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

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ABSTRACT

While much literature explores the external environment shaping women’s advancement and success as leaders, much less research examines the intra-individual and identity-based dynamics of women’s experiences on the leadership path. The present study extends this existing body of work by taking an intrapersonal perspective to study professional women’s experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders as they move along the leadership path in organizations. Through an inductive qualitative study in a large, global bank, I introduce the concept of a gender-leadership frame to capture the different ways in which women construct their gender in relation to their leadership. My findings then demonstrate that these different frames are associated with women’s leader identity enactment – that is, the way she is coming to see herself as a leader at a particular point in time. This research suggests that different ways of thinking about one’s gender in relation to one’s leadership may help explain women’s different choices, aspirations, and development on the leadership path. Further, coming to see oneself as a leader does not happen in a vacuum, but rather is a complex process in which non-work identities (here, gender) play a role in one’s understanding of who she is and can be as a leader. The findings of this research make a series of contributions to scholarship on gender, leadership, and identities, as well as to managerial practice aimed at supporting women leaders.
There is increasing recognition in organizational scholarship that non-work identities are relevant to and intertwined with the work domain. Existing research and theory explains how individuals manage non-work identities (e.g., gender, family, national) in relation to work identities, as well as how certain organizational practices can play a role in individuals’ integration and segmentation across work and non-work boundaries (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Yet, we know that some specific work and non-work identities are inextricably linked in broader discourse, regardless of an individual’s management preferences or an organization’s practices. For example, a woman’s gender is attached to her leadership in popular and cultural discourse, and conceptually speaking, the role of leader is imbued with status distinctions derived from gender (Ridgeway, 2011). Despite this, we know little about how individual women understand and make sense of this presumed connection between their own gender and leadership.

A focus on women’s understandings of their gender in relation to their leadership is important in light of recent theory which emphasizes the importance of identity to one’s development as a leader. This work proposes that coming to see oneself as a leader – developing a “leader identity” – is a crucial component to advancing and succeeding as a leader because it influences one’s motivation to pursue leadership roles and gain leadership experience (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005). Conceptual work on leader identity development acknowledges that coming to see oneself as a leader may in fact be different for women (e.g., DeRue, Ashford & Cotton, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005; Ibarra, Snook & Guillen, 2010) because cultural, structural, and attitudinal barriers to women’s advancement may “interfere in women’s ability to see themselves as leaders” and “obstruct the identity work necessary to take up leadership roles” (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011: 475). Beyond these conceptual suggestions,
however, our understanding of how and in what ways gender may play a role the development of a leader identity for women is limited.

In this paper, I introduce the concept of a gender-leadership frame to capture the different ways in which women construct their gender in relation to their leadership. This concept emerged from an inductive qualitative field study in the capital markets division of a large global bank. My analysis revealed how various meanings can arise for individuals when a particular non-work identity (in this case gender) comes together with a particular work identity (in this case leader), whether or not the individual intends the two to be connected. Integrating these findings with theory on gender as a culturally and socially generated frame (Ridgeway 2009, 2011) and a conceptualization of frames as individual orientations that guide and organize perceptions of experience (Goffman, 1974), the present study demonstrates how an individual women’s gender-leadership frame orients her approach to and development of a leader identity.

Specifically, I find that a woman’s construction of her gender in relation to her leadership – as shifting positively or negatively, as in a state of ambivalence, or as reinforcing self-reliance or deficiency – is associated with the way in which she undertakes her development as a leader.

Participants approached the ongoing development of their leadership identities through different forms of leader identity enactment which were interrelated with their gender-leadership frames.

This research contributes theoretically to the study of gender, leadership, and identity in at least three important ways. First, while much literature explores women’s experiences as leaders, the focus is more on the external environment shaping women’s advancement and success as leaders, and less on the intra-individual and identity-based dynamics of women’s experiences on the leadership path. Further, much existing work on gender and leadership generalizes among women to compare them to men. The present study extends existing work by
taking an intrapersonal perspective to study how women come to see themselves as leaders and construct their gender as relevant to their leadership, and in doing so, elucidates the variance among a population of women at a similar point in their leadership advancement.

Secondly, this research is significant for the growing stream of literature on leader identity development. Much is known about leadership development in general, but only recently have scholars delved deeply into an identity-based perspective on leadership development (e.g., DeRue et al, 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra et al, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). Although conceptually it is acknowledged that leader identity development may not be the same for everyone, this existing literature does not examine in depth how one’s leader identity may be intertwined with other non-work identities, such as gender. Considering these ideas with respect to one’s gender and leadership is especially important given that we know that the leader role is already imbued with status distinctions based on gender (Ridgeway, 2001).

Finally, this paper moves beyond a boundary theory examination of work and non-work identities (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015) to consider the ways in which individuals construct the more general relationship between work and non-work, particularly when a strong cultural narrative already links the two specific domains. Regardless of an individuals’ identity salience or boundary preferences, the content of the gender-leadership frames examined here captures an individual’s sense of how her gender and leadership are related. The findings then demonstrate that this broader frame has implications for the individual’s development in the work domain.

In the following sections, I introduce the theoretical foundations that both motivated the study at a broad level and also offered a lens through which to understand the specific findings that emerged from my inductive field work. While I entered this study with a broad interest in understanding women’s intrapersonal experiences on the leadership path, the specific focus on
frames and leader identity development emerged in the iterative process of inductive research described below. Thus, I present these literatures up front to provide structure for the analysis and findings that follow.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Leader Identity Development

While existing work on leadership development tended to focus on individuals’ development of surface level leadership skills and the attainment of leadership expertise (Lord & Hall, 2005), recent work emphasizes the identity-based dimensions of leadership development. Collectively, this work suggests that developing and succeeding as a leader involves constructing a leader identity (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; DeRue et al, 2009; Ibarra, et al, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). A leader identity refers to one’s self-view as a leader (DeRue et al, 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005), which is important because it influences one’s motivation to pursue leadership roles and to gain leadership experience (Day & Harrison, 2007). An individual’s leader identity is a key predictor of effective leadership development and career development (Day & Harrison, 2007; Hall, 2004).

Existing work discusses leader identity development at a relatively general conceptual level (Day & Harrison, 2007; Ibarra et al, 2010), acknowledging that gender is likely to have important implications for one’s leader identity. For example, Lord & Hall (2005) suggest that women may find it more difficult to develop self-views as leaders because their leadership attempts may be less accepted by others. Similarly, DeRue et al (2009) and DeRue & Ashford (2010) cite individual difference and social stratification explanations as rationale for why the leadership identity construction process might be different for women. Further, the women’s leadership literature makes it quite evident that gender matters for women’s leadership.
advancement and success more broadly, but we still have limited understanding of how and in what ways gender may be relevant for women’s experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders, or developing a leader identity.

**Women as Leaders**

A wealth of literature demonstrates that women leaders face particular cultural, structural, and attitudinal challenges in advancing to top leadership roles (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ely & Rhode, 2010; Ridgeway, 2001). Existing scholarly literature on women as leaders provides us with a robust picture of the environment that women navigate, revealing how masculine notions of leadership remain deep-rooted in organizational policies and practices and well as in individual views of what and who leaders should be. However, in comparison to this externally-focused work, much less work focuses intra-individually on the women who are navigating this broader environment.

Taking the theoretical lens of leader identity suggests this is another important area to study with respect to women’s leadership (c.f. Ely & Rhode, 2010): how women understand their own advancement and come to see themselves as leaders, amidst this broader environment they navigate. In particular, while existing literature demonstrates that everyone else (society, organizations, other men and other women) sees women’s gender as relevant to their leadership, we know little about how, if at all, women see their own gender as relevant to their leadership – that is, what it means to them to be “women” leaders – and how this has implications for their development of a leader identity. Such a focus is important, because identity is “a source of motivational and directional forces that determine the extent to which [a] leader voluntarily puts himself or herself in developmental situations” (Lord & Hall, 2005: 592). How women see and understand themselves as leaders is likely to have important implications for how they enact their
leadership, what they aspire to, how certain they feel, who they reach out to, and ultimately the choices they make as they move along the path to greater organizational leadership.

In recent work, scholars similarly recognize the importance of attending to this particular intersection of women, leadership, and identity, suggesting that constraints both external and internal to the leader may shape women’s own behaviors and development as leaders (Hogue & Lord, 2007), and that external barriers may limit women’s capacity to develop a viable self-view as a leader (Ely & Rhode, 2010). Conceptually, the argument is built that gender is likely to matter to women’s leader identity, yet to date, little, if any, empirical attention has been given to the variance of perspectives among women with respect to how they see their gender as relevant to their leadership, if at all. In the remaining section, I consider existing theory and research that forms the basis for considering variations among women leaders’ constructions of gender and leadership.

An Intrapersonal Lens on Gender & Leadership

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

Diverse empirical observations from the literature do suggest that women have different
perspectives about the relevance of their gender in the workplace. For example, Ibarra &
Petriglieri’s (2007) find that how female consultants perceive their gender as impacting their
client interactions has implications for their broader professional identity construction. In another
vein, Ely (1995) finds different gender identity profiles for professional women, suggesting that
women in the same organization do not interpret their gender and its relevance to their work in
the same way. Still, this work does not comprehensively consider the varying constructions of
gender and leadership among a similar group of developing women leaders. As Ashmore et al
(2004) emphasize, when focusing on meaning/content elements of the self, variations within
group (e.g., differences among women leaders) become more important than comparisons
between groups (e.g., differences between men and women leaders); yet, existing scholarship
tends to focus on the latter.

In the present research, I focus directly and centrally on the women’s varied perspectives
of gender in relation to leadership. To do so, I develop the concept of gender-leadership frame,
which captures how women think about themselves as “women” leaders (e.g., what does it mean
to me to be a woman leader? How, and in what ways, do I see my gender as relevant to my
leadership, if at all?). The term frame, as used here, builds from Ridgeway’s (2009) discussion of
gender as a cultural frame that acts as a “background identity that biases, in gendered directions,
the performance of behaviors undertaken in the name of organizational roles and identities”
(p.1). While Ridgeway (2009) recognizes that “the gender frame acts through the sense-making of individuals” (p.157), her emphasis is on the external and social creation of the gender frame. To draw forth the internal experience of these frames, I incorporate notions from Goffman’s original treatment of frames (1974) by theorizing the gender-leadership frame as an individual woman’s guiding orientation that organizes perceptions and interpretations of her own experience. Recent work in organizational studies suggests that the concept of frames “provides a theoretical link between individual experience and social context” (Mazmanian, 2013:1228). Therefore, I see an important basis for extending the frame construct into understanding how different women may frame their gender in relation to their leadership, and in particular, how this intersects with the broader organizational context in which they sit and their own development as leaders.

This study offers the foundation for an intrapersonal theory of women’s leadership development in the context of their gender. In doing so, it addresses the following research questions: (1) how do women on the path to leadership construct their gender in relation to their leadership? (2) how, if at all, do these constructions play a role in women’s leader identity development?

METHODS

I conducted a qualitative field study in the capital markets division of a global bank. Qualitative methods were appropriate given the research aimed to understand women’s own perspectives about their gender and leadership, rather than explaining generalities about women leaders from an outside vantage point (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). I took an inductive, grounded theory based approach, which is particularly effective for exploring “the interpretations and emotions of different individuals or groups living through the same processes” (Langley, 1999:
This aligned well with my aim to focus directly on the varying perspectives among a group of women at a similar point in their development on the organizational leadership path.

**Research Setting: CDH Markets**

CDH Markets [a pseudonym] is one of the three major operating groups of a large global bank with headquarters in Canada and the United States. CDH Markets has approximately 2,300 employees across 29 global locations. My research took place in three primary locations of the organization – one in Northeastern United States, one in Midwestern United States, and one in Canada. CDH Markets is comprised of three divisions: investment banking, trading, and internal consulting.

In qualitative research, the researcher must be strategic about where she chooses to conduct her research so it aligns with the study’s objectives (Maxwell, 2008; Patton, 1990). Ample research evidence suggests that women face the greatest challenges in reaching leadership positions in male-dominated environments (Ely & Rhode, 2010; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Accordingly, much existing research on women as leaders has been concerned with male-dominated contexts. Since I sought to understand how women come to see themselves as leaders amidst the broader environment of structural and attitudinal challenges they may face, a setting that ensures such an environment exists was appropriate. The financial services industry has traditionally been a male-dominated industry both in terms of demographics (Catalyst, 2014) and cultural norms of masculinity (McDowell, 1997).

Table 1 provides the percentage of females by division and level at CDH Markets. Like many financial services firms, CDH Markets offers some programming to support women’s development in the firm (e.g., a piloted sponsorship program, some development programs, and
networking events offered to women in the organization); however, such programs are not offered consistently across all firm locations.

Participants & Sampling

I began by using purposive sampling, a strategy which is appropriate when seeking participants that are representative of a particular case (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Patton, 1990). Given my original broad interest in understanding women’s experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders, I initially sought professional women who were on the path to leadership in their organization. From this, my sampling became more defined as I learned more about CDH Markets. Specifically, individuals at the Vice President (VP), Director (D), and Managing Director (MD) levels are seen as the “developing leaders” in the firm. Within these levels, the executive leadership team of CDH Markets identifies each year individuals that are seen as high potential, which they refer to as “emerging leaders.”

Based on these distinctions, as well as the three lines of business, I worked with the organization to fill in a sampling matrix, in which I sought to capture participants that were relatively representative across lines of business, levels, and the emerging leader designation\(^1\). An HR representative at the organization generated a random list of female employees that fit the criteria of this matrix. The CEO of CDH Markets then sent an introductory email to prospective participants explaining the study, asking them to contact me if they were interested in participating. The initial email from the CEO went out to 70 individuals, and the final sample consisted of 55 participants (n=55), for a response rate of roughly 79%. Table 2 provides a description of the final sample.

\(^1\) Importantly, I did not access information about each participant’s high potential status until after I had conducted their interview.
As the study progressed, the tenets of theoretical sampling, which aims to help elaborate and refine categories in the emerging data (Charmaz, 2006), led me to seek additional participants for interviews. For example, I decided it would be useful to speak to the executive level leaders in the firm (n=9) to get a sense of perceived definitions of leadership in the firm. Additionally, in order to confirm my sense that gender-leadership frames was a concept primarily salient and applicable to women, I sampled a subset of male developing leaders (n=9).

**Data Collection**

My primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews with participants, This was an effective method for getting at my core interest in how women construct their gender in relation to their leadership, because interviews allowed me to elicit participants’ interpretation of their own experience and reflections that rarely occur in their everyday lives (Charmaz, 2006). Specifically, I did not expect that women consciously consider the role that their gender plays in their leadership every day; rather, I used the interview context to draw out their reflections on this relationship. Additionally, interviews are an important method for studying women’s gendered experiences at work because they allow “hidden gendered talk” to be revealed and analyzed by the researcher (Aalito, 2002).

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

This study is purposefully focused on women, with a particular interest in understanding the variation among women in terms of their constructions of gender and leadership. However, as a comparative point, I conducted interviews with a handful of men (n=9) at a similar point in the developing leaders trajectory. I expected that men would likely not hold varying constructions of gender and leadership in the same way that women do, and these interviews confirmed that. Throughout the course of my data collection, I also held informational meetings with the two executive leaders at CDH markets that sponsored my research. These meetings (about 8 hours in total, across 6 meetings) gave me a necessary understanding of the processes related to promotion and compensation and the high potential designations, and also gave me further insight into the firm’s culture around leadership and gender.

**Supplementary Field Data**

I gathered an array of archival materials – organization charts, materials on leadership development and women’s initiatives at the firm, demographic and high-performing data on participants, results from a previous organizational survey – from the organization in order to gain a richer sense of the research setting I was studying (Charmaz, 2006). For the most part, these materials allowed me to go into interviews with informed background information on the firm’s existing discussions around gender and leadership; and in some cases, helped me further
I learned from this information that firm initiatives to support women were offered inconsistently across the firm’s locations (and this was largely confirmed via participants in interviews).

I also conducted informal observations during my field visits. Observations help to deepen the richness of the data collected by providing a more complete, descriptive picture of a social setting (Maxwell, 2008; Becker, 1970). While my field notes collected via observations were not directly incorporated into the findings presented below, they allowed me to enter interviews with a more informed sense of the different locations, and also provided a richness of having my own personal experience of the organization as I was coding the data.

**Data Analysis**

A professional transcriptionist transcribed verbatim all interviews into text. I kept detailed contact summary forms (completed within a day of conducting each interview) and field notes throughout my data collection to capture my reflections on themes emerging in each day of interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I followed an inductive, iterative data analysis approach that involved moving iteratively between data collection, analysis, the literature, and my own emergent theoretical ideas as captured in my detailed field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Locke, 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). I used the qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti to facilitate this process. For ease of explanation, I describe my detailed analysis steps below in a rather linear fashion; yet, in practice, the process was very cyclical and iterative in nature, with analysis, data collection, and further analysis, taking place concurrently throughout the study.

The first stage of coding was focused on understanding my data at a basic level through the creation of first order codes. The coding stayed close to the voice of participants and was primarily descriptive in nature (Locke, 2001), often using the words of participants as the initial
codes (e.g. “gender doesn’t matter” or “gender challenge to overcome”). As I gathered more data and engaged in further coding, these initial first order codes were reworded and integrated along the way so similar data fragments shared similar codes (Charmaz, 2006, Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Locke, 2001). It was through this stage of provisional coding that I saw initial evidence of participants discussing, for example, how they view their gender now as compared to a previous view. This became important as I moved into the next stage of coding.

The next stage of coding moves from the descriptive first-order codes to coding that allowed me to understand the data at a higher level of abstraction (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This involved creating second-order codes that are more conceptual in nature and also consolidating first-order codes into broader theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). As an illustration, the first-order codes mentioned above (“gender challenge to overcome” and “gender_negative”) became part of a second code (“Valence_negative”) that captures the underlying dimension of the frames. Elucidating this valence dimension then allowed me to better understand and make sense of the movement within the positive and negative shifting frame experiences participants described. I could then move into the final stage of coding with a sense that the dimensions may serve as a way of understanding this movement.

In the final stage, I used these theoretical dimensions as the basis for telling a broader theoretical story of the data that considers relationships among the dimensions (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, as I had coded different enactments of leader identity, I was able to focus on how these enactments may be related to different frame experiences. To facilitate these connections across categories of data, I used memos and displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that allowed me to play with different relationship and associations in the coded data. Concurrent with coding the data at this higher level of abstraction, I began to fill in a
matrix that had each of the participants down the left side, and each of the primary conceptual categories across the top. Use of such a display allowed me to play with some relationships, go back into the data, refine my coding and subsequently refine the categories, ultimately leading me to truly understand the connections across the theoretical dimensions of interest and the core findings I present below.

**DIMENSIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF GENDER-LEADERSHIP FRAMES**

In my interviews, women expressed different and varying views of how, if at all, their gender is experienced as relevant to their leadership. As defined previously, I use the concept of gender-leadership frames to capture these varying constructions of gender in relation to their leadership. For example, for some, being a woman leader means having to work harder, while for others, being a woman is seen as having little or no relevance to one’s leadership. Given that it was quite clear that women do express various perspectives, rather than focusing extensively on if different frames exist, I focus here on the content and experience of gender-leadership frames. First, I briefly describe the underlying dimensions that comprise the varying content of participants’ constructions of gender and leadership. Then, I build from the data to consider the ways in which women recount the experience of these frames within an organizational context.

**Frame Dimensions**

As depicted in Figure 1, I found that women’s constructions of gender and leadership vary on four primary dimensions: relevance (how relevant is my gender for my leadership?), valence (is my gender positively or negatively relevant for my leadership?), self-other construal (is my gender relevant for the myself as a leader, or for others’ perceptions of me as a leader?), and collectivity beliefs (to what extent do I see myself as connected to the broader collective of “women leaders”?). An individual woman may fall at various points on each of these
dimensions, comprising the content of her gender-leadership frame at a point in time. While these underlying dimensions provide a useful foundation for understanding the content comprising participants’ gender-leadership frames, deeper analysis revealed the importance of how these dimensions are experienced within an organizational context. I consider these experiences next.

Frame Experiences

Through this in-depth examination in one field setting, I found that this frame content is experienced as dynamic, such that participants recount a shift in their frames, express ambivalence in their frames, or remain within one reinforcing frame. Table 3 provides a summary of these different experiences, which are described in depth below. Importantly, it is these experiences of frames in context that serve as the basis for understanding the relationship between frames and leader identity development discussed later.

Negative or positive shifts. In this case, participants describe an experience of gender as relevant to leadership that has shifted over time – either negatively or positively. As detailed below, these shifts move among dimensions of relevance and valence in various ways (and in some cases, also have a concurrent shift in collectivity beliefs). Importantly, these shifts are captured in terms of participants’ retrospective accounts of their own constructions of gender in relation to leadership over time.
A negative shift is an experience in which participants have come to realize the challenges their gender creates to their leadership. Participants reflect that they initially felt like gender was not relevant, but now, they experience their gender as relevant for their leadership in a negative way. For example, participants echoed ideas such as: “I used to think gender didn’t matter, but now it does” and “I used to try to make [being a woman] not matter, but I can’t do that anymore.” As one participant expressed:

“Instinctually, I would say ‘I’m a woman leader’, but remember I told you there was a shift at some point? …It used to be that [when] everyone would say: ‘Wow, [you’re a] banker, there’re not that many women.’ I’m like, ‘Whatever, Yeah, I’m a banker but I’m a woman.’ That was always my approach to it but it has totally shifted that I feel like…as I said earlier, I need someone who can help me navigate these challenges unique to women; in terms of how to be better perceived, get my point across, in a way that is okay for a woman to do.” [045]

As illustrated here, and in the quotes in Table 3, a number of participants discussed how they initially felt they could just rely on themselves and their own hard work to succeed; however, more recently, they’ve come to realize that this is not enough, particularly for women.

Alternatively, some participants express a positive shift in their perceptions of gender in relation to leadership. In this case, participants discuss initially experiencing their gender as a disadvantage for their leadership, but now feel like gender is less relevant to their leadership. As one participant commented:

“I don't think of [my gender] anymore. I’m so used to being the only woman in the board room or whatever that I don’t see it anymore…I’m just a leader in what I do and I know there's no one else whose done more [deals of this type] than I have so it’s like I’m a leader. It doesn’t matter that I’m a woman. Look at all I've done. [...] It doesn't matter anymore because I’m less focused on it….I’m just leader in what I do and it just happens that I’m a woman…I am now able to just shrug that off.” [017].

This participant discussed the challenges her gender created for her in the past (e.g., having to give up some of her feminine passions and interests in order to be taken seriously, and changing
the way she dressed in order to fit in); yet as reflected above, she has learned to shrug these off and construct her gender as not so relevant. In some ways, this shift echoes a coping mechanism, such that these women discuss working hard to make their gender not matter for their leadership (at least in how they perceive and experience it, cognitively). Other participants recounted a shift that ended at a point of even greater positivity about their gender and leadership. They have come to see the positive advantages and opportunities their gender can have for their leadership.

For example, one participant expressed:

“I think [being a woman] is a huge benefit right now. I wouldn't say that that was how it has always been; especially when I was at [my prior company]. . . . But generally right now, if you’re a woman and you’re competent and you can do the job, if [a promotion opportunity] were to become open, you do have that ‘one up’.” [008]

Together, these shifts capture an experience in which a woman’s sense of how her gender is related to her leadership has changed over time, in a negative or positive direction.

**Ambivalence within the frame.** While above, participants discuss experiencing shifts within their gender-leadership frames over time, here, participants express ambivalence in how they see their gender in relation to their leadership. Ambivalence is defined as having simultaneously positive and negative orientations toward something or someone and is characterized by mixed feelings and conflicting ideas (Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt, & Pradies, 2014). In the present study, participants experiencing this ambivalence within their gender-leadership frames often directly and explicitly expressed the tension they were experiencing around what it means to be a woman leader. For example, one participant said:

“Being a woman leader…it’s two-fold. On one hand you’re like, ‘Uhhhh, do we have to push the woman part again’ like you’re hearing so much about that, blah, blah, blah, you know. But I’m also not kidding myself. I’m sure when I was up for promotion, it helped that I was a woman. But on the other hand…I had to ask my boss what I had to do to get [to this level]. I know that [the men in my group] didn’t have to do that. So, it’s two-fold…I get it but at the same time I’m like ‘don’t overdo it on the gender thing’... So, yeah I’m totally torn in how I think about it.” [006]
This participant is experiencing mixed feelings and conflicting ideas about what her gender means for her leadership in terms of if gender is relevant to her leadership, how positive or negative being a woman is for her leadership, and if/how she should be supported as a woman.

In some cases, the ambivalence was evident through concurrent expressions of negativity and positivity. These participants believed that gender simultaneously helped and hindered their leadership (e.g., my gender is positive for my interpersonal style, but negative in terms of how others see me), or that it was irrelevant in some ways, but negative in other ways. For example, one participant expressed “being a woman does not impact my decisions [as a leader]; but it creates challenges because of non-work responsibilities” [057]. In such cases, I coded the frame experience as ambivalent because conflicting dimensions of the frames are expressed, even if the tension is not as explicitly expressed as in some of the above quotations. Relatedly, existing literature suggests that individuals may not always be conscious of their ambivalence, but it can still affect them (e.g., Ashforth et al, 2014; Meyerson & Scully, 1995).

**Reinforcing frames.** While the above two experiences are expressed as either movement from one point to another (shifting), or as tension between dimensions (ambivalent), the reinforcing experience captures a circular dynamic in which participants remain in a perpetual loop within a particular dimension of their frames. I found two common experiences of such reinforcement, which I call a self-reliance and deficiency.

Some participants continually discussed that their gender has little relevance for their leadership; rather, they believe if they perform well and work hard, they will succeed: that is, for them, it is primarily a story of self-reliance. This experience is reinforcing because participants tended to interpret what goes on around them, even if related to gender, from this perspective of self-reliance. For example, one participant expressed:
“I don't think of myself as I'm a woman here. I've always thought of myself as an employee in the bank. I was aware that [there can be differences], but it didn't bother me. I was just aware that it was going to be different and I figured out ways to work around all of that.... Like when they wanted to do a social thing and end up being in a place where most men would like to go and not so much women, you went along with it...So I found that through the years that I don't feel like being a woman has been a barrier. Any of the barriers that I faced I think are my own.” [002]

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

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

Alternatively, other participants experience a perpetual loop of disadvantage, such that they perceive their gender as creating disadvantages for their leadership, making it always harder to be a woman leader. Here, the reinforcing experience is one of deficiency. For example, participants express: “It’s harder being a woman leader” and “men will always have it easier in leadership.” In contrast to the negative shifts above, these participants did not reflect on any shift that has taken place; rather they continually experience gender as a disadvantage for their leadership. In many cases, participants made reference to the intersection of work and home lives as intertwined with the experience of deficiency. As one participant stated:

“For me very personally … I find it difficult [being a woman] because I largely feel like the men that I work with have a different life outside of the office and I often feel -- what's the word? Just self-conscious about my priorities if I want to leave at 5:30 and go see my children and get back online at 8:30, and still dedicated and still doing what I need to do. But I want to go home and see my children before they go to bed.” [034]
Beyond work-life challenges, gender is also experienced as a disadvantage to one’s leadership, based on perceptions of how women leaders are treated. For example, one participant discussed:

“Sexism still exists in this business although we’ve come a very long way…It’s still there. I mean, I’ve had some ridiculous things happen to me. I’ll give you an example: I had a boss say to me once, when I was out on maternity leave… ‘Oh good news, your bonus wasn’t prorated for you being out. Gee, I’d like to go on vacation for three months and not have my bonus prorated.’ That was my boss. Just like things like that I have run into…It’s the subtleties that continue to be a challenge as a woman leader.” [034]

Together, these expressions of self-reliance and deficiency are based on a reinforcing view of gender in relation to leadership; one that is not discussed as shifting or in tension, at least in the context of the interview discussions.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRAMES AND LEADER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Having demonstrated that participants’ gender-leadership frames vary, my findings now turn to consider if/how these frames matter for women’s leader identity development. Specifically, I found that participants’ gender-leadership frames relate to particular enactments of leader identity. Through my analysis, I found six forms of leader identity enactment – personalize, amplify, engage, disengage, gender, limit – that constitute how an individual is coming to see herself as a leader at a particular point in time. In other words, these forms of enactment tell us how participants are developing their leader identity, cognitively and behaviorally (c.f. Ashforth et al, 2008). Table 4 provides definitions and illustrative quotations for each of these enactment types.

Cycling through the iterative stages of data analysis and the eventual aggregation of conceptual dimensions, led me to see that these enactment types and individuals’ experiences of gender-leadership frames were inter-related, as depicted in Table 5. These findings point toward a variance relationship among frames and leader identity enactment, such that an individual
constructing gender in relation to leadership in a particular way may be more likely to focus her development of a leader identity in a certain way. For example, individuals expressing a negative shifting frame tended to enact their leader identities by personalizing the leader identity in a way that better fits who they can be or want to be as a leader (personalization); while individuals expressing a deficiency frame tended to disengage from seeing themselves as leaders all together (disengagement).

Within each section below, I offer representative cases of participants that illustrate these associations. Because the associations arose by arranging the enactment types in line with different frames, it did not make sense to fracture and slice individuals’ stories because these links would be less visible. Rather, by telling the stories of individuals who reflect each of the overall associations I saw, I am better able to illustrate the inter-relationships between particular frames and leader identity enactments. In doing so, I also build from the data to theorize the mechanisms – particular concerns highlighted within each frame – that offer an explanatory link between each frame and its particular form of leader identity enactment.

**Negative Shifting Frame Relates to Personalization**

For participants experiencing a negative shift in their frames, *personalization* was the most common form of leader identity enactment; that is, they enacted their leader identities in a way that better fit who they felt they can be or want to be as a leader. This personalization was evident when participants discussed focusing on “leading by example” or being “leaders of the culture because of my historical knowledge of the firm”, even when they recognized that such approaches do not necessarily fit broader images of leadership in the firm.
For example, Sarah talked about how seeing herself as a leader is about “being the person that others come to” with their questions because she has specific knowledge, not necessarily because she is “a leader on the grandest scale”. She says:

“I don’t need to be the person who [runs the whole desk]. It’s more that [people are] coming to you because they really want to ask you… what I aspire to doesn't even have to be at the grander scale, like obviously this is a global bank so obviously a seat at the table on a higher level would require me to run the whole desk. But even locally, just like within our group, just to be a person that they come to is what I want. I like having an area of specialty, like… when people come to me and say, ‘What's your view on the market?’ So, when I see my future I want to be one of the people who have voices that need to be heard.”

In this case, Sarah clearly still wants to see herself as a leader; but she focuses on doing so by enacting a more personalized sense of leadership that feels comfortable to her (“having people come to me”) even if it is not the highest form of firm-defined leadership. Sarah also expressed core elements of a negative shifting frame: she reflected on how she used to think her gender did not matter, but as she’s advanced, she is facing “unique challenges as a woman leader.” If we consider gender-leadership frames as orienting how women approach their development as leaders, this enactment makes sense: participants discuss how being a woman is going to create more challenges as a leader than they initially assumed (*negative shift*), therefore they focus on enacting leadership in a way that is comfortable for them.

This association between negative shifts and personalization seems driven by authenticity concerns. For example, Sarah discussed the angst she felt in having to do things “that don’t feel natural to me…but it’s the only way to be noticed as a leader.” Participants enacting a personalized sense of who they are and can be as leaders discussed struggles in fitting broader definitions of who leaders are and should be within this firm; rather, they seemed motivated to see themselves as a leader in a way that was comfortable to who they are. In other words, if gender is now realized as more negative for my leadership, then I will focus my development on
leadership that feels right for me. Seeing oneself as a leader through personalization may be empowering for participants’ own sense of leadership; yet, as evident in many participants’ examples, it may also move them further from aspiring to higher levels of formal leadership in the firm.

**Positive Shifting Frame Relates to Amplification**

Another form of leader identity enactment evident in participants’ interviews was *amplification*. In this case, individuals broaden their leader identity, so that their sense of who they are and can be as leaders extended to include a responsibility for “leading women” more broadly. For example, participants talked about “feeling accountable as a woman leader” and “feeling a responsibility for other women leaders.” Such amplification of one’s leader identity in this way was primarily associated with the experience of a *positive shift* in one’s gender-leadership frame. In other words, participants who discuss working to make their gender not matter or realizing gender is an opportunity for their leadership (positive shift) also enacted their leader identity in a way that expanded the responsibilities they saw as part of their leadership.

The story of one participant, Fran, illustrates such connections between the experience of a positive shifting frame and an amplification of the leader identity. Fran experienced a positive shift in her frame as she talks about initially feeling gender constrained her as a leader but now feeling like her gender is an advantage to her leadership. She says: “it took me a while to own my voice….to own my leadership” but now, she sees how “I have inherent advantage when I walk into a room” because she is a strong woman that gets noticed. Thus, she has overcome the disadvantages to realize the opportunity her gender creates for her leadership.

As Fran discusses her aspirations and who she wants to be as a leader, it is oriented around providing more support for women – reflecting such amplification of her leadership. She
says: “I do think it means that I need to spend more time making sure that the younger [women] have a mentor. I've never had a mentor...I think it's really, really important for women to do that for each other. I don't know that we always know the things we should know.” She reflected back on what was missing for her earlier in her career, as it took her sometime to really internalize her success. Now, having worked through this to make a positive shift, Fran is motivated to create these changes for the next generation of women. She says:

“[I need] to make sure...that women are getting the right messages about things that are important to do that aren't written in your career goals...that there are other qualitative things to be doing. And I think it's really important for senior women to make sure you help junior women understand that and help them understand they can have a life, too.”

From these illustrations we see how experiencing gender as now more positive for leadership is intertwined with collectivity beliefs: participants experiencing a positive shift feel more connected to women leaders as a whole and therefore they amplify their leadership to include this.

It is important to note that supporting other women was not only mentioned by participants that experienced a positive shift in their frames. Some other participants, particularly those at the most senior MD level, also discussed feeling responsible for helping other women; however, these participants did not ‘amplify’ their leader identities in the same way as the women with a positive shifting frame. While they mentioned in passing specific ways in which they may reach out to other women, when discussing their own development as leaders, there was little evidence that they were coming to see themselves as by amplifying to include this responsibility.

Ambivalent Frame Relates to Engagement or Gendering
The next two forms of leader identity enactment were associated with the ambivalent frame. Specifically, participants expressing an ambivalent frame tended to either (a) *engage* more deeply in coming to see themselves as leaders, or (b) saw themselves as leaders through a *gendered* lens. I consider each in turn.

Participants that experienced tension around what it means to be a women leader (ambivalent frame) showed evidence of *engaging* their leader identity in a way that actively helped them to see themselves more as leaders. They were coming to see themselves as leaders through active commitment to developing and furthering their leadership in ways that aligned with firm expectations of leadership. For example, participants echoed ideas such as “building my brand within the firm” and “show[ing] what I can do and keep pushing and moving it forward.” One participant, Patricia, had reached a senior level of firm-leadership, but expressed ambivalence in how she got there. She admits that: “I keep getting promoted, but I’m not sure why” and she often wonders: “Did I get that promotion because I'm a female or because I'm a female and they wanted to promote me?” This ambivalence is associated with her further engagement in seeing herself as a leader:

“…people above me saw qualities that might be good as a leader but I never saw it….sometimes, I catch myself and go, ”What am I doing here?” I've got to give a leadership [discussion] on Friday […] and I'm like how did I get here, you know I feel like a bit of a fraud sometimes. But here I am. And it turns out that I can do it and I think I do it pretty well. I’m learning to take a step back, to see the forest for the trees, to not panic which I think is one of the reasons that people saw something in me. I'm working on delegating. .. I want to make sure that what's going out is what we were looking for, it's what the vision is, it's on message. So I could say that is part of being a leader.”

Importantly, the ways in which these participants talk about furthering their development is in line with what they see as firm-defined leadership. They are doing what they need to do to advance to greater and more certain leadership in terms of the perceived path to success in this
organization. For example, another participant reflected: “For me I think [my development is] based in the short term on pro-activeness. Like, I’m really trying to build the confidence to know that when I’m in a room full of senior executives, what I say matters….I’d say the other thing is I’ve also been really trying to advocate for my [team] differently.” Engaging the leader identity and working to prove to oneself and others that “I can do this”, may be a response to the tension they feel around what it means to be a woman leader (the ambivalent frame). They are working hard to engage their leader identities in spite of the uncertainties within their ambivalent frames.

However, not all participants experiencing ambivalent frames engaged in the leader identity in these ways. Rather than fully engaging in the development of their leader identity in a way that aligns with firm definitions of leadership, some participants experiencing an ambivalent frame end up enacting their leader identity through *gendering*, such that they develop their leadership in ways that are stereotypically feminine. For example, women discussed focusing on the “softer skills” and being the “emotionally supportive leader” for junior employees. One woman even labeled the way that she and her male co-leader split up the roles as: “we want it to be more like mom and dad.” For more junior employees, such gendering took the form of taking on administrative tasks for the group, for example, creating the schedule for the team “because that gives me something to lead.”

Importantly, participants themselves do not explicitly express this as a “gendering” of their leader identities, but they often made sense of these ways they were enacting their leadership in contrast to how the men may do it (e.g., I focus on the softer side, while he focuses on leading the business). Thus, from an analytical perspective, I refer to this as “gendering” of their leader identities, as they take on the stereotypically feminine tasks of leadership – the softer, interpersonal, or administrative tasks, which they frame as outside of the day-to-day
leading of the business. Paradoxically, this move toward gendered leadership seems to increase ambivalence about their own leadership and gender within the firm.

In a sense, this is the alternative path to the previous engagement we saw from other women experiencing ambivalent frames. These two groups seem to be leaning toward opposite sides of their ambivalence – on the one hand, some are working hard to engage in their leadership, and in the other case, some are inadvertently “gendering” their leadership to be more feminine. Thus, the tension within their frame experiences plays out differently for their enactment of the leader identity.

**Self-Reliance Frame relates to Limiting**

Participants experiencing a self-reliance reinforcing frame were most likely to enact their leader identities by limiting: in this case, participants focused narrowly on their functional responsibilities, rather than directly engaging with their future leadership. Participants are limiting their sense of selves as leaders because they focus their development on doing well in the content of their functional role (e.g., to close deals and bring in revenue), yet do little to transcend this to developing themselves as leaders, even though they may desire to advance further on the path. Thus, in contrast to the previous enactment in which participants seemed to be actively disengaging from their sense of selves as leaders; in this case, participants limiting is not so much an active disengagement, but rather is a by-product of their narrowing focus on functional effectiveness.

The case of Samantha illustrates these connections. Samantha echoed core expressions of self-reliance, commenting that “I would never identify myself as a woman leader, and would be offended to hear myself called that.” She talked about her early years of “living in the old, male, traditional Wall Street” and that she just made it work (“if you’re good, they’ll forget [you’re a
woman"]). Thus, she sees working hard and performing well as being much more important and relevant than her gender.

When discussing her leadership development, Samantha discussed how her focus has always been on closing deals and bringing in revenue. While she has led a team for a while, she says she always thought about her team as “just an extension of my deals. So, I had a whole team of people who just worked exclusively on my stuff that I called that my group.” Samantha admits that she really only focuses on leading her team because she’s supposed to, even though her true focus continues to be on improving in her functional responsibilities and much less on actively developing herself as a leader. The following quotations illustrate such limiting of her leader identity. She says:

“… it would be expected that someone that runs a group would spend most of his or her time running the group. I don't. I spend most of my time actually [doing the actual work] as opposed to leading the team. I prefer that…. If you have success, then it's easy enough to see how those qualities would lead to a leadership position… but, it never was part of my plan to aspire to run [this] department. In my view, if you're successful [in your role doing the actual work], why in the world would you want to run the department and give up the opportunity to be good [at this role]? There is latitude in doing [it the way] I do, as long as it pays off for [the organization].”

As evident in Samantha’s case, this association between self-reliance and limiting seems driven by efficacy concerns. Specifically, the self-reliance reinforcing frame experience is based on a construction that one’s own skills and hard work matter most for success as a leader, rather than gender. For these participants, such constructions are intertwined with a narrowing focus on their functional skill development within their area of expertise, because their own effectiveness is really what they believe matters most.

**Deficiency Frame Relates to Disengagement**
While women expressing a negative shifting frame ultimately end up at a more negative view of their gender in relation to leadership, participants expressing a deficiency frame discuss how they’ve always experienced their gender as a disadvantage. This broader orientation highlights for these participants that leadership will always be difficult for them as a woman, therefore, they *disengage* in any future development of their leader identities (at least in this particular context).

For example, Mary struggled to even discuss her future desires or goals for leadership, and said quite explicitly: “I don't see myself leading [this group] or any group here. There’s nothing here that leads me to believe that I’m necessarily being groomed for that. I’m just being told I need to think that way if I want to make [it to the next level], but that’s kinda where it is.” She expressed core elements of a deficiency frame experience, discussing ways in which her gender creates disadvantages, for example, because “women are just not aggressive enough” to succeed in this business. She spoke a lot about the disconnect in terms of the firm’s espoused values around work-life balance, and the actual enactment of such values; given this dynamic, she questioned if she even wants to be a leader here: “We preach certain things [about balance] and we don’t necessarily act on those things so I don’t want to be a leader because I don’t want to officially be a part of that.” Importantly, Mary was promoted to the next level of leadership in the firm (which should signal that she is seen as a leader by others), but continued to disengage from seeing herself as a leader; so much so, that she tried at first to turn down the promotion:

“So when [I got promoted], my fear was that people’s expectation of what I can do and what I can run will be very different from what I actually can do….I actually asked not to be promoted because I felt I was not ready”

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

As evident in Mary’s story, participants expressing a deficiency frame had a diminished sense of self as a leader all together: they didn’t aspire to greater leadership in the firm because they questioned if/how others would ever see them as a leader. This suggests concerns around credibility – others views of me as a leader – potentially explaining the association between deficiency frames and leader identity disengagement. For example, another participant, Jennifer, echoes this intertwining of disadvantage as a woman leader (deficiency frame) and others views’ of her as a leader. While she made it to a senior level, she feels like she really is only looked to as a leader because she’s a woman; she says: “…because there are so few female leaders in our firm, I have no doubt I'm pointed to as a leader just because I'm a woman.”

Summary of Associations between Frames & Leader Identity Enactment

Together, these findings demonstrate that the way in which individuals experience gender as related to leadership may act as a guiding orientation through which they come to see themselves as leaders. For example, I demonstrate above that a shift toward realizing the negative relationship between gender and leadership (negative shift) can orient an individual toward personalizing her leader identity through concerns of how to feel authentic as a leader. Or, experiencing a self-reliance reinforcing frame, in which individuals believe their own skill and expertise matters most to their leadership, can orient an individual toward limiting her leader identity through concerns around efficacy as the vehicle to seeing herself as a leader. Thus, the concerns participants have in seeing themselves as leaders and the choices they make in terms of how to develop at a point in time, vary in accordance with different constructions of gender and leadership.
DISCUSSION

The initial purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of professional women’s experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders as they move along the leadership path. Through a field study of women developing as leaders in a global bank, the construct of gender-leadership frame emerged to capture the various ways in which women construct their gender in relation to their leadership. I found that the experience of these gender-leadership frames orient women toward certain enactments of their leader identities within a particular organizational setting.

Together, these findings demonstrate that different ways of thinking about one’s gender in relation to one’s leadership may help explain women’s different choices, aspirations, and development on the leadership path. While prior work suggests that women may struggle to advance and develop as leaders, this study provides in-depth insight into the intra-psychic dynamics these women experience as they consider what it means to be a woman leader in a particular organization. Much like the broader narrative around women as leaders, we see the ways in which women themselves are grappling with the positives and negatives, individuality and collectiveness, surrounding conversations of women as leaders. Frame theory suggests that frames guide interpretations and orient patterns of action in particular settings (e.g., Dewulf et al, 2009; Mazmanian, 2013). For example, negotiation scholars suggest that conflict management frames “shape the way people think about resolving or managing disputes” (Gardner & Burgess, 2003: 400). I build on this to suggest that frames can also orient an individual’s sense of who she is and can be within the leadership domain: that is, gender-leadership frames shape women’s perceptions and interpretations of challenges and opportunities along the leadership path.
While these findings were derived within the context of women’s development as leaders in a large global bank, the ideas can be conceptualized at a broader level to understand how leader identity is produced as a function of the experience of non-work identity, especially when the non-work identity is already part of the cultural narrative around leadership. Thus, coming to see oneself as a leader does not happen in a vacuum, but rather is a complex process in which non-work identities (here, gender) may play a role in one’s understanding of who she is and can be as a leader. Below I discuss specific implications of these findings for theory and research on gender, leadership, and non-work identities.

**Contributions to the study of Gender & Leadership**

This study offers a systematic and nuanced understanding of the variations among a group of women leaders in terms of how they construct their gender as relevant to their leadership. While much past research focuses on generalizing women’s experiences in order to compare them to men’s, if we *only* focus on generalizing each group in order to facilitate comparison, we run the risk of sophisticated stereotyping (e.g., Osland, Birch, Delano & Jacob, 2000) in our own research. This study demonstrates that different constructions of gender and leadership exist even across women at relatively similar points in their objective leadership advancement. Perhaps most important, however, is not just that these variations exist, but that these variations have implications for women’s sense of who they can be as leaders; that is, gender-leadership frames are associated with developmental outcomes for women. In a recent review of leadership development literature, Day & Dragoni (2015) suggest that proximal developmental outcomes, such as leader identity, are conceptually and empirically distinct from the more typical focus on leadership effectiveness, and thus are important to study in their own right. Therefore, by understanding the forms of leader identity enactment unearthed here, and
their association with gender-leadership frames, this research offers initial insight into an important set of developmental outcomes for women on the leadership path in organizations.

My focus on women’s gender-leadership frames expands on Ridgeway’s notion of gender as a frame. While she recognizes that “the gender frame acts through the sense-making of individuals” (Ridgeway, 2009: 157), her emphasis is on the external and social creation of gender as a primary cultural frame for organizing social relations. Specifically, my findings suggests that gender framing at the individual level – at least in so far as how women frame their gender in relation to their leadership – can operate to shape the aspirations and goals women even develop in the first place. While Ridgeway (2011) suggests that individual’s may draw on and learn widely shared gender status beliefs, my study uncovers the nuances in how individual women take up, internalize, and act upon these beliefs in varying ways within their own frames. Thus, not only does the gender frame organize social relations and lead to the persistence of gender inequality at a more macro level; I reveal how, in the context of leadership, this frame is taken up in varying ways by individuals to orient the choices they make, aspirations they have, and development they focus on within their organizational lives.

Finally, this paper begins to fulfill calls for better understanding of how women’s leadership goals develop (Ely & Rhode, 2010; Ely et al, 2011). Specifically, this research sheds light on the cognitive processes and identity dynamics underlying the choices women may make and opportunities they envision for themselves as they move along the path to greater leadership. The various forms of leader identity enactment I found give in-depth insight into how women may head down a particular path in terms of their aspirations and developmental goals; and further, that these choices may simultaneously serve to help them individually while making it more difficult for them to advance to greater leadership in a particular firm. For example, some
women personalized their leader identities in a way that allowed them to feel more authentic as leaders, but simultaneously moved them further away from images of leadership in the firm. Other women amplified their leader identities in a way that was empowering for women collectively and for themselves in terms of the impact they made. At the same time, however, enacting leadership through such extra-role behaviors (e.g., volunteering for mentoring initiatives, leading informal networking events, etc.) may serve to further reify images of women as incongruous with this firm’s perceptions of leadership tied to revenue generation. Such findings provide insight into the contextual elements and cognitive dynamics underlying the choices women are making and the aspirations they develop on the leadership path.

**Contributions to the study of Leader Identity Development**

This work also makes a series of contributions to the growing attention in the literature on leader identity development. Scholars have called for a better understanding of how underlying social structures and norms embedded in organizational contexts may have implications for seeing oneself as a leader (DeRue et al, 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). My findings demonstrate that underlying social structures in organizations, which inherently privilege men, can play a role in leader identity development, at least in so far as women’s own understanding of how their gender may interplay with their leadership. Thus, while some existing work theorizes about the role others may play in leader identity development at the level of claiming and granting interactions, the present study situates such development within a broader organizational and cultural context around women and leadership.

This study suggests that research needs to move beyond treating the leader’s experience as generic, to better understand and appreciate whether and how particular non-work identities can shape a person's sense of themselves as leaders. Especially for populations that have been
historically under-represented in positions of power, how one experiences a particular non-work identity in concert with their leader identity is likely to be important. Perhaps when an individual has a demographic identity that is viewed as a prototypical for leadership, it intersects in a unique way with seeing oneself as a leader, beyond the usual treatment of simply categorizing dichotomously whether a leader “is” or “is not” a member of a particular category (e.g., male or female; white or non-white). Particular norms/stereotypes typically attached to women in organizations are inherent in the frames and enactment that emerged from this research; thus, it is possible that there may be unique intersections for other demographic identities with the leader identity.

Finally, this study builds empirical insight into the content of leader identity development, beyond current considerations that primarily conceptualize such development based on the strength of one’s leader identity in the overall self-concept. I expand our understanding of what leader identity development actually entails by revealing what individuals are actually seeking out, doing, understanding and questioning as they come to see themselves as leaders. The enactment types give insight into how individuals, at least at a point in time, undertake the development of their leader identity by personalizing, amplifying, engaging, gendering, disengaging, and limiting their sense of selves as leaders. Future research should consider if/how these forms of enactment apply to leader identity development in a broader population beyond the developing women leaders studied here.

**Contributions to the Study of Work and Non-work Identities**

While scholars have begun to theorize more directly about non-work identities in the context of work, an important difference with the present focus is that for women, gender (as a non-work identity) is already associated with leadership in broader cultural discourse. Therefore,
models which suggest that individuals experience organizational and individual pressures to align (or not) their non-work identities with work (e.g. Ramarajan & Reid, 2013), are complicated by this larger context in which the two particular domains are already inextricably linked, particularly in a male-dominated industry such as banking. In other words, gender is already tied to the leadership role, whether or not an individual prefers to include or exclude it. The importance of this dynamic is evidenced in the present study, in which we see women who construct their gender as not relevant (self-reliance frame), yet still acknowledge, recognize, and often counter against, the broader narrative that sees them as “woman leaders.” This emphasizes that in some cases, individuals may have less latitude in how they choose to align (or not) non-work identities in the context of work.

Outside of the leadership domain specifically, the literature on identities at work discusses ways in which individuals construct and “work on” their work-related identities. For example, Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufman (2006) offer a model of identity customization, in which professionals change their identity to fit work demands by enriching, patching, or splinting their developing identities as professionals. Ibarra’s (1999) research finds that some new professionals, primarily women, experiment with provisional selves by engaging in “true to self” strategies that allowed them to feel authentic in their shift toward a new role identity. My findings integrate and build on these ideas in the context of leadership: I find various forms of enactment among women, some of which appear to truly echo this ‘true to self’ strategy in the context of leadership (e.g., personalization), but others that focus more so on strategically matching defined images of leadership within the firm. Thus, my findings unpack further the nuances in how individuals may work to fit themselves to an identity, but also fit an identity to themselves. Without understanding the gendered dynamics intersecting with one’s leader identity
development, I may not have seen these important nuances in the enactments as working to fit the identity to who I am and want to be as a leader (not just to fit the work demands).

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The inductive, qualitative approach I took allowed for in-depth insight into individual’s subjective experiences and the questions at the heart of this research; yet, this approach has its limitations, as all methodological choices involve trade-offs. The most common limitation of qualitative work and cross-sectional interviews are that the data is based on participants’ retrospective sensemaking. However, interviews are a common method for studying individual identity in organization studies (Alvesson et al, 2008), because of the construction of self and experience that occurs right in the interview setting. In the present study, I was particularly interested in women’s conscious reflections on their gender and leadership, and thus prompted them to discuss this in the interview. I did not expect that women go through their daily organizational lives thinking consciously about how their gender may be relevant; rather, my purpose and interest in the interview was to elicit such reflections to get a sense of how they construct gender in relation to leadership. I took care in asking questions about their gender in relation to leadership at the end of the interview, so that all other questions about the organizational context and their own leadership development were asked prior to the eliciting of such reflections.

Additionally, while focusing in-depth in one organizational field setting provided many advantages, it may also create limitations. For one, as noted previously, this firm already offers some initiatives focused on women in the organization; therefore, it is quite possible that the saliency of being a “woman leader” was heightened in this setting. Nonetheless, at this point in time, a large number of professional services firms have implemented some programming and
initiatives relevant to women’s development (Ramarajan et al, 2014). This echoes that the existing cultural and societal narrative around “women leaders” is salient already, which makes this such an interesting intersection to study. Future research could attempt to consider similar questions in an industry or setting that has given less explicit attention to women’s development; however, it may be difficult to find any organizational setting immune from such discussions at this time, particularly in the U.S.

In addition to research that would address these specific limitations, many directions for future research follow from this study. At the most basic level, future work could fruitfully build from the foundation established here as it relates to gender-leadership frames. In the present study, I found four primary dimensions underlying women’s constructions of gender and leadership, but future work could consider more systematically if/how these dimensions are a comprehensive framework for gender-leadership frames. Quantitative methodologies could be employed to create scales for each dimension to test if these are the primary dimensions underlying women’s gender-leadership frames, and whether/how these dimensions may interrelate. On the one hand, such quantification runs the risk of losing the lived experience and nuanced construction within these frames, as developed in the present research. On the other hand, systematizing these dimensions would allow for a more methodical understanding of how particular organizational and personal variables may influence women’s frames.

Additionally, while my findings suggests that the experience of gender-leadership frames is dynamic (at least based on how individuals recount it), future longitudinal research should examine how gender-leadership frames actually change over time for individuals. In participants’ own retrospective accounts, they discuss shifts and changes in how they experience their gender in relation to their leadership now as compared to in the past; but future work following a cohort
of women over time could add more insight into this evolution as it unfolds in-situ. For example, a longitudinal study employing diary or journaling methods could shed light on the particular situations and interactions that might give rise to different meanings of gender and leadership at different points in time. Relatedly, while frame theory supports that gender-leadership frames act as the broader guiding orientation for an individual’s enactment of her leader identity, the relationship is likely recursive. For example, for many of the women experiencing the negative shifting frame, the way they were previously enacting their leader identities may not have been working (e.g., I thought I just had to perform well and work hard); therefore, they introduce gender as part of the story via a negative shifting frame. Research capturing participants’ experiences over time could build insight into these dynamic relationships.

Future work could also consider if certain frames are more adaptive in certain organizational contexts. For example, do women holding a positive shifting frame perform better in a certain organization than women holding a self-reliance frame? In the present research, I considered this question by using the high-potential designation as a proxy for performance; yet, there did not appear to be any systematic association between this designation and the frame types. This may be the case here because in this organization, individuals do not know that they are designated as high potential; this designation is used by the managerial team to evaluate employees, but it is not shared with individual employees. Perhaps formalized or transparent measures of performance might be more appropriate for assessing if particular frame experiences are more adaptive in certain contexts.

A large remaining question from the present study is what leads women to certain experiences of gender-leadership frames. While outside the scope of the present study, there is initial evidence in the quotations offered here that many of women’s constructions of gender and
leadership were intertwined with proximal experiences in their organizations. For example, often when participants reflected on positive and negative shifts in their frames, they discussed both personal (e.g., having a child) and professional (e.g., moving from an organization with different cultural norms) transitions related to this shifts in how they saw their gender in relation to their leadership. Additionally, participants experiencing ambivalence in their frames often discussed confusion around the firm’s support of and approach to women’s development (e.g., they appreciated the support for women in the firm but also noted that “it feels like a quote on paper”). Future research should consider more directly how elements of the specific organization may play a role in shaping how women experience gender-leadership frames.

Additionally, cursory analysis based on participant demographics (e.g., age, level, location, etc.) did not reveal any patterned associations with gender-leadership frames; however, a larger, more diverse sample would be necessary to consider in-depth if/how women’s constructions of gender in relation to leadership may vary by specific demographic characteristics.

**Implications for Organizations**

In the past, organizations that have implemented successful interventions around gender have raised managers’ awareness about the differences between women and men’s workplace experiences (Ramarajan et al, 2014). The findings here demonstrate that differences extend beyond those between men and women, such that organizations interested in supporting female employees should consider how lived experiences *between* women vary. We know that empathy is critical in managerial relationships, and managers who are curious about others get better than expected performance from their direct reports (Goleman, 2002). Too often, however, organizations attempt to take a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting and developing employees, or certain ‘groups’ of employees, such as “women leaders”.
The research presented here illuminates great variation within a group of “similar” women in the same firm; emphasizing how important it is for managers to develop a deeper understanding of how specific employees experience the organization and their own goals, aspirations, and development within it. For example, organizations could work with managers to anticipate and prepare for transition points in employees’ careers. Managers who pay careful attention to their employees’ transitions (e.g., having children, getting promoted, joining as a lateral hire) might be able to minimize negative shifts in women’s gender-leadership frames. Moreover, there may be an especially valuable opportunity for managers to “turn around” frames. Perhaps the most vocal champions among female developing leaders are those who “amplify” their leadership. These women overcame perceived challenges at work related to gender and, as a result, feel compelled to serve as a representative voice for other women. Guiding managers to identify these women and help improve their experiences through targeted coaching and development could yield beneficial results.

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

This study deepens our understanding of professional women’s experiences with coming to see themselves as leaders as they move along the leadership path; and in doing so, provides a foundation for much future research at the intersection of gender and leadership identity development. In particular, conceptualizing gender-leadership frames can spur a deeper appreciation for the varying organizational experiences and perspectives among women. While often acknowledged in our scholarship, women’s varying constructions of gender and leadership are rarely problematized as done here. This research demonstrates that there are many differences in how women construct and think about the relevance of gender to leadership in the first place, and these differences have important implications for their sense of who they are and can be as leaders. As one study participant put it: “…with every women, her story is going to be different.”
Table 1.
Percentage of Females by Line of Business & Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Investment Banking</th>
<th>Trading</th>
<th>Internal Consulting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VP</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.
Description of Sample

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VP</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>Total (by LOB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investment Banking</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Consulting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (by Level)</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>55 (total n)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Location 1</th>
<th>Location 2</th>
<th>Location 3</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total (by location)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investment Banking</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Consulting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (by location)</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>55 (total n)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High Potential %  | 62%  | 63%  | 77%  | 69%  |

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in Org (years)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage with Children  | 64%  |
Figure 1.
Gender-Leadership Frame Dimensions

- **Gender is relevant for leadership**
  - **Valence**
    - **Positive**
      - Gender is positively relevant for leadership in terms of the self (e.g., being a woman leader means having advantages in leadership style)
    - **Negative**
      - Gender is negatively relevant for leadership in terms of the self (e.g., being a woman leader means having disadvantages in leadership style)
  - **Collectivity beliefs**
    - **Low**
      - Being a woman leader means little for my connection to "women leaders" as a group
    - **High**
      - Being a woman leader means connecting with "women leaders" as a collective group

- **Construal**
  - **Self**
    - Gender is negatively relevant for leadership in terms of others (e.g., being a woman leader means having disadvantages in how others treat me)
  - **Other**
    - Gender is positively relevant for leadership in terms of others (e.g., being a woman leader means having advantages in how others treat me)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Core Elements</th>
<th>Representative Quotations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shifting Frame _ Negative</strong></td>
<td>• Experience of gender in relation to leadership has shifted over time to be</td>
<td>“I think up until now I would have said, ‘I’m a leader who just happens to be a woman.’…But, I think even in the last couple of years being in these [higher] roles, has opened my eyes a little bit more to why there's a difference, and why it’s harder. The things that I thought were unique to me are not really unique to me, are very common among women. What I was talking to you before about you put your head down and you just get your work down and you're going to be recognized. Well I thought that was me. I [now see that] it’s something that’s unique for women as opposed to men.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=10)</td>
<td>more negative;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individuals used to see gender as having little relevance for their leadership, but have come to realize the challenges that come with being a “woman leader” (move to negative valence)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shifting Frame _ Positive</strong></td>
<td>• Experience of gender in relation to leadership has shifted over time to be</td>
<td>“I think [being a woman] is a huge benefit right now. I wouldn't say that that was how it has always been; especially when I was at [my prior company]…. You do have a lot of egos on the trading floor so it’s a lot of that male testosterone you deal with, like ‘rah, rah look at me pounding the table.’ But generally right now, if you’re a woman and you’re competent and you can do the job, if something were to come up…you do have that one up.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=10)</td>
<td>more positive;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individuals used to experience gender as negative for leadership (negative valence), but now see it as less relevant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Individuals used to see gender as having little relevance for their leadership, but have come to realize the advantages that come with being a “woman leader” (move to positive valence)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ambivalent Frame</strong></td>
<td>• Tensions in the experience of gender in relation to leadership</td>
<td>“So I’m a female; I really have to work harder, I really have to go that extra mile or prove myself. I have to make sure they do notice me. Or they’re not noticing me because I’m a female, so let’s promote this whole diversity council stuff. But it’s really because I do have a brain up here and I do matter and I am able to contribute something of value. So I think it’s dealing with that, like you want it to really give women their space but you also don’t want it to be about women. Like it’s that conflict. I don’t want it because I’m a woman. I want it because I really am capable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=13)</td>
<td>• Mixed feelings and conflicting ideas about what it means to be a “woman leader”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reinforcing Frame _ Self-Reliance</strong></td>
<td>• Perpetual experience of gender as not relevant for leadership</td>
<td>“I've never really identified with my gender-- maybe I tend not to get too flushed about going into a room where I'm the only woman in the meeting, etc….Maybe blindly so, but I've never felt pushed back by gender. I think lots of places and environments I've been in it doesn't matter…And so, I'm defining success just on its own whether and not whether it’s a female or male driving it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=13)</td>
<td>• Performing well and working hard matters for success, not gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Reinforcing Frame: Deficiency (n=9) | Perpetual experience of gender as a disadvantage for leadership  
- Being a woman leader means facing challenges and always having to work harder than men | “I think it's difficult to be a woman…I think in finance it's probably one of the worst because as I said before it's a very [male]. They very much look upon the women as objects really. …The way that they talk about other women…some of the comments that come up which can be complete sexism or more just an objectification of women and stuff…With regard to working, [my male counterparts] receive mentorship [that is] miles and away different to what I received. Those are just the ways it is harder for women.” |

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*Working Paper 3-2016*
### Table 4.
Summary Table of Leader Identity Enactment Types

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

| Disengage | Lack of enactment in the leader identity evidenced by downshifting in their sense of selves as leaders.  
Most often expressed by participants with a *deficiency frame*  
“When it comes to leadership I kind of -- I always said I wanted to be a manager. I want to have people report into me….I did see success as someone who had, who sat at the top of the hierarchy. Whereas now I don't feel like I want that so much I think because I see what that actually entails, as well as understand that success isn't necessarily a function as your place on the hierarchy and as well as go back to the "pick your battles" point. …So nowadays to be a leader, I don't necessarily think it's as important as I used to because I realized it comes with strings attached.” |
| Limiting | Enacting the leader identity by focusing narrowly on functional responsibilities, rather than directly engaging with future sense of self as leader  
Most often expressed by participants with a *self-reliance frame*  
“I'm not concerned that my performance, if continued, will continued to be acknowledged within the corporation because they do a good job of: These are our expectations, you met those expectations, we're going to pay you based on that and we're going to give you XYZ more responsibility because you lived up to everything…. I think [closing deals] is really the best way to increase how the people within the organization view me because it's going to get you promoted at the end of the day. …it's how much money did she add to that bottom line. And then the other aspect it's qualitatively, what is she bringing to the organization? The dollars, bottom line, that's pretty straightforward… that’s really my focus.” |
Table 5.
Associations between Frame Experiences and Leader Identity Enactment Types¹,²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRAME EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>NEGATIVE SHIFTING (n = 10)</th>
<th>POSITIVE SHIFTING (n = 10)</th>
<th>AMBIVALENT (n = 13)</th>
<th>DEFICIENCY (n=9)</th>
<th>SELF-RELIANCE (n = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personalize</td>
<td>70% (7)</td>
<td>10% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>22% (2)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amplify</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>90% (8)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>10% (1)</td>
<td>46% (6)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>10% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>38% (5)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengage</td>
<td>20% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>67% (6)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>11% (1)</td>
<td>62% (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Cells represent percentage of participants reflecting the predominant association between frames and enactment types
²The associations reported here are conceptually suggestive, and do not represent a statistically significant relationship
Appendix: Sample Interview Questions

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

2) From your perspective, what does it take to be successful here?

3) Who do you turn to for support as a leader [formally, informally]? Who do you reach out to?

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

Leadership Development

5) Tell me the story of your leadership ascent at this firm. What’s gone well? What has been most challenging?

6) Tell me about a time recently when you felt particularly confident about yourself as a leader?

7) Tell me about a time recently when you felt unconfident/not-so-great about yourself as a leader?

8) What opportunities, if any, have been presented to you (by the org or managers), in order to develop your leadership? Do you wish there were others?

9) Give me a picture of your future career goals and aspirations as a leader. Over the next few years, who do you want to be or become as a leader? What’s important to you as you envision your future leadership?

Constructions of Gender & Leadership

10) I’m going to read you two identity statements, and I want you to tell me which statement resonates more with you:

   “I am a woman leader” OR “I am a leader, who just happens to be a woman”

Why did you choose that statement? Please reflect on your choice.
REFERENCES


