants referenced was the presence of mentors that they could consult.

Role of mentors. Mentors were one of the supports that sustained the participants as they navigated challenge. The role of mentors was summarized in Table 6 above and specific comments from the participants included: “Create a network. Find a friend. Get a mentor” (VIC 003). Beyond this initial recommendation, another participant spoke about the importance of identifying colleagues who could offer guidance,

They were, I suppose, like-minded if that’s a term, but the people with the same set of values and so on . . . they were people nurtured over the years . . . that you can go to every quarter or something just to have coffee with them and share ideas. (VIC 002)

The long-term impact of early mentors received the following attention from one participant, who said,

In my early days in politics I had some incredible mentors who said things to me that I have repeated thousands of times to others. And people who helped me to really define how I approach life, how I approach my work, and two of my biggest mentors are now deceased, but I can hear their voices in my head . . . one

of the things that my mentors when I was younger really helped to do was to find ways to find my own way, find what worked for me. And so I tried to sort of pay that forward, if you will, with others. (VIC 007)

The capacity in challenge to reach out and ask for help was reflected by this one participant who did not receive the support she had anticipated from within her organization and her choice to reach out, helped her to move forward to resolution in her challenge,

When it gets really tough going is to just—you will find somebody that is going to help you. I had to go to the States to find somebody and it was by a phone call to a Dr. out of Boston, who said, “I believe in what you are doing.” And she was the one that gave me the light to go ahead and pursue what I wanted to do. . . . We ended up having wonderful conversations and she helped me, she coached me, she mentored me, she said, “this is how you have to do this.” And we spent hours on the phone and she was a wonderful mentoring coach. (VIC 009)

Finding 3: Exploring Personal Mastery and Learning Amidst Leadership

Challenges

One of the key themes that I identified in the data was the participant experience of exploring personal mastery and learning amidst the leadership challenges that are experienced. One participant spoke about the importance of doing her own work, “What made it instructive is that you can have the best intent, but you still need to do your work” (VIC 006). As leaders, who lead through challenge, a relentless pursuit of personal mastery is valuable. As this participant offered, in the absence of the relentless pursuit of personal mastery, you start acting without thinking,

Recognizing the responsibility that we held—a huge responsibility that I have never forgotten, huge responsibility, and also recognizing just that the systems—other things too, but systems is probably the easiest way to sort of summarize it—is how you can get caught in the systems and culture and things like that and just start acting without thinking about it. (VIC 006)

One participant shared the following assumption as she reflected on her leadership practice:

I mean I have been challenged on this a few times. I think I have a really deep belief in—oh yeah, and it is growth. And someone said to me, “But some people don’t want to grow” and I thought, “Whoa, that’s interesting. Why do I assume everyone wants to grow?” (VIC 004)

The leaders I interviewed were focused on purpose, reflective practice and learning. Specifically, even in spite of changes that happened outside of their sphere of influence that impacted them directly, I did not hear the voice of the victim, who in experiencing change or challenge retreated or looked for someone else to blame. One participant shared the following in his final reflection, “Highlighting the need to charter a personal and professional path forward and not remain victim to the circumstances . . . being mindful that I had control and was not a victim or entirely helpless” (VIC 002).

The heart of leadership may be in the choice to view situations that are positive or challenging as opportunities to continue to learn throughout one’s leadership. This may be at the heart of what mastery really is. As we continually challenge ourselves and our theories, Laszlo (2012) invited us to consider, “Sustainability is an inside job, a learning journey to live lightly, joyfully, peacefully, meaningfully” (p. 101). Sustainable leaders

are committed to moving beyond outdated views that limit the possibilities for moving forward. Below, I examine the key themes for how personal mastery and learning were articulated. I begin with purpose and then examine the role of inner reflection and finally learning. Key messages that were offered by the participants in relationship to these themes are identified in Table 7.

Table 7

Recommendations for Exploring Personal Mastery and Learning Amidst Challenge

Purpose	Inner Reflection	Learning
Periodically check in with yourself in relation to assessing alignment with purpose	Reflection and intentional planning	Seeking opportunities to continue to learn throughout one's leadership
Seek to resolve challenge		Importance of continuing education
Meaningful work and importance of the work being accomplished when compared to the challenge being navigated	Believing in yourself during challenge	Growth
Desire to make a positive contribution		Leaning into difficult conversations

Purpose. As leaders reflected on what sustained them amidst challenge, purpose was stated as one of the ongoing sources for staying the course. One participant, who had been with her organization for many years, said the following about navigating challenge:

There are many crises, significant crises that the organization has gone through. There has been a lot of questioning and because of that there is a lot of questioning that happens and you are going, you know, you do get to go, "Am I ready to continue doing this?" In fact, that is something that happens quite

regularly as something will come up, you'll look at it and you will go, "I disagree with this" and I wouldn't say—it doesn't happen all that regularly, but it does happen where something comes up and you disagree with it so much that you go, "Do I need to leave over this?" and that's reflecting it back to the values. Yeah. And that has—it has come up several times and I always found it really healthy. It's like at what point do you go, "I'm out the door" and at what point do you go, "There is enough that I like about this that I can support, or there is a way that I can influence this that I can support it." (VIC 006)

As one participant noted,

Do the right thing, get to the right place. Like I—yeah, I don't know what the word is. Like I will figure this out. It has to happen. I won't just let it—like I mean this is why it kind of shocks me that it is seven months and I feel like I still haven't gotten somewhere, but then maybe that's okay. But, yeah, I need to get it resolved. It needs to be resolved and so maybe that is what has been sustaining me is like I don't give up. (VIC 010)

Another participant explored the concept of meaningful engagement as a way to sustain herself as she navigated challenge. She said,

What sustains me. Oh, I mean for me it's about meaningful work and meaningful engagement, right. Yeah, without that, I think I'd just lose interest and I'd want to move on . . . meaningful engagement I guess is a weaving together of all those values that we have talked about authenticity, about social justice, it's about contribution and kind of giving back to society. So for me just at the team level if I feel like the engagement is respectful on the team and people are learning and

growing with each other and challenging and supporting each other to move forward and strengthen their skills, and strengthen our programs—that's all great. So when I'm working with someone or they come to me with an issue, you know, I love those kinds of exchanges where I'm learning something, they are learning something, and the end result is just a richer learning, a richer product, a richer engagement, where there is just some growth and some change happening. So I guess that's what I mean by the meaningful piece. Where there is some positive growth, positive change, positive contribution. It doesn't have to be—you know, it could be at the unit level whether it is kind of a mentoring conversation or it could be at the program level, like my example of the [specific] program where those learners are then going back and then contributing to their community, so that's definitely the stuff where my heart really sings. (VIC 011)

The importance of the work that was being done and the strong desire to make a difference was articulated in a variety of ways. The comment offered by one participant included,

It always comes back to the importance of continuing to do what we do because the more that we do what we do, the more young people who learn that there are different ways to do things, the more young people that become determined to see a different future, the more I know they will move towards having a country that will have real democracy one day, that will have a real rule of law, that will have a real education system, that will have real healthcare, that will have systems that people can depend upon. And we have to help the people that want to work with us to build a critical mass of people who want to change their society. . . . What's

most important is that the work that we do continues to survive. The work, the service that we offer to the parties and the young people and the women and the marginalized groups, that that service is still available to them and that we can continue to do the work, to assist them to find a way forward to improve their parties, to improve their communities, to improve eventually/hopefully, their democracy. (VIC 007)

What was important to leaders who sustained themselves as they navigated challenge, surfaced in this observation:

What sustains me. Yeah. I don't know, having a positive contribution to people's lives and whether that is through the programs that we offer or whether that is through the people that are involved in offering them, I mean that is the stuff that really feeds my soul. (VIC 011)

As one participant looked back on a prolonged period of challenge in her organization, she stated, "What am I doing to make sure this doesn't happen again, because I made that commitment to a whole bunch of people [many] years ago, or close to. You know, I need to keep that. I've got that responsibility" (VIC 006).

Inner reflection. The inner reflections of participants offered insight and opportunities to shift the course to sustain themselves during challenge. One participant shared,

As I am talking to you I'm recognizing that I am actually pretty reflective a lot of the time and even in this interview I'm thinking, "And I need to tend to that and that and that," but there is still a real gap in intentional planning—"Okay, how am I actually going to tackle that new challenge?" (VIC 004)

She also shared her reflections regarding her awareness of a prolonged hectic period in her leadership:

I really notice in the last few years that I'm not as in touch with those values. I've had a few experiences where I have to go, "Wow, okay remember, remember." And all that illustrates for me is that because of what I know about physiology and psychology and emotion is just that I'm, you know, the tank is really low and so to be aware of that, it is not going to change for awhile so just be aware of that and make sure you are recovering so that you don't have those moments where you are falling down on your values because that certainly is not going to help build my soul, right. (VIC 004)

As one participant looked back on a challenge that occurred many years earlier, his reflection was,

Then too, you see, she would still be my political master because I hadn't left yet when she told me that. She was still the Trustee on the Board, so it was probably a wise decision not to. (VIC 005)

The role of inner reflection was captured in the summary offered by this one leader about what guidance she would offer that would contribute to sustaining herself and others as they navigated challenges,

Believe in yourself. Believe that you have what it takes to get through it. Because I think the fear of inadequacy interferes with our ability to think. I believe that inadequacy is crippling. It was for me. Feeling inadequate crippled me as a woman, as a person, as a leader, and made me resentful. So I think first off,

believe in your own ability to do something. And that's interesting as I say that, that is a very empowering thing to say. (VIC 008)

One participant added the following reflection when she returned her narrative account, that really spoke to what became clear to her following her review of the narrative account, and wanting to ensure that this was also reflected.

The essence of this story for me is the rub between what I value (what is important to me) and my perception that those were not being honoured in the relationship ultimately resulting in conflict. In my mind I was clear with them about what was important to me and, therefore, the lack of acknowledgement of that affected me and in the end more personally than I expected. The second part was I was not able to understand what they valued or what mattered to them. They did not open up to me. It could have been in part because of the relationship (me being their formal supervisor), however, I feel there were many factors at play for each of the two individuals. I felt I couldn't get them to meet me in the middle (if that makes sense), which made it difficult for me to support them in a way that I would have liked to. I felt put in an authoritative position, not partnership position, which I prefer. Another ah ha moment! (VIC 010)

The above comments are indicative of what occurred for the participants as they reflected in their interview with me about their challenge; as they reflected on the narrative that was returned to them; and as they reflected in the group interview on the collective values they had participated in identifying. In essence, reflective practice unfolded in dialogue, in reviewing their written account and in their own responses to the

reflective questions that were included with their narrative account. In the next section I examine the role of learning as it supports the pursuit of personal mastery.

Learning. One of the key themes that participants addressed was the importance of ongoing learning. As this participant noted, “Further reflections on what sustained me during this period include, keeping engaged, being accountable. Continuing education continues to be one of my strongest values” (VIC 009). Another participant offered, “It was an opportunity for learning for myself too, which is I think why I saw that it had so much value” (VIC 001). If leaders do not choose to learn amidst challenge and adversity, the possibilities for clarifying values are significantly limited. Learning is an important key to continuing to evolve and tune our instrument of leadership. Without learning, growth is stunted. The ongoing path of learning was summarized by this one participant, “one of the big things I learned is I have so much more to learn” (VIC 010). Another participant wanted to ensure that future leaders who might find themselves in her position would have someone to reach out to, “I would take them under my wing. I would definitely coach them and give them names of people to contact for help” (VIC 009). Another participant specifically spoke to his active mentoring and sharing of learning,

And that’s what I would always try to teach these kids. I would say, “If you take responsibility for the energy that you bring into the space, then the people will feel that. They will feel your joy for being there.” You know, “If you are going to constantly assess yourself ‘did I do right, did I do right?’ then you are always going to be on edge and there is always going to be a big shadow. Why not just be the light and say, ‘I am here to do right’ and do that.” (VIC 003)

In her follow-up reflection, as she considered her learning from one event and applied it to the event she articulated during her interview, this participant shared the following learning for herself:

The key things that have sustained me through both transitions has been my focus on maintaining my integrity, being authentic (in the earlier transition, I was more “authentic” than I should have been, as I revealed emotions to staff that caused them concern, whereas now I choose non-staff outlets for sharing), caring about the individuals and holding people accountable to respectful engagement with each other. (VIC 011)

From her challenge experience, this participant had taken away the inherent wish to do good that exists in people:

It was profoundly instructive because it really, really taught—what it really engendered in me was I truly believe that most people will do the right thing if they are given the right information and they are given an opportunity. And that has been born out again and again and again is that—and so part of my job after that—on the job and off the job—was to give people information, give them the opportunity to be the best they could be, comment on it if I think they are going off track—but bring to their attention information that they may not have when they think they are going off track and I do quite frankly the same thing to myself—hold myself to the same standard. (VIC 006)

As one participant reflected on her previous experience of transition and endings she addressed the learning from that event,

You know, they did the re-org and said, “Okay, done” and walked away. . . . Fair enough, like the division they made actually took time and it was thoughtful and actually it was a good decision. They made a really good decision on what needed to happen just for a whole bunch of reasons, not to get into all the details, unless you are interested in it. But you cannot walk away from the support that is now starting with the transition with the human beings involved in their whole identity around—because it was a large unit that got split into three. And so the group that stayed with me that I was going to be a director of, wasn’t as a big impact on them, but all of the other people in the other two units who were kind of ripped apart and under other units . . . so that is just a tiny example. It just went on for years and years and years, so I mean a steep learning for me around leadership in realizing in just kind of leaning into those conversations and just holding those truths. (VIC 011)

This excerpt offers a powerful wish for leaders to learn how to navigate transition with their people. Perhaps this research will offer future leaders a capacity building opportunity that can be developed in advance of navigating challenge, with a view to reducing the grieving and sense of loss that can occur.

As she reflected on values specifically, she commented, “I don’t always think about the values that guide. I know that I think about them when I am bumping up against them and there is a rub and I have to think about what is going on for me” (VIC 011).

Summary. This section identified the key themes that were identified in the research. Specifically, the capacity to support themselves in others as they navigate transition; approach the relational networks they build with thoughtful intentionality; to

ensure that they include individuals who will offer support through the inevitable leadership challenges; identify specific strategies and approaches for helping themselves and others navigate transitions together; and continue to learn as they engage in their lifelong learning and leadership journey towards personal mastery.

Finding 4: Collective Values that Sustained Leaders as they Navigated Challenges

In this section I include the results of the analysis across the narratives from the group interview (Polkinghorne, 1995). As described in Chapter 3, participants were asked to select up to five values that sustained them as they navigated their leadership challenge. Nine of the 11 participants responded to this request in advance of the group interview. Their responses were recorded and four collective values were identified that yielded four or more votes from the participants. Six participants were available for the group interview. The dialogue with and among the participants and me served as a rich opportunity to share, reflect, and test out assumptions. The interview created the reflective opportunity to discuss and integrate the values that had surfaced as being collectively important by the research participants. This next section explores the group interview and the collective values in greater detail.

Collective values identified and explored. The group interview was a final opportunity to engage the participants in dialogue to explore the four values that had been identified by the participants through a pre interview input process, as discussed previously in Chapter 3 (see Appendix F). The values definitions were offered by the participants during their individual interviews. Each value was explored in relationship to the question. How did this value sustain you as you navigated challenge? Below, I explored these values along with quotes from the group interview to add further meaning

to the value being explored. See Table 8 for a summary of the value of courage, the definition from the participants, and the additional descriptors that the participants in the group interview identified.

Table 8

Summary of Collective Value of Courage

Definition of Courage	Participants' Descriptors From Group Interview
<p>Understanding the danger and learn to trust yourself. Having the guts to do something that needs to be done and it's counter to what everybody else is telling you to do and may not make sense financially and all kinds of things. Courage is having the ability to be honest with feelings and to be able to clarify those feelings to put in a meaningful way. Being transparent, honest, and reasonable.</p>	<p>Gave me the confidence to risk in other later challenges</p> <p>Allows you to trust yourself</p> <p>Builds confidence</p> <p>Having the courage to look beyond the risk.</p> <p>Courage to look beyond the fear.</p> <p>Courage and confidence offers you the wisdom to grow</p> <p>Courage is sometimes backed into, because not dealing with the situation is far worse than dealing with it</p> <p>Courage is the ability to move whatever it is forward in a positive way</p> <p>Courage is the first step to find out what's possible</p>

Courage. As summarized in Table 8, courage was defined by the participants as follows: Understanding the danger and learn to trust yourself. Having the guts to do something that needs to be done and it's counter to what everybody else is telling you to do and may not make sense financially and all kinds of things. Courage is having the ability to be honest with feelings and to be able to clarify those feelings to put in a meaningful way. Being transparent, honest, and reasonable.

In the group interview specifically, here is what the participants offered about how courage was necessary to sustain them as they navigated challenge in their leadership.

It gave me the confidence to risk in other later challenges when I think back to the situation that I used in our interview, I'm thinking that I would think back and say, Well, I got through that and if I got through that I can probably drum up the courage to risk in this situation. (VIC 005)

Another participant agreed that past experiences with courage helped build capacity for future challenges where courage would be needed:

Courage allowing you to feel that you can manage subsequent challenges. I hadn't thought about that before, but it is something in fact that I too have felt where challenge has been extremely difficult and when I have faced similar things in the future, I have been able to say, "Oh well, I managed the other thing so I can certainly do this," and what is more is that even though this is difficult, hey, you know what, my instincts were correct before and I can trust my instincts again, so it is a matter of being able to trust oneself with more experience and more incidents of having courage. (VIC 007)

As the dialogue continued, another participant linked courage to confidence as he commented,

In my sense it's the confidence or courage—maybe interchangeable—that enables you to have choices. Without courage, you may be locked into a single direction or single option. With courage to take risk or have confidence in looking beyond that single approach that you have choices in other areas. (VIC 002)

When asked to say a little bit more about choices in other areas, he made the connection to the emotions that he identified as he elaborated,

Well having the courage to—well in the worst case scenario let's say you are in a situation that could lead to your—you know, affect your career or livelihood, but in the face of that you recognize that may be the case, but the courage is to look beyond that risk in that there are other options perhaps that you ordinarily wouldn't think of unless you have confidence in your opportunity and the courage to do that—courage beyond that fear. (VIC 002)

Another participant continued the dialogue by integrating what had been said as she noted the linkages of moving through the emotion of fear

with the courage, the confidence and that automatically gives you the wisdom to grow. And with that growth, you have that change, and with that change comes that confidence piece. And once you have the confidence, you can innovate in ways that you were never able to expand before because fear somehow blocked that ability to grow if you didn't have or take courage. (VIC 009)

The recognition that courage wasn't always something that showed up initially in leading through challenge was noted by one participant, who offered,

When speaking of courage, I would say that many times I'd back into it in that I know that far worse than dealing with the situation is not dealing with it, and so that's my learning and it makes me just go, "Okay, deal with it. Get up and deal with it." (VIC 006)

As I explored with the participant what prompted her to move forward and deal with it, integrity was brought into the dialogue, as she said,

The learning over the years that not dealing with a situation upfront honestly, transparently with as much integrity as you can bring to it, is far worse than sitting back—is not as bad as sitting back and imagining what could happen. And so dealing with it is far better than not dealing with it, so that is what gives me the courage. So I have to admit that I back into it sometimes. (VIC 006)

The idea that acting with courage allows us to create positive forward movement was identified when one participant said,

When I'm dealing with challenges—one—and that may be directly related to me and whether I am really willing to take that risk and put myself out there in a personal way, and whatever consequences/benefits—whatever comes from that—and I think on the other side sometimes I look at courage being that it is so much more than me. It actually has nothing to do with me. What it has to do with is my ability to move whatever it is forward in a positive way and to take the ability to get involved in whatever that may be. And so sometimes I look at that in two ways, right. Sometimes it is directly all about me and other times I think I look at it and go it is so much more than me, right, and what is my role in facilitating whatever that might be to move it forward or get resolution. (VIC 010)

As the dialogue on this value came to a close, this participant also connected courage to innovation, as she went on to say,

I love the idea of tying it to innovation because I think there is no possibilities unless we take that leap, whatever that leap may be. And so courage is the first step to find out what is possible, right, and so I like the idea of it being tied to innovation, I think that is lovely. (VIC 010)

The value of courage as identified and defined by the participants, involved backing into, or calling on courage to move through fear as an emotion, and on the other side of courage participants experienced innovation, greater confidence and the experience to rely on courage in the future based on navigating previous challenges. The value of courage appeared to grow as experience with courage was gained during the leadership journey.

Integrity. Integrity was identified in several interviews as a value that guided leaders as they navigated challenge. As summarized in Table 9, in the words of the participants, integrity was defined as follows: There are two leaders in your body—your gut and your heart. And your gut will always tell you no, and your heart will always tell you yes. Follow your heart and have your brain organize what your heart tells you. And so that's the integrity part where you don't turn your back on your own heart because that's your soul. Truth is in the integrity. In every situation you have to go back to the principles. Not only because it can safeguard integrity, but also because it opens up creativity. If you can get back to the principles, it can root you in your values and in your integrity, and it can also put you in a place that allows for more creativity, which is fun. Integrity is for me a lot about—I have to walk the talk. It means that I need to be what I am talking about, and I need to act what I am talking about.

Table 9

Summary of Collective Value of Integrity

Integrity Definition	Participants' Descriptors From Group Interview
<p>There are two leaders in your body—your gut and your heart. And your gut will always tell you no, and your heart will always tell you yes. Follow your heart and have your brain organize what your heart tells you. And so that's the integrity part where you don't turn your back on your own heart because that's your soul. Truth is in the integrity. In every situation you have to go back to the principles. Not only because it can safeguard integrity, but also because it opens up creativity. If you can get back to the principles, it can root you in your values and in your integrity, and it can also put you in a place that allows for more creativity, which is fun. Integrity is for me a lot about—I have to walk the talk. It means that I need to be what I am talking about, and I need to act what I am talking about.</p>	<p>There is no sliding scale of integrity. It is either you have it or you don't.</p> <p>Do things pass the sniff test? If every stakeholder was in the room with us while we were making a decision, would this meet the values of those stakeholders?</p> <p>Could I look at them and explain the reasons that we are making this decision in a way that is fair and just and reflects our values.</p> <p>Looking yourself in the mirror question. If I was looking myself in the mirror, how do I feel about this decision?</p> <p>Integrity is a moral, intellectual, operational compass. It gives direction.</p> <p>Integrity can well lead to consistency and somewhat predictability in how to manage the good as well as the bad.</p> <p>You wear it.</p> <p>They work with integrity, they talk with integrity and their actions are with integrity.</p> <p>Integrity comes from good role models. Helped me to develop my own gut instincts of the difference between right and wrong.</p> <p>Lessons learned as a child from parents, reading or learning from other mentors as an adult and saying consciously, I have decided to adopt that value as part of my integrity</p> <p>Asking, can I live with myself?</p> <p>Lessons I have learned from others about what not to do</p>

As the participants explored the value of integrity, one participant shared the perspective on integrity that is espoused in her organization:

One of the things we talk about in our organization is there is kind of no sliding scale of integrity. It is either you have it or you don't and it is obvious through behaviours that we see in the workplace and how people respond especially to challenges and circumstances. (VIC 010)

As participants explored how they would know that integrity was present, one participant said,

Integrity for me is the resting place. When I think of these four values, the integrity one is where— Do things pass the sniff test. If every stakeholder was in the room with us, which would never happen while we were making this decision, would this meet the values of those stakeholders? And it is that integrity piece that you go back to anchor yourself and your decisions . . . it links to all the values that you have and with everybody that this affected was in the room right now with me making the decision, could I look at them and explain the reasons that we are making this decision in a way that is fair and just and reflects our values. The other integrity one is the looking yourself in the mirror question. If I was looking at myself in the mirror, how do I feel about this decision? (VIC 006)

Further reflections on the value of integrity were offered. This participant specified,

It's almost somewhat of a moral, intellectual, operational compass. It gives direction. It would be—to my actions and then something that—track where I have come from and its trust and supports consistency and how to respond in various situations around—I can fall back on as well as others can see. But integrity can well lead to consistency and somewhat predictability in how to

manage the good as well as the bad. How to respond—not necessarily manage.

(VIC 002)

As the participants continued to explore what integrity meant to them, this participant shared her view,

Integrity is a very strong word, and I think that a person wears it. They wear it, they work with it, they are there. They work with integrity, they talk with integrity and their actions are with integrity. But it is a difficult word and it has very, very many different facets. It's strong. Either you have it or you don't. I think that, like [the other participant] mentioned, he said, "Well is it something that you develop or do you grow into it?" I think it is sort of one of these evolutionary things. It's like the coat you wear. It's like the face you have the morning you get up and go to work. You go to work, you do your job, you manage the people you work with, with integrity. (VIC 009)

Integrity as a value that leads to consistent action over time was an idea that was raised a second time by one participant. He said,

I'm thinking about what [another participant] was saying about consistency and I'm thinking back where I really valued let's say when a direct report would actually challenge a decision that I made in a way that would say that was sort of different than what you did before, which allowed me to think like how was it different? And sometimes that gave me that opportunity to sort of explain what that was and therefore that led to a more consistent approach. Because I think often there are a whole lot of environmental factors that sort of challenge you and it doesn't feel right. You know, some of the things you said about like looking in

the mirror, if it is not feeling right, then that makes you really question where did you stray? (VIC 005)

One ongoing question that the participants continued to pose of each other as they explored the collective values was, where do values come from and how do they develop? One participant shared the following reflection,

The question of where does this come from—I don't know the answer for certain for me, but I think that probably for me having good role models from a very early age that modelled what I see as integrity, helped me to develop my own gut instincts of the difference between right and wrong really is what it comes down to for me and that often it is just a question of in my gut does this feel right and am I doing something that is allowing me to act with integrity. But that is really based on having some good role models from a very early age. (VIC 007)

As participants continued to explore how these values evolve, one participant added her reflection to the dialogue,

When I think of the integrity, which is a reflection of values, I was immediately struck that the first three or four examples that came into my mind—span lessons that I learned as a child from my father, to lessons that I adopted from reading or learning from other mentors as an adult and saying, consciously, “I have decided to try to adopt that value as part of my integrity.” It is sort of that learned throughout life and conscious adoption that these are the things that I am going to look for in myself in the mirror. Fascinating question. (VIC 006)

As she considered how integrity sustained her as she navigated challenge, one participant offered the following question, “Can I live with myself?” (VIC 007). After making a decision, could she live with herself and the resolution to the challenge?

The participants also started to comment on how integrity developed within them as much from the models in their lives as the instances where the value was absent. This participant shared,

I like to pack little things around in my suitcase, things I learn in my life, and take those forward with me wherever I go—and when I think about integrity, some of the most profound things for me are lessons that I learned from others in which I would never do to another. I have worked with some bad people in my life, and felt they have made some really poor decisions, and those are things that I have always reflected on about that I will never ever put someone in that situation, or I will never ever treat someone in that way. It is interesting and so I think it is very much learned, but I think it is learned just as much from the good as it is from the bad experiences we have in our life and how that affected us. (VIC 010)

The dialogue continued to explore the role of bad models of leadership, and how the absence of integrity in other situations strengthened the presence of it as a value for these leaders. As this one participant noted,

That is super interesting in that how some leaders have such a strong—and I’m just going to pick on leaders for fun sake—but how some of them have such a strong negative impact in culture, and I think we have seen some global examples where leaders have taught others to act without integrity. Yeah, so how do they get there. (VIC 010)

Caring. Table 10 provides the definition for caring from the participants. The table also includes the additional descriptors that the participants in the group interview identified.

Table 10

Summary of Collective Value of Caring

Caring Definition	Participants' Descriptors From Group Interview
<p>Caring – definition: Is being able to identify and recognize and celebrate when people do things that are wonderful like that, when they operate from a values-based approach and a caring approach. People need to have ways of showing that they care for others. And you can do it in little ways. “I care”—I care about you, I care about this organization, I care about the clients we serve, I care to be curious and ask things. Everyone has something to give and contribute, so I work hard to try and to facilitate that unleashing/unlocking and clarity for people. One of the strongest things is my ability to love unconditionally, non-judgmentally.</p>	<p>Caring for people with whom you are working impacts the way you make decisions because you are a human being, they are human beings.</p> <p>Caring as a sort of two-way street</p> <p>Somebody actually either liked or appreciated your point of view, or understood how difficult this was for you</p> <p>Caring is about being unconditional and non-judgmental.</p> <p>To care, it’s to show empathy, recognize somebody for what they are or who they are.</p> <p>Caring is not a competency, it’s a state of being</p> <p>Leading with their heart, their hands and their head.</p> <p>Recognizing each person as full of capacity</p> <p>When we are acting from a place of caring, it allows a safe place to be able to care, to be able to develop and live within their own values, and feel the courage to act with integrity themselves.</p> <p>Some of what we do is we create a place where we do care and we make it safe for people to really develop themselves in a place that often is not safe for them to live with values</p> <p>When we are talking about caring and creating that environment is I like the idea of allowing ourselves and others to think about what matters here</p>

Caring arose in the interviews; as participants described caring, the following surfaced as the words and definition that were used. Caring is being able to identify and recognize and celebrate when people do things that are wonderful like that, when they operate from a values-based approach and a caring approach. People need to have ways of showing that they care for others. And you can do it in little ways. “I care”—I care about you, I care about this organization, I care about the clients we serve, I care to be curious and ask things. Everyone has something to give and contribute, so I work hard to try and to facilitate that unleashing/unlocking and clarity for people. One of the strongest things is my ability to love unconditionally, nonjudgmentally.

In dialoguing together about how caring sustained these leaders as they navigated challenge, the connection to decision making surfaced as one participant noted,

I think it is about caring for the people with whom you are working impacts the way that you make decisions because you are a human being, they are human beings, and if you care about them you want to do the best for them. (VIC 007)

The reciprocity of the value of caring and the empathy that was conveyed by another individual surfaced for the following participant, who said,

I see caring as sort of two-way. It’s the caring as the last speaker talked about in terms of caring for, but also that you feel cared for in this situation that somehow or other somebody actually either like appreciated your point of view, or understood how difficult this was for you. And, again, thinking back I have realized that that has sustained me in some difficult situations that I didn’t—because I guess I sometimes feel in these difficult situations that you are out on

your own somewhere and just to have someone—they might not even agree with it, but just showing some empathy sustained me. (VIC 005)

One participant extended the caring continuum to include the unconditional quality of love:

The word “care” for me is about being unconditional, sort of an unconditional love. Just providing a service, a cared recognition to anything or anyone like a dog having a pet to provide you with unconditional love, caring is along those lines, I think. Also being non-judgmental. It’s a powerful word, but it’s—to care—it’s to show empathy, recognize somebody for what they are or who they are. Yeah. It is an uncommunicated feeling as well because in body language. (VIC 009)

As one participant considered some additional work that he had done in the area of leadership competencies, he offered,

That is occurring probably—implies an inherent good. There is a benefit going to occur. It reminds me of a time when I was involved in developing competencies for health leaders and we worked hard at identifying . . . but when [we] did a final consultation within the health system, caring was not a competency, it was a state of being, so you could only apply the competencies within an environment that was caring, so it was not able to be left—it would have to be explicitly stated. To suggest that a leader in a health system, but I would suggest to other systems, that it has to demonstrate caring through the actions that any decisions, any action has a positive or public good attached to it, that it is not simply a bureaucratic or autocratic process. (VIC 002)

This participant captured the work of the employees of her organization as she articulated the care that is present in the work that they do. She stated,

Our workers have a wonderful way of being with the people they serve, and we tell them and try and support them in leading with their heart, their hands, and their head. We don't know if hands or head—which one comes in second or third—but heart comes first. And they have this wonderful ability to—and a way of working—that allows them to sit with clients and the first thing they can say to clients is “Tell me your story” and “What do you need?” and living the conversation to start from a place of caring and in caring recognizing each person as full of capacity, as well as having needs, but first and foremost full of capacity really changes the conversation. And so this permission and this ability to start from a place of caring just opens up the conversation. And I always feel that it is an incredible privilege to be able to be working in a place that allows you to start from a place of caring. (VIC 006)

As the dialogue progressed, one participant surfaced how she saw the integration of the values that were being discussed. She said,

And when we are creating a place of caring, it allows others a safe place to be able to care, to be able to develop and live within their own values, and feel the courage to act with integrity themselves . . . I was just thinking that that is some of what we do is we create a place where we do care and we make it safe for people to really develop themselves in a place that often is not safe for them to live with values. (VIC 007)

As participants concluded the dialogue on caring as a value, one participant reflected on the organizational possibilities of talking about what matters when she offered,

The only thing that comes to mind when we are talking about caring and creating that environment is I like the idea of allowing ourselves and others to think about what matters here, and if you think about what matters, it is kind of endless. So whether you are thinking about your organization, or your direct team, or your clients, or what matters in the situation for whomever it is that you are involved with and that care piece for me—because we ask that question about what matters—that really allows for that dialogue. (VIC 010)

Commitment. Table 11 provides the definition from the participants. The table also includes additional descriptors that the participants in the group interview identified.

Table 11

Summary of Collective Value of Commitment

Commitment Definition	Participants' Descriptors From Group Interview
<p>Commitment was huge. If I say I am going to do something, then I will do it no matter what—or at least to the best of my ability. Every single day. I'm going to make it the best day and I am going to commit to doing my job to the best of my abilities.</p>	<p>If I say I am going to do something, then I will do it no matter what.</p> <p>Commitment is very closely tied to responsibility in that I have a responsibility to a whole lot of other people to do the right thing for all of them.</p> <p>Commitment is like marriage. Nothing is ever perfect and so you are in it and you are there for the long haul, whatever that may be.</p> <p>Commitment is a relationship, it's like a marriage, you make it work.</p> <p>Commitment ties in with courage as well. To be committed, you need the courage.</p> <p>It's a personal commitment for making a difference in the lives of others.</p> <p>It is really the opportunity to keep on keeping on and it actually is keep going.</p>

As summarized in Table 11,

Commitment was huge. If I say I am going to do something, then I will do it no matter what—or at least to the best of my ability. Every single day. I'm going to make it the best day and I am going to commit to doing my job to the best of my abilities. (VIC 007)

This participant saw a connection between commitment and responsibility. As she reflected on commitment, she said,

Commitment is a question of—I have to be able to live with myself. And if I have made a commitment to do something, then I must do it. But also, I have a—
commitment is very closely tied to responsibility in that I have a responsibility to a whole lot of other people to do the right things for all of them . . . I think to do

the right thing and also commitment is there to help push through the challenging parts as well as the good parts. (VIC 007)

The surfacing of the parallel of marriage to the value of commitment was articulated by one participant, who said,

I look at it like a marriage—the good, the bad, but indifferent and your commitment is to follow through with those things. Nothing is ever perfect and so you are in it and you are there for the long haul, whatever that may be. (VIC 010)

Another participant agreed with the reflection and added her thoughts,

I like—the analogy—it is a relationship, it's like a marriage, you make it work. You know, you are going to have your ups, you are going to have your downs, but you are committed to the end goal to make things work, to see it through no matter what. It's like living with an illness—is to try and work around that and get through it no matter what. And like [another participant] said, it was a piece of courage as well and courage will sustain you through it. (VIC 009)

The link between commitment and courage was offered by one participant. He reflected, “I think commitment ties in with courage, as well. To be committed, you need the courage” (VIC 002).

One participant suggested that commitment surfaced for him on a personal level as he reflected on the value. His reflection was,

What I'm reflecting on is this sort of personal commitment for making a difference in the lives of others, so actually it is quite powerful to me. Again, I am seeing this connection between these values that I hadn't really thought about. (VIC 005)

One participant commented on one of the positive outcomes of commitment that she had observed was the personal gratification that comes from commitment:

The good piece around commitment for me is maybe a bit selfish, but it is out of passion or desire for just—there are some great things that can come from commitment. I think about athletes and some of those things that potentially are very selfish, but really drive us for looking what's behind it, and I think there are things like—that's another that couldn't see me as, well loving what I do, loving leading teams, like those are other pieces that there is personal gratification that comes from that. (VIC 010)

The concept that commitment sustains leaders as it facilitates perseverance was articulated by this participant. She said,

It is really the opportunity to keep on keep on keeping on and it actually is keep going. I find that sometimes people will when they run into a problem they will move away from it, and sometimes I go good choice but it is good for you to change what you are doing or change the organization. Other times, I am sad for them because I go, you know, “Whatever that issue is, you are taking it with you” and so that commitment to—sometimes commitment links to this dealing with situations that—and it does link back to courage—dealing with situations that if you are not addressing, you will be taking it with you anyways because it is some personal work that you need to do. So it is multifaceted. (VIC 006)

Collective values representation. In Figure 3 I offer the visual that summarizes the four collective values. These values were explored during the group interview.



Figure 4. Collective values explored during the group interview with the participants.

Leading with heart. With the title of this research project, harvesting the data from the stories that were shared with me by the participants without including their reflection on the presence of heart in their leadership would leave this research incomplete. Before concluding this research, I shared their reflections on and experience with heart. You will notice some duplication, as these participants had many heart-rich comments to offer which appear in their leadership vignettes and elsewhere in this research.

Challenges and lessons learned about heart leadership. One participant noted, what contributed to her heart singing, her heart break and the challenges faced in leading with heart in the following four excerpts from her interview, “that kind of stuff just warms my heart. It’s about access, it’s about saying it is not a level playing field out there and let’s not fool ourselves to think it is” (VIC 011). As she commented on the pending

changes, she said, “and so to think that a program like that or that would no longer have a place in our department really breaks my heart” (VIC 011). The challenge as she saw it, “You are only allowed to be in your head and you don’t talk about your heart, and so you gotta park all that heart conversation, the whole self conversation, at the door” (VIC 011). And the promise of the work she did, “so that’s definitely the stuff where my heart really sings” (VIC 011).

As this one participant noted upon reflection, she would have opted to bring more heart to her leadership:

I think I would approach this differently next time just in terms of understanding what success actually looks like for them on a very personal level, versus a work level. And so this is me—as much as I am all about the people, which is funny, I’m all about the business, right, so for me I probably didn’t go to a personal level quick enough to figure out what was in their heart and soul before we made some of these changes, which may have led—just even exploring those conversations in the beginning may have—right. (VIC 010)

As she reflected on the possibilities that existed for moving forward, she was considering her next step: “So maybe it is true heart and soul conversation with her next then because I think she is a good leader and she is all about the relationships, so how do we get her back into that?” (VIC 010).

Another participant commented on the challenges associated with demonstrating heart in her leadership when she shared the following example:

There are times in my heart I kind of want to say, “Oh, I would really like to”—like one staff person who I am extremely fond of and she is very dedicated and

lovely—she just had typhoid fever, but the way things worked out between her sick leave and short-term disability and all that sort of stuff, she is going to be out about a week's pay. And so her supervisor says to me, Can't you just like overlook this, or something and I'm like, No, I can't. If I do that, then how could I say to myself that I can't do that for every other person in this organization?

(VIC 007)

Demonstrating heart leadership. In discussing her challenge, one participant put it in heart language:

You know, all of this sort of drama or whatever had happened, you know, wasn't the heart of the problem, how were we going to work together to get where we need to be. And so it was sort of this beautiful moment where we together illuminated each other. (VIC 001)

She went on to describe what connecting to herself looked like as she navigated her challenge, and once again her heart was present:

You know, it's very—it's a very sort of calming, physical sensation. You know, I refer to it as myself. I always have the self as that sort of connection to me, but whether it's soul-centred or heart-centred, or it's being true to who I am, and I have to be really sort of calm and introspective to get that point—or at least I don't have to be calm, I connect to it without that, but I have to step back from that monkey-mind as they say, like that reactionary—what's in my brain to what's in my heart. (VIC 001)

She also articulated this connection between her great-hearted idea with gratitude:

I mean like I feel so much gratitude to them for even stepping up and being a part of this project that I would do anything to make sure that they felt comfortable with it, so yeah, that certainly is a factor. And that shows up quite a bit in my life—that sort of idea of being grateful for people—for what they do—and wanting to show that. (VIC 002)

One participant offered, as he commented on his efforts to release heart in his organization, “He’s got his heart in it, I can put my heart in it, and it’s all good” (VIC 003). He went on to explain,

My coaching style is heart and wisdom and I tell people that there is two leaders in your body—your gut and your heart. And your gut will always tell you no, and your heart will always tell you yes. Your brain can do the planning and the logistics, but don’t follow it, it’s stupid; it will waste your time. Follow your heart and have your brain organize what your heart tells you. (VIC 003)

Even as he discussed integrity, heart was present, as he stated,

That’s the integrity part where you don’t turn your back on your own heart because that’s your soul. I believe that—what are they called—heart intelligence research that is going on that believes that there is a heart mind. And I believe that there is a heart mind and that there is some connection, and it never fails me. (VIC 003)

One participant addressed how a heart was an importance symbol to her, and she went on to say,

This heart to me symbolizes motherly love because of these women in my life, and my love for my son. And it’s the—I would say it is one of the strongest things

about me is my ability to love unconditionally, non-judgmentally, right, and so that talisman, that heart is really core to who I am and what I believe in because I believe in love first and foremost. (VIC 008)

As one participant shared in the group interview, heart is infused throughout her organization. She said,

Our workers have a wonderful way of being with the people they serve, and we tell them and try and support them in leading with their heart, their hands, and their head. We don't know if hands or head—which one comes in second or third—but heart comes first. And they have this wonderful ability to—and a way of working—that allows them to sit with clients and the first thing they can say to clients is “Tell me your story” and “What do you need?” and living the conversation to start from a place of caring and in caring recognizing each person as full of capacity, as well as having needs, but first and foremost full of capacity really changes the conversation. And so this permission and this ability to start from a place of caring just opens up the conversation. And I always feel that it is an incredible privilege to be able to be working in a place that allows you to start from a place of caring. (VIC 006)

Leading with heart comes with challenges, ongoing learning of stepping into possibility as values are introduced into dialogue. In this next section, I communicate some final reflections from the participants in service of sharing some of the further comments that they offered in relationship to values, leadership, and navigating challenge.

Honouring the voices of the narrators – final reflections. One participant included the following final comment as she completed review of her narrative in response to the question, are there further insights that occur to you as a result of reviewing this narrative account?

The review of the narrative struck me because I felt that it captured my feelings about leadership and my role in my organization. I want to be an agent for empowerment, self-development in other, and collaboration. I believe the future is value-based leadership. (VIC 008)

Another participant offered in response to this question,

Leadership includes being able to make difficult decisions knowing it can and will affect the people you work with including clients being served. Working with different unions and contracts in a fast pace, highly technical and sometimes challenging work environment emphasizes the value to be flexible. (VIC 009)

This participant offered the following reflection on being enthusiastically humble,

I think I didn't stress enough the importance of being enthusiastically humble. It takes courage to let others that far into your leadership plans and model. But then when it's experienced you can't imagine going back to any other way. (VIC 003).

Finally, this participant had also shared an additional reflection on values:

All relationships are founded in truth, or they are something other than relationships. Passion and commitment to follow come from trust and safety. If there is no truth, then where is the safety? (VIC 003)

As this participant reflected on what she learned in her leadership role, she shared the following reflection about being mindful of position and recognizing when a higher order values conversation is called for.

Even when people go, “Well my value or my priority is this” it can still lead the organization astray. So you can have the value—you can have everybody working on values-based leadership and air quotes and still have huge—it doesn’t mean that you are all going to be marching to the same drummer and everything is going to be sweetness and light. You can still have people and in fact we do all the time, where they go, “Well, my job is to do this” and it’s like, “Wait a minute, we have to go higher because we have to look at a higher landscape here.”

(VIC 006)

As I explored where the collective values appeared in the literature, I noted that courage is called for in choosing to adopt a values-based approach to leadership (Frost, 2014). Also, Chun (2005) identified integrity as one of the most frequently cited values in the last decade. Van Wart (2014) defined integrity as “wholeness, and that in turn is based on notions of consistency with one’s own words, thoughts, principles, actions, and social setting” (p. 30). He went on to identify the five most common “hallmarks of integrity are honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, prudence, and conscientiousness” (Van Wart, 2014, p. 30). Caring is reflected in the servant leadership literature (Russell, 2001). One participant reinforced the importance of articulating principles when he said,

A leader must be able to express the principles of his or her vision in a way that will make followers want to invest their passion and sweat equity in it. If the principles are communicated properly, the overall vision can change on a dime,

because it's understood that life is subject to change, but we are still working within the principles, so there is comfort and trust. My Granddaughter say Papa makes hard things easy and I always trust her insight. Change is the hardest thing for a team to negotiate and navigate, so it's up to me to facilitate change within the trust relationship. (VIC 003)

Another participant responded to the reflective question, "Are there further insights that occur to you as a result of reviewing this narrative account?" He offered the following, comment as he looked back at the challenge he had navigated:

Another phrase that came to mind as I reviewed it was "short-term pain for long-term gain." Making that decision opened so many new doors for me and made my work life so much more meaningful. Another thought that came to mind was how the experience broadened my perspective . . . something I wasn't really aware of until others pointed that out to me . . . I guess one could look at it as tacit knowledge. It has always fascinated me that one can gain this knowledge without really knowing that you have . . . until someone else points it out to you. (VIC 005)

Another participant also followed up with reflections to this question when she returned her narrative account:

I've thought a lot about our discussion of acceptance since we spoke. It is something I will continue to reflect upon in the months ahead as we face further challenges to the organization from security agencies. I did think more about responsibility value. I feel a great sense of responsibility to the people with whom we work and our staff who work on democracy building in a country that has not

experienced a lot of democracy; they take risks to improve their country. Those are risks most of us never have to face and therefore we have a responsibility to live up to our commitments and give of ourselves. (VIC 007)

I asked the following question when I returned the narrative account, are the values that you articulated as being important to you reflected in the account? I received the following compelling and concise summary from one participant.

Here is my summary, as a leader.

Possibility – what can we do!

Curiosity – how can we do it!

Accountability – You can count on us to do it!

Caring/compassion/passion – and we will have your back along the way! (VIC 010)

Summary. This section articulated the key themes that were identified in the research which included transitions leadership, a strong support network and opportunities for personal mastery and learning as leaders navigate challenges in their leadership. I also described the four values that received four or more votes from the research participants. These values included courage, integrity, caring, and commitment. The values were described using direct quotes from the group interview. I also shared the participant comments on how they described leading with heart. Finally, I concluded the chapter with the final reflections that the participants shared as they reviewed their vignettes. In the final chapter, I begin to interpret and synthesize the individual and group interview data in relationship to the literature as I discuss the findings. I also articulate a

path forward to sustainable leadership for leaders in the public, health, and education sectors.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, I explore more fully the implications of this research, using the scholarly literature to support the findings and my interpretation. Also, within the context of the literature there is the opportunity to deepen the meaning making that is associated with the findings that have been presented (Wolcott, 1994). I will now layer in my interpretation over the analysis of the narrative interviews. As always I seek to honour the narratives that were shared with me by the participants as I link their comments to my recommendations and the scholarly literature.

This research offers a path forward to building sustainable leadership capacity as leaders navigate the inevitable leadership challenges that they face. In the following section, I explore specific recommendations and opportunities for public sector leaders to sustain themselves and others by integrating the key themes and findings into a model that I offer to public sector leaders. I weave in comments from the participants while exploring the various aspects of the model more fully. May the model honour what participants shared with me in service of current and future leaders who choose to respond affirmatively to the call of serving the common good while navigating challenge.

Leaders have impact (Manz et al., 2008). The impact that they have can potentially be generative or harmful to organizations, the people that report to them, and the public that they serve. As stated in Chapter 2, previous studies in the fields of relational and values-based leadership have identified that people have values and these values guide their behaviours and decision making (Diochon & Anderson, 2011; Larson & Hunter, 2014; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). To date, the majority of these studies have

taken a quantitative approach (Busch & Wennes, 2012; Chun, 2005; Oreg & Berson, 2011; Vrangbæk, 2009).

As discussed previously, public sector leadership received less attention in the research literature than did the private sector (Raffel et al., 2009; Trottier et al., 2008; Van Wart, 2003). Ospina and Dodge (2005) in particular called for more qualitative studies in public administration scholarship that would capture the lived experience of participants. Therefore, this study fills a gap in the literature because it offers a qualitative study on public sector leadership experiences, as called for by Ospina and Dodge (2005), and also a qualitative contribution to relational leadership scholarship, as called for by Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012). Not only does this study contribute to the literature by using a qualitative approach, it also presents findings that are of practical use to public sector leaders, specifically in the areas of values-based leadership and relational leadership. This study provides new insight into leadership by identifying that values play a role in the following three areas: enabling leaders to attend to transitions for self and other, building a values-based support network, and exploring personal mastery and learning amidst leadership challenges. In addition, leaders will benefit from having conversations about values with their direct reports and colleagues, which was not previously identified in the literature reviewed. Finally, the research suggested that engaging in conversations about values is potentially more important than having the same values, although further research is needed in this area. The following section explores the elements in the findings that support building sustainable leadership capacity for leaders in the public, health, and education sector who experience and navigate the inevitable challenges that occur with leadership.

Building Sustainable Leadership

This section synthesizes the primary findings from this research in relationship to my overarching research question of what role do values play in sustaining leaders as they navigated challenging situations. I introduce a model that I developed as an approach for helping leaders sustain themselves as they navigate challenge. My wish is to operate in service of future leaders who experience the inevitable challenges that come with leadership and weave the literature in as I explain my findings and interpretation in further detail. As addressed in the previous chapter, key themes included leading self and other through transitions, cultivating community through a strong values-based support network, and pursuing personal mastery and learning amidst challenge. In the section following Figure 5, I integrate the framework offered by the work of William Bridges (2009). The in-depth dialogue offered in the previous chapter was intended to present leaders with the key messages to support self and other in more successfully navigating challenge.

Leading Self and Other Through Transition, Change, and Challenge

Leadership is a process. This research has highlighted the activities that will contribute to sustaining leaders as they navigate challenge. Specifically, the transitions zones identified by Bridges (2009) included three zones: endings, neutral zone, and new beginnings. Following the announcement of any change, transition begins with the phase of endings. This phase of the transition process begins with a process of letting go of what was previously known and familiar. According to Bridges (2009), “Change and endings go hand in hand: change causes transition, and transition starts with an ending” (p. 23). Often, the endings are not fully known or understood when a change is

announced. Yet the intentional identification, exploration, and honouring of endings allows for leaders and the people they work with to acknowledge the endings in order to move forward into and through transition.

The neutral zone was described as the nowhere place between two somewheres (Bridges, 2009). This phase of transition is marked by an awareness that the old way of being is now gone, and the identification of the new ways of interacting and behaving in the new world are not yet clear. Both leaders and other members of the organization need to re-establish connection, relationships, and processes that support the shifts that have occurred in the organization. As Bridges (1980) stated, “One of the difficulties of being in transition in the modern world is that we have lost our appreciation for this gap in the continuity of existence” (p. 112). The neutral zone is a time of navigating ambiguity, and the inevitable reduced morale and productivity that occur during times of uncertainty such as the challenges that the participants navigated, as identified in Table 2 (see Chapter 4). As participants who had commented on their experiences in navigating the neutral zone, this period was unsettling both for the leader and the individuals who worked with them. For leaders who have an understanding of transition and are able to lead both themselves and others through the neutral zone, the possibilities of navigating challenges that honour themselves and the individuals around them are considerable.

The challenge with the next phase of transitions, which is referred to as new beginnings, included “there are times when I long for some simple way out, some procedure to follow rather than a process to understand” (Bridges, 1980, p. 135). In our action-oriented experience of leadership, creating conversational opportunities to both explore and more fully understand these internal and individualized processes of

recalibration and reintegration that occurs as a result of the transitions that take place each time an external change event is undertaken is often overlooked in our organizations.

The Role of a Strong Values-Based Support Network

As leaders develop and lead individuals through the transitions that are associated with change and challenge, the importance of nurturing a network of support to provide a values-based, nonjudgmental, and listening ear during these periods of personal and professional turbulence increases. In considering the key themes identified in the analysis of narratives as it linked the transitions leadership and maintaining support networks, Kralik, Visentin, and Van Loon (2006) articulated, “Healthy transitions are often linked to the development of relationships and connections with others” (p. 325). Navigating challenge takes an emotional toll. As Heifetz and Linsky (2002) stated, “The most difficult work of leadership involves learning to experience distress without numbing yourself” (p. 227). As challenging as it is, the work of leadership is to experience the distress associated with the challenges and use the wisdom in the emotion to be of service to oneself and others. As Brown (2015) noted, “The process of regaining our emotional footing in the midst of struggle is where our courage is tested and our values are forged” (p. xviii). The connection to the collective value of courage as identified by participants both in navigating challenges and in asking for help to regain emotional equilibrium is possible when a strong support network that has been nurtured over time is available to these leaders when they experience challenge. As noted by the participants in the previous chapter, the leaders who participated in the research benefited from support, which included a strong professional network, a strong personal network, and mentors

who might not work in the same department, but who nonetheless served as trusted advisors (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2000). These mentors could be contacted for input, guidance, and perspective as leaders confronted challenging situations. From personal experience, I recall facilitating 2-day workshops on change leadership within a provincial government organization with the uppermost nonappointed leadership group. As I stepped in to work with these leaders in groups of 20–25 at a time, I realized quite quickly that in the previous 3-year period, with limited access to professional development, one of the elements of their leadership toolkit, which was their professional network, and their connections among each other had deteriorated. In addition to facilitating the content of the course, I realized that their presence in the course was also an opportunity to rebuild this fractured network. The importance of having a professional support network was reinforced for me as I conducted this research.

Personal Mastery and Learning Amidst Challenge

Third, the capacity to choose personal mastery and learning amidst leadership challenges supports leadership sustainability. Over the course of many years of working with leaders, I have been struck by the “chronic next” (Page, 2011, p. 76) that individuals within society and particularly leaders are experiencing. This section holds a special place for me in the research. As an educator and a consultant who seeks to build capacity in people and organizations to function more holistically and productively, the choice for personal mastery and learning amidst challenge is a profound one.

In examining the relationship between this research and learning, Frost (2014) noted, “Leading values-based organizations is a dynamic process and one that requires people to constantly be learning and evolving their thinking” (p. 125). Specifically, the

process of identifying, defining, and refining values within the context of leadership and challenge is an ongoing process of discovery, clarification, and learning. The case for leaders as learners (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) is strong. Personal mastery is described by Senge (2006) as “a relentless willingness to root out the ways we limit or deceive ourselves from seeing what is, and to continually challenge our theories of why things are the way they are” (p. 148). A constant willingness to examine values, understand current context, and explore personal mastery is called for in the complex public sector environments. Leaders would very quickly become disconnected from the very tools that allow them to continue to develop and learn the skills that would enable them to continue to serve themselves, those they work with and the common good.

Moments to pause, reflect and perhaps celebrate accomplishments are occurring less and less as the drive to accomplish the next thing presents itself. Senge (2006) offered, “Those who become lifelong learners become what [Schön] calls ‘reflective practitioners.’ The ability to reflect one’s thinking while acting, for Schön, distinguishes the truly outstanding professionals” (p. 176). The discipline of harvesting learning through reflection is supported in the literature (Etmanski, Fulton, Nasmyth, & Page, 2014; Kiel, 2015; Wood Daudelin, 1996). This section presented an opportunity to explore the key themes that were identified in the previous chapter and reconnect these themes in relationship to the scholarly literature. Figure 5 integrates the key findings identified as part of this research.

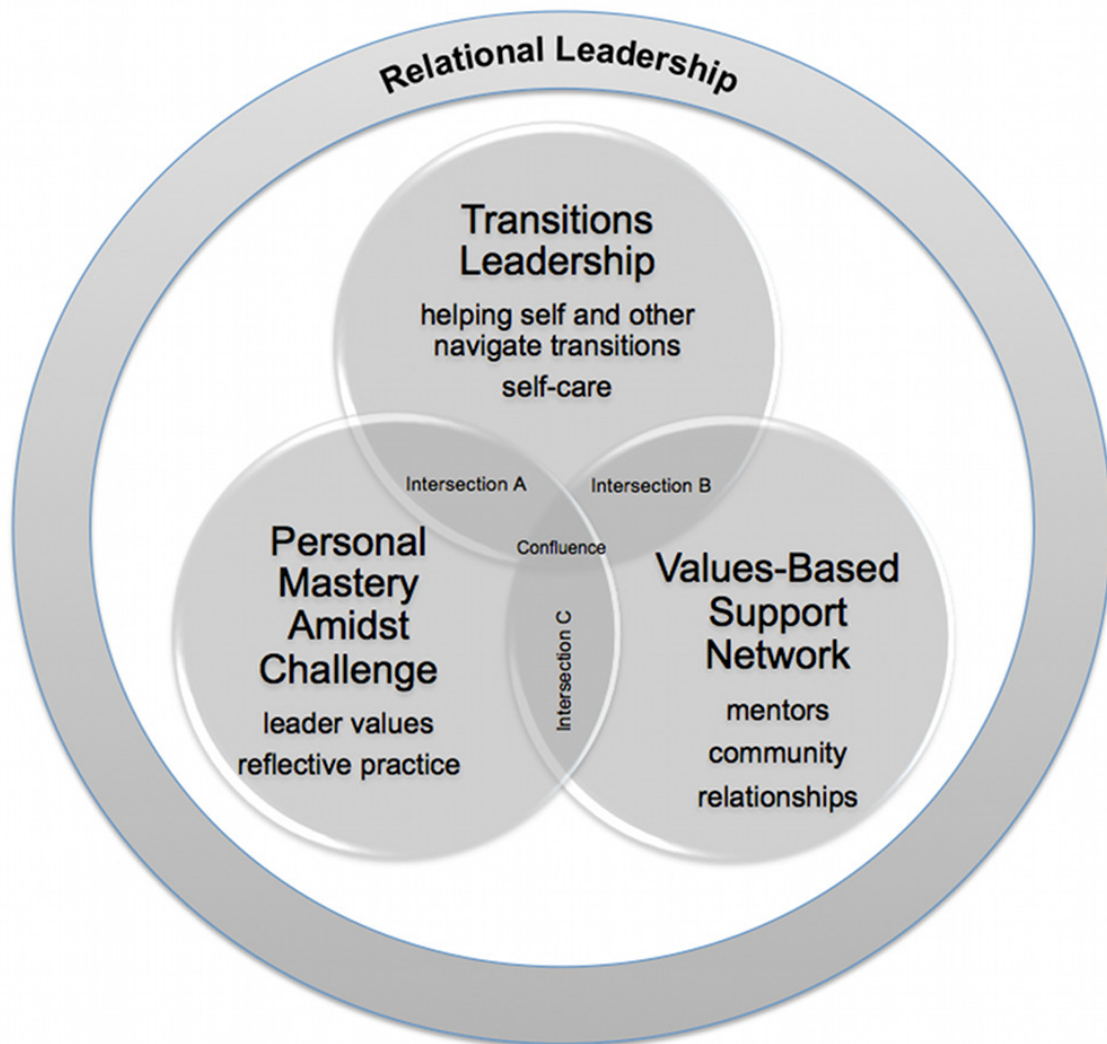


Figure 5. Building sustainable public sector leadership.

Note. Intersection A: Transitions leadership and personal mastery: Attending to community to build sustainable human capacity.
 Intersection B: Transitions leadership and support network: Building and implementing sustainable self-care practices.
 Intersection C: Personal mastery and support network: Serving as a model of sustainable public sector leadership in community.
 Confluence: Sustained public sector stewards building leadership capacity in self others in service of the common good: using values to release the hero in everyone.

This final chapter ends where I began, exploring the role of values for leaders as they navigate challenge. As I explore I do so on the shoulders of the values theorists and researchers who have paved the path for this research to take place within a scholarly

container. I begin by considering the values implications for leaders along with reflective comments from the participants. I then articulate a potential path forward that includes a multi-disciplinary approach to future research. I conclude by sharing my reflections on the implications for practice for public sector leadership. Finally, I seek to offer a conclusion to this research journey.

Values Implications for Leaders

While there are varied perspectives on leadership, George et al. (2007) asserted strong values-based leadership is critical in today's fast-paced global climate.

The importance of values as a guidepost in an environment that is in constant change offers leaders a foundation for decision making. The literature on values is diverse. Early writings included the work of Aristotle (as cited in Dyck & Kleyson, 2001), who identified a virtues framework that examined values as virtues. Aristotle developed cardinal human virtues. Aristotle's human virtues have been used as a teaching tool for moral development. Values theorists have used the human virtues framework to articulate virtues appropriate to leadership (Cameron, 2011), and ethics (Chun, 2005). Specifically, Chun (2005) examined virtues within the organizational context by having 2,548 individuals evenly split between customers and employees associated with seven British firms complete a survey that included values that had been harvested from ethical value statements of organizations. She described virtue ethics as looking "to motivate aspirational values" (Chun, 2005, p. 269). She was quick to point out that virtuous organizations are not created by a single hero, but by collective effort (Chun, 2005).

This research suggested that positive impact is possible when the invitation to operate from guiding values and principles is used to build capacity in others to operate

from values and guiding principles. In our complex organizations, the common good would be best served by leaders who have clarity of the values that guide their work and the work of the organization so that they can assist others to learn how to engage in generative dialogue and problem solving, rather than coming to their leader for the right answer. In our world today, once you move beyond the rule of law and the policies, codes of conduct, and standards that guide the actions of our public servants, there remains a potential for innovation and creativity. My argument is that capacity building in the area of incorporating values into day-to-day conversation, problem solving, recommending, and solution providing will enable more individuals in the public health and education sectors to bring more of themselves to this important and necessary work. Also, by thoughtfully and intentionally cultivating environments where issues and potential solutions are considered within the context of values, everyone in the organization has the opportunity to participate in the generative conversations that occur. The opportunity to deepen and broaden the skillset for considering values can be spread broadly throughout our public sector organizations. As previously articulated in Chapter 2, the importance of dialogue and exploration of core values in particular is emphasized within the multicultural leadership literature (Bordas, 2012). In exploring the role of values and leadership, Bordas (2012) concluded, “Values are the touchstones for multicultural leadership principles dedicated to building a benevolent and just society that upholds the well-being of all people and nurtures future generations” (p. 24). The potential for public sector leaders to use values to embrace an approach that can extend impact beyond the cyclical shifts in government that exist as a result of the election cycle exist when the longer-term perspective of a values-based leadership perspective is emphasized.

Relational Leadership, Values, and Community

Support for the leader's role in building connection and community using values and relationships is abundant. As Ospina and Sorenson (2006) emphasized, "This perspective emphasizes relational processes that depend on social networks of influence, so that leadership is enacted at all levels of the network" (p. 198). Fletcher (2012) emphasized the relationship between leader and follower and stated that over the past several years the "concept of relationality has deepened, become more explicit, and expanded beyond positional leadership to a concept that emphasizes personal leadership regardless of position or organizational role" (p. 85). The relational leadership literature offered additional considerations for public sector leaders who are seeking to build networks, communities of practice, and strengthen collaboration in our highly interconnected world. Specifically, leaders have the opportunity of viewing relationality as an additional source of leverage within the public, health, and education sectors.

Values-based leadership offers us the bridge to strengthening our relationships, and ultimately our communities. As Wheatley (2009) stated, "Our pressure-cooked lives are driving us farther away from the very resource that could most help us—strong relationship with those in our local communities" (p. 1). As this research has explored, professional and personal support networks contribute to sustaining leaders as they navigate challenge. Indeed, values-based leadership supports greater connection (Frost, 2014). As identified in Figure 2 (see Chapter 2), perhaps one of the keys to leadership sustainability of our public sector leadership exists in building stronger connections and a greater sense of interconnectedness in communities. Wayne Wouters (as cited in Wilson, 2013), Canada's Clerk of the Privy Council and most senior public servant asserted,

“Collaboration, consultation, partnerships – these need to be the hallmarks of the Public Service of Canada in the future” (p. 7). This assertion by the Clerk of the Privy Council is an important step in this journey towards greater collaboration, connection, and ultimately a stronger sense of community.

The literature on the many benefits of belonging in community is rich (Block, 2008; Stallard & Pankau, 2008; Wheatley, 2009). In particular, Block (2008) defined community as “the experience of belonging. We are in community each time we find a place where we belong” (p. xii). As defined, belonging suggests ownership and feeling as though individuals are a part of something (Block, 2008). Public sector leaders have a significant opportunity to assist individuals in organizations to experience a greater sense of belonging in their work and in their organizations. As previously discussed, the presence of caring or care as a collective value is well represented in the literature (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Rusaw, 2005), and was identified as one of the collective values by the participants. In particular, care was identified as a value that was grounded in relationships rather than roles (Larson & Murtadha, 2002). In our interconnected and interdependent organizations caring, greater relational connection among individuals and increasing collaboration to solve complex issues may result in a greater sense of community. With a greater sense of community and belonging there may ultimately exist a sense of collective ownership in service of the common good. In the next section, I explore the reflections that were identified from the group interview on collective values.

The Importance of Values

The group interview prompted an insight that the capacity for leaders to engage in dialogue about values is perhaps more important than the specific values that they hold. During the group interview, without exception the participants actively engaged in the dialogue about the values that had received four or more votes. No one shared that they hadn't selected that value as part of the pre input survey, or that a particular value didn't relate to their specific situation. I was struck by the active engagement in meaning making and attention to how the value had sustained them as they navigated challenge. This reflection prompted me to realize that the key leadership capacity is having values, and being able to share what they are with others. Values can serve as a bridge to building community. By engaging in reflective dialogue about these values with peers, direct reports, and other stakeholders, leaders make available to others important information about what matters to them. This information extends the invitation to others to engage in this meaning making and reflective process. The act of sharing values and engaging in dialogue about these values may be a source of leverage for leaders in the public sector who are seeking to build community and collective empowerment (Kirk & Shutte, 2004). Also, the influence of the alternative perspectives in leadership literature emphasizes additional opportunities for our leaders to solicit the diverse voices that exist in our public sector organizations (Jacob, 2012; Young Leon, 2012).

Servant leadership is one example that may be of service to public sector leaders who wish to honour the seven-generation rule discussed in further detail in Chapter 2. As Spears (2004) offered, "At its core, servant-leadership is a long-term, transformational approach to life and work—in essence, a way of being—that has the potential for creating

positive change throughout our society” (p. 12). This perspective invites public sector leaders to adopt and maintain a stance that is clearly focused on future generations, despite pressure from media, the election cycle, and interest groups to operate differently. As Van Wart (2014) noted within the public sector, servant leadership articulated the philosophy that “it is the leader who is privileged to serve the people” (p. 34). Within the health sector, servant leadership as a leadership philosophy appropriate for the sector is receiving scholarly attention (Gunnarsdóttir, 2014). Recently, Parris, and Welty Peachy (2013) conducted a review of 39 qualitative and quantitative studies that were published between 2004 and 2012 and noted that until 2004 servant leadership was not studied empirically. Within the context of this research, educational institutions were well represented, while the public sector was not, so there is additional opportunity for additional scholarly contributions in this area.

As Greenleaf (2008) stated, “The servant-leader *is* servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p. 15). Similarly, within indigenous leadership literature the commitment to community is a significant factor that influences leadership selection (Kenny, 2012). While the emphasis on public sector leadership is to serve the common good, and aligns with servant leadership, this model has not been widely embraced within the public sector.

Setting the Stage for Moving Forward

The opportunity to move beyond the model of leadership that reinforces a heroic leader is gaining momentum. A variety of alternatives now exist, which enable leaders in the public, health and education sector to embrace values-based leadership more

explicitly as part of their leadership practice. Leadership theorists and values theorists are making contributions to leadership and PA scholarship so that these alternatives can be more fully explored in practice. Leadership models that include a values emphasis include values-based leadership (Barrett, 1998; Copeland, 2014; Frost, 2014; Hall, 2001; O'Toole, 1996), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1998, 2008; Gunnarsdóttir, 2014; Russell, 2001; Sipe & Frick, 2009; Spears, 2002; Spears & Lawrence, 2004; Van Wart, 1998, 2014), virtuous leadership (Bright et al., 2006; Cameron, 2011), shared leadership (Amar et al., 2009), not to mention the alternative perspectives in leadership literature that was explored in Chapter 2 (Kenny, 2012; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Sinclair, 2007, 2009; Young Leon, 2012). The above leadership models and frameworks have positive and affirming values embedded in their approach, and I invite scholars to collaborate in service of highlighting the role and impact of values that operate as a foundational aspect of leadership.

My wish is that this research demonstrates the vast number of values-based alternatives that exist for leaders in our public, health, and education sectors that will enable them to both sustain themselves and the people they work with as they build capacity for everyone to think, reflect, and act from a values-based perspective. With this approach, not only will decisions be anchored in values, they will also offer individuals the innovation and creativity to take ownership for their decisions and the values that guided them towards the actions they took. Possibilities are reflected in this research. Also, the potential for misuse of values exists as has been well documented in both the public and private sector (Adams & Balfour, 2009; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2012).

Further research is needed to explore “how” to best invest our leaders and our leadership resources in building capacity for themselves and others as we seek to experience the “what” of more fully representing values and values-based leadership throughout our public sector. There is more exploration of this terrain that is needed to fully explore the possibilities that exist for integrating values further into public sector and the leaders who are responsible for stewarding the common good. Further research to explore demographic, ethnicity, and gendered approaches to stewarding the common good is also needed.

Implications for Public Sector Leadership

What I have learned from this research is that leading from values is a sacred journey. Beyond the meaning that is inherent in the work of serving the common good, leading from values invites others to be part of the journey. Busch and Wennes (2012) noted, “In organisations where the employees enjoy a great deal of autonomy in the execution of their work, it is important to cultivate values which allow them to develop strong bonds of identification with the organisation” (p. 205). When leaders can have transparent conversations about values with the staff that help them achieve their workplace goals, recommendations can be developed within these shared values (Busch & Wennes, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Paarlberg & Perry, 2007; Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985). What might be possible if people were able to bring problems and recommendations that aligned with shared values to the leaders that operated in service of the common good? Leaders must build capacity in staff to think through issues and engage in values-based decision making and enable them to have challenging conversations about what values are the highest priority in situations where values

conflicts emerge. As part of their discussion, Busch and Wennes (2012) noted, “Leaders must become more proficient at handling conflicting values” (p. 211). Furthermore, leaders and employees have additional opportunities to make decisions that rely less on how it would play in the media and more about how it would align with the lived values of the organization and the longer-term perspective.

Ultimately, perhaps the possibility of using values to be able to inform political masters how a particular decision conflicts with the values of the public service without fear of retribution would in and of itself be a signal that values really were supporting leaders as they do this challenging and complex work. Perhaps the summative comment on the sustaining nature of values comes from a participant, who offered,

What sustains me as a leader is—I still go back to the same things is that being able to work with people when you are working from sort of a values-base. Is being able to work in a group where you start with that place and can build up from it. Is being able to identify and recognize and celebrate when people do things that are wonderful like that, when they operate from a values-based approach and a caring approach. (VIC 006)

This participant articulated the combination that facilitates leading with heart. To embed values in the dialogue and caring as two elements she embraces in her leadership.

My Final Reflections

The exploration of this stage of the journey is almost complete. I am finding my voice as a researcher. This journey has some familiarity to previous journeys I have taken to find my voice as a leader, a consultant, and an educator. As with these previous journeys patience and compassion with myself as I have built capacity to navigate the

inevitable puzzles that presented themselves to me was important. I also was reminded of my own supportive personal and professional network, as each time I asked for help, the request was met with assistance, resources and a supportive and listening ear.

What I have learned on this research journey is that values matter. Beyond the fact that they matter, what matters is that leaders have them, leaders talk about them, and leaders share what the values mean to them. In doing so, leaders inspire others. As leaders engage in dialogue with values, they may also have the opportunity to share their humanity as they experience the challenges that come from a desire to live from a place of values that sometimes results in values conflicts and compromises. Yet, perhaps it is in choosing to live into values that leaders identify their aspirations and inspire others to do the same. As leaders we need to have serious conversations with ourselves about our values. What do we stand for? We then need to share them with others. We also need to be mindful of the diverse values that exist around us and collaborate with others to identify shared values together. Shared values bring people together. We have much work to do in sharing our values more broadly in service of creating community and a greater sense of belonging. Values create a sense of belonging. Values serve as the bridge to building community.

On this research journey, I have also learned that there are fabulous leaders that are working in the public, health and education sectors who are learning how to sustain themselves and others as they navigate the inevitable challenges that come with public sector, health and education leadership. As I harvested the wisdom from their stories, and lived with the data that was present, these individuals and the lessons they had learned offered me an opportunity to share these lessons with others. In the next section, I share

my recommendations on a path for moving forward. As always, a few participant comments will be reflected to honour my commitment to staying close to the voices of the research participants.

Beyond the Heroic Myth of Leadership: A Multi-disciplinary Approach Forward

My participants have inspired me and these final words are my inspiration for moving forward with this research, “I never regretted it looking back—ever, ever, ever. It was just making it” (VIC 005). Another participant shared, “The other thing is, you will get through this. This [challenge] does not define you. Pick what defines you. This does not have to be it. I think about that a lot” (VIC 008). Finally, “never give up” (VIC 009). What happens next matters, and one of the crucial opportunities for moving forward is to honour the scholarship, the history, and the leaders who provided the foundation for moving forward as we come together across disciplines to discover the both/and possibility for moving forward, together. In essence, we have the opportunity to serve as bridges to more fully understanding and integrating each other’s efforts in service of the leaders of today and tomorrow.

In choosing to end by honouring myself as both researcher and practitioner who seeks to offer a strategy for moving forward, I would like to share a model that was recently part of a presentation that I attended. This model helped me to place my research in the larger context of what is currently unfolding within the field of PA scholarship and leadership. This model is referred to as the two-loop model and was developed by the Berkana Institute (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). The model is described as “a map (co-created with our global family of friends and colleagues) to describe the predictable dynamics that are bound to occur between those pioneering the new and those preserving

the old” (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011, p. 10). The model is used to describe the predictable life cycles experienced by a system and is appropriate to assist us in placing this moment in time in a context that invites input, collaboration and further research. The following quote offered an on-point description of what we are experiencing today in the health, education, and public sector:

Especially if there’s growth and success, things can start to go downhill. Leaders lose trust in people’s ability to self-organize and feel the need to take control, to standardize everything, to issue policies, regulations, and laws. Self-organization gets replaced by over-organization; compliance becomes more important than creativity. Means and ends get reversed, and people struggle to uphold the system rather than having the system support them. These large, lumbering bureaucracies—think about education, health care, government, business—no longer have the capacity to create solutions to the very problems they were created to solve. (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011, p. 10)

This model offers us one path forward to accepting an invitation offered by Laszlo (2012) who, in describing evolutionary leadership, offered, “Evolutionary leadership is an invitation to embrace paradox: blending the old with the new, bridging the quantitative with the qualitative, connecting the being with the doing” (p. 106). The double-loop model offers us an approach for embracing the paradox she described above, while we engage in further dialogue about the future possibilities for public sector scholarship and leadership. May our evolution embrace paradox, while we collaborate to move this important work forward together.

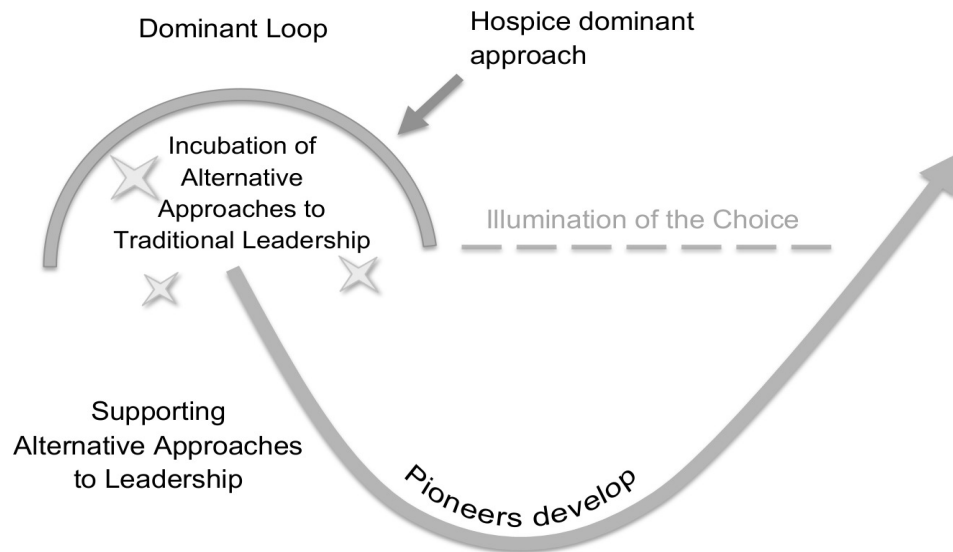


Figure 6. The Berkana two-loop model (adapted for this research).

Note. From Walk Out Walk On (p. 12), by M. J. Wheatley & D. Frieze, 2011, San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler. Copyright 2011 by M. J. Wheatley & D. Frieze. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. www.bkconnection.com

In the model depicted in Figure 6, the first loop is the loop that signifies the dominant system. In this case, I invite you to consider the traditional, hierarchical, largely masculine model of leadership in the public sector represents the first loop. As the system peaks and begins its decline, alternative approaches to leadership begin to emerge. According to the construct of this model, as alternative approaches begin to appear, the dominant system and those in power take steps to preserve itself as the dominant approach. As alternative approaches persevere and additional alternative approaches to the dominant approach to leadership continue to evolve and develop, they become known as the pioneers of the new approaches to leadership. As Wheatley and Frieze (2011) offered, leaders “use their formal leadership to champion values and practices that respect people, that rely on people’s inherent motivation, creativity, and caring to get quality work done” (p. 11). A few considerations need to be in place. First, certain powerful members of the dominant system, who in my example could include scholars, think

tanks, or key leadership theorists, protect the space for the pioneers as they continue to develop the alternative approaches. Second, questions need to be asked about what gifts can be taken from the first loop that will serve as “compost” for the second loop that is emerging. Third, a form of hospice for the dominant system needs to be carried out, that identifies the hospicing needs of care and compassion for the dominant system that is now in decline. The second loop emerges from below the first loop and includes the pioneers who are incubating and developing the alternative perspectives and advancing the new perspectives and are in essence pioneering the new paradigm, because there is a gap between the dominant paradigm and the new paradigm. As the second loop establishes itself, a pathway between the two loops is illuminated so that members of the dominant system, which is now in decline, have a bridge to the new loop, which is gaining momentum.

The above offers one perspective on where we as scholars, researchers, and leadership theorists find ourselves. In light of the last decade of the issues associated with leaders who operate within the dominant paradigm, what we do next matters. What can we harvest from the dominant first loop that will help us as we move forward? As scholars and researchers continue to incubate the emerging loop by engaging in additional interdisciplinary research from all disciplines, ontological and epistemological paradigms, the opportunity exists to gain the momentum necessary to establish the benefits and long term sustainability of these alternative approaches to leadership that are emerging in the second loop. How can each of us play a role in hospice of the dominant system while acknowledging the benefits it offered in a different time, as we continue to strengthen ourselves and each other to continue the journey forward? For myself, I want

to nourish and contribute to the ongoing incubation of alternative values-based approaches to leadership in the public, health, and education sector so leaders can sustain themselves, their people, their organizations and ultimately the common good that they are called to serve. As I reflect on the double loop model, my hope is that my research has helped to illuminate a possible path forward for those courageous, caring, committed public, health, and education sector leaders, who with their integrity wish to nourish themselves and each other. Hopefully, this model will support them, as they seek to navigate the leadership challenges that they experience while continuing to operate in service of the common good. I am seeking other scholars and leaders to connect with as I wish to sustain myself for the next steps of the journey because what my research has taught me is that a community will be needed to take steps and conduct research that will continue to “illuminate” and brighten the path forward.

As part of my expression of appreciation as I concluded the group interview with my participants, I offered the following. I am going to leave you with a quote from June Jordan because as I listen to you talk and explore these values with such heart; I was reminded of a passage from June Jordan’s poem that she wrote for South African women. It says, “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for” (Jordan, 1980, p. 43). If we are the ones we have been waiting for, our organizations and the people around us are in good hands.

I invite you to join me on this journey, so that we can work together, because what happens next matters. Maybe we’re the ones we’ve been waiting for, who can and indeed are making it happen as we use our gifts, our hearts, and our talents to make a

contribution to values-based sustainable leaders, sustainable organizations, with sustainable people working in service of the common good.

Conclusion – Values Release the Hero in Everyone

What happens next matters. Values-based leadership is a lifelong journey of learning and discovery. What I have learned on this research journey is that values-based leadership is noble and sacred work. Through interviews with participants, the group interview, review of the literature and ongoing analysis, interpretation and reflection, I am struck by the possibilities that can emerge when leaders harness the wisdom in their people in service of the common good. The conclusion of this chapter came as I reflected on this comment from a participant:

This is one of the reasons I appreciate this conversation is because it makes you think of things in a different way—but actually as I said, it is about—what shifted for me is—assuming that there is sort of a hero in everybody and how do you bring that out. (VIC 006)

As I reflected on her question and my research question, I thought to myself, values release the hero in everyone. This would offer an opportunity to build capacity in everyone to consider issues from the perspective of generating solutions and recommendations that operate within shared values. The model that I developed as part of my interpretation of the data I collected, calls for leaders in the public, health, and education sectors to embrace their values, become leaders of transition, support ongoing development of their own personal mastery, and sustain a strong personal and professional network. With these pillars in place, the opportunities to move beyond the heroic model of leadership to step into a future in which ongoing work on values in self

and other, allows the hero in everyone to be nurtured and released. Our children and future generations are relying on us to adopt a generative approach to leadership that can sustain us and our planet. If you were the one you were waiting for, what choice would you make today to enable this desired future?

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter for Potential Research Participants

My name is Beth Page, and I am a PhD candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Victoria. I am completing research on the role of values in sustaining leaders who navigate challenging situations. I have a passion for supporting leaders, and look forward to learning from your experience.

My criteria for research participation is leaders working in the health, education, or public sectors, who can articulate values that guide their decision making and have navigated a self-defined challenging leadership experience.

Participants in my research study will be involved in a 1-1.5 hour research interview, which will be audio recorded. Participants will be asked to review the story that is identified following the interview. Finally, participants will be invited to participate in a conference call to hear the preliminary findings and engage in dialogue with other participants about the findings. Participants will be invited to offer input, add clarifying comments, share experiences which differ from the findings and confirm the findings as appropriate. May I enlist your assistance and participation?

I greatly appreciate your consideration of my request. Please let me know at your earliest convenience if you are available to participate. By way of confirmation, please respond to this email with your preferred email address and phone number so that I may contact you to discuss your involvement further.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Warm regards,

Beth Page

Appendix B: Informed Consent and Information Letter

Exploring the Role of Values in Sustaining Leadership in Challenging Times

My name is Beth Page, and this research project is part of the requirement for a PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Victoria. Dr. Lynne Siemens (School of Public Administration) is my primary co-supervisor and can be contacted by telephone: [telephone number], or by email: [email address]. Dr. Guy Nasmyth is my second co-supervisor. Dr. Natalee Popadiuk is my committee member.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of my research project is to explore whether personal values are one of the key factors that sustain individual leaders. Personal values are a result of many variables including our background and life experiences. They have shaped the criteria we use to guide our behaviour, make choices and set priorities for how we conduct ourselves in relationship to others. This research will assist leaders to develop a stronger connection to themselves and their values as they navigate the challenges they face.

Your participation and how information will be collected

The research will consist of open-ended semi-structured interview and is anticipated to last no more than 90 minutes. Specifically, I will ask: What role, do values have and play in your work as a leader? Would you describe a time when you navigated a challenging situation as a leader.

Potential follow-up probes include: What core values guided your actions? Can you share with me in your own words, how you define these values?

I will also prepare a narrative of your story for your review.

Benefits and risks to participation

My results should provide new information on whether or not there are core values that leaders believe sustain them in challenging times. Also, it will inform public sector organizations of key values that can result in strong and sustained leadership performance, as evidenced during times of challenge, uncertainty and duress.

Re-visiting challenging situations from your leadership experience may bring up emotions. I will provide a list of follow-up support resources which will be shared with all research participants.

Real or Perceived Conflict of Interest

I may have a previous relationship with participants who are graduate alumni of leadership studies, which could result in a perceived “power over.” However, our academic relationship is complete. If you choose to participate or not participate in this research study, our future interactions will not be affected. I disclose this information

here so that you can make a fully informed decision on whether or not to participate in this study.

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work hard to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on password protected servers at the University of Victoria. A transcriptionist may be retained to assist with transcribing interviews. This individual will sign a confidentiality agreement as part of the agreement for transcribing the audio interview files to protect the confidentiality of the participant interview and group interview data. Information will be recorded in electronic format through word processing and digital format through audio recording, and, where appropriate, summarized, in an anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential. Original data will be retained for seven years. The data will be shredded following completion of this data retention period. Identifying information pertaining to specific individuals will not be retained. To protect the individual data provided, each research participant will be assigned a pseudonym which will be retained in a separate encrypted file. Information pertaining to participants who withdraw from the study will be filed in a separate file for the data retention period and will be destroyed when the retention period is complete.

A group interview will also occur as part of this research study. Due to the nature of this group method, it is not possible to keep identities of the participants from other participants. All research participants will be asked to respect the confidential nature of the research by not sharing names or identifying comments outside of the group.

Sharing results

In addition to submitting my final report to University of Victoria in partial fulfillment for a PhD, I will also be sharing my research findings through scholarly publication of journal articles, books, and conference presentations. Participants will have access to an electronic copy of the final report.

Procedure for withdrawing from the study

Individual interview participants who wish to withdraw from the study, are asked to send an email to [email address] to indicate their desire to withdraw, or communicate that request during the interview. All data collected will be stored separately and will be destroyed following the data retention period.

For participants in the group interview, it will not be possible to remove specific individual comments because the data is being collected as part of one digital audio file. However, no comments will be attributed to any individual who participates in the group interview.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation and signing the consent form you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

As part of your participation in this study you are asked to sign the following consent form. By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project. Specifically:

- I consent to the audio recording of this narrative interview
- I consent to reviewing the narrative interview for the purposes of providing input or clarification on the material captured by the researcher
- I consent to being contacted with follow-up questions, or clarification
- I commit to respecting the confidential nature of the group interview by not sharing identifying information, or specific comments shared during the group interview about the other participants
- I consent to being audio recorded during my participation in the group interview. I understand that due to the group nature of this study, the audio recording will be ongoing throughout the interview and group interview, and my voice or image cannot easily be removed.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Outline

Following recruitment and confirmation of interview

Information and Informed Consent letter will be sent out in advance

Interview Outline:

Acknowledgement: Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project on the role that values play in navigating leadership in challenging times.

I also appreciate you returning the signed informed consent letter.

I want to highlight a few elements of the information letter, and get your input before proceeding. Specifically, I'll be audio taping today's interview. This will help me to remember all of the wonderful things that you say. I will also be preparing a narrative account of our interview for your review and comments. Finally, I will be inviting you to participate in a group interview with other research participants to share and discuss the preliminary findings. I hope you will be able to participate in the group interview when it is scheduled.

Based on your review of the information and informed consent letter, I'm wondering if you have any specific questions, comments, or concerns that you would want me to be aware of before we begin?

I also want to confirm that my role today in our interview will be to invite you to share your leadership story as it relates to a challenging situation that you have navigated. I may ask a few follow-up questions to help us focus on specific details. However my main interest is in hearing your leadership story, so my participation will be largely as a listener.

So if you are ready, let's begin. I'm looking forward to hearing your leadership story as you navigated a situation that was challenging for you as a leader.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

I'd like to explore your experience of navigating challenge as a leader. Would you describe a time when you navigated a challenging situation as a leader.

Potential follow-up probes include:

In that moment of challenge, what was important to you?

What symbol captures your experience navigating this challenging situation as a leader?

Closing

Those are all of my questions for the research interview. Is there anything you wanted to add before we close?

Thanks again for so generously sharing your time and expertise. I appreciate your willingness to be involved in this research project.

In terms of next steps, I'll be forwarding a summary of your story within the next four weeks for you to review and provide further input.

I'll also be in touch after I've had an opportunity to complete all of my interviews, to invite you to participate in a follow-up conference call. I hope you will be able to join me and the other participants as we share and explore further the preliminary findings that have been identified from the interviews.

If there are additional questions that show up for you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks again for your time.

Follow-up

I will send a follow-up email to each participant following the interview to express my appreciation and I will include a follow-up resource sheet with helpful resources and additional available sources of support.

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement for Transcriptionist**CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT****Transcription Services**

Project Title: "Leading with Heart: Exploring the Role of Values in Sustaining Leaders as they Navigated Challenging Leadership Situations"

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from M. Beth Page related to her doctoral study, "Leading with Heart: Exploring the Role of Values in Sustaining Leaders as they Navigated Challenging Leadership Situations."

Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not disclose, publish or otherwise reveal any of the confidential information received from Beth Page, to any other party whatsoever;
3. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Beth Page;
4. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
5. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Beth Page in a complete and timely manner within ten (10) days of her requesting them. This includes all material received in written or tangible form, including copies, or reproductions or other media containing any confidential information;
6. To destroy any copies of confidential documents or other media developed by me and remaining in my possession after the completion of the transcription work;
7. To provide a written certificate to Beth Page regarding the destruction of relevant material within ten (10) days of completion of the destruction;

8. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Transcriber's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix E: Email Sent to Participants Requesting Input in Advance of Group

Interview

Thank you for your ongoing involvement in this research.

In preparing for the group interview, I have compiled the values that were articulated as part of the research interviews, and edited to focus in on my overarching research question. Specifically, what are the values that sustain leaders as they navigate challenge?

I have attached the draft values list for your review and I would appreciate your input by reply email.

I would welcome the following input in advance of Monday:

1. By reply email, identify up to five values from the list that sustained you as you navigated challenge.
2. Was a more important value missing from this list that sustained you as you navigated your challenge? If so, what is the name of that value and how would you describe it?

Finally, for your information, I will be sending out details on Monday for the process of joining the call.

Please let me know what further questions or considerations you have as I complete the final preparations for our call on Tuesday 7:30am your time/Monday May 11 at 7:30 PST.

Thanks again for being on this research journey with me.

With gratitude,
Beth

[email address]

Appendix F: Preliminary Values and Descriptions of What Sustains Leaders as they Navigate Challenge

Request: Identify up to five values (from the alphabetical list below) that sustained you as you navigated/are navigating challenge in your leadership. Your email reply before Monday at noon is appreciated to assist with final preparations for the call.

Value	Description
Acceptance	Acceptance means that I will agree to something that I think is wrong, for the greater good. To be able to do the work that we do and the service that we offer. The greater good is more important.
Accountability	How do we make sure we build in those values and you hold yourself accountable to those values continuously. We need to equip our people with the capacity to do this because they are all good people, they are all working hard. Accountability is that people are given accountability and control over things, and their ability to make decisions.
Authenticity	I was authentic and honest and let the cards fall as they would. Being true to who you are and be authentic in all situations. My actions are in alignment with my values. To really honestly, authentically try to build those relationships, and that meant bearing more of myself.
Caring	Is being able to identify and recognize and celebrate when people do things that are wonderful like that, when they operate from a values-based approach and a caring approach. People need to have ways of showing that they care for others. And you can do it in little ways. "I care"—I care about you, I care about this organization, I care about the clients we serve, I care to be curious and ask things. Everyone has something to give and contribute, so I work hard to try and to facilitate that unleashing/unlocking and clarity for people. One of the strongest things is my ability to love unconditionally, non-judgmentally.
Commitment	Commitment was huge. If I say I am going to do something, then I will do it no matter what—or at least to the best of my ability. Every single day. I'm going to make it the best day and I am going to commit to doing my job to the best of my abilities.
Community	We want to be a community, which demands that collaborative openness, listening, caring for each other. Creating connections. It's always relationships and people around you. Creating diverse and inclusive environments. Contributing to strength of community.

Value	Description
Compassion	I saw myself as kind of having the task ahead of me of just showing/demonstrating, and helping people understand. It was an opportunity to illustrate again where I actually stood and where I actually was, and then to do it in a way that demonstrated compassion. Realizing that everyone is struggling away with their own challenges and to just be compassionate. Everybody has a different view, but that ties to compassion because you need to be compassionate, that everyone has come from a different place too, so you can't just assume they can come around. Compassion is that understanding that it is not actually about me, it's about them.
Courage	Understanding the danger and learn to trust yourself. Having the guts to do something that needs to be done and it's counter to what everybody else is telling you to do and may not make sense financially and all kinds of things. Courage is having the ability to be honest with feelings and to be able to clarify those feelings to put in a meaningful way. Being transparent, honest, and reasonable.
Fairness	Fairness in not being treated as I thought I should be, I want it to be fair. I want it to be fair for people who are doing their best and it offends me when people who are not doing what they should be doing get benefits that those who are doing their best, do not. The fairness piece is all about treating people fairly in work, in pay, in the way that we deal with them.
Illumination/ Learning	We realized that there was this whole other opportunity here for learning, it is like it lit and we were able to see each other's perspectives and, we both had these lenses, we both had these video cameras up showing each other our stories and learning from them. And that was that moment of illumination. We had this exchange of stories, both of us gaining insight into each other's world. I have a really deep belief in growth. I truly believe that most people will do the right thing if they are given the right information and they are given an opportunity. And that has been born out again and again and again so part of my job on the job and off the job—was to give people information, give them the opportunity to be the best they could be. What shifted for me is assuming that there is sort of a hero in everybody and how do you bring that out. I learned I wasn't alone. There are challenges every single day, but it is how we choose to embrace the challenge and how we react to it. Transformation. It's like everything is going to change and you just have to go with the flow and embrace the change and be willing to learn. Every day it is about learning, it's about growing, and it is about sharing your knowledge with others to make them be the best they can be. I always chalk up any of these challenges just helps me continually

Value	Description
Influence	<p>grow. I pack around for the rest of my life in my little suitcase of being a better person and having better knowledge of how to go about doing things.</p>
Integrity	<p>I wanted to influence people and influence how things are being done, so the opportunity to influence and the opportunity to influence based on values. Probably the single most important touchstone for me every single day and in every single interaction is that you go back to the touchstone of your values, whether they be your values in how you work with clients, or its your values on what is a healthy workplace, or your values on what is a global world that you want to see?</p>
Respect	<p>There are two leaders in your body—your gut and your heart. And your gut will always tell you no, and your heart will always tell you yes. Follow your heart and have your brain organize what your heart tells you. And so that’s the integrity part where you don’t turn your back on your own heart because that’s your soul. Truth is in the integrity. In every situation you have to go back to the principles. Not only because it can safeguard integrity, but also because it opens up creativity. If you can get back to the principles, it can root you in your values and in your integrity, and it can also put you in a place that allows for more creativity, which is fun. Integrity is for me a lot about—I have to walk the talk. It means that I need to be what I am talking about, and I need to act what I am talking about.</p>
Responsibility	<p>Respecting each other. Without that you are not going to understand or grow or be willing to listen. Everybody has a different view, everyone has come from a different place too, so you can’t just assume they can come around. Coming from that strength-based approach and seeing every individual, every family, every community has strength. Every culture certainly has strength and you come in respecting that strength from the individual, the family, and the community and it completely changes your conversation. I value them for what they are bringing to the table. They are there for a reason and they are participating—all good intentions. Treating each other as professionals, very respectfully. Communicating and engaging with people in ways that honours each individual</p>
Responsibility	<p>Recognizing the responsibility that we hold to people. It is related to the privilege of serving. Responsibility to the people that you serve. Responsibility to the people who support you. Responsibility to your mission, to your employees.</p>

Value	Description
Trust	<p>Giving people time to trust me and each other. Receiving that message of trust and making sure that we earn it is really, really, really important to me. The privilege and trust that people have placed in us. I will trust first. The wisdom is in the room and you need to honour what happens in the room. I am very protective of the creativity and vulnerability that people go through when they are doing this work as they are incredibly vulnerable because they have these ideas and they are afraid nobody else will like them. I will protect them from people who will take away their power and make them feel less than they actually are. I look at trust as a by-product, it comes from many, many things. I look at it as if I do these things, it's my by-product, I built trust and then that brings a lot of other great things about. Being curious instead of being accusatory helps to build trust, all those different things.</p>
Truth/Honesty	<p>We made agreements that we would be truthful. We would be the truth. To the extent that it was possible, we would be the truth. Tell the truth—just everything. All relationships are founded in truth, or they are something other than relationships. If there is no truth, then where is the safety? Honesty for me is about being honest with yourself, about trying to be open and honest with others, but honest not in just talking, but in the way that you deal with one another. That you are good with others. That you behave in ways that are fair and are honest.</p>

Appendix G: Group Interview Protocol

Welcome to this conference call to explore preliminary findings that came out of my interviews with each of you and the subsequent data analysis process.

First, thank you for being on the call. I'm really looking forward to getting your input, reflections, and comments on the preliminary findings that have been identified as a result of the analysis.

I also want to remind you that this call is being audio-recorded as I will be transcribing the call, for further analysis. The other reminder is that because this is a research study, I won't be including any data from the call that would link directly to you. One final reminder please do not share details that are communicated by any of the participants on this call in order to honour their privacy.

For our call, my plan is to review each of the collective core values that were identified as part of the data collection and analysis process. I'll provide a definition of each of the values and a couple of examples. Then I'd like to turn it over to you for your reaction and response to what I've shared. I'm specifically interested in knowing what seems to really fit for you and what doesn't. I will continue the process as we review each value in turn.

My goal is to complete the process within the hour allotted for our call, so I'll also be conscious of the time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

If everyone is ready to proceed, let me begin with the first value,

Closing

Those are all of the values I wanted to review with you this evening. Is there anything you wanted to add before we close?

Thanks again for so generously sharing your time and expertise. I appreciate your willingness to be involved in this research project.

I'll be following up with each of you to share my final report with you. Please know that you have my deep gratitude for electing to be part of this research journey with me.

If there are additional questions that show up for you, please do not hesitate to contact me.