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## Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders

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Graduate Program in Education  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Education  
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## Abstract

This exploratory case study explores unique leadership challenges facing Ontario college Continuing Education leaders as they navigate institutional responses to contemporary changes in the higher education landscape. Nine Ontario college deans/administrative leaders participated in semi-structured interviews that were analyzed using a modified version of constant comparative analysis. Adopting the theoretical perspectives of sensemaking and identity from an Interpretive stance, the analysis leads to the presentation of a conceptual model that represents the interpretation of these leaders' experiences.

The conceptual model that emerged from this study adopts the position that sensemaking resolves identity ambiguities and is triggered by leadership challenges. These leaders' identities demonstrate passionate advocacy for lifelong learning; a commitment to serving their students, their communities and their teams; and a connection to provincial colleagues that counteracts a perception of local isolation. Furthermore, participants' leadership challenges include experiences of complexity, constant change, and varying degrees of institutional marginalization. Finally, despite commonalities of identity construction and leadership challenges, there is diversity in these leaders' approaches to their roles, as narrated in their interviews and subsequently interpreted as distinct metaphorical cameos. The study findings suggest a similarity that Continuing Education leaders may have with a "reframing" model for approaching leadership challenges in higher education.

This study contributes to the field of Educational Leadership, and presents an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that Continuing Education leaders in Ontario colleges encounter. Recommendations suggest future research that may further develop an even deeper understanding of sensemaking phenomena as applied to leadership in the higher education setting.

## Keywords

leadership, continuing education, sensemaking, identity, reframing, Ontario, college

## Acknowledgments

My pursuit of this doctoral degree has been a four-year journey, and many supporters, companions, and way finders have helped me along the way.

Preparing me for this journey were the wonderful professors who led our cohort through the ten courses of this EdD program at Western. Each shared their expertise, guidance and wisdom, and encouraged us to develop our ability to see leadership in a new light.

To my classmates, thank you for sharing your journey with me, for your inspiring contributions to our online dialogue and our group assignments. I have appreciated the opportunity to explore leadership through your experiences that you so readily shared.

To my colleagues at Fanshawe College, who have been both supportive and patient while I worked away at my studies. I express special thanks to my Faculty of Regional and Continuing Education 'FoRCE' team – whose make up has changed over the past four years as we experienced our own organizational changes. You are an inspiration to me.

To my Senior Vice President, Dr. Gary Lima, your unwavering support has been a steady motivator for me to see this through to the end, especially as you completed your doctorate in 2015. Yes, you can finally call me "Dr. Cluett"!

To my Supervisor, Dr. Pam Bishop, you had an uncanny ability to sense when I was struggling. Your encouraging 'check-ins' always came to me at just the right time to keep my momentum going. With only a few words, you could boost my confidence, and gently push me to find time for the writing that needed to get done. I can't thank you enough.

To Dr. Brenton Faubert, Supervisory Committee member, thank you for your careful review of my dissertation, and for your commitment to providing me with timely feedback. Your insights have added to the quality of my work.

To the team in the Graduate Office of the Faculty of Education, thank you for responding so quickly and so expertly to my inquiries, for enabling the revisions and feedback to flow seamlessly between Pam and me, and for sharing your expertise with APA formatting.

To my participants – my provincial colleagues to whom I am indebted – thank you for your willingness to engage in this study with me, to share your joys, your disappointments, and your ever-encouraging vision for the future of Continuing Education.

Finally, and most importantly, to my family. Mom - you have put up with infrequent and too-short visits and phone-calls from me long enough. Your love has shone through the gaps between our times together. Thank you for your encouragement, your love and your confidence in my ability to achieve this goal.

To my boys, who both accomplished so much while I was pursuing this doctoral degree – your dedication to your own studies has helped me with mine. Cameron, you have earned your Masters degree - and married your love Janelle - since I started this journey four years ago. Thank you for your encouragement and love, and for asking me to help you with your literature review on soil mechanics research just when I needed a little dose of engineering in the early days of my EdD studies.

Jonathan, you have earned your medical degree; and yes, we started together in September 2013, but you beat me! In June you became “Dr. Cluett” just like your dad, and now your residency in OB/GYN has begun. Your positive attitude helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel when I didn’t think I’d ever get this finished. “Don’t worry Mom – it will be done when it’s ready”. Well, it’s ready. Thank you to you and to Kyle for sharing your experiences of qualitative research with me as I was feeling my way through this new territory.

To my husband Jamie, the first “Dr.” of the family. You have been more than patient while I spent evenings, weekends, and vacation breaks, on my doctoral studies. Thank you for taking on far more than your fair share of the household logistics over the past four years. I most definitely could not have done this without you by my side. I can’t thank you enough for the sacrifices you’ve made. I promise – this really is the last degree I will pursue. (I know I said that twenty years ago when I completed my Masters degree, but this time I really mean it.) Your love and support has made this all possible.

To my entire family, my friends, my colleagues who boosted my spirits with a “hurray” reply each time I announced the completion of another chapter...this last “hurray!” is from me to you. You earned this with me. We did it!!!

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Cork Foster (1941-1991), whose love of lifelong learning inspired me from my earliest days to explore new ideas with an inquisitive and curious mind. Dad dedicated countless hours to his fascination with the world around him – and that informed who I am today.

Dad was no scientist, but he set up a small laboratory in his den where he could study the microscopic aquatic life of our nearby pond. Subscriptions to academic journals filled our mailbox. I received gifts of books that were beyond my reading ability, but were treasured for the challenge that lay ahead as I grew into them. Greenhouse experiments, photography dark-room creations, an incubator full of pheasant eggs – these are the memories my sister Cathy and I share, of a house filled with hands-on learning that complemented the shelves upon shelves of books. We enjoyed endless opportunities for discovery. Admittedly, Dad's fascination with new discoveries required a certain patience of Mom, who managed it all with love.

Dad's formal pursuit of higher education began at the same time mine did. As I set off to Queen's University to study engineering, Dad (with a year under his belt from his younger days) enrolled in general studies part-time at Western University, taking one or two courses at a time, while he continued to manage his successful family-owned business. To gain admission to Western as a mature student, however, he first was required to upgrade his math credential to the admission criteria at the time. It was at Fanshawe College, in the very department of Continuing Education that I now lead, where he earned his math upgrading credit - and so began his pursuit of his bachelor's degree and the continuation of his love of lifelong learning.

Dad died in 1991, just a few courses short of earning his degree. I dedicate this dissertation and the completion of my doctoral degree to you Dad.

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## Chapter 1

### 1 Introduction

This is a study of the complexities and ambiguities of educational leadership as experienced by Ontario-based college deans/administrative leaders in the field of Continuing Education, where the purposes of public education are intersecting with dramatic changes in higher education.

Continuing Education in Ontario has traditionally met the needs of students pursuing their path of lifelong learning as an alternative, or as a complement, to full-time post-secondary education. With its flexible part-time, evening, weekend, and online delivery options, Continuing Education contributes to preparation for the world of work, often developing students' skills to match emerging labour market needs. Additionally, Continuing Education contributes to students' personal growth and the quest for self-actualization, attained as they pursue fields of personal interest. Leaders of Continuing Education have the unique opportunity to impact both purposes, and to affect change that leads to positive experiences for those who engage in lifelong learning journeys at their institutions.

As Max De Pree (2004) states,

...to be a leader is to enjoy the special privileges of complexity, of ambiguity, of diversity. But to be a leader means, especially, having the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who permit leaders to lead. (p. 22)

This exploratory case study presents the voices of leaders who are doing just as De Pree (2004) suggests: They are leading amidst complexity and ambiguity, while quite notably making a significant and meaningful difference in the lives of their students, their communities, and the institutional teams that they lead.

Nine leaders of Continuing Education in the Ontario college sector generously shared their experiences as they navigated the tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities that arise in the changing landscape of higher education. In the following sections of this chapter, the

context for the study, the problem statement, aim and scope of the study, and its significance are presented as an introduction to and distillation of the chapters that follow.

## 1.1 Context of the Study

As in many places across the globe, the landscape of higher education in Ontario is changing, and the role that Continuing Education plays in this landscape is also changing as a result (Baker, 2013; Braverman, 2013; Coates, 2013; Craig, 2004; Fong, 2013; Hanft & Knust, 2009; Landry, 2011; Stephenson, 2010). These changes are introducing new - or magnifying pre-existing - complexities and ambiguities of leadership experience to which leaders of Continuing Education must adapt. In meeting the needs of their students, of their communities, and of the teams that they lead, these leaders are doing so amidst the shifting influences of globalization, innovations in technology, mass communication, and changing student demographics.

The Ontario college sector of higher education is experiencing funding pressures, at the same time as demand is increasing for higher education to align educational attainments with evolving labour market demands that can address a critical skills mismatch which is affecting Ontario's economy (Miner, 2014). These changing and sometimes competing influences on the delivery of higher education, and in particular, Continuing Education, are presented in detail in Chapter 2.

In the context of such changes, the role of Continuing Education is shifting, as colleges increasingly adopt flexible delivery models of teaching and learning across their post-secondary academic schools that have traditionally been the mandate of Continuing Education departments. Part-time, evening, weekend, and online 'deliveries' are becoming models of choice for many post-secondary academic programs that are seeing this flexibility as a means to adapt their deliveries to the needs of the 'non-direct' student - the more mature student who has not entered college directly from high school but rather after having been away from the academic environment for a period of time.

In a climate of what is often described as the marginalization of Continuing Education within higher education institutions (Coates, 2013), Continuing Education staff, faculty, and administrators take great pride in serving the needs of students for whom the organization traditionally has paid little attention. As Stephenson (2010) argues, Continuing Education divisions should be key drivers for institutional commitment to meet the larger purpose of education, by providing access to higher education for all.

These shifts in higher education have had an institutional-level effect of blurring the boundaries between departments that were once quite separate, with each offering unique programs and courses to their distinct target markets. These overlapping mandates and lack of clarity are leading to the problem that motivates this study, as described in the following section.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The role of the dean or other administrative leader most responsible for Continuing Education at an Ontario college is arguably unique, and presents tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities for leadership that may be different than those experienced by other leaders in the college sector. While the changing landscape of higher education is influencing the ways in which all academic leaders enact their roles, the Continuing Education leader experiences unique complexities and ambiguities that result from influences such as organizational change, revenue challenges, performativity pressures, and overlapping mandates, as examples.

Marginalization of Continuing Education has been identified as a contributing factor to the Continuing Education leader's challenges (Coates, 2013; Stephenson, 2010). Recently however, arguments are being made that the shifts in higher education as described above should be drawing on the expertise of Continuing Education to address the changes afoot in higher education. Some of these efforts may in fact be contributing to the very tensions described above, as the once clear mandate of Continuing Education becomes blurred by well-intentioned but nevertheless competing initiatives undertaken by other post-secondary academic schools at their colleges.

Furthermore, the effects of isolation and marginalization can still be found. This then begs the question: How are Continuing Education leaders experiencing these changes? And what can be learned from their experiences that will inform practice? The following section presents the aim and scope of this study that responds to this problem of practice.

### 1.3 Aim and Scope of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore the unique tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities that Continuing Education leaders at Ontario colleges experience as they adapt to the changes in the higher education landscape, and to gain insight into the factors that are influencing these experiences.

Thus, the intended outcome of this study was to present a model as one avenue for interpreting these experiences and to propose a means by which Continuing Education leaders could learn from the experiences of others facing similar challenges and opportunities.

The literature presented in Chapter 2 reviews previous studies of leadership experiences in the higher education setting. These studies include explorations of the effects of organizational change, and cultural and sub-cultural influences on leaders in higher education. Studies of the application of sensemaking and identity theories are also presented in Chapter 2. The present study is intended to contribute to this body of work, by introducing a new framework for interpreting Continuing Education leadership experiences that highlights themes of identity and leadership challenge, viewed from a reframing perspective.

The scope of the study was limited to Ontario college leaders with experience in leading Continuing Education teams over the past three to five years. The findings of this exploratory case study are not intended to be generalizable but are instead to provide insight into the experiences of Continuing Education leaders in the Ontario college setting as they navigate the changes in higher education. Furthermore, the study does not offer specific insights into the impacts on leadership experience that may be associated with variations in organizational structure, size of college, size of department, and other



contextual attributes of the participant sample. A larger study population base would be required to ensure that participant anonymity would be preserved for such analysis. Finally, it is important to note that while this study's conceptual framework is centered on the role of sensemaking in leadership, it is not a study of sensemaking per se. It is rather a study of leadership experience and the perceptions of a sample of college leaders, as interpreted through the lens of sensemaking theory.

To achieve the aim outlined at the beginning of this section, the following exploratory case study was undertaken, in which semi-structured interviews of nine Ontario college Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders were conducted. The research instrument questions were designed to elicit data related to indicators of those participants' identity and a sense of meaning of the work that they were engaged in with Continuing Education. Using an approach drawn from Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), interview transcripts were analyzed and interpreted through a modified version of constant comparative analysis of data (Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I took an Interpretivist approach, listening to all themes with no preconceived notions of fit with a particular model (Yin, 2014). The methodology of this study is presented in detail in Chapter 3.

The proposed conceptual framework integrates sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and identity theory (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) in a model for interpreting these experiences that leads to a reframing of leadership challenges according to Bolman and Gallos (2011). According to this model, Continuing Education leaders may view challenges and opportunities from new perspectives, learning from Continuing Education colleagues whose successes may emphasize different perspectives.

The following section describes the significance of this study as it relates to the development of a deeper understanding of Continuing Education leaders' experiences.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the unique leadership challenges facing Ontario college Continuing Education leaders as they navigate institutional responses to the

contemporary changes in the higher education landscape. The study responded to the Research Question: In what ways are Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders in colleges leading amidst dramatic changes in the Ontario college sector of higher education?

Analysis of data revealed common themes that describe these leaders' experiences; it became evident there was a shared sense of identity and leadership challenges that transcended all roles. At the same time, analysis of the interviews and participants' use of metaphor revealed a diversity that highlights the differences in the ways each participant enacts their role as leader. This diversity is congruent with the various leadership frames, or lenses, that Bolman and Gallos (2011) identify as aspects of organizational life encountered by educational leaders.

The importance of this study relates to the growing need to understand the significance of meaning in the workplace (Fairholm, 1996; Holbeche & Springett, 2004; Weick, 1995), and contributes to the research field on sensemaking as it relates to identity in the face of change. As highlighted in Bolman and Gallos (2011), "sensemaking is the difficult art at the heart of academic leadership" (p.18), and is a "personal search for meaning" (p. 20). The context of changes in the higher education landscape formed the backdrop upon which these phenomena were examined.

In particular, this study contributes new understandings to the field of Continuing Education leadership in the Ontario college sector, and presents an opportunity for Continuing Education leaders to learn from one another's experiences, and to strengthen the role of the collective leadership of Continuing Education in the higher education sector. The study also presents an opportunity for senior executive leaders in the Ontario college system to develop a deeper understanding of the role that they play in championing the important contributions that Continuing Education leaders and their teams are making.

This study appears to be the first of its kind in Ontario and in Canada, in that it presents a conceptual framework that integrates the theoretical concept of sensemaking into a

comprehensive model for the interpretation of Continuing Education leadership experience.

## 1.5 Overview of the Study

The following chapters present the study in a logical order that mirrors the undertaking of this study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review that was conducted in preparation for engaging in the gathering of data. This literature review presents the background for the study, including the purposes of public education, the changing landscape of higher education in Ontario, and the evolution of leadership theories that culminate in the pluralistic reframing model adopted for this study. Theoretical foundations of the study, including theories of change, identity, sensemaking and culture are presented. Finally, relevant research is presented that provides opportunity for comparison of the present study's findings.

The literature review is then followed by the methodology, as presented in Chapter 3. There, the research question and rationale are introduced, and the research design, study description, ethical considerations, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques are presented.

Chapter 4 then presents the findings of the analysis. It opens with descriptive cameos of the participants using metaphorical representations of their unique roles. This introduction to the participants is followed by the findings of their reflections on their experiences, both internal and external to their organization. Then the participant's self-reflections of their roles as leaders are analyzed. Finally, these findings of the inductive and deductive analyses are thematically summarized.

The findings are then discussed in light of relevant literature in Chapter 5, where the proposed conceptual framework for interpreting these findings is introduced. The elements of the framework are presented, beginning with a discussion of sensemaking processes upon which the framework is built. Next, the identity and leadership themes that emerged from the analysis are discussed. These themes are then aligned with a

pluralistic model of leadership that sees challenges and opportunities reframed from new perspectives.

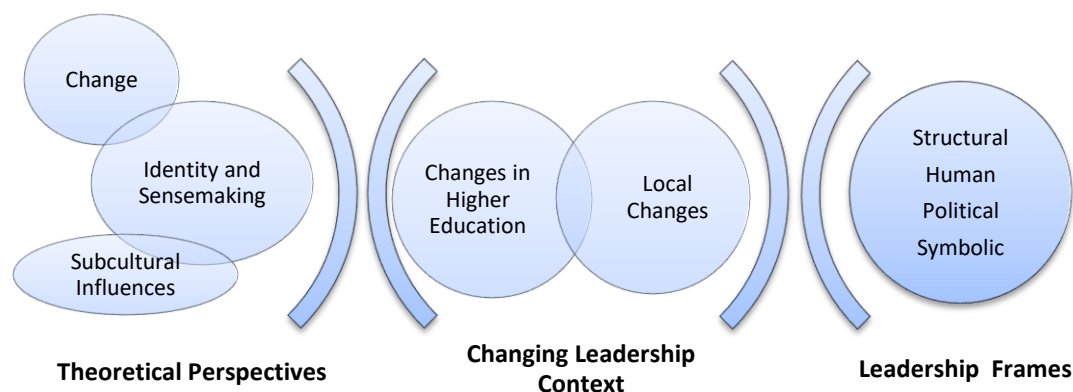
The study then draws to a close in Chapter 6 with the key conclusions and implications of the study, offering its contributions to the field of educational leadership, while the limitations of the study serve to set boundaries for the interpretation of the study beyond the immediate context. Recommendations for future research naturally follow these implications, with invitations for future research to extend the discovery of this study to deeper understandings and new contexts. A summary and final remarks then bring the study to a close.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Literature Review

As noted in Chapter 1, this study explores the ways in which Continuing Education (CE) leaders in Ontario colleges are coping with and responding to the complexities and ambiguities they encounter in their leadership journeys. The literature review is divided into four parts: Setting the context for the study with background and an overview of the higher education and Continuing Education landscape; a review of the evolution of specific leadership models; the supporting psychological and sociological theories – including theories of change, identity and sensemaking, and subculture - that support the understanding of the leadership practices often exhibited by leaders experiencing ambiguity and complexity; and a presentation of relevant research related to educational leaders' experiences of these phenomena.

The preliminary conceptual framework that informed the analysis of data for this study is shown in Figure 2.1.



*Figure 2.1* Preliminary conceptual framework for the study.

## 2.1 Background Setting of the Study

Continuing Education (“CE”) in North American higher education represents a changing landscape (Baker, 2013; Braverman, 2013; Coates, 2013; Craig, 2004; Fong, 2013; Hanft & Knust, 2009; Landry, 2011; Stephenson, 2010) in which students who were once deemed to be peripheral to the mandate of the institution are becoming a critical piece of the enrolment and revenue strategy in a climate of changing demographics and shrinking government coffers (Braverman, 2013). Where CE programs were once marginalized, required to fend for themselves with often inadequate resources (Coates, 2013), there is growing recognition of the opportunities they present for institutional revenue growth (Braverman, 2013; Coates, 2013; Fong, 2013; Stephenson, 2010). At the same time, altruistically, in terms of meeting the greater purposes of education (Greene, 2001; Starratt, 2004), Continuing Education, or “part-time studies”, or “distance education” departments are now becoming key drivers of institutional commitment and support for communities suffering the effects of economic downturns, changing industrial forces, and evolving needs for workforce development and retraining (Braverman, 2013; Coates, 2013). This public benefit of higher education has been explored by Marginson (2007, 2011), who cautions that higher education institutions must not depend on private interests which would undermine the institution’s role as a social foundation; Marginson advocates that a “turn to global public goods offers the most promising strategy for re-grounding the ‘public’ character of higher education” (p. 411). It can be argued that Continuing Education units play a significant role in maintaining this “public good” role for institutions of higher education, especially in the face of the present economic struggles facing our local communities.

In the context of this changing landscape, administrative structures have frequently been reorganized in response to organizational administrative capacity and varying forces on the role that part-time studies plays in the larger institutional context (Craig, 2004; Fong, 2013; Hanft & Knust, 2009; Stephenson, 2010). A common structural change seen is the move from decentralized CE to centralized CE, and ironically, often at the same time, other institutions moving in the opposite direction, from centralized to decentralized models (Heads of CE, 2013, 2015). An oft-repeated statement among CE administrators

at various Ontario colleges is “centralized – decentralized – neither one is better than the other, just pick one and stick with it” (personal communication, 2014). In that respect, it can be argued that it is a shared impression that the challenge of organizational structure is the *change* from one structural model to the other rather than the model itself being a problem needing addressing.

In a climate of what has often been described as the marginalization of Continuing Education within higher education institutions (Coates, 2013) – CE staff, faculty and administrators take great pride in serving the needs of students for whom the organization traditionally has paid little attention. As Stephenson (2010) argues, Continuing Education divisions should be key drivers for institutional commitment to meet the larger purpose of education, by providing access to higher education for all. The following overview of these purposes of education and the changes in higher education in Ontario provide background to this changing landscape of Continuing Education at Ontario colleges.

### 2.1.1 Purposes of education

The key purposes of education can be described as two-fold: the efficient preparation of skilled workers who will achieve personal success through contribution to market economies, and high quality preparation for the citizenry of life (Greene, 2001; McMahon, 2013; Mulford, 2008; Starratt, 2004). Greene (2001) traces the evolution of educational purpose from the post World War I cultivation of skills to support growing capitalism, through the stock market crash’s impetus for solidarity of public education that could “change the social order” (p. 8); World War II drove an emphasis on preparedness, support for the war effort, and encouragement of democratic ideals (Greene, 2001). Post-war, emphasis on mathematics and technology was fueled by the space race, with the Russian Sputnik launch in 1957 prompting renewed focus on mastery and development of high IQ potential students (Greene, 2001). Protest movements of the 1960’s challenged conservative notions of performativity, which included testing and resultant sorting of advantaged versus disadvantaged students - challenges that remain today (Greene, 2001). Summarizing the purpose of education and its role in creating community, Greene (2001) captures a hopeful vision of education’s future purpose:

The communities that take shape in schools and colleges, the dialogues set free at last must somehow be made present to a public we can still hope is in the making. To define educational purposes, we know is to define the kind of culture we inhabit and internalize. In most respects, it is an effort to create that “community in the making” that Dewey (1927) said characterized democracy. (pp. 10-11)

As Greene (2001) argues above, emphasis on economic competitiveness versus citizenry and individual self-development has cycled over time. O’Sullivan (1999) highlights as well that science, technology, and math education has been a focus for Canada and for Ontario at various periods intermittently for over one hundred years – and rises when political attention is being paid to international competitiveness in the global economy. It can be argued that reforms with emphasis on efficiency of delivery, standardization of curriculum, and evaluation, have prioritized pre-determined subject availability over the student’s democratic right to choice (McMahon, 2013; Starratt, 2004). In other words, knowledge is treated as a commodity, especially with core curriculum subjects such as math and science, technology and even languages in such times of competitiveness (O’Sullivan, 1999). Starratt (2004), however, cautions against this “simplistic reduction of schooling to the commodification of knowledge for work in a competitive free market” (p. 731). Increasingly, this focus on global competitiveness is driving educational reform at all levels of the educational spectrum.

In the early 1970’s, a “back to basics” approach to educational reform in Canada and in Ontario was motivated by goals of ensuring employability for graduates (O’Sullivan, 1999). In 1987, Radwanski (1987) was first to articulate the need for education to drive Ontario’s global economic competitiveness (O’Sullivan, 1999). This approach was echoed in the Ontario Premier’s Council Report (1988), highlighting the importance of science and technology education for international competitiveness (O’Sullivan, 1999). The early 1990’s saw increasing influence of business and industry, most evident in Canadian college and university curriculum (O’Sullivan, 1999), yet again emphasizing economic competitiveness in education reforms.



Educational reform has transcended all levels of schooling, from preschool to elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education; in fact, “education” is more than “schooling” (Young, Levin & Wallin, 2007). While schools can be ascribed a breadth of goals, including “critical thinking, socialization, child care, vocational preparation, physical instruction, social-role selection, education of the emotions, and development of creativity” (Barrow, 1981, as cited in Young, Levin and Wallin, 2007, p. 7), institutional education expands these experiences beyond the traditional classroom, to include the early years of daycare, to adult education for seniors (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007). Institutional education also provides access to secondary and post-secondary education through academic upgrading programming. Further expanding institutional reach, are bridging programs for internationally educated individuals, continuing professional education and apprenticeship training, which all serve the purpose of preparing and supporting workers in their chosen career paths. At the same time, continuing education, whether accessed through school boards, community agencies, colleges or universities, also contributes to Canada’s global competitiveness through provision and development of ‘skills training’.

But the second, vital, and complementary purpose of education is to prepare “citizens for life”.

The challenge for today’s educational leaders is to find balance between these two paradigms. While equally important, the two purposes of education - contributing to global competitiveness and economic stability, and contributing to the individual’s self-actualization and empowerment (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007) - create a tension between the seemingly divergent and at times conflicting purposes of education. Leaders in the college sector of Ontario higher education are familiar with employers’ demands that students graduate with the necessary employability skills that complement the ‘technical competencies’ acquired during their academic programs. The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (formerly Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, “MTCU”) aims to ensure this need is met by mandating that employability skills and general education credits are incorporated into the credential framework for colleges programs (Ontario MTCU, 2009).

Certainly the focus of college education in Ontario has been primarily to meet the first purpose; however the value of the second can't be underestimated. I believe that the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead brought together the two seemingly divergent perspectives beautifully, when he stated, "education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge" (Whitehead, 1929, p. 196).

It is noteworthy to juxtapose the writings of educational philosopher Harold Taylor with those of Whitehead. In 1957, defending the importance of teaching literature in the face of growing emphasis on the drive for technical education to compete with the Soviet Union, Taylor implores his academic colleagues to "...move your students out of the world of things into the world of imagination and bring them back again, better able to understand themselves and their world." (Taylor, 1957, p. 248). Whitehead, in his Presidential address to the Mathematical Association of England in 1916, cautions against "inert ideas", and advocates for "the evocation of curiosity, of judgment, of the power of mastering a complicated tangle of circumstances" (Whitehead, 1929, p. 196). These two educational thought leaders, addressing opposite ends of the academic spectrum – English and Mathematics – arrived at what I believe is a common conclusion: educational purpose transcends disciplines and rises to higher levels of human potential when balance between seemingly opposing paradigms is sought, and the beauty of learning itself is at its core.

### 2.1.2 Changing landscape of higher education in Ontario

Post-secondary education institutions, and in particular community colleges, are undergoing dramatic changes. It is critical for leaders to understand how they can facilitate effective and appropriate responses to these changes. New goals for organizations, academic units and individuals are being established and revised to meet the challenges of changing demographics of the student population, changing allocation of resources to meet the teaching needs, changing administrative structures and evolving employee relationships. With a confluence of change of this magnitude, there is a need for organizational alignment toward new strategic goals, and organizational culture and identity play important roles in how the members of an organization adapt to and embrace this change. A further complicating factor is that organizational identity is

maintained through organizational culture – but what happens when organizational culture is comprised of subcultures that see the world through different lenses? Leaders of Continuing Education in Ontario colleges face unique challenges in responding to these evolving influences of change in higher education, and these changes are being felt across higher educational sectors, and transcend geographic boundaries.

### 2.1.2.1 Global influences on higher education

The 1990's saw a general convergence in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand, and Canada toward “neoliberal market/neoconservative social policies that fundamentally shifted relations among the individual, the state, education and work” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 29). Mulford (2008) describes the forces of change that were shaping the environmental context for educational leaders in schools: “technological innovation, globalization, mass communication, mass culture and rising consumer expectations” (pp. 4-5). At the time, strategies advocating “internationalization, marketization, client service, efficiency, accountability, self-management, and devolution” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007, p. 31) were leading to a vocationalized education and blurring of boundaries between public and private providers. Publically funded colleges delivering technical and vocational programs were becoming marginalized by the increasing competition with private trainers, thereby leaving these public providers with higher cost, low employment outcome programs (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007). These influences have also been seen locally in the Ontario college sector, whose evolution is described next.

### 2.1.2.2 Evolution of the Ontario college system

The Hon. William G. Davis introduced legislation in 1965 to establish the Ontario community college system as an alternative to university or private vocational colleges, with the aim to serve community needs and support Ontario's growing economy. This system celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017. The Ontario college system is now comprised of 22 English and 2 French colleges, and continues with a vision to be “the post-secondary destination of choice for internationally acclaimed, career-focused

education that is essential to an inclusive, prosperous and globally competitive Ontario” (Colleges Ontario, 2015, p. 4).

The Ministry introduced its Differentiation Policy Framework in 2013 (Ontario MTCU, 2013), followed by the negotiation and signing of Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) with all publicly funded post-secondary institutions in 2014. The SMAs articulate each institution’s strengths, and drive funding decisions for new college and university programs. These SMAs are being renegotiated for another three-year term at the time of this writing.

While great strides have been made over the years, the Ontario college system is currently at a fiscal breaking point (Colleges Ontario, 2016b). Current provincial funding levels are inadequate to sustain colleges in a time of unprecedented change; colleges play a key role in providing high quality programs for people entering the post-secondary system for the first time, or are retraining and upgrading career-specific skills. The quality of Ontario’s workforce depends on colleges meeting the needs of a changing demographic and strained economy.

In his groundbreaking report, “People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People”, Rick Miner (2010) identified that Ontario’s aging population and emerging knowledge economy had increased the proportion of the labour force that would require some form of post-secondary education (Miner, 2010). Emphases on continuous learning and adult education were among several approaches recommended to ensure that Ontario’s growth is not “constrained by a workforce that is out of balance with the needs of our economy” (p. 19).

Since the release of his initial report, Miner (2014) identified further dramatic shifts in labour force participation and demand, educational attainment and employment programs impacting Ontario’s labour shortage. Miner (2014) highlighted multiple skills mismatches, including “supply-demand”, “geographical”, “under-employment” and “under-skilled” (p. 2) as key gaps to be addressed by aligning educational attainments to future labour force needs. Recommendations to government included “improving labour market information”, “a national education and training strategy”, “‘mandatory’ career

counseling”, “basic literacy and employability skills training”, and “a post-secondary system [that is] more flexible, responsive, relevant and affordable” (Miner, 2014, pp. 2-3). Miner aptly summarized the challenge:

Demographic changes, along with increased skill requirement, are the origin of our current and future labour force challenges....and success will ultimately require concerted and cooperative efforts between businesses, governments and educational institutions to address and resolve these problems. (p. 3)

In the 2014/15 academic year there were approximately 225,000 funded FTE post-secondary enrolments in Ontario colleges and there were 94,000 graduates, an 8% increase from the previous year (Colleges Ontario, 2016a, p. 2). Annual funded enrolment in part-time courses has remained relatively stable over ten years, at approximately 25,000 FTE's, with total FTE's - including these part-time enrolments - growing from approximately 180,000 to 225,000 over ten years (Colleges Ontario, 2016a, p. 6). Also worth noting is international student enrolment, which has grown from 7,000 to over 34,000 from 2006 to 2016 (Colleges Ontario, 2016a, p. 9).

### 2.1.2.3 Continuing Education in Ontario colleges

Continuing Education (CE) at Ontario colleges is defined to include courses and programs offering certificates, diplomas, workforce development, and learning for personal enjoyment (Kerr, 2011); CE students are typically enrolled on a part-time basis, in face-to-face, hybrid and online delivery formats. Adult education refers to intentional learning opportunities that are organized and structured; CE as well as Adult Upgrading activity is included in the adult education umbrella (Kerr, 2011). All of these adult learners have been identified as one of the sources for Ontario to meet the demands of a higher post-secondary education attainment rate. The knowledge based economy, paired with aging demographic means that adult learners will increasingly be the solution to addressing the “skills mismatch” (Kerr, 2011; Miner, 2010).

Ontario's CE students are 67% female; 34% of Ontario's CE students are aged 25-34, 26% aged 35 – 44, and 19% aged 45-54; 66% identify English as their first language, 3%

French, and 31% other. 20% of CE students are recent immigrants (in the last ten years); 24% have completed high school or less, 24% a college diploma, and 42% have completed a university degree. Notably, 32% are first generation students, whose siblings or parents have not attended post-secondary education. 59% of CE students are employed full-time, 20% part-time, and 10% are unemployed. The main reason for taking a CE course is reported by 34% of the survey's respondents to be improvement of current career, 23% preparation for career change, and 15% for personal development and fulfillment (CCI Research, 2015).

It is estimated that between 50% and 75% of Canadian post-secondary students take one or more online course(s) (Contact North, 2016, slide 3). Online learning has been a key priority for the Ministry since 2014, with the infusion of \$42M to support the development of online courses and programs, as well as the creation of the eCampusOntario online portal (Bradshaw, 2014). This new portal, launched in 2015, provides access for potential and current students to find online college and university courses and programs.

Even prior to the creation of the eCampusOntario portal, colleges were 'sharing seats' in online courses through the innovative OntarioLearn platform, created in 1995 by seven Ontario colleges. OntarioLearn membership has since grown to include all 24 of Ontario's publicly-funded colleges, with approximately 1,350 shared online courses and more than 70,000 student registrations in 2016/17 (OntarioLearn, 2017). Through this virtual organization, the consortium's college members share delivery of online courses, enabling students of a "registering" college to enroll in courses offered by a "host" college. This model of collaboration provides students with access and flexibility to achieve their educational goals, and began as a collaborative initiative between college Continuing Education leaders, who saw an opportunity to share curriculum and make courses available for each others' students in an online setting.

#### **2.1.2.4 Implications for leaders of Continuing Education**

Blackmore and Sachs (2007) argue that a professional identity crisis is arising for educational leaders who are required to comply with performativity measures of a

managerialized structure that pulls them away from their core teaching, research and leadership functions. In a study of Australian education leaders, Blackmore and Sachs (2007) explored the ways in which educational leaders experienced and negotiated the “contradictions, paradoxes and tensions” (p. 4) resulting from this rewriting of national educational internationalization policies and state institutional restructuring. Blackmore and Sachs (2007) found that increasing performativity demands created a dissonance within organizations and for individuals as they attempted to reconcile the paradoxical contrast between this performativity culture and their passion for educational work.

The importance of Blackmore and Sachs’ (2007) study, and its relevance to the present study, is that it identifies and explores the hidden dimension of emotion in organizational life: “Understanding the processes of organizational change means exploring individual emotional and intellectual investments in maintaining the existing circumstances or changing them. The focus therefore shifts to the relational aspects of leadership, as well as the matter of personal and professional identity” (p. 19).

This changing landscape, with its emphasis on economic competitiveness, performativity, and workforce development can present challenges for the leader of Continuing Education, who brings to the role a professional obligation to meet these needs, while balancing a more personal motivation to serve their community, their employees, and their students with a care for the person and their human potential. Leadership models have evolved that increasingly embrace this dual role of the leader who ideally balances performance with passion. The following section outlines this evolution, concluding with a pluralistic multi-frame approach to leadership that can support the leader of Continuing Education who must draw on multiple skills and leadership styles to meet these challenges.

## 2.2 Leadership Theory

The study and practice of leadership has evolved from the early days of managerialism to explorations of the differences between management and leadership, with leadership study and practice recently evolving from transactional to transformational theories and practices in business settings to the enactment of such ‘styles’ in education settings and

beyond. As understanding of the personal and organizational impacts of these and numerous other leadership models continues to develop along this continuum, there is also an emerging interest in a new dimension of leadership that encompasses a spiritual element. This section begins with background describing the historical and philosophical evolution of several traditional leadership models, finishing with reviews of various authors' explorations into the spiritual leadership themes including servant leadership, transcendent leadership and other models that describe the interplay between self and other, inner wisdom and collective purpose. The evolution is traced to a conclusion that presents a contemporary pluralistic multi-frame approach to leadership that integrates particular elements of these models into a powerful tool for reframing leadership challenges faced by leaders of Continuing Education.

### 2.2.1 Traditional juxtapositions

An evolutionary path can be traced for the emergence of leadership as a discipline unto itself, and has its origins in the fundamental contrasts of the science of management versus the art of leadership. The theory and practice of scientific management that has often become known as "Taylorism" after the industrial engineer Fred W. Taylor, originated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In brief, it was aimed at optimizing efficiency of production by reducing conflict between manager and workers, whereby "the principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee" (Taylor, 1911, p. 9).

A century later, and in stark contrast, the art of leadership is eloquently described as "liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible" (De Pree, 2004, p. 1). "When we think about leaders and the variety of gifts people bring to corporations and institutions, we see that the art of leadership lies in polishing and liberating and enabling those gifts" (p. 10).

Traditions of leadership research have often been described in the context of the juxtapositions between political/historical versus bureaucratic/managerial models, and within these broader models, further distinctions of contrast have been made (Milner & Joyce, 2005). The keys to the discipline of political/historical leadership tradition are the



relationship between individuals, dimensions of power, and the leader-follower dynamic (Foster, 1989). On the other hand, a bureaucratic/managerial tradition based on the sociology of organizations arose in the business management and public administration disciplines, where achieving organizational goals means getting employees to do what managers want them to do. For example, Fiedler's (1967) contingency model of situational leadership falls into this category, having its origins in Taylorism and industrial relations (Foster, 1989).

Kotter (1990, 2012) distinguishes management from leadership in a largely definitional exercise. According to Kotter (2012), managers engage in "planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem solving" (p. 28). Leaders, on the other hand, are "establishing direction...aligning people...[and] motivating and inspiring people" (p. 29) to overcome obstacles. As Kotter (2012) states,

Only leadership can blast through the many sources of corporate inertia. Only leadership can motivate the actions needed to alter behavior in any significant way. Only leadership can get change to stick by anchoring it in the very culture of an organization. (p. 33)

The political/historical disciplines of leadership have been based on the notion of power and manipulation of social forces. Burns (1978) has been widely cited as the seminal author of the transformational model of leadership, which he contrasts with a transactional model of leadership, in a hierarchical, positional power context.

## 2.2.2 Transactional versus transformational leadership

The differences between transactional and transformational leadership have been at the core of much leadership research literature, led by the works of Burns (1978), Bass (1985) and Avolio (2010). In a discussion of transformational leadership models, Stewart (2006) cites Burns' (1978) comparison of transactional leaders' 'reward for hard work' approach to that of transforming leaders' 'inspiring and transforming' approach to followers. While Burns (1978) first discussed transformational leadership in a political context, it was Bass (1985) who later brought the theory into the organizational context,

connecting personal growth of followers and benefit for the organization (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Rather than sticking to an either/or model, Bass and Avolio subsequently embraced a “two-factor” theory (Stewart, 2006) – in which a transactional approach that deals with operational needs of the organization is combined with “transformational practices that encourage commitment and foster change” (p. 13). Although widely accepted in much of the business literature, transformational and transactional leadership research and theory became problematic for many in educational leadership; as Bill Mulford argued, leadership was more complex and changing than adjectival terms could adequately capture (Mulford, 2008).

More recently, Collins (2001) has described a leadership model that bears similarities to the Burns and Bass model of a transformational leader. Collins’ “Level 5” leaders combine professional will with personal humility and through these unique personal values, empower others to transform organizations, enabling companies to achieve breakthroughs in long term performance (Collins, 2001). Collins’ model is similar to Burns and Bass’ descriptions of transformational leadership in its focus on organizational success, but with less emphasis on the development of the follower (van Dierendonck, 2011).

### 2.2.3 Community of leaders and followers

Much of the contemporary leadership literature emphasizes the relationship between leaders and followers. Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009) broadened the focus from leader to include “followers, peers, supervisors, work setting and culture” (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1234). Avolio and Gardner (2005) define authentic leadership as an expression of true self – “work[ing] through an increased self awareness, relational transparency, internalized transparency...to encourage authenticity in their followers” (van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1235).

In another presentation of the leader-follower dynamic, distributed leadership is described as a model in which leaders are encouraged to accept their strengths and

weaknesses as “imperfect leaders” (Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, & Senge, 2007). Sensemaking, relating, visioning and inventing are described as the four capabilities of leadership in this model, and imperfect leaders are encouraged to accept their strengths and weaknesses within these capabilities, and to ensure balance of these capabilities within their teams of colleagues and followers.

In addition to the expected sociological and philosophical descriptions of leadership models, there are scientific analogies emerging that provide an alternative perspective of the leader/follower dynamic in leadership models. Of particular interest, are self-organizing biological systems. As noted by Margaret Wheatley (1998), “self-organization is a powerful force that creates the systems we observe and that testifies to a world that knows how to organize itself from the inside out” (p. 347). This self-organizing force serves as a model for an interplay between leader and follower, part and whole, that is based on a system where both are learning from each other (Wheatley, 1998).

Turning to a physical sciences metaphor, Fris and Lazaridou (2006) have drawn a comparison of leadership models to classical Newtonian physics versus modern quantum physics. The Newtonian perspective assumes predictability and control are possible, whereas the quantum paradigm, in contrast, sees nature as “complex, chaotic and unpredictable” (Fris & Lazaridou, 2006, p. 6). To complete the analogy, Fris and Lazaridou argue that the Newtonian paradigm deals with people as “objects, interchangeable parts” (p. 21), with no reference to belonging, simply rewarding an individual’s usefulness to the organization. On the other hand, the quantum paradigm holistically emphasizes relationships, honoring the individual’s “emotional and values dimensions” (p. 22), fostering a sense of community among followers (Fris & Lazaridou, 2006). Such a stance is broadly consistent with for example transformational leadership research that has emerged in the last decade - keeping in mind that some of what most mattered in transformational leadership over the last few decades has changed, because what employees sought from their transformational leaders was changing.

## 2.2.4 Spiritual leadership theories

Parallel to the evolution of the traditional models of leadership and management, and complementing the scientific models that highlight complexity and self-organization, there has emerged a theme grounded in a sense of spirit. However, as concluded by Fry (2003), “the distinction between spiritual leadership theory variables and other leadership theories and constructs needs to be refined. To date, these notions have been confounded under such constructs as encouraging the heart, stewardship, charisma, emotional intelligence, and servant leadership” (p. 721), as well as the previously mentioned transformational leadership construct.

These emerging models address the growing awareness that “people are hungry for meaning in their lives” (Klenke, 2003, p. 59). Klenke describes spiritual leadership as a model for satisfying this hunger, encouraging the development of connections between work life and spiritual life: “Leadership involves relationships, connectedness, power, influence, and transformation – characteristics that also are echoed in our spiritual experiences” (p. 59).

Compared to other leadership models where the focus is on the organization, models based in spirit hold at their core a focus on the person. Foremost of these spiritual models of leadership is Robert Greenleaf’s servant leadership theoretical framework. As Greenleaf (1970) defined it in his seminal work *The Servant as Leader*,

The Servant-Leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. The conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as person? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? (p. 14)

Spears (1998) illuminated Greenleaf’s model with ten essential elements of servant leadership: “listening”, “empathy”, “healing”, “awareness”, “persuasion”, “conceptualization”, “foresight”, “stewardship”, “commitment to growth of people”, and “building community” (pp. 4-6). One of the challenges with this, as with many other

models of leadership, is that the theory can be difficult to translate into measurable antecedents of change. In an analysis of Spears' examination of Greenleaf's model, van Dierendonck (2011) notes that Spears did not differentiate between the "intrapersonal aspects, interpersonal aspects, and outcomes of servant leadership...making a valid and reliable study based on these characteristics difficult, thereby hindering empirical research" (p. 1232). Nonetheless, the servant leadership model serves as a beacon to leaders seeking the validation of their quest for meaning in their leadership journey in a framework that places the focus on those whom they serve.

While comparisons of servant leadership have been made to transformational, authentic and 'Level 5' leadership models, including by Stewart (2006), Kouzes and Posner (2003), van Dierendonck (2011), Jaworski (1998) and Wheatley (1998), other authors have expanded on the notion of spiritual leadership in terms of the personal nature of the work of spiritual leadership. For example, Parker Palmer elevates the value of inner work – journaling, reflective reading and meditation for example – leading the journey to spiritual insight that can transform leadership and transform our institutions (Palmer, 1998).

Margaret Wheatley (1998) writes of the emerging story of the human spirit in leadership, and its transcendence of different disciplines:

I find it delightful to note that W. Edwards Deming, the great voice for quality in organizations, and Robert Greenleaf both focused on the human spirit in their final writings. Deming concluded his long years of work by stating simply that quality was about the human spirit.... Greenleaf understood that we stood as servants to the human spirit, that it was our responsibility to nurture that spirit. (pp. 349-350)

### 2.2.5 Reframing: A pluralistic model for CE leaders?

As described above, leadership models in the Western world have evolved on a continuum of early industrial relations management models, through transactional to transformational models of organizational leadership. The emerging theme of spirituality

in leadership has experienced an evolution from the secular servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970, 1975), to transcendent models that embrace a sense of spirit, describing the interplay between self and other, inner wisdom and collective purpose. All of these spirit-centered models serve to feed a hunger for meaning in the world of work. A key contrasting position to these models has been the view that adjectival leadership models no longer capture the complexities of what leaders (especially highly effective ones) do and exhibit (Mulford, 2009). As described in section 2.1, CE Deans/administrators face changes in their world of work that place increasing demands on their ability to lead their teams through a complex and changing landscape.

The present study proposes a pluralist *reframing* model developed by Bolman and Deal (1991) and Bolman and Gallos (2011) as a suitable conceptual framework for exploring the experiences of CE leaders as they navigate these tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities encountered in their leadership journey.

Bolman and Deal (1991) present a pluralistic model of leadership, incorporating a number of theoretical perspectives for viewing organizations. Drawing from sociological, psychological, political, and anthropological disciplines, they construct a four-frame model that integrates research and practice from which leaders can construct meaning amidst the complexities and ambiguities of organizational life (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

These four frames – “structural”, “human resource”, “political”, and “symbolic” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 19) – are intended to be used in a fluid “re-framing” capacity, where “...the ability to shift nimbly from one to another helps redefine situations so they become understandable and manageable” (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 39).

In “Reframing Academic Leadership”, Bolman and Gallos (2011) apply this conceptual framework to the higher education arena, addressing four challenges commonly faced by leaders in higher education – “building institutional clarity, managing difference, fostering productive working relationships, and enacting a powerful vision” (p. 10). To these four challenges, they attach the organizational metaphorical frame of the “machine”, the “jungle”, the “family”, and the “theater” (p. 11) respectively, each describing distinct aspects of organizational life.

Bolman and Gallos (2011) argue that leaders in higher education must build the ability to reframe, in order to navigate the complex institutional world of colleges and universities, which require leaders to attend to vastly differing demands:

The art of reframing is a deliberate process of shifting perspectives to see the same situation in multiple ways and through different lenses....These versatile habits of mind enable academic leaders to think in more powerful and comprehensive ways about their own leadership and about the complexities and opportunities in leading colleges and universities. (p. 13)

Sensemaking is employed by Bolman and Gallos (2011) and is described as “the difficult art at the heart of academic leadership” (p. 18). Drawing on the work of Argyris (1982), Bolman and Deal (2008), Schön (1983), and Weick (1995), Bolman and Gallos emphasize the reflective practice inherent in the process of reframing. Sensemaking facilitates the process, and, as highlighted by Bolman and Gallos, involves three important features: it is “incomplete and personal”, “interpretive”, and “action oriented” (pp. 18-19). Stated another way, “reframing is the deliberate process of looking at a situation carefully and from multiple perspectives choosing to be more mindful about the sensemaking process by examining alternate views and explanations” (p. 23).

Bolman and Gallos (2011) challenge leaders to develop their reframing skills:

- Embrace the life of a reflective practitioner
- Be aggressive in seeking growth opportunities
- Actively and regularly solicit input from others
- Anticipate and practice the future through data gathering and scenario building
- Step outside your comfort zones and “break frame”. (p. 25)

This reframing model forms the basis of the conceptual framework for the present study, supported by the psychological and sociological theories of change, identity and sensemaking, and the influence of subcultural elements of organizational structure, each described in the following section.

## 2.3 Psychological and Sociological Theories

The following theories support or at least provide some assistance with the understanding of leaders' behaviours, as they face the challenges of the changing landscape of CE leadership in higher education. Theories of change, identity and sensemaking, and the impact of subcultural influences in an organization combine to form the framework upon which the analysis of Continuing Education leaders' experiences is explored in this study.

### 2.3.1 Theories of change

Organizational change theory has a long history and is well developed, beginning with Kurt Lewin, who introduced the three-step model of planned change process (Lewin, 1947). According to Lewin, the first step in creating permanent change is to *unfreeze*, or destabilize the equilibrium state, in order to overcome inner resistance to change, and to break "social habits" (p. 32).

Lewin's second of the three steps is *moving* the system to a new equilibrium, which "enables groups and individuals to move to a more acceptable set of behaviours" (Burnes, 2004a, p. 313).

Finally, the third step of Lewin's change model is *refreezing*. As Lewin (1947) states, "...it does not suffice to define the objective of a planned change in group performance as the reaching of a different level. Permanency of the new level, or permanency for a desired period, should be included in the objective" (pp. 34-35). Without the commitment to freezing the new equilibrium, Lewin argues that group life will return to the previous equilibrium level (Lewin, 1947).

Kotter first published a contemporary model of change in 1996, which recognized globalization and technological change as drivers for organizational change. The eight stages of this model were:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Creating the guiding coalition
3. Developing a vision and strategy



4. Communicating the change vision
5. Empowering broad-based action
6. Generating short-term wins
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

(Kotter, 2012)

Kotter's model echoes Lewin's three step-model for change, in that "the first four steps in the transformation process help defrost a hardened status quo....Phases five to seven then introduce many new practices. The last stage grounds the changes in the corporate culture and helps make them stick" (Kotter, 2012, p. 24).

While in some instances Lewin's seminal work has been challenged and re-examined in more recent times (Burnes, 2004a, 2004b; Schein, 1996; Weick & Quinn, 1999), there have been parallels drawn between it and the work of complexity theorists (Burnes, 2004a, 2004b).

Applications of complexity thinking to organizational change translate concepts from natural sciences to social sciences, taking the view that organizations are *complex*. Complex systems have capacity to respond to their environment in more than one way, tending to self-organize, producing new emergent states. Complexity theory has its origins in Chaos Theory, popularized by Gleick (1987), who drew on the earlier work of Lorenz (1972) in describing dynamical properties of non-linear systems and their associated feedback processes that lead to spontaneous states of organization (Stacey, 1995).

Although in the early stages of explication, complexity theory represents a paradigm shift in emphasis from systems which remain in equilibrium to systems which operate far from equilibrium states; in these states, positive feedback turns tiny changes into significant impacts that cause systems to self-organize into something new (MacIntosh, MacLean, Stacey & Griffin, 2006). Burnes (2004a) compares the behavior of complex systems to Lewin's conceptualization of Field Theory that underpins Lewin's unfreeze - move -

refreeze model of change (Burnes, 2004a), and describes parallels to the quasi-stationary equilibrium and self-organizing of groups during change processes (Burnes, 2004a).

Stacey (1995) contrasted this new way of conceptualizing organizational change with traditional Newtonian and Darwinian scientific models of negative feedback processes that lead to stable states of equilibrium and predictability (Stacey, 1995). In emphasizing the implications for leadership that complexity science brings to the conversation, Stacey (1995) found that much leadership research presumes that a leader can actually foresee where an organization is heading. But given the unpredictability of complex systems, Stacey asks how leaders can be expected to foresee the long-term outcomes of their change interventions (Stacey, 1995).

Stacey (1995) argued for the role of informal networks, conflict and boundary conditions for change as areas of interest for future study:

To understand the kind of leadership required in turbulent times we need to understand more about the nature of the boundaries around the conflict, which is essential to organizational learning and how leaders may be able to manage those boundaries more effectively. (p. 492)

While not a focus for this research study, there are elements of complexity and loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976) and double-loop learning (Kezar, 2014) that could also provide opportunity for future research in the context of organizational change as explored in the present study.

Turning our attention from the individual to the organization, an evolution of theoretical models of organizational change has unfolded. Chris Argyris, together with Donald Schön, began in the 1970's to define organizational learning – a three-step model of change in which the detection of errors precedes correction of errors, followed finally by change. The importance of learning and feedback in the decision making process was novel at a time when traditional “single loop” learning was proving to be inadequate for driving change (Argyris, 1976; Argyris & Schön, 1974). It was Peter Senge who in the 1990's expanded on this notion of organizational learning with his groundbreaking

systems thinking. This *fifth discipline* was a theory and culminating principle to the four foundational principles of a learning organization: “personal mastery...mental models...shared vision...[and] team learning” (Senge, 2006, pp. 7-9). As Senge described it, a learning organization is “...an organization where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 2006, p. 3).

Building on the theme of organizational learning, Kezar (2014) has described new vehicles of organizational learning in the context of creating deep change, or “second order change” (Kezar, 2014, p. 62). It is this concept of identity construction and the relationship to the concept of sensemaking, described in the following section, that forms the theoretical perspective for the analysis of data in the present study.

### 2.3.2 Theories of identity

Theories of identity have been the subject of considerable interest among researchers over many decades. It is useful to briefly recognize here the seminal contribution of Albert and Whetten (1985), who defined organizational identity as a scientific concept. By their definition, organizational identity is a statement that meets three criteria – it identifies characteristics of an organization that are “central, distinctive and enduring” (p. 265) – and it answers the identity question “who are we?” (p. 265). Although originating as a defined construct, Albert and Whetten’s (1985) organizational identity has since been challenged by “inconsistent treatments of the concept’s distinguishing properties” (Whetten, 2006, p. 220) - treated variously as a stable property of an organization, or a flexible property capable of shifting to accommodate changing circumstances.

Recognizing the need to clarify confusions regarding its originally intended meaning, the concept of organizational identity was strengthened and redefined by Whetten (2006) as “the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations” (p. 220). The functional standard of distinctiveness, paired with the structural standards of centrality and durability, together form the operational guides used by Whetten to validate the construct. Referring to these three attributes as ‘identity claims’ that organizational members can invoke as categorical imperatives, Whetten

(2006) envisions organizational members turning to them at decision points to help determine “what the organization must do to avoid acting out of character” (p. 221). Furthermore, Whetten (2006) emphasizes that organizational identity should be a distinguishable concept from “organizational culture, image, and identification” (p. 220).

Having introduced the notion of organizational identity into the background of this study, it is important to note that this definition remains a rather fixed and permanent concept of “who we are” (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 265). In this second decade of the twenty first century, institutional as well as employment permanency in the higher education sector is diminishing; post-secondary education is, many respects, in constant flux now. In particular, the reliance on part-time faculty and support staff makes organizational identity building even more challenging for Continuing Education leaders (Puusa, Kuittinen, & Kuusela, 2013), as does the changing economic landscape that drives government funding decisions for post-secondary education as well as student participation decisions related to personal financial stability. The landscape is better described in terms of constancy of change than any notion of permanency.

Organizational identification affects to a greater or lesser extent both “the satisfaction of the individual and the effectiveness of the organization” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 20). Social Identity Theory (SIT) presents a social-psychological perspective of organizational identification and behavior, and was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the early 1980’s (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). SIT posits that “people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories...that are abstracted from the members” (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 20). This social classification offers the individual a perception of belonging to a human group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Furthermore, identity, and meaning are linked by Ashforth and Mael (1989):

The individual’s organization may provide one answer to the question, Who am I? Hence, we argue that organizational identification is a specific form of social identification. This search for identity calls to mind a family of existential motives often alluded to in the literature on organizational behavior, including searches for meaning, connectedness, empowerment, and immortality. (p.22)

Ashforth and Mael (1989) go on to argue that the individual's social identity may originate not only from their organization, but may also be influenced by a sub-unit to which they belong; in fact, individuals may identify as members of a number of sub-units or as collective members of one sub-unit. It can be argued in broad terms that colleges and their CE units align with Albert and Whetten's (1985) description of "holographic organizations in which individuals across subunits share a common identity (or identities) and ideographic organizations in which individuals display subunit-specific identities" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 22). Thus "organizationally situated social identity may, in fact, be comprised of more or less disparate and loosely coupled identities" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 22).

The SIT concept is relatively new to the organizational behavior literature (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), and 'organizational identification' has often been confused with employees' engagement with organizational goals and values (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). It is therefore important to emphasize that the conceptual framework for the present study does not include any element of organizational commitment, but rather that of the potential links between organizational change, sensemaking, and *identity*.

### 2.3.3 Theory of sensemaking – ambiguity and complexity

Sensemaking has its origins in Karl Weick's "The Social Psychology of Organizing", first published in 1969. In this work, which he revised in 1979, Weick first describes recursive cycles of "enactment"- "selection"- "retention" (Weick, 1979, p. 132) as an organizing model. He then derives a recipe for sensemaking on the statement, "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" (p. 133), extending it to the plural "How can they know what they think until they see what they say?" (p. 134). In this early model of sensemaking, Weick argues that "...organizing is not confined to just cognition and thinking....Organizing is also built around feelings, actions, and desires and collective attempts to understand them" (p. 134).

By 1995, Weick had devised a theoretical framework of sensemaking, in which he drew on Schön's (1983) work on reflective practice to refine his description of sensemaking. As Gioia (2006) emphasized in his essay on the unique contributions that Weick made to

the field of organizational studies, Weick's introduction of sensemaking theory changed the conversation from the study of the *organization* to that of *organizing*, emphasizing the active process that is 'organizing' rather than the virtual entity called the 'organization'. In "Sensemaking in Organizations", Weick related sensemaking to problem setting as a key component of professional work. Weick (1995) asserts that, "Problems...must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain. ...Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them" (Schön, 1983, p. 40, as cited in Weick, 1995, p. 9).

Weick (1995) described sensemaking as an explanatory process that can be described with seven characteristics: it is "grounded in identity construction, retrospective, enactive of sensible environments, social, ongoing, focused on and by extracted cues, and driven by plausibility rather than accuracy" (p. 17).

Weick (1995) argues that people engage in sensemaking when they are confused by uncertainty due to "information load", "complexity" and/or "turbulence" (p. 86) in their environment and/or "ambiguity" (p. 91) arising from multiple interpretations of their environment. Weick describes these as triggers for sensemaking, or "threshold[s] of dissatisfaction" related to such confusion, causing individuals to "initiate action to resolve the dissatisfaction" (p. 84).

Weick (1995) relates the sensemaking process to the concept of identity, citing Ring and Van de Ven (1989), who define sensemaking as an "emergent interpersonal transaction process" (p. 179). Ring and Van de Ven provide an explanation that leans on Turner's (1987) sociological theory of motivation, in their connection of sensemaking to identity:

Sensemaking processes derive from the need within individuals to have a sense of identity – that is, a general orientation to situations that maintain esteem and consistency of one's self-conceptions. Sensemaking processes have a strong influence on the manner by which individuals within organizations begin processes of transacting with others. If confirmation of one's own enacted "self"

is not realized, however, sensemaking processes recur and a reenactment and representation of self follows. (Ring and Van de Ven, 1989, p. 180)

More recently, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) presented a comprehensive literature review and overview of the sensemaking field. In their review, they acknowledge that the sensemaking literature has become fragmented since Weick's (1995) seminal work.

In their review, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) found that various authors were linking sensemaking to organizational culture (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999) and strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). Maitlis and Christianson found that more recently, research has focused on social process such as discursive practices of middle managers (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2004). Furthermore, Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) have introduced power and emotion as areas for future study of sensemaking within organizations as well (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

Given the various approaches to sensemaking, there have been correspondingly many definitions proposed. Typically, definitions polarize into two camps: sensemaking “within” individuals – a cognitive process whereby the individual develops a mental model to make sense of the organizational environment - or sensemaking “between” individuals – “a social process that occurs between people as meaning is negotiated and mutually constructed” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 66). The latter collective nature of sensemaking is the focus of Maitlis and Christianson's (2014) review; the present study of leaders in CE draws on both concepts of sensemaking “within” and “between” individuals.

Maitlis and Christianson (2014) recognized that “organizational change, including restructuring and redistribution of responsibilities has the potential to trigger sensemaking as leaders and followers orient themselves to their new roles” (p. 77). It is these tensions and challenges that are of interest in the present study, as they relate to the institutional adaptations to changes in higher education, and more locally, the internal negotiations and positioning resulting from blurred boundaries between departments and roles.

### 2.3.4 Theory of culture and subculture

Culture and identity are described by Schein (2010) as organizational influences, where tensions may arise among and between subcultures as they seek alignment toward shared goals. Mitigation strategies may be necessary to address these challenges. The present case study explores the challenges and opportunities for CE Deans/administrators to lead amidst change in a setting with identifiable subcultures.

Schein (2010) describes organizational culture as “the foundation of the social order that we live in and of the rules we abide by...and it is...created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders” (p. 3). As well, Schein (2010) has explored the question of identity and culture, and has identified three major organizational subcultures that exist in most organizations. He labels these subcultures as the “operators”, the “engineers”, and the “executives” (pp. 58-64). In the community college setting, these subcultures can be interpreted to represent the support staff, faculty and administrators of the educational institution.

In the community college setting, tension, and conflict can arise as a result of the interactions between these various subcultures, and require significant one to one and organizational trust to overcome (Shults, 2008). Further to the identification of the three subcultures according to Schein’s model, several “oppositional’ pairings can also be seen in the community college setting: vocational versus academic program focus; full-time post-secondary versus part-time continuing education delivery; administration versus unionized labour groups; faculty versus support staff employees; part-time versus full-time employees; and central main campus versus geographically dispersed smaller campuses.

The challenge that these various subcultural tensions bring to the organization is one that community college leaders must recognize. Leaders must mitigate the tensions and conflicts in order to facilitate alignment of these sometimes competing or diametrically opposed interests, as a means to achieving shared and sound organizational goals. The present study explores the ways in which CE leaders are experiencing these tensions, and their approaches to mitigating these challenges.



## 2.4 Relevant Research

The initial literature review produced fifteen substantial research studies that pertain to organizational change, identity and sensemaking, and subcultural dynamics, with relevance to the context of the present study of leadership in the changing higher education landscape. This section begins with studies by Kezar (2005), Schultz (2014), Pierce (2010), and Tippett (1998) on the theme of organizational change in higher education. Additionally, a fifth study by Stephenson (2010) explored the organizational structures and dynamics of Continuing Education units. These five studies are summarized below, followed by six studies with relevance to identity: Pamuk (2008), Sveningson and Alvesson (2003), Landry (2011), Miller and Plessis (2014), Mills, Bettis, Miller and Nolan (2005), and Puusa, Kuittinen and Kuusela (2013). Next are two qualitative studies of sensemaking, by Holbeche and Springett (2004), and Gioia and Thomas (1996).

To complement this review of research related to the themes of the present study, a comprehensive literature review conducted by Maitlis and Christianson (2014) adds additional insight into sensemaking as a means of understanding leaders' responses to change.

The most impactful study I encountered during my preliminary literature review related to subcultural influences on organizational change was that of Locke and Guglielmino (2006). This was one of the first studies I encountered while reviewing literature related to the change I was leading in 2014/15 at my own institution. A further literature review was conducted following the data gathering phase of the present study to explore themes related to the unique challenges of leading teams of non-full time faculty; these studies include Ayers (2005), Leslie and Gappa (2002), and Roney and Ulerick (2013), and add to the background provided by the Locke and Guglielmino study.

These eighteen studies are presented in the following subsections, grouped into the research themes of organizational change, identity, sensemaking, and culture/subculture.

### 2.4.1 Studies of organizational change

Kezar (2005) studied the creation of collaborative environments amongst professors within higher education institutions. The research question was stated: “How does the context for collaboration emerge, grow and become implemented and succeed or fail” (p. 840)? The theoretical framework for this case study was grounded in organizational studies literature on collaboration with an evolutionary/developmental focus on collaboration. The main components of these models included “the driving force”, “stages of development”, “formal versus informal processes”, and “importance of initial conditions” (Kezar, 2005, p. 835).

A three-stage model emerged from Kezar’s (2005) research that is not too distant from Lewin’s (1947) three-step theory of change: “*building commitment*” (“values, external pressure, learning and networks”); “*commitment*” (“support and re-examine the mission of the campus”); and “*sustaining*” (“development of structures, networks, and rewards to support the collaborations”) (Kezar, 2005, p. 831). The importance of Kezar’s study to the present research is that it offers a model of collaboration in a similar higher education context to the present study, in conjunction with an examination of change processes related to successful collaboration.

Schultz’s (2014) study of change in higher education is situated in the Continuing Education context, similar to the present study. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify “key elements that create an environment for sustainable organizational change in continuing and higher education” (p. 3); to study how learning may be an influence on the outcomes of organizational change; and to explore what kind of model or transferable lessons might emerge (Schultz, 2014). The study is grounded in change management theories and theories of resistance to change that Kotter (1995, 2007), Kanter (1983, 1985, 1999, 2003) and Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) developed in the last two decades. Semi-structured interviews were used, “to gain an understanding of individuals’ personal reflections on their experiences of a specific, shared change initiative” (Schultz, 2014, p. 6).

The findings identified four emergent themes related to sustained organizational change: “people, previous experience, preparation, and perspective” (Schultz, 2014, p. 19). “Learning” is identified as a key unifying concept, combining “the act of learning” with “learners who act” (p. 19). The significance of Schultz’s (2014) research to the present study is that “the study suggests that ever-present opportunities to learn – created, encouraged, and acted upon by individuals and groups – create an environment for lasting organizational change readiness and sustainable organizational change” (p. 22). Such learning may be evident in the changes leaders described in this study, and may inform the relative success and sustainability of CE units undergoing change.

In Tippett’s (1998) doctoral dissertation, the forces that impact academic reorganization were studied. The research was framed with theories of “organizational culture, planning, and the connection of planning to institutional survival” (p. 35). That qualitative case study involved semi-focused interviews of eight Deans, whose original roles had been eliminated in a major reorganization driven by fiscal pressures, requiring them to apply for new roles in a new matrix management structure. The research revealed a lack of understanding of the organizational culture by the administration, resulting in difficult implementation of the reorganization. Lack of planning also contributed to difficult implementation of change (Tippett, 1998). While this study may have limitations of bias due to “close professional ties” (p. 22) of the researcher to the participants, its relevance to the present study positions it as an example of a qualitative study of reorganization that relates culture to organizational change, in the community college context, much like several participants’ context in the present study. It is also significant in that given the size of the sector, it is one of relatively few doctoral dissertations related to the topic of higher education reorganization, and suggests there is potential for future study in this area.

A qualitative study was conducted in the state of Florida by Pierce (2010) that illuminates the sensemaking experiences of seven college presidents during a time of transformative organizational identity change. Similar to the present study, Pierce (2010) grounds his study in the organizational theories of Albert and Whetten (1985), Weick (1995) and Ashforth and Mael (1989). Pierce cites Weick (1995), in stating that “...ambiguity is

mediated by the process of sensemaking” (p. 15), recognizing that sensemaking is “a retrospective process for constructing interpretations of ambiguous stimuli” (Pierce, 2010, p. 17). In Pierce’s study, the ambiguities arise from the transformational change taking place in the Florida college system, as presidents navigate their colleges through a transition from two-year to four-year college status. The scope of ambiguity in the present study pertains to comparatively smaller sub-cultural and structural changes and ambiguities than those in Pierce’s study; however the present study similarly examines “the implications for how organizational members identify with an organization and [how] their identification with the organization impacts their own perception of self” (Pierce, 2010, p. 81).

The unique contribution of Pierce’s (2010) study of organizational change is that unlike previous case studies of sensemaking that focused on the organization and its members’ behaviors, it focused on the leadership experience itself and the personal effects of organizational identity transformation on leaders (Pierce, 2010). The present study similarly combines the concepts of identity, sensemaking and the experience of change for leaders in higher education, while placing the research in a multi-case context.

Finally, Stephenson’s (2010) study took a qualitative approach to examine the dynamics of continuing education units in eight universities, from the perspective of the university administrators’ experiences. Similar to characterizations by Braverman (2013), Coates (2013), and Fong (2013), Stephenson describes continuing education as “constantly in an organizational architecture mode, framing and reframing its desired mission and ultimately its relationship with its parent or host institution” (Stephenson, 2010, p. 63). In exploring administrators’ perceptions of continuing education organizational dynamics, Stephenson grounds the work in the persistent reality of “continuing education’s pursuit of acceptance and full incorporation into the life and culture of its parent institution” (p. 63) – citing Embree and Cookson’s (2002) description of continuing education as “the stepchild” (p. 63) of the institution.

Stephenson (2010) found that administrators’ perceptions could be symbolized allegorically and metaphorically - citing Bolman and Deal (2008) - by six different

models of continuing education units; these six models (“colonial”, “educational-laboratory”, “facilitator”, “hybrid”, “mediator”, “mélange”, and “radical” (Stephenson, 2010, p. 64)) are then grouped into “humanistic”, “procedural” or “mechanistic” (p. 64) structural framework designs. The study by Stephenson suggests that reliance on these symbolic ideas by continuing education leaders “will lead to an enlightenment of the relationship between administrative strategies, leadership skills, and program delivery” (p. 70). The implication is that leaders’ ability to visualize these symbolic frameworks and models promotes a “co-academic image” (p. 70), and “leads to inspiration, a unique identity and self-efficacy” (p. 70) for continuing education units (Stephenson, 2010). The significance of this study in relation to the present research is that it proposes a means by which leaders of continuing education can construct symbolic meaning from their roles in a “contemporary, postmodern, suborganization within a traditional organizational culture” (p. 70).

#### 2.4.2 Studies of identity

On the subject of identity, Pamuk (2008) presents a doctoral dissertation that explores disaster management and government reorganization - specifically the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)’s transfer into the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS) following the tragic terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Pamuk surveyed 65 employees in a regional FEMA office who were transferred to the DHS, and proposes that “employees’ perceived threats to their self-concept is central to understanding their reactions toward reorganization” (p. 91). The research also examines the effect of “change-relevant actions” (p. 8) and human resource programs on an individual’s attitude toward reorganization. This qualitative research study is framed by Steele’s (1988) self-affirmation theory as well as Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) Social Identity Theory, and was conducted by a survey instrument - Zatzick’s (2001) Self-Affirmation Model of Resistance Towards an Organizational Change - that was modified by Steele’s (1988) self-affirmation theory. Past studies on organizational changes, governmental reorganizations and the self-affirmation theory were also reviewed (Pamuk, 2008).

Pamuk's (2008) findings support the main tenets of the self-affirmation theory – “that the greater the perceived threat to an individual's self-concept, the greater the negative attitude toward reorganization...[and that] no significant difference was demonstrated between an individual's position in the hierarchical structure of an organization and negative attitudes toward reorganization” (p. 103). There may be potential connections to be made with the present study's focus on identity to Pamuk's findings related to self-affirmation – both related to self-concept.

In a study of identity construction, Sveningson and Alvesson (2003) present an in-depth case-study of one manager's identity work. A narrated self-identity construction is explored, and is unique in its presentation of a metaphorical representation of identity as “struggle” (p. 1188). Sveningson and Alvesson argue that as individuals seek meaning in their work, “discourses, roles and narrative self-identities are all involved – they fuel and constrain identity work” (p. 1188). Their study invites future research that explores in-depth studies of identity, with an interest to explore “how people see themselves in organizations as part of and/or in addition to how they perceive and identify/dis-identify with organizational identity and/or distinct social groups” (p. 1190).

Focusing on the challenges facing Continuing Education leaders, Landry (2010) conducted a qualitative study exploring the realities of practice for CE leaders in Canadian universities. This research highlights the tension that resonates throughout CE leadership. Landry's (2010) study identified perceived threats that challenge CE leaders:

CE has not been acknowledged as a core activity within the institution, and the profession of CE has not been viewed as professional in the same way faculty would be viewed as professional. CE units perceive threats in the areas of resources, decentralization, positioning of the unit, and academic credibility (p. 9).

Furthermore,

...there is a sense of vulnerability among most CE leaders about the future of their units. For some CE units, organizational history has influenced their position

within the institution. A historically based undertone of pessimism still exists toward some CE units (p. 10).

Miller and Plessis (2014) also explored the challenges associated with leading marginalized academic units. Their study of the narratives that CE leaders employ about whom they serve highlights the need to “update these stories in order to eliminate dated binaries, to reflect a more diverse student and workforce population, and to bring our learners from the margin to the centre” (p. 7).

Another study with ties to Social Identity Theory is that of Mills, Bettis, Miller and Nolan (2005), in which they study one case of a reorganization of academic departments, through journal analysis of five faculty members during the first year of a reorganization. The study is framed with Alvesson and Willmott’s (2002) explorations of identity and organizational change, as well as Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) SIT and Ashforth and Mael’s (1989) Self-Categorization Theory (SCT). The findings highlight implications for the merger of academic units, and demonstrate that in this case, the merger “encourage[d] the airing of differences and separation within the new unit because [the merger] increased attention to the differences and tensions between subgroups” (p. 614). The study highlights shortcomings of applications of SIT/SCT, which may focus too much on the importance of “prototypical characteristics” (p. 616). The present study provides an opportunity to corroborate or refute this conclusion by exploring the ways in which CE leaders navigate the tensions and dilemmas inherent in the ever-changing organizational structures of CE units within their organizations.

Another study of identity is presented by Puusa, Kuittinen and Kuusela (2013), in which change and construction of identity was studied in the educational institution context. Questions included: “[How do] members of an educational organization construct the meaning of ‘who we are’ during an ongoing change?...[Is it] reasonable to expect that a loosely coupled educational organization can possess a coherent organizational identity?...[Do] administrators and teaching staff structure organizational identity differently?” (Puusa, Kuittinen, & Kuusela, 2013, p. 165). According to Puusa et al.,

organizational identity is “a social and symbolic construction whose purpose is to give meaning to an experience” (p. 166).

As noted earlier, the theoretical frame of reference in their study was based on Albert and Whetten’s (1985) organizational theory; the framework also incorporates Schein’s (2010) organizational subgroup cultures, as well as Weick’s (1976) theory of loosely coupled systems. When paired with Schein (2010), these theories describe “a fragmented and fluid organizational structure, in which individuals representing different cultural, social or educational backgrounds can also form their own subcultures” (Puusa et al., 2013. p. 168).

Puusa, Kuittinen and Kuusela’s (2013) research concluded that the two critical features that Albert and Whetten (1985) use to characterize organizational identity - centrality and distinctiveness – are incomplete without consideration of “an emotional dimension that has not been explicitly investigated in prior research” (Puusa et al., 2013, p. 177). Puusa et al. emphasize the importance of linking past to future in the analysis of organizational change, and conclude that “controversial interpretations of change and identity may result in difficulties in the implementation of change” (p. 177).

This identity work is facilitated by the process of sensemaking which, as described earlier, is triggered by uncertainty and ambiguity (Weick, 1995) associated with such challenges.

### 2.4.3 Studies of sensemaking

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) identified university governance as a site where sensemaking was clearly evident, in a grounded theory study (Weick, 1995). Weick also lists other helpful methodologies that have been used in engaging in the study of sensemaking: naturalistic inquiry, case scenarios, interviews, work diaries, semiotic analysis, dialectic analysis, field observation, among others (p. 172).

In the sensemaking literature, Gioia and Thomas (1996) are widely cited: They combine the concepts of identity, sensemaking and organizational change in a mixed methods study of top management teams in higher education institutions and their sensemaking



experiences in the context of strategic change initiatives. Beginning with a case study at one institution to develop grounded theory, they then applied that theory in a multi-institutional quantitative study of management teams' interpretation processes, involving 611 executives at 372 US colleges and universities.

From their large-scale study, Gioia and Thomas (1996) found that during times of change, perceptions of identity and image serve to connect team members' interpretations of issues to the organization's internal context. Gioia and Thomas' conclusion resonates with the challenges faced by leaders in the present study:

Although existing organizational theories have viewed identity as somewhat changeable, typically over a long term (Albert and Whetten, 1985)...the kind of change now demanded of academic institutions calls for altering aspects of identity and image within dramatically shorter time horizons. (p. 398)

A Roffey Park Institute (in the United Kingdom) research report presented by Holbeche and Springett (2004) is also central to the present study's research question. The purpose of the study was to investigate people's perception of 'meaning' in the workplace. Holbeche and Springett's study is grounded in Weick's (1995) sensemaking theory, Zohar and Marshall's (2000) spiritual intelligence (SQ) and connections to the 'quest for meaning', along with leadership and climate explorations of Bennis and Nanus (1985), Kotter (1995) and Schein (2010). Holbeche and Springett's qualitative case study utilized a Quest for Meaning at Work "QMW" survey, and applied Appreciative Inquiry methods to explore themes (Holbeche & Springett, 2004). The findings established that "there is a business case for taking questions of meaning seriously...[with] a clear link between employees' experience of meaning and an organization's ability to manage change successfully" (Holbeche & Springett, 2004, p. 3). The present study seeks to explore similar themes of meaning in the workplace, with an aim to corroborate these findings of significance of the relationship between meaning and change, albeit through different methods than those used by Holbeche and Springett.

Finally, Maitlis and Christianson (2014) conducted a literature review highlighting studies that explored the theme of sensemaking during organizational change. Luscher

and Lewis's (2008) study of decentralization noted that new jobs became triggers for sensemaking; Balogun (2003, 2006) and Balogun and Johnson (2004, 2005) explored middle managers' experiences of a significant strategic change initiative and the associated sensemaking triggers. The various change goals served as triggers that were "at odds with managers' existing understandings of their organization, causing them to grapple with what the organization was becoming and the implications for themselves and their teams" (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 77). Narrative research conducted by Humphreys and Brown (2002) explored the tensions between organizational versus personal identity narratives (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). In a study by Gioia, Thomas, Clark and Chittipeddi (1994), metaphor emerged as a powerful sensemaking device in constructing social identity.

These studies of sensemaking focus primarily on changes at the organizational level. The present study presents an opportunity to explore similar concepts of organizational identity and image at the sub-cultural level, with findings that can be compared to college leaders' experiences of sensemaking related to leading their teams through times of change. The next section provides examples of studies that explore these subcultural influences on change.

#### 2.4.4 Studies of culture/subculture

Locke and Guglielmino (2006) studied cultural characteristics of organizational subunits in community colleges and the impacts of subcultural differences on planned organizational change. Their study addresses a gap in the study of community colleges as it pertains to their organizational subunits (Locke & Guglielmino, 2006). Research questions included: "How do subcultural groups within a community college experience, respond to, and influence organizational change? Do distinct subcultural groups differ in their perceptions of planned change? Applying Schein's [(2010)] three-tier model of organizational culture, at which levels are differences among the subcultural groups most evident" (Locke & Guglielmino, 2006, p. 111)?

In their qualitative study, individual interviews, anonymous questionnaires, observations and data analysis were employed. The framework was based on Kotter's (2012) eight

stage model of organizational change, and on eleven dimensions of culture (Schein, 2010), informing open-ended questions intended to reveal cultural assumptions (Locke & Guglielmino, 2006).

Locke and Guglielmino (2006) found that the four stakeholder groups – administrative, senior faculty, junior faculty, and support staff – could be considered distinct subcultures, carrying different assumptions about “mission, means used to fulfill the mission, common language and concepts, and the meaning of rewards and recognition” (p. 115). Furthermore, these subcultural groups demonstrated commonalities as well as unique differences in their attitudes toward planned organizational change. Locke and Guglielmino (2006) also noted the importance of recognizing that subcultural differences can both facilitate and/or hinder change.

The conclusion that “subcultures demonstrated significant differences in the manner in which they experienced, responded to, and influenced planned change” (Locke & Guglielmino, 2006, p. 125) in a community college is relevant to the present study, in that the CE leaders’ organizational units may be considered subcultural units of the larger organization. There may be connections between the cultural dimensions studied by Locke and Guglielmino, and the subcultural identities being explored in the present study.

Other researchers have identified subcultural influences as important elements of successful change initiatives. In a study of institutional discourse at a rural community college undergoing organizational change, Ayers (2005) used storytelling as a means of gaining understanding of language as it is used to represent perceptions of experiences in the work environment. Referencing Bergquist (1998), Ayers (2005) emphasizes that the “...community college is a site of expanding missions, chaotic environmental turbulence, and increasing heterogeneity both within the public served and among organizational members” (p. 1).

Ayers (2005) identified competing discourses reflecting the “uneasy tension between academic and vocational programs” (p. 19). Alignment of employees toward common goals and a shared vision is particularly difficult amidst this ever-present tension; Ayers

(2005) calls for transformational leadership that can facilitate effective change in the face of these and other post-modern challenges.

So, what is to be done with this awareness of the important differences in subculture among members of an educational community? Beyond the leader's need to know and understand the various differences woven into their organization's environment, the leader of a successful change initiative must enable change that accommodates and even capitalizes on these very differences. The present study explores leaders' experiences of leading change amidst similarly divergent discourses relating to sub-unit cultural phenomenon.

Increasingly, community colleges hire part-time faculty and support staff to meet the labour needs of the organization while managing labour costs. This part-time status brings with it many challenges. A study by Leslie and Gappa (2002) analyzed the similarities and differences between full- and part-time faculty; they found that 85% of part-time and 84% of full-time faculty were satisfied with their jobs, supporting their assertion that "part-timers in community colleges look more like full-time faculty than is sometimes assumed" (p. 65). However, they did find that part-time faculty were less likely to have attended professional organization meetings or joined community college specific organizations, likely a result of absent funding for these activities for part-time faculty. It is clear that community college faculty do not comprise a homogeneous employee group, and leaders must recognize the similarities and differences to inform faculty development programs to maximize the educational potential of community colleges (Leslie & Gappa, 2002).

Finally, Roney and Ulerick (2013) studied part-time faculty engagement, and found that part-time faculty rarely attended divisional meetings, and felt disengaged from the college (Roney & Ulerick, 2013). Lack of available professional development for part-time faculty, lack of access to institutional resources, and failure to include part-time faculty in curricular and policy decisions are cited as factors that lead to lack of engagement on the part of this employee group (Roney & Ulerick, 2013). Efforts to mitigate such challenges may be experienced by participants of the present study, who

also lead large contingents of part-time faculty in the delivery of their Continuing Education programming.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This literature review has both examined educational reforms that respond to the pressures of globalization and market competitiveness, and highlighted the changing landscape in which Ontario college Continuing Education deans/administrators must lead. A number of leadership models are presented which, when designed, were intended to help the leader to frame their experiences as they navigate identity challenges and sensemaking triggers inherent in the ambiguities and complexities of their environment. As well, previous research was reviewed which explores these themes and provides insights into areas for further study.

At present, the community college environment in Ontario is changing broadly and rapidly; changing student demographics are impacting institutions that have historically enjoyed periods of growth, supported by cultures of tradition and stability. There is a need for alignment to new goals, a need to be organizationally agile and nimble in response to demands from students for flexible, innovative programming. Given that the culture and identity of an organization play significant roles in the organization's ability to achieve strategic goals, the existence of subcultures can complicate the path to alignment. Tensions and conflicts can be barriers to success; tools and strategies are necessary to mitigate effects of these challenges. Sensemaking can mitigate the ambiguities and complexities experienced in this changing landscape. Transformational leadership, with attention to spiritual elements of the leader/follower dynamic is one 'style' that potentially inspires leaders and followers to share the vision for a future that meets the purposes of education, while satisfying the desire for meaningful contribution to the broader purpose of public good. Two eminent academic researchers of 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership excellence, Kouzes and Posner (2007), share the following advice:

Leaders find the common threads that weave the fabric of human needs into a colorful tapestry. They develop a deep understanding of collective yearnings; they seek out the brewing consensus among those they would lead. (p. 119)

The challenge for today's community college leaders is to follow this direction, to observe, listen and act to serve *all* of the constituents of their employees, their colleagues, their communities, and their students. The present study hears from Continuing Education leaders as they navigate these challenges. In the chapter that follows, the study's methodology is outlined.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Methodology

As detailed in Chapter 2, the landscape of Continuing Education in Ontario colleges is changing, within the context of broader demographic and economic pressures affecting higher education, and this study serves to illuminate the experiences of leaders adapting to this changing environment.

The methodology that underpins this study is presented in this chapter. It opens with the research question and rationale for the study, followed by a section outlining the research design, including the study's philosophical paradigm, researcher background, and the study's resulting approach. Following this 'stage setting' for the study, the data sources – participants as well as documentary evidence – are described, and the assurances of trustworthiness are provided. Ethical considerations that protect these participants are outlined next, including the Research Ethics Board approval process, and protections provided to participants. Finally, the data collection and analysis methods are outlined. A chronological summary of the data analysis undertaken in this study prepares the reader for the research findings to be presented in Chapter 4.

#### 3.1 Research Question and Rationale

As noted earlier, in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to explore unique leadership challenges facing Ontario college Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders as they navigate institutional responses to contemporary changes in the higher education landscape. The Research Question in this study was: In what ways are Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders in colleges leading amidst dramatic changes in the Ontario college sector of higher education?

The research design of this study is outlined in the next section, which describes the evolution of my philosophical paradigm, a review of the biases that invariably arise from my own background and experiences, and the resulting methodological approach for this study.

## 3.2 Research Design

In designing this study, I took the position of an Interpretivist, with a motivation to honour what each participant is trying to say, and to tell their stories from their perspectives, bracketing my biases and maintaining my own neutrality wherever possible with an openness to their experiences.

My background includes biases arising from an earlier 'positivist' worldview. Additionally, my present role as a Dean of Continuing Education in the Ontario college sector invariably informs my biases toward the purposes of education and how I perceive my leadership role in this setting.

In order to explore the CE leaders' professional observations regarding their role as an academic administrator in the changing environment described above, I determined that a qualitative approach was most suitable for this exploration, and specifically, an exploratory case study (Yin, 2014) was deemed to be an appropriate design for such a study.

The following subsections explore these elements of the research design in more detail.

### 3.2.1 Evolution of my philosophical paradigm

I am the Dean of the Faculty of Regional and Continuing Education at Fanshawe College, with responsibility for our three Regional Campuses in St. Thomas, Woodstock and Simcoe, and our Huron/Bruce Regional Sites, as well as Fanshawe's Continuing Education, Access Studies and Academic Upgrading activity across all campuses including the College's main London campus. Previously, I was Chair of the School of Health Sciences, having taught mathematics and physics and coordinated the Pre-Health Science program prior to becoming Chair in that School.

My educational background to this point was in engineering, with a Bachelor's degree preparing me for engineering practice, and a Master's degree in engineering preceding the beginnings of my career in higher education. Based on these former academic pursuits, I would have characterized my philosophical orientation as rooted in a positivist



stance, with an ontological affinity to a reality that is “observable, stable and measureable” (Merriam, 2009, p. 8). Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that positivism “has dominated the formal discourse in the physical and social sciences for some 400 years” (p. 108), characterized by ontological realism and epistemological dualism and objectivism (where the researcher and the researched object are independent entities). As an engineer, I was trained to solve problems, and for that matter, any research that I reviewed or produced was very quantitative in nature. I was trained to apply mathematical reasoning to understanding how things work and to solving problems of a practical nature that produced useful products and processes. In effect, I learned and practiced from a positivist paradigm.

During my evolving career in higher education as a teacher and an administrator, and in particular over the past four years in the simultaneous pursuit of this doctoral degree, I have developed an understanding of the perspective that embraces socially constructed realities. Taking an Interpretivist – or constructivist - stance (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) – I embrace the relativist’s ontological stance that views realities as “multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature” (p. 110). Epistemologically, I take the position that knowledge is transactionally and subjectively created through interactions between the investigator and the object of investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

This journey through doctoral coursework has emphasized reflective practice, listening to the voices of colleagues and classmates, and developing openness to multiple interpretations of events. I have broadened my perspective on the nature of knowledge and reality, and approached this present study with an interest to explore the shared experiences of colleagues who are on similar leadership journeys to mine, and to share the resultant understandings with others who may face complexities of leadership challenges that mirror those of CE leaders in Ontario colleges.

### **3.2.2 Declaration of my biases**

In terms of my own leadership practice, I define my role as an educational leader in the context of the broader purposes of education, and with respect to the challenges and

opportunities that exist in Ontario's community colleges, and more locally at Fanshawe College. I must balance the individual versus public benefits of education in my approach to my role. As a leader, I strive to inspire a shared vision for my team, and in support of that vision, to push against boundaries that may hinder our ability to reach organizational goals.

I believe that it is critically important for leaders in education to balance the values and purpose of the individual versus public benefits of education (Gale & Densmore, 2003). Nowhere is this more evident than in the community college setting, where the public role of education can easily monopolize the agenda of educational purpose. We must always remember that, "students are not just future workers" (Griffiths, 2013, p.1). We must also embrace the diversity of our learners, and rise above 'deficit thinking', recognizing the untapped potential within our students (Weiner, 2006) as individuals and as citizens, and countering the ongoing patterns of disadvantage (Gale & Densmore, 2003) that our students bring to their learning experience.

Fanshawe College's organizational goals are directly related to both purposes of education. The Vision Statement, "Unlocking Potential", and the Mission, to "...provide pathways to success, an exceptional learning experience, and a global outlook to meet student and employer needs" (Fanshawe College, 2016, p. 7), clearly describe a commitment to public and personal benefit. Our College's strategic goals – "to grow enrolment, ...to provide flexible learning options, ...to provide the premier learning, student life and career preparation experience, ...and to foster a high-performing and sustainable College" (Fanshawe College, 2016, p. 41) – again articulate the two-fold role that the College plays in the education of today's and tomorrow's workforce and citizens.

While I espouse the individual value of higher education (a personal motivator for me for the past thirty years), I must balance that with the real challenge of meeting the public need for a skilled workforce. My actions as a leader must support these organizational goals. In 2013, my team developed a "team purpose statement" that, in hindsight, captures beautifully the essence of our roles as educators serving the public and individual purposes of education:

We strengthen our communities and enhance economic growth by providing lifelong pathways to personal and professional success.

We serve our current and future students, clients, funders, partners, employers and communities in a localized, personalized, and integrated manner. We respond quickly to labour market and student learning needs by delivering quality post-secondary programs, continuing education, training solutions, academic upgrading and career and employment services.

By doing all of this, we unlock potential in our students, clients and communities (Cluett, 2013).

This statement tied the tailored vision we hold for our own team's unique purpose to the broader organizational goals of our organization described earlier.

In support of these goals, I must push against the boundaries of bureaucracy and institutional practice as an academic leader. In my role as Dean of the Faculty of Regional and Continuing Education, I lead geographically and functionally diverse teams. Given the unique nature of this academic unit, I recognize 'silos' and subcultures across the College, some of which present very challenging interactions for me and for my teams and place expectations of me in my leadership role, always with the broader purposes of education at the core of my actions and as the foundation of the College's goals.

### 3.2.3 Methodological approach: exploratory case study

Given my philosophical stance as an Interpretivist, I committed to a qualitative approach, and in particular, I decided that this study would take the form of an exploratory case study. The rationale for choosing a qualitative case study design is described here.

At the outset of designing this study, I was humbled by Max van Manen's (2006) advice, who cautioned "qualitative method is often difficult, as it requires sensitive interpretive skills and creative talents from the researcher" (p. 720). This study has stretched my modest creative talents, but has also expanded my appreciation for the richness and diversity of my participants' experiences.

According to Schwandt (2000), interpretivists aim to understand the "subjective meaning of action" (p. 193), while maintaining an objective intention to theoretically distance

themselves from - but at the same time methodologically participate in - the lives of those whom they study. I acknowledge the challenge in maintaining this fine balance between objectivity and immersion that is required of a qualitative researcher, and I strove to focus this study on gaining an understanding of the participants' experiences from *their* own perspectives, not from mine. As Gay, Mills and Airasian (2012) argue, the qualitative researcher is immersed in the participants' setting, gathering data directly from them; these data are analyzed through inductive methods, seeking patterns and common themes among the data; and the researcher's biases are declared to ensure the resulting findings provide a rich description of the studied phenomenon in the participant's voice. I have declared my biases, and have attempted to maintain the primacy of my participants' voices.

Qualitative research, or *interpretive research*, arrives at an experiential understanding of phenomenon and provides not only a rich description, but also *thick* description, moving interpretation from the particular to the general (Stake, 2010). "A description is rich if it provides abundant, interconnected details, and possibly cultural complexity, but it becomes *thick* description if it offers direct connection to cultural theory and scientific knowledge" (Stake, 2010, p. 49). One key aim of this study was to provide both rich and thick description of the experiences of CE deans/administrative leaders in an effort to understand the unique challenges they face in their leadership journeys.

Expanding on the origins of qualitative research, Stake (2010) and Patton (2015) make reference to *verstehen*, a doctrine in the interpretive tradition that originates from Max Weber's *interpretive sociology* (*verstehende Soziologie*) (Bakker, 2010). Weber built on philosopher William Dilthey's distinction between the physical and human sciences, and situated a philosophy of science that would place the understanding of social behaviour between these two traditions (Bakker, 2010). Inserting his methodological ideas in the middle of the continuum between these hard and soft extremes, Weber envisioned a third category of methodology that is historically contextual and that utilizes thick description - epistemologically "real", but at the same time highly descriptive (Bakker, 2010). According to Patton (2015), the *verstehen* tradition emphasizes "understanding that focuses on the meaning-making capacity of humans, the contextual importance of social

interactions, an empathetic understanding based on interpersonal experience, and attention to the connections between mental states and behavior” (p. 56).

While the *verstehen* tradition has been criticized for its dependence on knowledge derived from the introspection of personal experience (Tucker, 1965), this suggested weakness of a methodological tool that is arguably absent of external verification does not, in my opinion, detract from the inherent value of the interpretive approach. As Tucker (1965) argued in favour, *verstehen* puts the researcher firmly in the participant’s shoes, understanding the meaning of action from the actors’ point of view. This is the very perspective that I sought for this study.

Contemporary case study methodology is derived from this classical principle of *verstehen* – “an experiential understanding of action and context” (Stake, 2010, p. 48) - and lends itself to exploration of experiences such as the present study undertakes. More specifically, Yin (2014) positions case study as a suitable methodology for exploring “how” questions from an interpretivist perspective.

Case study research is most likely to be appropriate for “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2014), and is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in-depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). A case study distinguishes between phenomenon and context; a “how” question explores the stages through which an action moves from initiation to conclusion, and a “why” question explores the variables and the possible relationships between them (Yin, 2014). “Case study research also can excel in accommodating a *relativist*, [or *interpretivist*] perspective – acknowledging multiple realities having multiple meanings, with findings that are observer dependent” (Yin, 2014, p.17) – which is the approach that is intended with this research.

Yin (2014) argued that case study research requires a theoretical perspective to be declared prior to the development of the research question, data analysis, and interpretation of findings. Initially, Creswell (1998) cautioned that while the inductive nature of qualitative research suggests that theory must only be used as a theoretical lens

to provide an orienting framework and not to “test or verify” theory, but he later acknowledged that the researcher may choose to use theory as a starting point (Anfara & Mertz, 2015; Creswell, 2014).

Miles and Huberman (1994) also argue in favour of the critical role that theory plays in making decisions about what things to study and the relationships between them, with theory providing at the very least, a “rudimentary conceptual framework” (p. 17) upon which the study is based (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). In keeping with this position argued by Yin (2014), Creswell (2014), and Miles and Huberman (1994), the sociological and psychological theories outlined in Chapter 2 form the theoretical perspective for the present study. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the very nature of interpretive research demands that as qualitative researchers, we “seek out alternative data, interpretations, and explanations, and to doubt our framings and understandings” (Anfara & Mertz, 2015, p. 50). Wherever possible, I have incorporated triangulation of multiple data sources in an effort to counter this risk of a narrow theoretical interpretation of participant interview data.

Responsibility of interpreting these leaders’ stories weighs heavily on me. As van Manen (2006) cautions, “one does not write primarily for being understood; one writes for having understood being” (p. 721). The following section outlines how I selected the participants whose stories I would interpret, and the documents that I would draw on for additional study data. It also addresses the trustworthiness of the study design I have described above, by highlighting elements of the data selection and study design that meet criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of such a study.

### 3.3 Study Description

This section outlines the study description in two parts. First, it presents the rationale for participant selection such that the research question may be answered. It also identifies the data sources that provide opportunities for triangulating my interpretation of their experiences with other sources of evidence. Second, this section closes with assurances that matters of trustworthiness have been addressed in the study design.

### 3.3.1 Selection of data sources

Data for this study included interview data provided by selected participants, as well as documentary evidence related to participants' sites, complemented by documents related to the provincial Continuing Education context.

In order to study the experiences of Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders at Ontario colleges, participants were drawn from the members of the Colleges Ontario Heads of Continuing Education committee. Each of Ontario's 24 colleges is typically represented by the most senior leader with direct responsibility for administration and/or delivery of Continuing Education at their respective institutions. Thus the committee is comprised of 24 members, each representing their college, and holding various titles, including Dean (7), Associate Dean (5), Director (5), Chair (2), Manager (2), Vice President (1), Associate Vice President (1), and Registrar (1). The members meet at least semi-annually in Toronto at the Colleges Ontario office, and provide feedback to and receive guidance from Ministry as well as Colleges Ontario leaders and staff. These meetings contribute to provincial conversations with Colleges Ontario and the Ministry related to policy setting and implementation, curriculum development and delivery, and emerging educational trends in the province. The Heads of Continuing Education also lead a bi- or tri-annual survey of Ontario college Continuing Education students, most recently in 2015 (CCI, 2015), to provide data and analysis that guides decision making locally at each institution as well as provincially. The members also share best practices and innovative developments with each other at these meetings, providing a supportive network where colleagues share with each other common administrative approaches as well as challenges. Arguably, this group of Continuing Education leaders is most representative of the province's Continuing Education leadership in the college sector.

It was not feasible to include all 24 college representatives in this study due to time and resource constraints; thus, a purposive sample was sought. Patton (2015) defines purposive (or purposeful) sampling as "selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated" (p. 264). More specifically, the present study utilizes a maximum variation (or heterogeneity) sampling strategy in order to "document diversity...and to identify

important common patterns that are common across the diversity” (p. 267). The strategy requires that the researcher identify the diverse criteria for constructing this sample. This strategic design ensures that the study findings will facilitate documenting the uniqueness and diversity of the cases, and will reveal “important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (p. 283).

In order to mitigate the inherent risk of researcher bias, while at the same time ensuring maximum variation, the purposive sample was deliberately designed to utilize criteria that would capture optimal breadth of representation. Accordingly, this sample included administrators from large colleges and smaller colleges, experienced as well as newer administrators, those whose CE units operate under centralized administrative models and those with decentralized models. The purposive sample also sought representation of the four Ontario geographic regions (Northern, Western, Central and Eastern).

It is important to note that due to organizational changes at their home institutions during the time of the study, there were potential participants who during the time of the study had recently moved into new positions and had been replaced on the Heads of Continuing Education committee; however their experience was deemed to be relevant to this study and thus they were not excluded from being considered for the purposive sample of potential participants. Explicitly excluded, however, were members who had been in a Continuing Education leadership role for fewer than two years.

A maximum of eleven and minimum of six individuals were identified whose participation would ensure that this breadth of representation was realized within a manageable timeframe for the study. Therefore, eleven individuals were invited to participate. In fact, nine of the eleven individuals invited did agree to participate. All of the breadth characteristics identified above were represented in this resultant sample of nine participants.

Data sources associated with each participant included interview transcripts and institutional documentation. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews, lasting 60-90 minutes, were audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. One of the nine participants requested that their interview be conducted without audio recording; this



interview was therefore recorded solely with handwritten notes by the researcher during the interview. A common set of open-ended interview questions was used for all participants, with opportunity for individual questions depending on the direction the participant took in the interview. Further details of the interview procedure can be found in the Data Collection section 3.5 below.

Other sources of evidence intended to be used for triangulation included documentation such as the Provincial Heads of Continuing Education annual operational survey results; archival records such as organizational charts, enrolment or budget trends; websites and social media communications as well as college CE course guides published during the period of the study. In addition to these publically available documents, some participants voluntarily provided institutional documents such as strategic plans, organizational charts and other internal documents during the course of the face-to-face interviews. These pieces of documentary evidence complemented the interview data, and were gathered and analyzed in an effort to “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2014, p. 107).

Finally, a comment on nomenclature used in this study. The word *participant* is used deliberately to refer to the individuals who were interviewed for this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest terms such as *interviewee* or *respondent* may be used; however both of these words suggest a more passive role for the individual being interviewed (Seidman, 2013). Certainly, a shift has occurred from using the term *research subject* to *research participant*, and reflects “many positive developments in how the researcher approaches, understands and maintains the research relationship” (Birch & Miller, 2012, p. 94). In practical terms, the term *respondent* is now typically used in reference to survey data, whereas *participant* is used in reference to interview data. By using the word *participant*, this study emphasizes the active role that these individuals took in reconstructing their experiences during their interviews (Seidman, 2013).

With the decisions regarding data selection presented above, the next subsection outlines the criteria for trustworthiness against which this study design may be assessed.

### 3.3.2 Assurances of trustworthiness

Guba (1981) outlined the four aspects of trustworthiness that should be addressed in any inquiry that have remained relevant and frequently referenced in the succeeding decades since introducing them in 1981. Drawing parallels to prevailing rationalistic paradigms at the time, Guba (1981) related the four driving aspects of trustworthiness (and their relativist application) as: “truth value” (“internal validity”), “applicability” (“external validity” and “generalizability”), “consistency” (“reliability”), and “neutrality” (“objectivity”) (p. 80). Guba then introduced applications of these four aspects to an emerging naturalistic inquiry paradigm. The present qualitative study design is situated in this naturalistic paradigm, and therefore its trustworthiness can be assessed against Guba’s naturalistic criteria. These four criteria are: “credibility”, “transferability”, “dependability”, and “confirmability” (p. 80), and are described in this section.

Credibility refers to the truth value of the study; recognizing the multiple realities of participants’ experiences requires that the testing of credibility be done through member checking – i.e. testing the data with the participants themselves. Triangulation of the interview data with other data sources such as institutional and sector-wide documentary evidence also serves to support the credibility of this study, producing findings that are plausible (Guba, 1981).

Transferability refers to the applicability aspect of the study. Sometimes described as generalizability, there will be limitations to the extent of transferability or generalizability possible, but the thick description of the context of this study, along with the assumptions declared in the method, provide the basis upon which any transferability claims may be made for a new context (Guba, 1981). The results of this study are not in fact intended to be generalizable, but by contrast, are intended to uncover deeper understandings of phenomena that are sometimes encountered by administrators at this level during a period of notable change. In other words, by drawing on administrators from disparate colleges, the purpose is to gain insight into a variety of experiences and perspectives. Thus, the purposive sampling employed in this study, combined with thick description, serve to ensure that efforts to transfer the findings of this study to new contexts will be informed by the contextual details provided in this study.

Dependability is the degree to which the study demonstrates consistency as “trackable variance” (Guba, 1981, p. 81) that can be explained by “changes in instrumentation” (p. 81). By clearly presenting a step-by-step research method, combined with an audit trail of decisions made throughout the analytical process, the consistency can be traced.

Furthermore, by presenting the paradigm that informed the study, and by describing the researcher’s background and bias, the researcher is established as a consistent instrument (Guba, 1981). The dependability of this study has thus been established, and arguably it produces findings that are stable.

Finally, the confirmability of the study speaks to the neutrality or objectivity of the researcher (Guba, 1981). The risks of bias influencing the findings are mitigated through triangulation of data sources, and demonstration of reflexivity that informed the research question, and by sharing introspection and dilemmas that arose during data collection and analysis, serve to demonstrate shifts in my orientation to the study that preserves objectivity as the study unfolded.

With these assurances established, the next section presents the ethical considerations that were addressed in the design, and implementation of this study.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

Patton (2015) presents an Ethical Issues Checklist that guides researchers who will conduct qualitative interviews, addressing ethical issues in design, data collection, analysis, and reporting. In particular, matters of utmost importance are highlighted, including confidentiality and informed consent.

Given that we are all leading in a mutually competitive environment, my colleagues at the Heads of Continuing Education would not thank me for any inadvertent exposure of their position on their experiences of change (particularly if critical of their institution). The necessity to build narrative that captures the essence of the data but conceals identity (Patton, 2015) is paramount for this study.

With respect to reciprocity, I recognize the significance of the contribution that can be made to the collective profession by way of the participants' sharing of their experience. I

believe that my CE colleagues share with me an interest in contributing to an understanding of the experience of leading in the changing dynamic of higher education, especially as it relates to the evolving role of part-time and online education. While the participants were not compensated for their participation in the study, I believe that the motivation to contribute to their profession and to colleges in Ontario led to a willingness to accept the invitation to participate.

Research Ethics Board proposals were developed, submitted, and approved for the eleven potential participant colleges, as well as for Fanshawe College and Western University. These proposals outlined the ethical considerations pertaining to this study, as described in the following subsections. Such considerations as risks and benefits to participants, confidentiality and data security, participant control and consent are outlined below.

### 3.4.1 Research Ethics Board approvals

Approval to proceed with this research study was sought and obtained from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at Western University, Fanshawe College, and the colleges at which each of the potential participants were employed. In preparation for submitting the REB proposals, the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)* was completed on January 24, 2015. The TCPS 2 certificate of completion was attached to all Research Ethics Board (REB) proposals.

The REB proposals for approval to conduct this study were required to be submitted in three stages: first to Western University, then to my employer Fanshawe College, and finally, to each institution at which a potential participant was employed. All colleges' applications were prepared using each respective college's local version of the provincially adopted "Ontario Community College Multi-site Form".

Western University REB approval was granted June 7, 2016 (see Appendix A); Fanshawe College REB approval was granted June 21, 2016 (see Appendix B). Eleven potential participants' college REB approvals were granted between June 29 and November 1, 2016 (see Appendix C), with the shortest approval time being two weeks,

and the longest seventeen weeks. Average time to achieve Research Ethics Board approval, from date of application to date of approval notification for the participants' colleges was nine weeks.

Four of the eleven colleges required one or two levels of administrative approval in addition to submission of the REB application form itself - with new forms for me to complete and have signed by a Vice President at their college. These forms were required to be attached to the submission before the REB would review the proposal. This added to the time required to obtain REB approval at these colleges. Compounding the time delay was the fact that eight of the eleven colleges' REB committees were unavailable for over two months due to a summer break and weren't reviewing submissions until end of August/early September. Interviews were arranged for each participant as their college's REB approval was granted. This meant that some interviews were conducted before other colleges had even reviewed the REB proposal for their site. College administrators may not be aware of the significant pressures this time delay imposes on doctoral students who must postpone their data gathering while their REB committees are inactive. In some cases, the degree to which colleges required extensive administrative approval processes to be completed may be hindering their ability to attract researchers to consider their sites for study as a result.

The following subsections outline the specific elements of ethical consideration that were addressed in these Research Ethics Board proposals in order to mitigate potential risk to participants.

### 3.4.2 Potential risks and benefits

Risk to participants in this study was deemed to be minimal; the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in this research was reasonably expected to be no greater than those encountered by participants in aspects of their everyday life that relate to the study.

In order to minimize any potential risks/harms in this study, participants were able to request that they not be required to respond to particular questions.

Time demands on the participants included time for the interview itself, which, as noted earlier, was anticipated to last 60-90 minutes; it was anticipated that additional time may have been required for local travel, depending on the participant's location of choice for the interview, and depending on any prior or following commitments necessitating travel directly before or after the interview. However, eight of the nine interviews were conducted – by their choice – at participants' college offices. Time was also anticipated to be required for follow-up member-checking interactions.

There were no anticipated risks to me, outside of the inherent risks of travel to and from each interview location.

Possible benefits to the participants were identified in the REB proposals; it could be argued that participation in this study may have provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on the meaning that they derive from their work, and to reinforce positive experiences associated with serving students, faculty, staff and their community through their roles in Continuing Education. Participants may have derived satisfaction from exploring the ways in which they identify with their team members and colleagues across the college. Participation in the interview process may have prompted self-reflection that revealed an increased sense of self-worth and identity associated with their roles they enact through their work in Continuing Education.

Participants received no compensation or incentive for participation, nor did they receive any reimbursement for expenses.

### 3.4.3 Confidentiality and data security

The Ontario Community College Multi-Site Form includes guidelines for confidentiality and data security. These guidelines, as well as the Western University REB and TCPS-2 guidelines, were followed in the collection, transportation, storage, and reporting of data in this study.

Identifiable information was collected for this study, including full name, email address, title and college of employment for each participant. These details were collected in a schedule of interviews on an electronic calendar. This calendar was stored independently

as a separate calendar from any personal or work related calendars, and was stored electronically in an encrypted file on my laptop. Each individual was only identified on field notes and transcriptions by coded identifiers. Each individual is subsequently identified in this document by a letter pseudonym, that was arrived at by randomizing the initial list of coded identifiers using the website tool [www.random.org/lists](http://www.random.org/lists). A master list cross-referencing participant initials and their colleges with these coded identifiers and letter pseudonyms was stored electronically in an encrypted file on a memory stick stored in a locked cabinet in my home, separate from any other study data.

It was necessary for data to be physically moved during the course of the study. Audio recordings of participant interviews were carried in my personal bag in an inside zipper pocket. During travel from the interview location to my home, the audio recordings were stored in the locked glove compartment of my personal vehicle. Upon arrival home, the audio recording was removed from my vehicle and a copy saved in a password protected and encrypted file on my laptop. This audio recording file contained no identifiable information. The original recording was then deleted from the recording device once copied to the laptop.

I personally transported de-identified data (hard copies of the interview transcripts) to the follow-up meeting with each participant to facilitate member checking. In one instance, a face-to-face meeting was not possible to share the transcription hard-copy. In all cases, a telephone meeting was held to discuss the transcript and to review any quotations that would appear in this paper.

Data were stored in both electronic and paper formats, in accordance with Western University, TCPS-2 and Ontario college guidelines. De-identified study data was stored in password protected electronic files on my laptop and on a backup USB memory stick stored in a locked cabinet separate from the mater key coding cross-list described earlier. These electronic records were encrypted using FileVault software as well. Identifiable and de-identified data will be retained for a minimum of 5 years as per Western University, Ontario colleges, and TCPS-2 guidelines. At the end of the 5-year retention period, all paper documents will be shredded; all electronic documents will be destroyed

at that time by deleting from my laptop and by physically destroying the backup memory stick.

The research data were not physically or electronically moved once they had been saved on my laptop at my home, other than the transportation of paper copies of the transcripts for the face-to-face member-check interaction. This physical hard copy of the transcript was left with the participant for their keeping. All transcription of audiotaped interviews was done by me at home, thus no further movement of that original audio data occurred, either electronically or physically.

No secondary use of data was anticipated or occurred. The data were not combined with other data sets from other research.

#### 3.4.4 Participant control and consent

Participants were informed at the time of recruitment and again at the time of the interview of their option to withdraw at any time from the study prior to defense of this dissertation. This option would be exercised by contacting me to indicate their wish to withdraw from the study. Should a participant have chosen to withdraw from the study, all data associated with that participant would have been destroyed and not used in the analysis. Participants were informed that there were no consequences to a participant withdrawing from the study.

No deception was used in this study.

I acknowledge potential influence due to my holding the position of Dean of Continuing Education at an Ontario college, and due to my membership on the Heads of Continuing Education committee described above. However, my role on this committee is not one of any authority over the potential participants. The committee is a collegial network of equals, which meets face-to-face several times a year and involves ongoing email communication among members throughout the year. Thus there was no undue influence exerted on the potential participants to agree to participate in this study. All recruitment activity took place outside the context of these committee meetings, and was conducted by way of email communication using my Western University student email address.



Written consent was sought from participants. A Letter of Information and Consent was sent to each participant at the time of recruitment, and was signed by the participant at the time of the interview (see Appendix D). Participants were also provided the opportunity to review their transcripts and were alerted to use of direct quotations in this dissertation document.

Although we are a very collegial group and do assist each other from time to time when we need advice or information or data regarding CE practices, the members of Heads of Continuing Education are still in some respects competitive with one another, especially given that in the online education environment, we could literally be attracting students from each others' catchment areas quite readily. And so with this backdrop of "collegial competitiveness", I trustingly asked my participants to open up to me and share their achievements and successes as well as their disappointments and challenges they've experienced at their own institutions. The following section describes how I collected the data that they generously provided.

### 3.5 Data Collection

“What more intuitive way is there to learn from another than to ask a question and then to listen to the answer from that person’s perspective?” (Mears, 2009, p. 121). The data collection for this study heeds this wise advice.

As noted earlier, I conducted semi-structured interviews to gather data from a purposive sample of up to eleven (11) and in actuality nine (9), Ontario college academic leaders of Continuing Education regarding their leadership experiences over the past three to five years. The research instrument questions explored participants' professional reflections regarding their role as an academic administrator in a changing environment, and were designed to explore leaders' experiences in light of any organizational changes that their department had undergone, as well as their experiences of any institutional responses to changes in the higher education landscape.

As stated earlier, I am a member of the Colleges Ontario Heads of Continuing Education committee, the population source for this study. Most potential participants were likely

aware of this anticipated research, by way of informal discussions with me at Heads of Continuing Education meetings in 2015 while I was conceiving my research question. However it wasn't until REB approvals had been granted that potential participants were invited to participate by way of an email from my Western University student email account to their college email address that is publically available on their college website. The script for this email invitation is found in Appendix E.

I sent the personal recruitment email to the Dean (or equivalent) of Continuing Education at each college in the purposive sample to invite them to consider participating. This email included as an attachment a Letter of Information and Consent (see Appendix D). If the potential recruit replied to my email with interest, then I replied to arrange a mutually convenient date and time to meet for a 60-90 minute face-to-face interview at a location of their choosing. It was anticipated that there might also be telephone communication with potential participants during the recruitment period to clarify any questions potential participants may have prior to meeting for their interview. In fact, only one participant required a follow-up telephone conversation as part of the recruitment process, and that was simply to clarify my parking arrangements for the site visit.

Invitations were sent as soon as each REB proposal was approved, between July 4 and November 1, 2016. Given that the invitation requested a response in one week, I waited until that week had passed, and then sent a reminder email if I had not received a response in the first week. Four invitations were not responded to within one week of my sending and so a reminder email was sent to these four individuals. In two of the four cases, that reminder email reached individuals who had been on vacation at the time the first message was sent; they immediately responded to the reminder with interest to participate. The other two individuals did not respond to the one-week reminder, and were sent a further reminder two weeks after the first reminder, requesting that if the message had been received but the individual preferred not to participate, they could indicate so, in order to confirm that they had received the invitation. One of these two responded that due to changes in their responsibilities they would not be available to participate, but suggested another individual from their college. Their suggested

replacement, however, did not meet the inclusion criteria I had established at the outset, so I did not pursue that recruitment any further; the second individual did not reply to any of the recruitment messages, and I did not pursue the recruitment any further, respecting their right to not engage in the recruitment process at all. In fact, I have no way of verifying that they did in fact receive the recruitment emails, as I do not want to breach the boundary between my role as a researcher and my role as a colleague, and thus have not engaged in casual conversation about whether the emails were received.

The interviews utilized a common set of open-ended questions (see Appendix F); these questions were not provided to participants in advance of the interview. Interviews were audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription and analysis. Participants also had the opportunity to review their interview data at a later date, in order to comment on the “accuracy of descriptions, explanations and interpretations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 48) that arose from the analysis of their interview. All participants received their transcripts for review; one provided some typographical corrections and clarification of meaning of several passages. In follow-up phone calls with participants to provide another opportunity for member checking following my data analysis, all participants agreed to have their quotations stand in the final report.

One participant accepted the invitation to participate in the study, however at the beginning of the interview, requested not to be audio-recorded. I agreed to this request. Therefore, there are no audio data for that interview; extensive written notes were taken during the interview. The participant had also prepared comprehensive notes in response to the themes identified in the Letter of Information and Consent in advance of the interview, and presented them to me at the beginning of the interview, used them as reference during the interview, and offered these notes to me to keep for further reference during data analysis. This participant is not identified in any unique way among the nine participants of this study, but it is important to note that this data-gathering anomaly occurred.

Other sources of evidence used for triangulation included documentation provided by the participants during the interviews, such as organizational charts and strategic plans. On

the day of each site visit, I also attempted to gather copies of Continuing Education course guides and other literature from kiosks and reception desks at each college. I retrieved copies of provincial documents such as the Provincial Heads of Continuing Education annual operational survey results from my office files (accessible by all Heads of Continuing Education members and their college administrative leaders through Colleges Ontario); I reviewed publically available college websites from my home computer, and I also accessed social media communications (twitter and Facebook) related to each college from my home computer as well.

All of the interview data were gathered by November 28, 2016. As described above, some documentary evidence was also gathered during this time, while further data gathering from websites and social media continued past this date during data analysis in early 2017. The next section presents the approach I took in analyzing these data, and highlights dilemmas that arose and the resulting decisions I took in order to resolve these analytical dilemmas.

## 3.6 Data Analysis

This section begins with the analytical approach to this exploratory case study design that is based on a modified version of constant comparative analysis, originating in the Grounded Theory method. It then outlines the preparation for data analysis, including decisions regarding data organization and software tools. Finally, the section closes with a presentation of the analytical process itself, highlighting dilemmas and decisions related to my approaches to conducting the coding and analysis.

### 3.6.1 Approach to case study analysis

This study is informed by the Grounded Theory Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), to the extent that it focuses on explanatory rather than theory-building analysis. Grounded Theory (GT) begins with the review of qualitative data; as patterns in these data emerge, they are grouped into concepts, and then into broader categories, which can lead to the development of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This inductive approach to data analysis has a disadvantage for the novice researcher, however, who “may be less familiar with

the issues being studied, and may be challenged to make useful connections with the data” (Yin, 2014, p. 138).

In the present study, relevant theories were identified before data were gathered; these theories formed the foundation or ‘anchor-points’ for the analysis of data that led to explanation of behaviors and perceptions of participants. As such, it can be argued that the purpose of this exploratory study is similar to that of the grounded theorist’s goal: to explore “the beliefs and meanings that underlie action” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 11). More specifically for this study, interview transcripts were analyzed and interpreted using a modified version of the constant comparative approach to analysis of data (Creswell, 1998; Glaser, 1965; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

In order to link the data to the propositions, the data analysis employed pattern matching, explanation building and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2014) by way of the techniques of constant comparative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding first identified patterns and themes arising from the data, followed by axial coding of these themes into categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The software tool NVivo was used to facilitate this data analysis. These analytical approaches and tools are further detailed in sections 3.6.2 and 3.6.3 below.

In committing to these approaches to case study analysis, other means of analyzing case study data were ruled out. Yin’s (2014) other two suggested modes of case study analysis – time series analysis and logic models – were not utilized, given that cases did not have time as a reliable variable due to the necessity to recall experiences over a period of several years. Similarly, a logic model was not employed, as it inherently implies a process sequence analysis, also utilizing time as an independent variable.

With the analytical approach thus decided upon, the data were prepared as described in the following subsection.

### 3.6.2 Preparing the data for analysis

The interview transcripts were created using the transcription program F5transcription PRO. This software proved to be very easy to use, and facilitated synchronizing audio

and transcribed versions of the interviews using the automated timestamp feature. Transcription of each interview typically took between four and eight hours, depending on the length of the interview (ranging from 60 to 90 minutes). Variations in speaking patterns of each participant also impacted the transcription time, with some participants speaking very casually in broken sentences with frequent interjections and thought tangents, while others spoke in a very measured way throughout their interview. Sound quality was excellent for all interviews, with the exception of one interview conducted in a relatively empty restaurant (thus confidentiality of the interview was not compromised), where background music could be heard on the audio recording of the interview.

The technique for analyzing these transcriptions was determined following consideration of various options, including various Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (“CAQDAS”) software packages, as well as manual analytical procedures. It is recognized that CAQDAS can be an indispensable tool when qualitative data includes multiple participant interviews and field notes (Saldana, 2013). The benefit of CAQDAS software is that it “efficiently stores, organizes, manages and reconfigures your data to enable human analytical reflection” (p. 28).

Admittedly, I feared committing to CAQDAS only to later discover it may be unnecessarily cumbersome and get in the way of truly hearing the voices of my participants in the data. And if committing to CAQDAS, the choices presented dilemmas of choice as well. NVivo was well regarded as a rigorous tool, but was known to be somewhat “buggy”, with frequent crashes requiring repeated re-starts of the program; NVivo also didn’t display line numbers or paragraph numbers for reference. Some limitations were a result of using the Mac versus PC version, which appears to be more fully developed and supported. Finally, NVivo was recognized to be an excellent tool for very large studies with hundreds of data sources, but would perhaps prove to be overkill for this study of nine participants.

I decided to explore seemingly simpler options, to see if I could find a tool that would still lend the desired rigor to the analysis, without overburdening me with complexity of analytical tools. Quirkos was trialed next, proving to be very easy to use, but ultimately

too simple, with very rudimentary output, no attribute coding feature, and no ability to conduct matrix analyses such as NVivo affords. Also there was no frequency reporting available in Quirkos. And so, despite the appeal of its simplicity of use, I ruled out using Quirkos as it didn't lend the desired depth of analysis I was seeking.

Finally, I trialed the analytical tool called f4analyse that accompanied the f5transcription PRO software that I had used for interview transcription. f4analyse proved to be very easy to use, meshing very well with the transcription formatting as it was designed specifically for analyzing interview transcripts; however it was hampered by comparatively modest reporting capabilities.

There was a fourth choice available to me – to simply use manual coding techniques - putting pen to paper, printing copies of transcripts and highlighting passages using colour coding to represent codes, categories and themes, and cutting, pasting and re-arranging hard copies of excerpts to build a visual representation of the evolving themes throughout the analytical process. As Saldana (2013) argues, “there is something about manipulating qualitative data on paper and writing codes in pencil that gives you more control over and ownership of the work” (p. 26).

I was convinced, however, that using some manner of CAQDAS would help optimize my analytical process, and would be more efficient when it came time to writing and preparing this paper. And so, I concluded that I would proceed with using NVivo, as I determined it wasn't critical to use line numbers or paragraph numbers in the way it would have been for a detailed line-by-line coding exercise such as is recommended for language-based analysis (Saldana, 2013). I did want to utilize classification by attributes in order to facilitate matrix analysis for pattern identification. NVivo meets these criteria where Quirkos and F4analyse do not. (It is important to note that these software tools are being constantly updated, and it is possible that features unavailable at the time I was deciding upon a CAQDAS tool have since been introduced.) NVivo could also produce summarized graphical displays of analytics that were desirable for completion of this dissertation paper.

Having committed to utilizing the CAQDAS method of analysis, and NVivo as the preferred tool, I next faced the decisions as to how to proceed with coding and analysis itself. Would I present demographic data in an individualized or clustered representation? Would I take a case-by-case or a question-by-question open coding approach as the first step? Would I begin open coding with a wholly inductive approach, or would I use my pre-identified theoretical perspectives to inform a more deductive open coding approach? These decisions are outlined in the next subsection.

### 3.6.3 Proceeding with analysis

The data analysis proceeded following a number of decisions, related to presentation of demographic data, organization of coding exercises according to cases or interview questions, and integration of theoretical perspectives in the coding and analysis processes. This section addresses these analytical dilemmas in this order.

To develop the narration of the participants' demographic information, I needed to strike a balance between a clustering approach, to represent the collective features of the participants and an individualized description of each participant's demographic data (Adu, 2016). The challenge in finding the appropriate balance is to provide enough information to the audience to ensure an adequate understanding of the context for the reported results, while at the same time protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of my participants. Erring on the side of protecting my participants, I elected to provide very little uniquely identifying demographic data in this report. The population only represents 24 colleges, and there is risk that individuals in the sample may be identifiable if much unique detail is provided. Thus the demographic data are presented with a clustering rather than individualizing emphasis.

Next, the dilemma regarding case-by-case versus question-by-question coding is addressed. I recognized that case-by-case coding would preserve the mood and flow of each participant's narrative as I explored their responses to all questions in sequence; the evolving nature of the dialogue could reveal themes that became more and more evident as the interview proceeded. This approach would also facilitate the "What strikes you" questions about the individual case (Saldana, 2013, p. 22). It would also facilitate



comprehensive memoing on each case in an independent fashion. Furthermore, an excerpted narrative could be created for each individual that could aid cross-case analysis (Mears, 2009).

The second approach, coding each question in sequence for all participants, would facilitate comparison of cases by nature of having parallel responses before me as I analyzed the responses to each question one at a time. This approach would potentially prove to be more efficient than the case-by-case approach, as I could focus on one specific element of the interview at a time and complete the analysis of that element for all participants. The drawback of this approach would be that some participants' interviews wandered a bit off-topic as we moved through the questions in sequence; I would risk missing points raised elsewhere in the interview related to a particular question theme if I didn't catch it in the first round of coding at the question-by-question level.

I decided to conduct preliminary coding on a question-by-question basis to assess the presence of themes, and then returned in iterative fashion to re-code each case from beginning to end, alert to the possibility of new emerging themes.

Next, I deliberated as to how to approach the data analysis in the context of the theories I had identified as relevant to the study. I needed to decide whether to establish codes a priori, according to my pre-identified theories, or to start inductively coding from scratch – true open coding – with no preconceived codes established at the outset. A number of fears emerged: that my pre-determined theories would not prove to be relevant or appropriate for understanding the experiences of my participants; that I didn't have enough data to confidently build themes from codes (whether pre-determined or not); that a decision to proceed with coding from theory would be biased and risk the trustworthiness of the study.

The literature provided supporting evidence for a combined approach. Echoing Miles and Huberman's (1994) position on the role of theory in qualitative research, Mears (2009) advises the researcher to seek patterns in the data, but "...rather than starting out to find expressions or examples to prove a preconceived idea or to advance a theory, your task is

to connect directly with the experience described by your narrator. Your prior knowledge should inform yet not precondition your interpretation” (p. 123).

Heeding this advice, I used the following rationale to proceed through the coding analysis. Beginning with open coding, I assigned preliminary codes to segments of data that seemed relevant to my research question (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam, 2001). This process of open coding built a descriptive preliminary framework out of the raw interview data, and contributed to the validity of the study by ensuring that I began the exercise objectively, contributing to the confirmability of the study as described earlier in section 3.3.2.

A true Grounded Theory analysis would entail an entirely inductive analysis, whereby samples of data would be coded iteratively, creating new codes as required and recoding earlier samples to see if the new codes fit that data as well. Alternatively, in the analysis of data for this study, I customized the analysis by adding a deductive element, whereby previously identified theories served to form the basis for codes that aligned with these theories. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), theory can be used as a source of codes; a starting point for identifying possible codes includes “the conceptual framework, list of research questions, hypotheses, problem areas, and key variables that the researcher brings into the study” (p. 58). Miles and Huberman (1994) also recommend creating data displays, or matrices, that compare text segments to identify patterns; the NVivo software facilitates this type of matrix analysis, which was used extensively in the analysis of the data for this study.

There is a risk of bias influencing the creation of codes, categories and themes that only related to pre-determined theories, to the exclusion of new codes, categories and themes that would otherwise emerge naturally. Gläser and Laudel (2013) encourage explicit memo writing during the coding process, and to exercise caution when the data doesn’t appear to align with pre-determined theory. They caution that the researcher must strike a balance between supporting the analysis with theory versus coding the data rigidly according to theory, warning that “immediately abandoning theory whenever a conflict between theory and data arises is not a good way of resolving such conflict – it should be

recorded and kept until it can be resolved in the context of all the theory and all the data that have a bearing on the analysis” (p. 56).

I recognized that as the analytical instrument myself, I inherently bring bias to the exercise. To mitigate against this risk, triangulation using multiple sources of data was employed to confirm the themes that emerged from this analytical process; and I committed to embracing data that didn't “fit”, challenging myself to explore unanticipated themes that emerged outside the pre-determined theoretical background.

### 3.6.4 Conclusion

In summary, the preceding data analysis elements that I employed in this study can be described chronologically as follows: interview transcripts were cleaned to remove identifying references; these transcripts were uploaded into NVivo into case nodes. Data were then reorganized into question nodes (while maintaining the full cases in their original nodes). Queries were developed to begin exploring the data, and initial word frequency counts were also conducted to identify the most frequently used words, as well as to ascertain the presence of words that aligned with the pre-determined theoretical perspectives. A first cycle of open coding was undertaken, splitting relevant information in the data into individual coded segments; this was subsequently followed by a second cycle of axial coding, comparing and reorganizing the codes to arrive at categories and subcategories that would eventually lead to major concepts or themes (Saldana, 2013). These first and second cycle coding exercises were complemented by the analysis of memos that I had written during this analysis process as well. In these analytical memos, I reflected on the coding processes and coding choices, illuminating the evolving understanding of the meaning of participants' narratives as told through their interview data. Additionally, attribute coding provided essential demographic information about the data sources themselves. As a result of this multi-layered analytical process, themes were generated that ultimately addressed the research question.

Having established the data analysis processes in this chapter, Chapter 4 presents findings of this analysis in order to provide an interpretation of the experiences of Continuing

Education deans/administrative leaders as they lead amidst dramatic changes in the Ontario college sector of higher education.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Findings

Data gathered for this study were analyzed with the aim of answering the Research Question: In what ways are Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders in colleges leading amidst dramatic changes in the Ontario college sector of higher education? Nine selected leaders of Continuing Education at Ontario colleges were engaged in semi-structured interviews using a common set of open-ended questions, and documentary evidence related to the provincial Continuing Education context were retrieved as sources of these data. Analysis of these data led to the identification of themes that can be interpreted to provide an understanding of these leaders' self-reflected experiences in light of internal organizational changes as well as external changes in the higher education landscape.

This chapter begins with brief cameos of the participants, which serve to illustrate the individuality of the participants' voices, while maintaining participant anonymity. Their unique approaches to their leadership roles are captured in a metaphorical representation of their role, each drawn from an analysis of their own use of metaphorical references woven throughout their respective interviews.

Following this introduction to each of the participants, their responses to the interview questions are summarized. These questions and responses are grouped into three perspectives: internal to the organization, external to the organization, and oriented to self. The summaries combine responses from participants, highlighting commonalities as well as differences in their experiences of internal organizational change, their experiences and observations regarding external influences and impacts on change, and finally, their self-reflections on their perceptions of their leadership roles, and the meaning that they derive from these roles.

The chapter closes with a presentation of a summary of the themes that emerged from analyzing these interview and document data. In Chapter 5, these themes will then be interpreted in the context of the conceptual framework that was presented in Chapter 2.

## 4.1 Getting to Know the Participants

A brief, creative cameo has been developed for each participant, which is based on the experiences they shared in their respective interviews. A metaphorical leadership role has been attributed to each participant, and is derived from an analysis of metaphors that they themselves used as they responded to questions throughout their interviews.

Before presenting these cameos and their assigned metaphorical roles, it is helpful to review the variety of titles that the participants actually hold. Each interview opened with a question inviting the participant to tell me their current title and how long they had been in this position. Across the nine leaders interviewed, there was little commonality in their reported titles. This variability is consistent with the variability seen in the entire membership of the Heads of Continuing Education committee, where all twenty-four representatives' titles variously include the titles "Dean", "Associate Dean", "Manager", "Director", "Registrar", "Chair", "Executive Dean", "Associate Vice-President" and "Vice President" - and typically, they are their organization's most senior leader with direct responsibility for Continuing Education. Their titles also include various combinations of the words Continuing Education, Part-time Studies, Access, Online, and Continuous Learning. Not only are the titles varied, but they frequently change. One participant's title has changed so many times that they had to refer to their business card in the interview to tell me their title.

Seven of the nine participants interviewed moved into their current leadership role in Continuing Education from a previous position also within Continuing Education at their institution. Two of the participants came into their CE leadership roles having experience as academic leaders in other academic schools within their institution. Years of experience leading CE ranged from two years to longer than fifteen years. The average years of experience in CE leadership for all participants was 11.4 years; the median was 11 years.

The following sub-section presents the participant cameos.

### 4.1.1 Participant cameos

The following cameos highlight the complexities of the leadership experiences shared by the participants in this study, and introduce metaphorical roles that can be interpreted to represent the unique nature of each leader's perception of their role as it relates to their local environment. Gender-neutral terms are used, and demographic details are not included in these descriptions, in order to preserve participant anonymity. Furthermore, participants are identified in these cameos by randomly assigned letter pseudonyms ("A", "B", "C", etc.) that do not correspond to the subsequent pseudonyms that were also randomly assigned following this section ("P1", "P2", "P3", etc.). This swapping is done to prevent correlating the findings and quotes in subsequent sections with these cameos presented here, in order to further protect participant anonymity.

**Participant A** has led a restructuring of their Continuing Education team. Years of persistence have strengthened their resolve to continue to improve synergies between academic departments in their centralized CE structure. They view the emerging demand for flexible deliveries as untapped potential for their institution; they counter their frustration regarding organizational inertia with strong leadership of their team in overcoming institutional obstacles. This participant used metaphors such as working their way up the ladder, experiencing the pecking order, chugging along, preventing a bottleneck, crossing all the streams, meeting a brick wall, earning bumps and bruises; I envision this leader as the courageous **Mountaineer**, leading their team on a challenging journey to reaching the pinnacles of success.

**Participant B** has experienced significant organizational change over the past two years, and is eager to optimize opportunities for collaboration and growth of CE in a reorganized model. They enjoy the variety of challenges and the fast paced nature of leading CE at their college. Metaphors appearing in this participant's interview included references to winning, game-changing, competition, moving strategically on all fronts, and pieces falling into play; I characterize this participant with the metaphorical leadership role of a **Competitive Coach**.

**Participant C** has also experienced significant organizational change during their tenure as leader in CE. They see tremendous potential for growth, but at the same time, their optimism regarding future opportunities is countered by frustrations regarding the lack of organizational clarity around the hybrid model of CE leadership, with their efforts constrained by organizational resistance to change. Metaphorical references included being at a tipping point, creeping along, riding a wave, providing mainstream delivery, adding bells and whistles, performing a balancing act, moving people with me, getting folks on board, needing to streamline...or someone will pass us along the way. These phrases lead me to characterize this leader as a ship's **Navigator** at the helm of a freightliner, who worries about the speedboats reaching the market before they can make course corrections for the same destination.

**Participant D's** years of experience are grounded in a values-driven leadership approach that has supported their team through recent fiscal challenges. A prevailing sense of optimism informs their positive attitude that draws encouragement from the tangible impact on communities and individuals served by their leadership. Holding down the fort, raising heads above water, streamlining activities, seeing a rebound, supporting team through struggles are all metaphors that point to characterizing this leader as a caring **Chaplain**, providing guidance and advice for their team through challenging times.

**Participant E** is a bold, creative leader who is a confident, experienced risk-taker. They credit support from executive leaders as a significant enabler of growth of CE in a stable, centralized organizational structure. Capitalizing on new opportunities, and thinking outside the box have led to introduction of new delivery models by this leader. Metaphors used by this participant included coming a long way, having vision, points along the way, riding the wave, being first out of the gate, winning the prize, waving the flag; I characterize this participant with the metaphorical leadership role of an **Explorer** who is leading their team to forge new paths and discover unknown territories.

**Participant F**, another experienced leader, has enjoyed relative stability in organizational structure, albeit a structure that reinforces a separation of CE from the rest of the academic units of the institution. This leader embraces the independence that this



structure lends to their operation, and nurtures their team's independent spirit with practical guidance that reinforces the benefits and advantages of independence.

Metaphors heard in the interview included holding the whole thing together, maintaining boundaries, severing ties, fighting complacency, not getting dragged in, and observing a changing landscape. I envision this leader's role with the metaphorical representation as a nomadic **Shepherd** tending and guarding their flock, protecting them from predators and guiding them to market.

**Participant G** has gained years of experience honing an entrepreneurial approach to growing CE at their institution. With the strong support of executive leadership, and an organizational structure that aligns and realigns portfolios with individual leaders' strengths, they embrace change and build temporary coalitions to implement new initiatives where opportunities emerge. Seeing the fruits of your labour, growing and stretching, building a team, and moving into new markets are metaphors used by this participant, who is readily envisioned as an **Entrepreneur**.

**Participant H** wears many hats. While initially experiencing isolation of the CE activity, their responsibilities broadened and an expanded portfolio led to opportunity for building relationships across the college and in the community. Creative pairings of previously unrelated activities intentionally influenced a blurring of the lines, leading to integrating CE across all academic departments. Metaphors described the initial isolation of being off on an island, then coming to the table, creating better cohesion, making changes on the fly, going rogue, being spread so thin, and banding together; I envision this leader as the **Chef de Cuisine** who started as an unknown but grew a team who would creatively introduce new ingredients from foreign lands to refresh familiar recipes for new audiences.

**Participant I** is an experienced, strategic leader who has led significant organizational change initiatives. They envision a model of lifelong learning that sees boundaries between full-time and part-time delivery becoming more fluid, and recognizes challenges that such a strategic shift brings to leading teams through this transition. Metaphors such as getting out in front, moving forward, pushing down the road, breaking down barriers,

developing and positioning, and building bridges, lead me to arrive at the leader as **Developer/Builder** metaphor.

The next subsection reviews participants' roles and responsibilities, and the organizational structures within which they lead. From this point forward, participants are identified with the randomly assigned pseudonyms "P1", P2", "P3", etc.

#### 4.1.2 Roles, responsibilities, and organizational structures

As outlined in the introduction to section 4.1, the variety of participants' formal titles and the names of the organizational units that they lead reflects the diversity and breadth of the roles and responsibilities that they hold within their respective organizations. Typically, leaders of Continuing Education may have within their portfolios the responsibility for leading some or all of their respective colleges' online deliveries, part-time studies, evening, and/or weekend on-site deliveries. In addition, some CE leaders are responsible for leading other post-secondary academic units, or other administrative support units within their colleges. Furthermore, the organizational structure of CE departments and the reporting relationships vary across participants' colleges. This subsection captures this diversity with a collective summary of participants' responsibilities and the structures within which they lead.

Seven of the nine participants reported responsibility for their college's online deliveries, with these online activities centrally delivered and administered through their CE department. Of these seven colleges, six also see online activity taking place within academic schools outside of the CE department, albeit three of them only offering minimal online delivery through these schools. In one of the seven instances of central responsibility for online delivery, there is no online activity in any other academic school; it is all delivered and administered through the CE department. Finally, there are two colleges at which online activity is decentralized across the academic schools with no central role for the CE department in its delivery; however one of these two participants does have a role in administrative support, course development and faculty training for all academic schools that are delivering the college's online activity. A similar pattern is seen in the Heads of CE Operational Survey (Heads of CE, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015), in which

a three year average (2012-2014) shows 85% of respondents having responsibility for their college's online deliveries. Because of the way the question was asked in those surveys, it cannot be presumed that there are no online deliveries occurring outside these CE departments reporting responsibility for online delivery. However, these data do confirm that online delivery is a predominant element of the activity within CE portfolios across the Ontario college sector.

Despite this diversity in online/CE administrative responsibility, in all nine cases, the provincially-shared collaborative OntarioLearn activity was reported by participants as centrally administered and delivered by teams under their supervision, with no OntarioLearn activity being delivered outside of their CE portfolio.

As described in Chapter 2, the organizational structure of Continuing Education administration is of ongoing interest to those leading CE across the Ontario college sector. Participants were asked about their organizational structures at their colleges, and data drawn from provincial surveys were also reviewed. These structures are defined as “centralized” – an administrative and academic team holds responsibility for all of the college's CE planning and delivery; “decentralized” – administrative and academic responsibilities are distributed across the college in all academic schools of various disciplines; and “hybrid” – which describes some combination of the first two, typically with centralized administration (planning, budgeting, marketing) by a CE unit, and academic delivery distributed across academic schools of various disciplines.

Reviewing results of the Heads of CE Operational Survey over the past four years, on average, there were reportedly 54% centralized, 21% decentralized, and 25% hybrid structures for the responding colleges' CE activity. Response numbers varied, from a low of 18 to a high of 22 colleges (of a potential 24) responding. There may be a trend evident with the percent of centralized operations dropping (62% to 45%), and percent of hybrid colleges rising (19 to 32%) over the four years. However, with such a small population, it is possible that the missing responses could have influenced this apparent trend. At the very least, the average over the four years could be assumed to be somewhat representative of the structural differentiation across the province; if these four-year

averages were applied to this study's participant sample, it would suggest that there should be five centralized, two decentralized, and two hybrid structures in this study for this to be a representative sample. In designing this study's purposive sample of eleven potential participants, and knowing a little bit about these colleges' operations, an attempt was made to match this distribution as closely as possible. While two of the invited participants did not choose to participate, in broad terms the remaining nine still left a reasonably close approximation to the assumed representative distribution of operational structures.

Turning to the interview data, seven of the nine participants used the term "centralized" in their interviews to describe their structural model; one used "decentralized" and one used "hybrid". The seven leaders of centralized models have responsibility for all traditional CE for their college; the other two leaders do not have academic responsibility for their colleges' CE deliveries, however they do provide administrative support (planning, marketing, faculty training, etc.) for the CE deliveries originating in the other academic schools. Of the seven colleges with centralized CE delivery, three of them do not report any part-time delivery of any kind occurring in other academic schools; the other four do report part-time programming being delivered by other academic schools, by way of part-time seats being made available in full-time post-secondary "day" programs. The remaining two colleges with decentralized or hybrid CE deliveries expectedly report part-time programming being delivered in other academic schools across their colleges.

Another issue of interest across the college sector is the branding of Continuing Education – specifically, by what name the unit and its deliveries are identified and marketed, both internally to their organization, and externally to the broader market. Referring again to the most recently available Heads of CE Operational Survey from 2015, of the 22 colleges that responded, 15 units were named "Continuing Education", three were named "Part-time Studies" and four were identified as "other". These data suggest that in 2015, the strong majority of CE activities were identified as "Continuing Education" rather than as "Part-time Studies". Similar to this pattern, in the interviews, five of the seven participants at colleges with centralized CE departments called their departments "Continuing Education"; the sixth used the term Part-time Studies in the

department title, which also encompasses other responsibilities beyond CE or Part-time Studies, and the seventh simply used the title “Part-time Studies”. However it is notable that the decentralized and hybrid college participants used the term "Part-time Studies" in identifying their decentralized continuing education activity.

A review of the participants’ college websites reveals a slightly different pattern. Eight of the nine participants’ corporate websites have a link to the participants’ CE activity. Only three of these corporate websites have “Continuing Education” identified as the link to participants’ CE activity, while four of the websites name the link some variation of “Part-time Studies”, and one uses a name that includes other services and supports. The ninth website has no identifiable link to CE or Part-time studies on its home page; however a link to “Part-time Studies” is found by navigating program and choice options deeper in the site. Notably, two of the sites take the user from the initial Part-time Studies link directly to pages called Continuing Education.

Hard-copy course catalogues were available from six of the participants’ colleges (five picked up during the on-site interview, one only viewed online). A review of the titles of these documents confirms that they have titles that match their corporate college website home page initial link.

All participants report through a Vice President Academic (or similar) division of executive leadership. This is corroborated by the annual Heads of CE Operational Survey that has consistently shown CE activity reporting through to a VPA or higher in over 80% of respondents’ colleges. All participants have anywhere from five to ten or more direct reports. Five participants have responsibility for activity that is outside the portfolio of Continuing Education, either for complementary programming such as ESL and other Access programming, or for full time post-secondary academic portfolios in addition to Continuing Education.

Having established the organizational structures within which the participants are leading, the findings now turn to participants’ experiences of organizational change, and the organizational boundaries and mandates that influence their CE units. Participants

also described various challenges, tensions, and dilemmas, as well as opportunities that arise within these structural realities of their organizations.

## 4.2 Reflections on Internal Organizational Experiences

Participants were asked a series of questions about any changes to their organizational structure, and the clarity of boundaries between the mandates of CE and other academic units. They were then asked to describe any challenges and/or opportunities that result from overlapping mandates. Finally, they were asked to identify challenging leadership issues that they encountered in their organization, and also any opportunities that they saw for CE in their organization. The following subsections summarize and analyze participants' responses to these questions.

### 4.2.1 Changes in organizational structure and/or relationships

All participants have experienced some manner of organizational change, whether it is structural within their unit, structural across the college, or change to their own role due to promotion or expansion of responsibilities. Two participants experienced significant organizational change in the past two years (with one of these reporting a previous reorganization five years ago and the other reporting a previous reorganization fifteen years ago). Two participants reported that reorganization had taken place between five and ten years ago. One participant reported frequent organizational changes of varying degrees of scope over the past five years. Two participants reported change within the last two years of their own team structures, with one of them also reporting organizational change occurring over ten years ago. One participant commented that "...that's the big specter that hangs over any of us I guess. It's the pendulum swinging - centralized, decentralized." (P3)

In addition to these organizational changes reported by seven of the nine participants, three of the nine participants saw frequent changes to their own titles and responsibilities over the past five years, due to changes to the breadth of their portfolios.

When asked specifically whether their role as leader of CE had changed in any way over the past five years, six participants responded that, “yes”, their roles had changed, while three responded “no”.

Those who answered yes, either took on other responsibilities in addition to CE (P1, P4, P5, P8, P9), and/or saw their supervisory responsibilities change due to changes in the support and administration of CE by their team (P1, P3, P5, P8,). In one case, a reduction in their team complement saw the leader take on more responsibility for day-to-day operations (P1); in several cases, recent organizational change saw their team grow (centralization) or be distributed out to academic schools (decentralization). And in a number of cases, leaders sought new opportunities and were assigned responsibility for additional portfolios as a result (P8, P9).

Next, participants described the clarity with which their organization defines and enacts the mandates of CE at the various discipline-specific academic units.

#### 4.2.2 Boundaries between institutional units

Participants were asked to reflect on the nature of the boundaries between the various academic departments and CE at their college; it was evident that clarity of boundaries between the mandates of the various academic departments and CE are perceived on a continuum from “yes, quite clear” to “no”.

Only one participant responded confidently that boundaries are clear: “yes, quite clear” (P8). All other participants described the clarity of boundaries with a qualified “yes” (P2, P3), “yes, but most unclear is mine – getting fuzzier” (P9), “becoming clearer” (P5, P6), “not necessarily clear, but in process of being clarified” (P1), all the way to an emphatic “no” (P4, P7).

One participant described the influence that their President has had on clarity of the mandate of CE and its role in the context of the rest of the academic departments of the institution:

[The President] has been pretty clear, which is helpful. Because I think if you have the leader of the institution fully supporting Continuing Education, and [its] model - whatever that model is - and clearly articulates that, then the rest of the institution can get behind it, and knows what it is that they're working within. (P8)

Another participant described the existence of very clear boundaries at their institution that have been in place for many years:

Ten years ago it was a brick wall. You know, we were on one side of the brick wall, and full-time daytime was on the other side of the brick wall. And everyone was quite happy with the brick wall. And so that made it easy - everyone was happy. But in terms of the mandates [now], I think they're quite clear. I mean, we don't try to run full-time face-to-face. They don't try to run part-time online. And even their online activity is not designed for anyone other than full-time students trying to give them a delivery option. (P3)

These responses contrast with one from a participant who is experiencing a lack of clarity regarding the boundaries between mandates of CE and the various academic departments:

I don't think that they're necessarily clear. I think that they're in the process of being clarified. There have certainly been numerous discussions recently about how we can work together better. But also what our specific organizational responsibilities are, and where our responsibility lies for certain components. So it's too soon to kind of say what the outcome of that will be. But I think as we're focusing - all of us - on our quality assurance processes, the need for clarity is becoming clearer. And that's a conversation I imagine will have an outcome very soon. (P1)

The following two subsections explore the challenges and the opportunities presented by the overlap in mandates of academic departments at participants' colleges.



### 4.2.3 Challenges related to overlapping mandates

Participants describe factors contributing to challenges, tensions, and dilemmas that arise due to overlapping mandates. These factors include ownership issues, quality concerns, protectionism, silos, isolation, and separation of CE from the rest of the academic schools. Participants described the need for clarity in order to mitigate these tensions, and highlighted that role definitions and a deliberate strategy are especially required in a decentralized CE model.

Seven participants responded strongly that they experience challenges, tensions and/or dilemmas related to overlapping mandates: “Certainly” (P5); “Yes, yes, absolutely” (P6); “Constantly” (P3). Two participants responded with qualified “no’s”: “On occasion” (P1); “No, not currently...but there [is] a real separation...nobody want[s] anything to do with us.” (P4)

One participant described how they address these challenges through conversation, to “try to come up with the best approach to meet the needs of the students”. “Let’s look at the students we’re trying to serve, and how might we better serve them. Let’s start there and then we’ll work it out.” (P8)

Another participant articulated the tensions that arise due to quality concerns, especially when those concerns are compounded by poor communication between full-time postsecondary “owners” of curriculum being delivered by CE:

That was always the biggest challenge for us...that we had this tension between full-time saying that our teachers weren’t as good, or we weren’t delivering things as well, or we weren’t using the right course outline. Because they would change the course outline, but then would forget to tell us. So, there were a few issues around that area... .So we backed off on having as many equivalencies as possible. I have to say the tension has diminished dramatically over time as we all get better at this - but even so, we’ve decided to sever that relationship entirely where possible, so that there is a distinct difference between Continuing Education and

what the college does as its full-time mandate...which is their full-time postsecondary programming. (P2)

Several participants spoke to the multiple layers of marginalization of CE that are experienced at their institution. When asked about any tensions or dilemmas that arise due to overlapping mandates, they responded by describing internal competition as an outcome of these overlaps. One of these participants spoke of a commonly held perception among CE leaders regarding this marginalization:

I don't think that'll be a surprise to anybody who's been in CE - lack of visibility, which in turn could lead to lack of appropriate supports... There wasn't always the perception that it was an academic school. Even though it held the title of School, one of my challenges...was helping them understand that we were an academic school, that we were building academic programs, that we were looking at academic rigour, just like any other program or school. (P6)

Reiterating the ownership issue described above, another participant relayed their experience of this competition when asked how frequently they experience tensions or dilemmas due to overlapping mandates:

Constantly. And that's the tension around 'who owns it'. And being at the mercy of the full-time operation. Where they go into a program review and forget to invite us. And then [they] find out that we didn't change our programming - because they didn't tell us. And then denying equivalencies. [Them:] 'Well, did you know we changed that course?' [Us:] 'Well, you would have to have told us'. (P3)

This participant went on to describe that the program reviews are more recently being coordinated by a new, neutral party not attached to any school, and CE is now automatically invited. However, there is a recognition that the essence of the challenge remains. Despite improved synergies, "...there are natural tensions. And they will never go away...because in one sense...they *do* own the curriculum. And we *are* delivering it." (P3)

Finally, another participant captured the sense of isolation that results from the organizational and attitudinal separation of CE from the rest of the academic schools:

We were off on an island for the longest time. Nobody wanted anything to do with us. They didn't understand us. They didn't think we ran any quality courses. You know, just nobody knew anything about what we did... .And so there was a real separation. And you know, sometimes you can use that to your advantage. i.e. it was meant to be entrepreneurial...but it was costing as well. (P4)

As this participant alluded, pervasive marginalization takes a toll on a leader and on their team members. This phenomenon is explored more fully in Chapter 5.

#### 4.2.4 Opportunities related to overlapping mandates

In contrast to the descriptions of challenges that arise due to the overlapping mandates of CE and other academic portfolios, participants were also asked to describe their perception of any opportunities that are related to these overlapping mandates.

All participants responded affirmatively, that there are opportunities related to overlapping mandates between CE and other academic schools, with three immediately responding “absolutely” (P3, P5, P8). A seeming paradox exists, wherein the predominant declaration of existing challenges, tensions, and dilemmas as noted in subsection 4.2.2 coincide with the acknowledgement of opportunities related to this very overlap of mandates.

There were a variety of detailed responses, specific to each of the participants' local issues and situations. Identified opportunities related to testing the market for new or struggling full-time post-secondary programs (P5, P7); quality and advisory supports (P3, P5); and synergies and emerging understandings (P1, P4). Recent organizational change at one college has seen competitiveness disappear, with integration breaking down silos between academic schools (P6).

As one participant stated, the benefits of delivering CE programs that are partnered with full-time programs of similar disciplines are particularly evident when it comes to

meeting the quality assurance requirements of academic delivery and the support that Program Advisory Committees (PACs) provide:

Some of the things that CE lacks in terms of structure are things that we benefit from the schools. We have programs where we don't have to have our own PACs. We join their PACs when we can. Because it's not supportable to have [CE] PACs – the multitude of programs we have, we just simply couldn't do it. (P3)

Another participant recognized the synergies that have emerged from collaborating in program development and delivery with the faculty who teach in the related full-time day programs: “There are certainly benefits from having the faculty who are experts managing the equivalencies; we do see tapping into the schools' expertise as being absolutely value added”. (P3)

However, these benefits are countered by the struggle to fully realize these collaborative opportunities. Constrained by modest budgets and restrictive policies that limit CE to hiring non-full-time faculty – admitted by participants as necessary for fiscal sustainability and adherence to the Collective Agreement – there is a resource capacity issue that limits CE teams' ability to increase those opportunities of growth within the part-time CE delivery portfolio.

The next subsection presents responses to the second of three instances of discussion of leadership challenges faced by participants. The question is revisited again in subsection 4.4.3.

#### 4.2.5 Challenging leadership issues

Turning to their leadership roles at their respective colleges, participants were asked to describe what they believed to be their most challenging issues that they faced.

Participants identified the challenges of maintaining a strategic vision for their CE units; managing tensions that result from perceived inequalities; resource/capacity challenges; keeping up with trends; and pressure to generate revenue for the college.

Strategic visioning was identified as one of the most challenging issues for five of the nine leaders of CE interviewed. (P1, P5, P6, P7, P8). One participant succinctly captured the challenge: “Who is it we want to be in this space?” (P7).

As colleges explore new models of delivering Continuing Education, the questions of how to ensure students’ needs are met - the type of delivery, the availability of courses, even the time frame to completion – were raised by a number of participants as they discussed the evolution of Continuing Education. As one participant stated, “things change quickly, and opportunities arise quickly in Continuing Education, ...it’s a challenge to keep on top of that...having the vision, and then being able to implement the day to day” (P8).

A leader of a recently decentralized model described the challenge of leading strategic change amidst organizational restructuring: “We’re not just asking our staff to change; we’re asking our leadership to change. We’re trying to break down those silos, and talk about governance versus ownership” (P6). This shift in paradigm, from a model of centralized ownership and delivery of CE to a distributed decentralized model that still requires a coordinating oversight was identified as a particular leadership challenge.

Several participants mentioned the challenge of maintaining this strategic focus in the face of constrained human resources. In the face of reductions in staff and administrative complement due to budget challenges, one participant lamented that “...the opportunity to think more strategically, and to plan ahead, and into a greater distance from the present day becomes somewhat hampered” (P1).

In terms of strategic leadership challenges, the complexity of these leaders’ portfolios was identified as a contributing factor. While deans of other academic schools are focused on a particular field or discipline of study, CE deans/administrative leaders are required to oversee a tremendous breadth of programming. As one participant commented, “it’s huge...it covers all disciplines...the Dean of Continuing Education is focused on everything!” (P8). This notion of being ‘focused on everything’ presents a particular challenge for these leaders as they attempt to provide strategic leadership for their teams and for their college.

Following the number one challenge related to strategic visioning, two themes tied for second most frequently mentioned challenges: managing the tensions that result from not being perceived as an equal partner (P2, P4, P6, P9), and dealing with resource/capacity challenges (P1, P2, P3, P7).

The perception of difference arose in several responses to this question, and also in other questions' responses. This theme is explored more fully in Chapter 5. As P2 states, "we aren't viewed as an equal partner in what the college does" (P2). The need to break down silos and counter prevailing isolation due to the emphasis on full-time post-secondary delivery at their institutions is frequently mentioned. In some cases, positive movement in that direction is expressed, where "progression and an acceptance within the institution" has moved CE from "being the black sheep of the family – to being sort of legitimate all of a sudden [laughing]". (P4)

With respect to resource/capacity challenges, being able to properly fund the development of online programming is cited as a barrier to the growth of CE. Despite the large amounts of money that the Ontario government is making available for online program and course development, it was noted that it is a challenge to be able to either access it, or manage it. Several participants similarly pointed out the cost of developing and delivering online education if resources aren't available to leverage these opportunities. Whether it is the human resource required to prepare proposals for grants, or the capacity of existing staff and faculty to manage and implement these projects, "the challenge of online [is] not having our college understand how expensive and time consuming it is to maintain." (P3). When speaking of the limited resource capacity to develop and deliver unique, modularized, micro-credentials to meet the demand for flexible, online, customized programming, one participant asks, "Ok, to what point though? What's realistic? As a publically funded institution. We're not private. We're not a vendor" (P7). Repeating a quote related to strategic visioning, the relationship to resource capacity is evident: "Who is it that we want to be in this space? And what's the cost?" (P7)

The human resources capacity is also cited as a very challenging issue at several colleges where participants lead with a small team to carry out the administrative support of delivering CE for their college. A decline in staffing levels at one college has led to “...overwork. ....There’s only so much you can do. ...Seeing things float past that you know you should be doing that would move things forward but you just can’t get to them” (P1).

Two further themes tie for third most frequently mentioned, with three participants citing keeping up with trends as a key challenge (P2, P5, P8), and addressing the pressure to generate revenue being another key challenge (P3, P4, P7).

“Being ahead of the market is probably the biggest challenge. We have the greatest flexibility to be able to do that, but at the same time...you’re trying to predict which way industry is going” (P5). Another participant related similar challenges, to “keep on top of the changing trends, to ensure that they’re coming up with new programs and at the same time, discarding programs that are now outdated” (P8). They described the multitude of possibilities for niche programs, but typically those niche markets ride a wave, and then they decline, requiring a continual renewal of program offerings to satisfy emerging labour market needs.

And finally, the pressure from executive leaders to generate revenue is ever-present, as previously mentioned by participants when asked about changes in higher education that are affecting Continuing Education. One participant related that maintaining enrolments is their most challenging issue that they face:

We are struggling to turn it around, and I’m not being successful. And it’s causing great anxiety. Because CE is supposed to be a revenue generator. So I find my biggest challenge right now is the bifurcation of what they’re asking. They want us to continue to earn revenue, but at the same time, they’re asking us to align with the quality controls, the quality pieces, that don’t make any money. So, not to say they’re not good things to do - like program review and program development and annual curriculum review and all the things that we should have been doing because we run academic programming for years; ...they all cost

money and time... so when you put people into those roles, you take away from the revenue generating side of things. (P3)

These challenges will be revisited from the perspective of participants' inward-facing self-reflections on leadership challenges in subsection 4.4.3. The next subsection turns the conversation from challenges to opportunities.

#### 4.2.6 Opportunities for Continuing Education at colleges

Having spoken about organizational structures and change, and having explored the challenges as well as the opportunities related to overlapping mandates, participants were asked to reflect on what they believed to be the most significant opportunities for Continuing Education at their colleges.

As they looked to the future, commonalities emerged: entrepreneurial opportunities to develop innovative programming; forging partnerships with industry; the growth in online learning and other flexible deliveries; inter-institutional collaboration; as well as collaboration with other academic departments in their own colleges.

Five participants identified the opportunity to develop new and innovative programming, with an entrepreneurial spirit that sees colleges responding quickly to student and community needs. (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6).

As one participant put it, "I think that is really the biggest opportunity - and I think this is the same for all colleges - to be known as that entity at the college that is able to be really responsive and cutting edge." (P5). As another participant put it, "CE traditionally ends up being more entrepreneurial and much more ready to respond.....Where there is an opportunity that needs a quick turnaround time...it's pretty easy to ramp up and to get it done." (P4)

The second most frequently mentioned opportunity is forging partnerships with industry to meet local needs. (P2, P5, P6). Participants see themselves as best positioned to understand the needs of people who are employed in local industries, and where those



industries might be heading in terms of future labour market needs. As one participant described,

We've created a program...that is going to help these people to be better in their career, and to perhaps advance in their career. [It] allows an organization to invest in their people and support their employees in a way that they don't necessarily have a capacity to do on their own. (P5).

Another participant at a decentralized college highlights the role that academic schools' Program Advisory Committees (PACs) play in this partnership: "Those third party relationships.... aligning workforce development with the work of the school through their PACs, thorough their partnerships, through their alliances, through their fundraising, through all of it, I think is a huge opportunity." (P6)

Despite being cited as a challenging issue by some (P2, P3, P7), online learning was regarded by three participants (P1, P3, P7) as a growing opportunity for CE, where one participant has observed greater acceptance of online learning in their area, where there used to be some hesitation. They have more people trained to develop and deliver online courses, or have done some investigation in terms of understanding what it actually takes to meet those standards in online delivery. Another participant referred to their active engagement in the OntarioLearn consortium in speaking of the opportunities for online learning through CE. A third participant spoke of the role that online learning will have in supporting personalized learning as well.

Flexible, compartmentalized learning was also mentioned by three participants (P7, P8, P9) as an opportunity for CE at their colleges. Such individualized educational pathways was seen to be an emerging model of higher education delivery where students can proceed through programs at a pace that suits their personal circumstances, and allows for sequencing of course work as their schedules permit.

Finally, collaboration, both within and across institutions was identified as a significant opportunity for CE. (P5, P6, P9). At one college, one of the biggest opportunities is a collaborative approach with the full-time areas: "The ability to test the market for the

viability of programs and throw out a course and see what the uptake is, and if there's interest, to go from there." (P5). Another highlights the importance of collaborating with universities, particularly those in the college's local community.

This section has presented participants' responses to questions posed from the perspective of their respective institutions, their organizational structures, changes, and associated impacts, on leadership challenges and opportunities. The following section turns the perspective externally, to the changes in the higher education landscape, the students and the communities whom these leaders serve.

### 4.3 Reflections on External Perspective

"The importance of CE and lifelong learning is absolutely critical to the mandate of the colleges fundamentally, but also to be able to see a student, not just once in their lifetime, but to ensure that we're supporting them all through their career" (P5). This participant's reflection on the impact that colleges have on students' lifelong learning opportunities provides us with an external facing perspective on the role of Continuing Education in the higher education landscape.

The following subsections explore participants' reflections on the impacts of changes in higher education to the delivery and administration of Continuing Education.

Participants' anecdotal perception of their students is complemented by demographic data drawn from the most recent provincial Continuing Education student survey (CCI Research, 2015). Finally, participants' reflections on the impact that Continuing Education has in their respective communities is presented, along with data drawn from a Community Impact Study conducted in one Ontario college community.

#### 4.3.1 Changes in higher education influencing Continuing Education

Participants were asked about the changes in higher education that they perceive to be influencing Continuing Education. Included in their responses were observations regarding the impacts that these changes may be having on their own institution, and on their leadership of their teams.

Participants described the growing adoption of online learning; the demographic shift; demand for flexible delivery options; emphasis on quality assurance; blurring of Continuing Education/Part-Time/Full-Time Post-secondary boundaries; increasingly competitive environment; Ministry funding changes that incentivize inter-institutional collaboration; and pressure to generate increasing revenue to counter the decline in post-secondary revenue resulting from demographic shifts. These responses are elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

The most frequently cited change in the higher education landscape that is influencing Continuing Education is the growing adoption of online learning. (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P9). While the opportunity to meet an increasing demand for online courses and programs is seen as having positive enrolment growth opportunities, one participant commented that while demand for online delivery is growing, these courses are expensive to develop and keep up to date (P9). Another participant noted the influence that the Ministry is having on online delivery with the implementation of the eCampusOntario portal, which enables students to search for online courses offered in Ontario colleges and universities (P6). And further to this search portal, the eCampusOntario initiative also incorporates avenues for curriculum sharing through funding of shared inter-institutional course and program development and delivery, as well as funding for development and adoption of open educational resources (“OERs”) and other online learning tools that will enable future students in their online learning journeys.

Second most frequently cited was the demographic shift (P3, P5, P7, P8). As noted earlier in Chapter 2, an aging population leading to a decline in the number of traditional “direct” applicants to post-secondary education, paired with the career aspirations and challenges faced by the younger Gen Y and Millennials who may or may not have completed post-secondary education as part of their career preparation, have influenced the market for Continuing Education across the province.

Four participants spoke about the role that Continuing Education can play for Gen Ys and Millennials. Leaders must determine what this demographic cohort needs, recognizing

that they tend to already be well educated, requiring niche programs and graduate certificates. However these programs are harder to create and harder to deliver. As one participant stated, the demographic shift means, “it’s less clear who the market is for Continuing Education versus full-time” (P8).

One participant describes the potential for CE to be an important avenue for Millennials’ career growth: “Their perception of career, and the fact that they’re probably more entrepreneurial and flexible in terms of how they learn and what they need for their careers, and even switching careers and looking for new opportunities – I think that’s a factor as well in terms of the importance of CE”. (P5).

Demand for more flexible delivery options was cited third most frequently (P1, P5, P7, P8). One participant recognized the organizational inertia that hinders forward thinking ideas, and lamented the tendency for leaders and their teams to become mired in habits. In the face of growing student demand for flexible delivery options, this participant shared frustration related to how difficult it is to innovate flexible deliveries that don’t align with existing systems and models:

You want to maintain that quality and that rigour, and make sure that [when] someone is leaving your system with a credential, it’s still a great credential; it carries value, they’re actually achieving the outcomes that are intended. Employers, and workplaces, and society will respect the credential, but they’re not going to achieve it in the same way they did in 1993. (P1)

At the same time, quality assurance measures are the fourth most frequently mentioned change in higher education affecting Continuing Education (P1, P2, P9). These quality assurance processes are in some cases perceived by some participants as contributing to the challenges related to developing flexible deliveries that best meet student needs. The provincial Program Quality Assurance Process Audit (PQAPA)’s “laborious rules” are perceived by some to not help colleges meet student needs. Changes to third party accreditation of some CE programming (accounting, for example) was also identified as an example of quality assurance that is having increasing impact on Continuing

Education delivery. The draw on resources that these processes require is seen to redirect efforts from student-focused developments.

Three participants mentioned the blurring of mandates of CE/PT/FT deliveries of college courses and programs (P5, P6, P8). This phenomenon was explored previously in section 4.2 from the perspective of organizational structure and institutional relationships. There is at the same time, a recognition that a dramatic shift is occurring in higher education in general, where demand for flexible deliveries is driving traditional full-time post-secondary academic units to explore delivery options that come to look more and more like CE: part-time, evenings, weekends, online, etc. As one participant stated,

I also think there's a blurring between full-time and part-time. I think there's a huge huge blurring. And we've done it intentionally. ...We need to look at the whole student experience now - that in, through, and out concept - in everything we do, whether it's through advising, whether it's through pathways...I think the key will be maintaining the part-time priority in a full-time world. (P6)

Three participants highlighted the increasingly competitive environment as a change in higher education that is influencing CE. Global online offerings are available to students at any geographical location; private career colleges offer flexible, career focused short duration programs, supported by aggressive 1:1 marketing tactics; universities' online certificate programs frequently compete for the same career-changer/career-improver market segment as do colleges, and may draw on alumni ties to market for CE. As P3 said, "A student can take online virtually anywhere; they do not have to look in their backyard".

Two participants mentioned funding changes: OSAP reform, introduction of net billing, and the changing nature of grants potentially impact college delivery of Continuing Education. (P8, P9). One participant mentioned specifically the introduction of OSAP eligibility for students of private career colleges. This expansion of the OSAP program to full-fee private career programs could contribute to increasing competition from private career colleges for the higher education market in which Ontario colleges compete.

With the introduction of net billing, some students will qualify for grants that will essentially make post-secondary education free for them. As one participant put it,

I think that'll change the landscape too – so a lot of those people will all of a sudden not need to work maybe as much as they did, and will dedicate themselves more to full-time study – it could be a boon to full-time studies really, even though the demographics are changing (P8).

However, it is felt that this trend may have the effect of decreasing enrolment in Continuing Education, as students may opt to enroll in full-time programming instead, once their financial concerns have been addressed with net billing.

Continuing on the discussions of funding – both for students and for college grants - two participants mentioned the increased need for collaboration with other colleges and universities that is being driven by Ministry funding for online course and program development funding criteria, as an example. (P6, P9)

Finally, two participants explicitly identified the pressure to generate increasing levels of revenue to contribute to the college bottom line at a time when full-time post-secondary enrolment may not grow. (P4, P7). Again, this challenge was described from the internal perspective by participants at the end of section 4.2.5.

After exploring the changes in the higher education landscape that are perceived to be influencing Continuing Education, participants were asked about the students who they serve, and about the impact that their CE deliveries are having in their respective communities. The following two subsections present these responses, and include data from other sources of student and community impact (for triangulation purposes).

#### 4.3.2 Who are Continuing Education students?

Participants were asked to describe the students who they serve. Their responses illuminate the variety of demographic and personal circumstances that lead students to engage in CE activity, and also highlight the challenges that leaders face in marketing to this segment of the higher education market.

Participants most frequently described their students as working, and aiming to advance their careers by attaining credentials (P4, P5, P6, P8, P9). Notably, however, the most frequent first, and immediate response when asked the question was “diverse” (P4, P5, P6). They describe their students as coming from a variety of backgrounds, from an educational point of view, a cultural point of view, and an economic point of view. Their students’ prior academic experiences range from undergraduate university degrees and masters degrees, but at the other end of the spectrum they also describe serving students who have never completed high school.

Participants indicated that their students are committed, focused, and engaged (P1, P3, P4, P5), and also characterized them as demanding, service oriented consumers of education (P3, P4, P6, P7). In terms of their focus and dedication, as one participant put it:

They’re here because they really want to be here. And they’re paying for it in a different way than maybe the first time around that they came to school. And so they tend to be highly engaged. They make the teaching experience for the faculty a really positive one. Because it’s really focused on the learning, and participation, and how this is going to apply in their lives in a fruitful way. (P5)

Another participant described the perspective that they have regarding their students’ expectations of the elearning experience, and the demanding nature of these students’ interactions with the college:

I just think they expect more, and it’s our job to rise to the occasion. We can argue all the reasons why we shouldn’t call students customers, and we shouldn’t call them clients, and we can argue that, but the fact is, they are consumers of education. That makes them a customer and a client. It’s just the way it is. (P6)

The demands and high expectations may be driven by the pressure that CE students are feeling to advance their careers through education. Online education is frequently a delivery option that is chosen as a necessary avenue for accessing college programming, even though it may not be their preferred delivery model. As one participant stated,

They're stressed. They are trying to do their education on the backs of their family, and work commitments, and online is the winning ticket. Not because they like it - and that's what I find interesting. I've had many a student tell me, 'I don't even like online...but it's my only option. Because I can't guarantee that I'm going to be free every Tuesday from 7:00 - 10:00pm, and also, I can't do it fast enough face to face. So I have to do it online'. (P1)

With the unique nature of CE students described by participants here, it is timely to refer back to the student demographics as outlined in Chapter 2. These data corroborate the anecdotal characterizations by participants of their students: Ontario's CE students are 67% female; 34% of Ontario's CE students are aged 25-34, 26% aged 35 – 44, and 19% aged 45-54; 66% identify English as their first language, 3% French, and 31% other. 20% of CE students are recent immigrants (in the last ten years); 24% have completed high school or less, 24% a college diploma, and 42% have completed a university degree. Notably, 32% are first generation students, whose siblings or parents have not attended post-secondary education. 59% of CE students are employed full-time, 20% part-time, and 10% are unemployed. The main reason for taking a CE course is reported by 34% of the survey's respondents to be improvement of current career, 23% preparation for career change, and 15% for personal development and fulfillment (CCI Research, 2015).

As described by participants, and by provincial survey data, Ontario's CE students are culturally and educationally diverse, career focused, typically working while studying, and are striving for career advancement. The next subsection describes participants' perceptions of the broader impact that Continuing Education has in their communities.

#### 4.3.3 Community impact of Continuing Education

Having explored the characteristics of the students who engage in Continuing Education, participants next turned their attention to the community perspective. Participants were asked to describe the impact that CE has in the communities that their college serves.

Participants described their CE department as being the primary liaison between their community and the college, providing professional development (“PD”) and support to



organizations in the community. They described the impact of lifelong learning in helping communities weather the storm of economic downturn and plant closures for example. Social justice impacts – programming that serves aboriginal communities, priority neighbourhoods, and incarcerated populations, are other examples provided by participants as they described unique segments of their community that are served by their colleges' CE deliveries. Finally, participants identified serving newcomers with international credentials who benefit from bridging programs, English as a Second Language (“ESL”), and Occupationally Specific Language Training (“OSLT”) programs to enable them to fully participate in their professional communities.

One participant described the life-changing impact that they've witnessed and learned about through community feedback. They reflected on the difference that CE has made in their community,

...[through] some of the projects that we've undertaken, in response to changes in industry, in response to things that threw whole communities into disarray, and you know, the way that we've been able to come in and assist, and help people turn their situation around on a pretty grand scale. (P1)

This participant went on to relate their personal experience as they engaged with employers in a community facing economic downturn:

I've actually gone to that organization and have seen first hand how things have improved in terms of their services to other people, and it's really marvellous. And it was something that the individuals there, the employees really feared, but it turned out to be just incredibly empowering. And a great boost for the morale, as well as a boost for skills. (P1)

Several participants commented that it would be desirable to have access to data that would describe this impact. Community impact of Continuing Education is difficult to measure. However, the impact of Continuing Education delivered by a college in an Ontario community has in fact been measured and reported on. Data from that study reveal a significant economic contribution: in 2010, 29.2 per cent of locally employed

individuals had engaged in continuing education courses at this college. As the author states,

That a single institution could serve so large a proportion of the area's population is remarkable... It is impossible to overstate the importance of this function: the older worker adapts or is unemployed. Indeed, for those who lack the appropriate educational background, [this college] offers help to prepare for their studies. By providing this absolutely minimum condition for economic and social success, [this college] makes a vital and invaluable contribution to those who would otherwise be disadvantaged. (Smith, 2011, p. 12)

The study adds that 9.8 per cent of the local adult population engaged in CE courses for personal interest, emphasizing the “major contribution to the local community's well-being and quality of life” (p. 12). These data corroborate the anecdotal reflections by participants described earlier in this section, on the impact that their colleges' CE deliveries are having on an individual and community-wide basis.

This section has presented the participants' perspectives as they reflected on the external drivers and impacts that they perceive to be influencing their delivery and administration of Continuing Education. The next section turns the participants' perspective inward, and explores their own perception of their leadership, and the meaning that they derive from their roles as leaders of Continuing Education at their colleges.

#### 4.4 Reflections on Self as Leader

This section presents participants' perceptions of themselves as leaders, and explores their achievements and challenges that have shaped their leadership of their teams. Participants also shared what they have learned from other leaders both locally and through their provincial network. Finally, the section closes with an exploration of participants' perceptions of the meaning that they derive from their roles as leaders of Continuing Education.

#### 4.4.1 Self-perception of participants as leaders

Participants were asked to describe how they perceive their role as a leader of Continuing Education. Participants found this question somewhat challenging to answer when I asked them specifically, “What *words* would you use to describe your identity as a leader of Continuing Education?” After re-stating the question, and prompting them to think about how to capture the essence of “who they are” as a leader of CE, they listed some words or phrases that they believed described their identity as they perceived themselves in the role. Figure 4.1 summarizes the words they used to describe their identity as a leader of CE:

diplomat ambassador mediator reminder	holding things together constant	figurehead inclusive relationship builder invisible/visible resourceful inventive agile revenue generator rule breaker rogue
disrespected misunderstood entrepreneurial community focused	strategic innovative collaborative flexible	visionary strategic directional supportive motivator advocate
change agent disruptive resilient perseverant nimble flexible love distance education	leader understands CE behind the scenes	entrepreneurial freedom to try supportive ability to grow and stretch collaborative forward thinking

*Figure 4.1* Words used by participants to describe their identity as leaders.

In some cases, participants more easily described their identity in a fluid, narrative form, rather than pinning themselves down to distinct words or phrases as the labels found in Figure 4.1. In addition to the summary of participants’ representations of their leadership identity in Figure 4.1 above, the metaphorical references they used throughout their

interviews were used to build the cameos that introduced each participant at the beginning of this chapter.

Repeated here are these metaphorical leadership roles that I assigned to participants based on a metaphorical analysis of their full interviews: (note – these are listed in a different order than the participant listing in Figure 4.1, to ensure participant anonymity.)

- Mountaineer
- Competitive Coach
- Navigator
- Chaplain
- Explorer
- Shepherd
- Entrepreneur
- Chef de Cuisine
- Developer/Builder

In some cases, the metaphorical role I assigned did not appear to be particularly well aligned with the words that participants used to answer this particular question of identity, shown in Figure 4.1 above. However, it is important to note that when I conducted member-checking interviews with participants and read to them the cameos and metaphorical role titles that I had prepared to represent each of them, they each responded with resounding agreement that I had accurately captured important elements of their leadership roles. Their reactions indicated an emotional connection to the role I had chosen, and they seemed to enjoy the creative representation of their leadership identity in this way. These metaphorical roles are explored more fully in the interpretation of findings as presented in Chapter 5.

The next subsection highlights the leadership achievements that stand out in participants' reflections on their leadership journeys.

#### 4.4.2 Leadership achievements

When asked to describe their most significant leadership achievements, participants related stories that fell into four common themes: leading change, building cohesive teams, breaking down institutional barriers, and developing strategy. These four themes are expanded upon in the following paragraphs.

Notably, a word frequency count on the answers from all participants to this question reveals “people” as the most frequently used word (19 times by 6 participants). Next were “work” (11 times by 6 participants); “change” (11 times by 3 participants); “able” (10 times by 4 participants); “team” (9 times by 2 participants); “college” (8 times by 4 participants); and “online” (8 times by 4 participants).

Leading change stood out as the most commonly identified achievements by participants. As summed up by one participant who had led a recent organizational change initiative: “Well, leading the restructuring for sure. I mean, that was the focus of the last year, and it took everything to restructure.” (P5). Another participant described leading change with enthusiasm: “I embrace change....I look for change....As soon as change comes along, (and you know, it’s always there!) [laughing], I’m ready. I’m ready to go.” (P7).

Another participant reflected on the selflessness that they demonstrated as an important element of successfully leading change:

One of the areas I’ve been very very proud of in my leadership is that I was able to set aside my own needs and demonstrate leadership in moving this forward for the right reasons. I don’t know if that’s ‘leaving your selfishness at the door’ or that kind of thing. But to me, personally, in my personal leadership aspirations, [that] was a huge accomplishment. Huge, huge accomplishment for me. (P6)

Participants described that in the face of such substantial and ongoing change, the importance of building and developing a strong CE team was critically important. Helping their teams understand change, these participants used a positive approach to move people forward in the gradual process to embrace change. One participant related the way in which they ensure that, despite the apparent inattention that the rest of the

college pays to their CE activity, they play a very important role that cannot be dismissed. As they put it to their team, “just because the rest of the college may not know who we are, or may ignore us, or seem to forget about us, we are still offering an incredibly valuable service to the people that we serve.” (P2). This participant went on to describe their approach to leading team as ‘second nature’: “I believe in treating people fairly. I believe in treating them the way I’d want to be treated”. And they intentionally build their team with like-minded people, so that “over time, [we] tend to have a collection of people who all think the same way”.

Another participant described restructuring their team to “make sure we had the right people in those positions, and make sure that they had the necessary supports in place to be effective in creating a really dynamic environment.” (P5).

In addition to building strong teams, participants described their achievements in breaking down institutional barriers. These included breaking down institutional resistance to collaborating with CE, or eliminating barriers to efficient operation and administration of CE.

One participant attributed such achievements to their willingness to take risks, to create new and innovative delivery opportunities in spite of naysayers from other parts of the organization. Another participant related their achievement in facilitating their institution’s adoption of online learning, where there had been resistance. “Breaking down misconceptions, breaking down concerns that they had. Addressing concerns that were valid”. (P1). Finally, several participants spoke about achievements related to the establishment of administrative processes and/or systems that facilitated efficient CE operations – for example online CE registration and website redesigns.

Finally, developing strategy was commonly identified as a significant achievement by participants. Several participants referred to developing a strategic plan that contained priorities that would enable CE to provide better programming and support for their students. One participant made specific reference to the instrumental support of senior executive sponsorship lent to the strategic plan. And the participant reiterated the key role that senior executive support plays in the strategic direction of CE:

I do think one of the most fundamental things is having the support of your institution. That's been a game changer, absolutely, for Continuing Education here. We have an executive group that completely supports CE, and supports our new strategic direction. They walk the talk, they do walk the talk. And that's been important for every single member of our team - to see that and understand it. I mean, I'm not just talking about financial support. It's in our strategic plan, it's so thread into other priorities. That shows the importance of it. And that's...it's more fun to work in an environment like that, day to day, knowing that what you're doing is of great importance to your organization. (P5)

Following the discussion of leadership achievements, participants were asked to identify unique leadership challenges that may be different than those faced by leaders of academic schools that focus on a particular field or discipline.

#### 4.4.3 Unique leadership challenges

Participants identified challenges, dilemmas and tensions that they encounter leading their CE teams, in comparison to the other deans/administrative leaders' challenges at their colleges. Responses included the ever-changing environment of CE; leading a team that feels marginalized; the tensions related to perception of lower quality of academic delivery compared to full-time post-secondary programming; tension related to program ownership issues; and the continual turnover and recruitment and professional development of faculty who are all non-full-time. These challenges are expanded upon in the following paragraphs.

The most frequently mentioned challenge relates to the ever-changing environment of Continuing Education (P3, P5, P6, P7, P9). "Setting a brand new innovative vision and direction, because the context of the work has changed" (P6).

A close second is the challenge of leading a team that feels marginalized (P4, P5, P6, P8). Emphasizing the effort required to counter the perception that CE is not as important as other academic areas of the college, one participant describes the work required in correcting this approach: "That's been a real focus over the last year... whether from a

Registrarial perspective, a business solutions perspective... that we are more part of the rest of the academic and corporate and financial area, in a way that we weren't before.” (P5)

Another participant described the challenge of this difference, when the primary institutional focus is on full-time activity: “I don't believe that anybody here does anything intentionally to exclude CE. But it happens on occasion, just because they're so focused on their own activity, they just don't think about it; our focus is CE – we never forget! [laughs].” (P8)

Leaders of CE find themselves interpreting policies that are written from a full-time delivery perspective, a challenge described with several examples by one participant. This participant went on, however, to emphasize the need to step in and speak up, not accepting the brushing aside of CE:

An example of one of those times was relatively recently, where they were talking about teaching standards for faculty, and they actually explicitly mentioned CE: ‘So we won't, you know, won't impose this, or we won't bother with this for CE’. And I said, ‘well hold on a minute, I think this is a situation where I would like to have the same teaching standards applied to the faculty in CE as are applied to the faculty in full-time’. I said ‘the difference might be in how we get there, how we apply that, you know, how we support them, but I think the standards, whatever they are, need to apply across the board. We shouldn't have different ones’. (P8)

Similarly, another participant also referred to the assumption of lower quality standards in CE: “...people don't believe that we are being held to the same standards. Which then creates a different kind of tension” (P2).

Referring to their team's own sense of marginalization, one participant related their team's feeling of being the poor second cousins: “their inability to see the importance and the significance of their work in the broader college context” (P6).

Another participant described this challenge of marginalization in the context of trying to get data or information to support their reporting requirements. As they recounted, the



rest of the college isn't oriented to considering the unique administrative needs for data: "It takes them longer to get their heads wrapped around it...so it takes longer...until they're able to do it, or understand how to do it, or you need to keep, you know, asking..." (P4). The frustration of constantly having to request data that are relevant to their CE deliveries is palpable.

Other challenges mentioned included the tension between fighting the perception that CE wasn't meeting quality standards of delivery, and the desire to be held to the same standards in order to be recognized for quality delivery (P2, P8).

Also mentioned, was the need to break down silos, barriers, and ownership issues. At a college where all online CE delivery is managed centrally, "It comes back to culture. We're still working hard at trying to break down the ownership issue... .It's the tensions that are raised when a full-time program has been put online; it's the ownership thing" (P7).

Finally, the ever-present challenge of leading a faculty team that is entirely non-full-time arose with several participants. "Constantly recruiting part-time professors" (P9); "all of our faculty are part-time, so the constant turnover, the lack of fulsome faculty development, all the things that come with having part-time faculty being your entire complement" (P3). Where the full-time faculty have rigorous and a fulsome orientation of PD programming available to them, the CE faculty are often either not included in this institutional PD activity led by Human Resources departments, or they are developed as an afterthought, and don't meet the needs of non-full-time faculty who would otherwise have very little opportunity for organizational engagement and team building. As one participant stated, the challenges of leading are many:

I think too, with faculty, it's always that challenge of engagement with CE faculty. Do they feel supported? Do they feel like they are part of something? We've been working really hard to improve that. I would say we're starting to build some success there, in terms of supports, and engagement activities, and outreach to our faculty. But I certainly think there's always room for

improvement in that area. And it's a huge challenge with those faculty for sure.  
(P5)

Notably, another participant countered that challenge of leading a non-full-time faculty team with the unique opportunity that presents itself when leading in the CE environment; for example, in creating shorter CE certificate programs that are approved locally by college Boards, rather than requiring approval from the Ministry,

We aren't bound by the myriad of administrative minutiae, the requirements of the Ministry for all kinds of things, the requirements around the Collective Agreement - faculty Collective Agreement in this particular case - so, I mean it gives us a bit more freedom. We can create programming quickly, deliver it more quickly, change it more quickly, whereas a full-time division wanting to create a new program, it takes them a long time. Two years. We can do it in two months.  
(P2)

These challenges, tensions, and dilemmas emphasize the “other-ness” that leaders of CE perceive on an ongoing basis; however, despite these ever-present challenges, participants shared a very positive attitude about overcoming these challenges, and drew on their achievements as evidence (see section 4.4.2) of the important work that they undertake in their college community. The shared optimism is, in part, supported by a network of like-minded leaders, from whom they have gained knowledge and advice as they hone their leadership skills. The following sub-section explores participants' thoughts on the learning they have acquired from those leaders.

#### 4.4.4 Learning from other leaders

Participants were asked to reflect on what they have learned from other leaders in similar roles to theirs. Seven of the nine participants named the provincial Heads of Continuing Education (“HCE”) members as the source of much of their learning when it comes to leading Continuing Education at their colleges. (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P8, P9). The two who did not name HCE explicitly happen to be newer members of the group than the other participants.

Things learned from their HCE colleagues ranged from sharing information, experiences, best practices, operations, marketing, programming and delivery ideas, to ways of coping with or responding to change and ways of seizing opportunities. The level of engagement and support between HCE members encouraged participants to embrace this collaborative spirit. This unique nature of the collaborative support that members of HCE provide for one another was repeated by a number of participants.

One participant described how members of HCE have encouraged them to stretch their horizons: “I’ve learned to think outside the box. To redefine how we reposition CE. Looking at their successes and challenges - how they get the support from their institution.” (P9). Another participant related the comfort that they feel, being connected to this supportive network: “When things come up that are common to all of us, it’s nice to have a place where you can go that you can say, well ‘what are you guys doing about this?’ or ‘how do you handle this?’” (P2)

Participants emphasized that HCE provides a valuable supportive network for CE leaders that they perceive to be unique among provincial college leadership networks. As one participant noted, “I think one of the things I really learned from the Heads of CE is how open and willing to share they are. Because again when you talk to other academic Deans, it’s not necessarily the case.” (P3)

Another participant reiterated the unique nature of this collaborative network:

And in the world of CE, the one tangible difference is the level of collaboration and care amongst the institutional leaders in CE. I’ve never experienced that before in my life. ...So... that changed my leadership approach. Right from the get-go when I joined CE. But I think the real benefit is in sharing experiences and sharing best practices, and having the ability to be open about it. Which you can’t always do within your own institution. (P6)

Several participants spoke of a change that they are sensing with Heads of Continuing Education – diminished engagement amongst members, reduced attendance, some

meetings being cancelled for example. They expressed a sense of loss for what HCE once was. One participant described concern for this apparent shift:

Especially with the changeover now in the system with so many brand new people - I think it's even more important [to] get together, and talk through things....I mean, one of the best pieces of all of my time in CE [has been] knowing I could always pick up a phone and call somebody at another college, and ask them. And we were always very open, and sharing, and didn't hide things. So it was great. (P8)

Another participant revealed an emotional connection to this network: "You know I really, I miss those Heads of CE terribly when they don't happen. I mean, A - it's kind of a support group, and B - there's always something you can learn from these people who are doing similar work." (P1)

Finally, there was also recognition of the learning from local colleagues at their home institution. In addition to acknowledging the supportive relationships they had with HCE colleagues, several participants identified learning from colleagues at their respective colleges. Learning to keep a focus on high-level strategy was identified by two participants (P5, P7). How to take risks, to be resilient (P7), and to engage in reflective practice (P6) were other things learned from local colleagues identified by participants. As one participant described,

I think I've learned more about the spirit of leadership from some of my colleagues. I think I have learned about reflecting on my own leadership style. About advocating, and I mean advocating for leadership, not only for myself but for my staff and my own colleagues and superiors at the institution. And I've been blessed with being able to see other people's leadership styles, which has helped me hone my own. (P6)

This exploration of learning from their provincial and local colleagues demonstrates the value that participants place on learning from one another, and how that learning contributes to their own growth as leaders. In the remaining and final segment of the

interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning they derive from their work, from two perspectives – what their work means to them in their role at the college, and also, the meaning that their work brings to their life outside the college. The following subsection presents the meaning of their work from these two perspectives.

#### 4.4.5 Meaning derived from the role

Participants were asked, “what does your work mean to you in your role at the college?” Notably, the most frequently used word in all participants’ responses was “people” (34 times). One participant immediately turned to the daily interaction with students that their role entails:

I mean my work obviously means everything to me. I think if I didn’t enjoy what I did, and if I ever lost contact with seeing the students - I would quit this job. Because it’s seeing the students that actually keeps me going. (P2)

Some participants had difficulty articulating a response to this question, whereas others had an immediate response. By far the most commonly mentioned response was the feeling of making a difference in people’s lives. Eight of the nine participants referenced this impact as meaningful for them in their role. “Making a difference in peoples’ lives”; “changing people’s lives”; “improving circumstances for people around me”; “being helpful” were the various ways in which participants expressed this sentiment.

Three participants described their work as fulfilling, and related “I love what I do”.

Others mentioned serving staff and managers (2); providing strategic leadership (2); solving problems (2); and being motivated by students (2).

Individual comments also included enjoying creating change and motivating people to be part of change; the opportunity to be creative, that they are never bored; that the role stretches them; and that they enjoy the people they work with.

One participant summed up the meaning that they derive from their role by relating a story about a convocation ceremony:

My favourite thing to do is to go to convocation. Because I think it's there that you really realize, I mean at times you think, oh, who cares, right? Are you really making any difference? Does anybody care about what you're doing? And then you go to convocation. And I'll never forget this one student that had us all in tears, who graduated from Continuing Education... He just went on about how much it meant to him, and his family, and his career, to have the opportunity that he had, to come to [our] College, and to take these courses, and to have a flexibility that was given to him, and the support of the faculty, and the coordinators, and the Chairs, and the Dean, and all the...[chuckle]...anyhow, let's just say there was a stage-full of tears... But I think that it's times like that that really make you finally realize that you are making a difference to people's lives. (P8)

Another participant shared a similar sentiment regarding making a difference in the lives of students whom they serve:

I don't want to make it sound trite, but you know I'm always trying to improve circumstances of people around me. And professionally, this is a great role that allows me to do that - in a very tangible way, in a very measurable way. [I think of] the number of people that never thought they would graduate with a credential, that thought it was too late for them, that are getting out of a difficult personal circumstance, or an abusive relationship even, and are able to use Continuing Education or lifelong learning as a springboard to improve their lives. (P1)

Finally, another participant related the meaning that their role brings when they consider the people they serve, as compared to the financial contribution that their team's activity makes to the college bottom line: "I enjoy helping people. Despite the fact that you're trying to make money - it's a business, and if you put aside the mechanics of making money - we're really helping people gain something that without us they couldn't achieve." (P3)

Participants were also asked to describe the ways in which their work brings meaning to their life outside their role as a leader in continuing education. Responses to this question were quite varied, but the common thread throughout them was an overriding sense of positive impact on their lives personally, but also the impact that they have had on others because of their roles.

Three participants described the constant learning that was a meaningful impact of their role; “I think just keeping yourself engaged in education. I just recently took a course! I don’t know...if I hadn’t ...made a career here...whether I would be this engaged in education myself... .So, it probably changed my personal life” (P8).

Two participants spoke in particular about how they look differently at the world because of their role in Continuing Education. “I have a much broader view of ...the world. [In CE] you really have to know what’s happening in health care, in business, human services, areas [where] maybe I had a peripheral involvement before” (P5).

One participant related the influence that their role has had on their perspective with which they face challenges:

It allows me to look at the world differently. It’s allowed me to look at challenges more as opportunities...inside and outside the institution... .How I approach some of those challenges in my life is taken more from my honing of my own leadership abilities within my work environment. The work that we do allows me to do that, and look at things differently. (P6)

Gratitude and appreciation were expressed. “It gives me personal satisfaction. I’m personally happy in my role. So, I go home happy” (P3). Another stated, “the opportunities I have had in the college system, I’m so appreciative of.....I’ve been able to do so much”. (P4).

Several spoke of the ways in which their work and their personal life are connected. As one participant related, “Work and life for me are very intertwined. ...It requires discipline to keep that separation – of work work and community work. And make sure that the balance is right.” (P1). Another participant spoke about this intersection of their

work and their personal life: “You connect people. You meet so many people – lots have become friends. You develop relationships with people – they become part of your life – someone in your community you can call” (P9).

Finally, a common theme was repeated from the question as posed from the perspective of the college role: the theme re-emerged in the participants’ sense of making a difference in peoples’ lives. “I’m not saving peoples’ lives – but at least [laughing] I think I’m contributing, I hope in some way to the improvement of some people’s lives” (P2).

Another participant reflected on this ‘difference-making’ meaning of their impact on their families as well as their students whom they serve:

I’m very proud of the work that I do. I’m very passionate about CE, and online learning, more so in recent years. And I think the sense of pride comes from the fact that I do think we make a difference in peoples’ lives. And because of my experiences here I’ve been able to impact and make differences in my family’s life. (P6)

The passion for life-long learning and the difference it makes in peoples’ lives is evident in these findings from the interview data as participants responded to each question in sequence. This section concludes the question-by-question frequency analysis of the interview data. The next section presents the findings of the analysis of the transcripts that coded and categorized each questions’ responses, and then adds an analysis from the theoretical perspectives of identity and sensemaking that were introduced in Chapter 2.

## 4.5 Themes from Inductive and Deductive Analysis

Prior to the question-by-question frequency analysis that led to the summarizing of participant responses to each of the interview questions as outlined in sections 4.1 to 4.4, each set of interview question responses was coded inductively as an initial open-coding step in the data analysis. Over 130 codes resulted from this initial exercise. Through iterative rounds of re-coding, and in conjunction with reviewing the question response summaries, these preliminary codes were combined into categories, listed here alphabetically:



- Advocating for lifelong learning
- Boundary issues
- Changes in higher education
- Community impact
- Connected to provincial network
- Delivery model changes
- Feeling different than other deans/administrative leaders
- Lack of clarity
- Leading teams
- Marginalization
- Meeting community needs
- Meeting student needs
- Multi-disciplinary
- Non-full-time faculty teams
- Organizational change
- Student diversity
- Support from senior executive leaders

Following this inductive coding analysis of each interview question to compare and contrast responses from each participant, a deductive analysis of the transcript data was conducted using a priori codes from theory. Codes were selected from identity theory (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and sensemaking theory (Weick, 1976, 1979, 1995) that could be used to characterize participants' reflections of their leadership experiences. The following initial theoretical codes were established (some of these were added after the coding began), and are listed in decreasing order of frequency of source:

- Identity
  - perception of being different
  - perception of leadership strengths
  - serving and meeting needs
  - work group identification
  - perception of belonging to a group
  - perception of isolation
  - organizational identification
  - social classification
  - perception of belonging to more than one group
  - perception of equality
- Sensemaking
  - feeling supported
  - expressing satisfaction

- interpersonal experience
- transacting with others
- accepting reality
- learning
- expressing fear
- expressing frustration
- expressing gratitude
- feeling pressure or expectation from others
- feeling unvalued
- managing competing priorities
- adapting to changing environment
- expressing confusion
- feeling valued
- feeling sense of accomplishment
- process of becoming
- working within limitations
- expressing hopefulness
- expressing self confidence
- rationalizing
- retrospection
- expressing humility
- haven't considered or thought about this
- positioning
- negotiating meaning
- orienting to new role

In addition to the inductive and deductive coding analyses outlined above, a number of matrix analyses were also conducted. These matrix analyses compared question responses and theoretical codes against participant attributes (particularly related to size of college, organizational model, and length of time in the role). Some noteworthy patterns emerged in these matrix analyses. However, it was not possible to include these analyses in this report, as they had the distinct potential to reveal participant identity. Thus, in order to preserve participant anonymity, these matrix analyses are not presented.

I remain satisfied that this analytical methodology has resulted in meaningful themes that capture the essence of participants' experiences as shared in their interviews. Despite not using these matrix analyses for this final report, the inductive and deductive coding and categorization were able to be combined with the frequency analysis to conclude with the following themes:

1. **Leaders of CE are leading amidst tremendous complexity;** boundaries between portfolios are blurred or are blurring, lack of organizational clarity confounds efforts to lead strategically, multi-disciplinary expertise is necessary, and faculty teams are not available on a full-time basis to engage fully in professional academic roles.
2. **Leaders of CE experience almost constant change;** organizational structures change, their portfolios change, higher education landscape is changing, delivery models are changing, and they must themselves lead their teams through change.
3. **Leaders of CE possess a strong sense of serving others;** they are serving and meeting the needs of their students, their communities, and their teams that they lead.
4. **Leaders of CE and their teams experience marginalization of their CE activity;** experiences of isolation, feeling different, being forgotten are shared by both the leaders and by their teams.
5. **Leaders of CE feel strongly connected to the provincial network of CE leaders;** they derive support and encouragement and learn from these provincial colleagues, more so than from their local college colleagues.
6. **Leaders of CE are passionate advocates for lifelong learning;** they are inspired by their students, are ambassadors of CE in their communities, and engage in continuous learning themselves.

These themes are interpreted in Chapter 5 in the context of the conceptual framework as presented in Chapter 2.

## 4.6 Summary of Findings

The preceding sections of this chapter have presented descriptive cameos of the unique nature of each participant's role. Participants' responses to the interview questions and their responses have been analyzed from three perspectives: from within their own

organization, looking outward to the external landscape, and finally turning inward for reflections on themselves, as individual leaders.

The internal organizational perspective revealed that participants are experiencing – as well as leading – significant organizational change. Boundaries between the mandates of their CE and other academic units' activities are generally not clear (with a few outliers reporting clarity). They experience tremendous challenges related to this lack of clarity, however at the same time see opportunities that arise from these overlaps.

As participants turned their perspective outward, they described a multitude of changes in the higher education landscape that are influencing their delivery and administration of Continuing Education. These influences included the increase in online delivery, demographic shifts, demand for flexible delivery, quality assurance requirements, blurring of CE/PT/FT boundaries, increasing competition, changes in Ministry funding, and pressure to generate revenue to compensate for declining full-time enrolments.

They described their CE students as culturally and educationally diverse, career oriented consumers of education who are focused on achieving credentials in order to advance in their careers. They described the impact that their CE activity has in their communities, where they serve as a primary liaising role between their institution and their community, ensuring that labour market needs are met and enabling communities to rebound from economic downturns.

Upon reflecting on their own roles as leaders of Continuing Education, they presented varied description of their identities as leaders; their self-described identities could be considered to be as unique as each individual who takes on this role.

The leadership challenges experienced by participants were raised at three different points in the interviews – from the perspective of challenges related to overlapping mandates within their organization, and more generally as leaders within their institution. The question of leadership challenges was posed for a third time later in the interviews, in the context of challenges that may be unique to their roles as leaders of Continuing Education as compared to other academic leadership roles. Commonalities emerged from

these various perspectives, with repeating themes related to maintaining strategic vision, managing tensions that result from perceived differences, leading teams that feel marginalized, resource/capacity/revenue generation challenges, and managing constant change.

Complementing the question-by-question frequency analysis of participants' responses to the interview questions and subsequent grouping into themes as described above in sections 4.1 to 4.4, and the inductive open coding of question responses, each transcript was also coded according to theoretical representations of identity and sensemaking phenomena, as presented in section 4.5. This alternate approach to the data analysis provided an opportunity to test the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2 against the interview data. Reduction of all of these codes to categories and finally to themes led to a thematic characterization of the leadership experiences as described by participants of this study.

These themes substantially assisted with the building of an answer to the Research Question: In what ways are Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders in colleges leading amidst dramatic changes in the Ontario college sector of higher education? Voiced from the perspective of CE deans/administrative leaders who participated in this study,

- We lead amidst **complexity**
- We experience almost **constant change**
- We **serve others**, meeting needs of students, communities and our teams.
- We experience **marginalization** of our CE activity from the rest of the college
- We are **connected** through our provincial network of CE colleagues
- We are **passionate advocates** of lifelong learning

These themes will be interpreted in Chapter 5 to provide further answers to the Research Question, in the context of the theoretical perspectives and conceptual framework presented earlier in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Discussion

This discussion of the study's findings connects the six themes presented in Chapter 4 to the theories of sensemaking and identity in an explanation and interpretation of these findings. The chapter opens with a summary of the background and purpose of the study, research question, and methodology in section 5.1.

Following this opening summary, section 5.2 presents a framework for interpreting the six themes in the context of sensemaking theory (Weick, 1976, 1979, 1995) and identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This framework expands on the preliminary conceptual framework introduced at the beginning of Chapter 2, and incorporates elements of Bolman and Gallos' (2011) model of "reframing" academic leadership challenges into four aspects of organizational life: "building institutional clarity, managing difference, fostering productive working relationships, and enacting a powerful vision" (p. 10).

Subsequent sections then explore the four assertions that result from the study findings. Section 5.3 presents a discussion of the application of sensemaking to this study. Section 5.4 then explores the three identity claims in turn, followed by a discussion of the three leadership challenge themes in section 5.5. Finally, an argument is presented in section 5.6 that supports the assertion that Bolman and Gallos' (2011) reframing model can be implemented to represent a reframing perspective of these leaders' perceptions and experiences.

Throughout the chapter, comparisons are made to existing research previously presented in Chapter 2, wherein this study's findings are demonstrated to either corroborate, or in some cases, contradict these earlier studies.

#### 5.1 Summary of Study Background and Methodology

As outlined in Chapter 2, the landscape of higher education is changing: changing demographics of students, changing allocation of resources to meet teaching needs,

changing administrative structures, and evolving employee relationships are impacting the administration of college programming. Global influences include “technological innovation, globalization, mass communication, mass culture, and rising consumer expectations” (Mulford, 2008, pp. 4-5). Vocationalized education and a blurring of the boundaries between public and private providers (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007) are escalating the competitive environment in which Ontario colleges operate.

The Ontario community college system has seen a Differentiation Policy Framework introduced (Ontario MTCU, 2013), and renegotiation of Strategic Mandate Agreements is driving funding decisions for new college programming. Fiscal challenges threaten to undermine the colleges’ key role in addressing Ontario’s labour shortage. Multiple skills mismatches, including “supply-demand”, “geographical”, “underemployment”, and “under-skilling” have been identified (Miner, 2014, p. 2) that will require colleges to adapt programming and delivery models, especially in light of the significant demographic shift that will see Ontario’s aging population coincide with an increased skill requirement from its workforce (Miner, 2014).

Continuous learning and adult education are becoming key strategies in ensuring that these unprecedented changes in labour force participation and demand will be supported by “flexible, responsive, relevant, and affordable” post-secondary education opportunities (Miner, 2014, p. 3). Online learning has also been a key priority for the provincial government since 2014, with funding to create an online portal and the development of online courses and programs; Ontario colleges have also collaborated since 1995 on shared delivery of online courses through OntarioLearn, providing students with accessible and flexible options to meet their educational goals.

Landry (2011) and Coates (2013) have described the complex organizational challenges and strategic opportunities that the Continuing Education leader faces in meeting institutional and community needs. Where Continuing Education was once marginalized (Coates, 2013), it is timely that Continuing Education leaders embrace the opportunity to bring their flexible adult education model, operations and programs to the forefront of



academic strategy, as these are well positioned to contribute to colleges' solutions to the growing skills mismatch and labour market crisis outlined in Chapter 2.

The purpose of this study was to explore the unique leadership challenges facing Ontario college Continuing Education leaders as they navigate institutional responses to these contemporary changes in the higher education landscape. As noted earlier, the Research Question was stated: In what ways are Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders in colleges leading amidst dramatic changes in the Ontario college sector of higher education?

Taking the position of an Interpretivist, I employed a qualitative approach to the design of this exploratory case study (Yin, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine purposefully selected Ontario college Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders, and their transcripts were analyzed and interpreted using a modified version of constant comparative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Supplementary data were also gathered for triangulation purposes, including a review of CE course guides, provincial CE survey data, and college websites.

Inductive and deductive analyses of these data resulted in the themes presented in Chapter 4, and each of the six themes is interpreted in the following sections. The analysis led to an interpretation of these six themes from the perspective of Bolman and Gallos' (2011) pluralistic reframing leadership model, with evidence from the findings that illustrates how participants are demonstrating leadership from the perspective of these frames – revisiting the metaphorical roles introduced in Chapter 4 and attributing a dominant leadership frame to each.

Having reviewed the background and methodology of this study, the next section presents this conceptual framework that illustrates the interpretation of the findings previously outlined in Chapter 4.

## 5.2 Conceptual Framework of Interpretation

Analysis of the data generated six themes: three can be characterized as expressions of identity, and answer the identity question “Who are we?” and three can be characterized

as leadership challenges, answering the question “How do we lead?” As presented in Chapter 4, in the voice of the participants:

- Identity
  - We are **passionate advocates** of lifelong learning
  - We **serve others**, meeting needs of students, communities and our teams.
  - We are **connected** through our provincial network of CE colleagues
- Leadership challenges
  - We lead amidst **complexity**
  - We experience almost **constant change**
  - We experience **marginalization** of our CE activity from the rest of the college

The analysis of the study data through the theoretical perspectives of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) led to the development of the proposed conceptual framework that is illustrated in Figure 5.1 and is explored in the following sections of this chapter. This conceptual interpretation of the study’s findings as presented in Chapter 4 applies Weick’s (1995) theory that sensemaking resolves ambiguities of identity construction, and that complexities and/or ambiguities trigger sensemaking. The conceptual model also applies Bolman and Gallos’ (2011) argument that sensemaking facilitates “reframing” of leadership challenges through the lenses of four commonly encountered elements of organizational life.

The study findings as represented in this model can be stated as follows:

**Finding #1** – Sensemaking is a useful theoretical perspective through which to analyze leadership experience in the context of identity and leadership challenges.

**Finding #2** – These leaders’ identities are constructed by the meaning-making evidenced in their data, and can be thematically represented. These leaders are

- Passionate advocates for lifelong learning
- Committed to serving their students, their communities and their teams
- Connected provincially, and yet isolated locally

**Finding #3** – Leadership challenges can be represented by three commonly-held themes.

These leaders

- Lead amidst complexity
- Experience and lead constant change
- Counteract persistent marginalization

**Finding #4** – Despite commonalities of identity construction and leadership challenges, there is an evident diversity in these leaders’ approaches to their roles, as narrated in their interviews and subsequently interpreted as unique metaphorical cameos. The juxtaposition of this diversity of approach against commonly-held challenges lends itself to overlaying Bolman and Gallos’ (2011) reframing model, wherein Continuing Education leaders can see opportunities to view challenges through different lenses.

Figure 5.1 on the following page provides a visual representation of the relationships between these four findings in the form of the proposed conceptual framework. The following four sections of this chapter will refer back to this figure from time to time for continuity of the argument, and address each of these assertions in turn, beginning with a discussion of the application of sensemaking to this study in section 5.3.

Following the introduction of the conceptual framework in section 5.3, the three themes connected to identity - answering the question “Who are we?” – are explored in section 5.4. Next, the three themes that are interpreted as triggers for sensemaking – answering the question “How do we lead?” – are explored in section 5.5.

Finally, in section 5.6, the conceptual framework ‘reframes’ the challenges of leadership that participants shared in their interviews, according to Bolman and Gallos’ (2011) ‘reframing’ model of academic leadership.

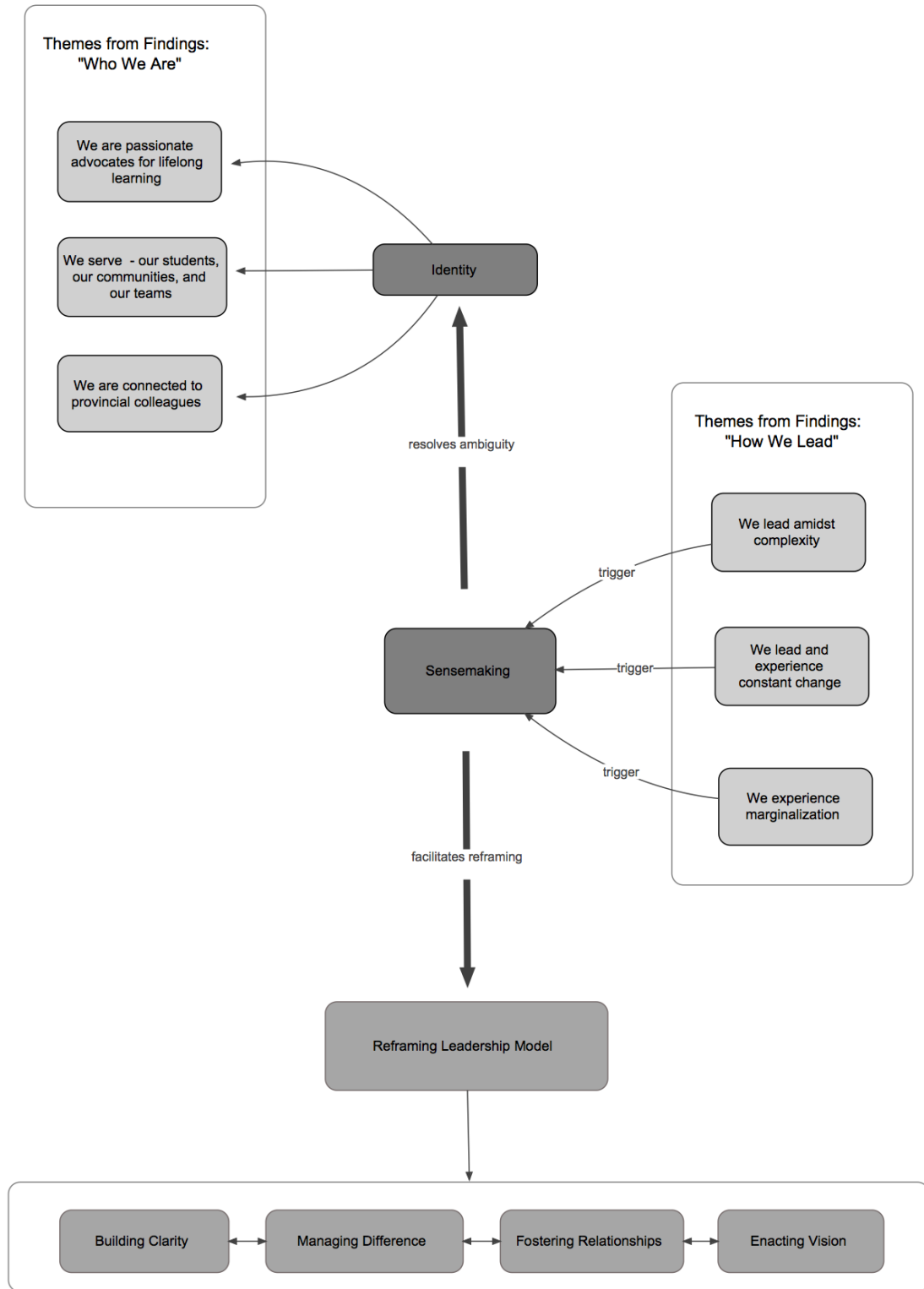


Figure 5.1 Conceptual framework for interpretation of findings.

### 5.3 Sensemaking Processes

The first assertion of this study is that sensemaking is a useful theoretical perspective through which to analyze leadership experience. It assumes Weick's (1995) theory that sensemaking resolves identity ambiguities, and that sensemaking is triggered by leadership challenges. The following argument supports this assertion.

Sensemaking is described by Bolman and Gallos (2011) as “the difficult art at the heart of academic leadership” (p. 18). Sensemaking has been defined as a process that occurs within, and also between individuals: it is a cognitive process whereby individuals develop *within* themselves a mental model to make sense of their organizational environment (Weick, 1995), and alternatively, a social process that occurs as meaning is negotiated and mutually constructed *between* individuals (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

As outlined in Chapter 2, Weick (1995) argues that people engage in sensemaking when they are confused by uncertainty due to “information load”, “complexity”, and/or “turbulence” (p. 86) in their environment and/or “ambiguity” (p. 91) arising from multiple interpretations of their environment. According to Weick, these triggers for sensemaking relate to such confusion, causing individuals to “initiate action to resolve the dissatisfaction” (p. 84).

Sensemaking and identity have been linked by various authors (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Ring & Van de Ven, 1989; Weick, 1995). Ring and Van de Ven (1989) connect sensemaking processes and identity construction, by way of Turner's (1987) sociological theory of motivation: “Sensemaking processes derive from the need within individuals to have a sense of identity – that is, a general orientation to situations that maintain esteem and consistency of one's self-conceptions” (Ring & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 180).

Furthermore, Gioia (2006) argues that Weick emphasizes the use of gerunds to focus the attention on dynamic “processes of becoming” rather than static “states of being” (p. 1711) when he developed the theoretical construct he called sensemaking, “changing the conversation” (p. 1710) on the study of the *organization* to that of *organizing*. The

theoretical codes that I used for the deductive analysis of data were thus written intentionally to emphasize the dynamic nature of sensemaking – in which the emphasis of sensemaking theory is on giving meaning to experience.

These initial codes, presented in Chapter 4, are listed here again:

- feeling supported
- expressing satisfaction
- interpersonal experience
- transacting with others
- accepting reality
- learning
- expressing fear
- expressing frustration
- expressing gratitude
- feeling pressure or expectation from others
- feeling unvalued
- managing competing priorities
- adapting to changing environment
- expressing confusion
- feeling valued
- feeling sense of accomplishment
- process of becoming
- working within limitations
- expressing hopefulness
- expressing self confidence
- rationalizing
- expressing retrospection
- expressing humility
- positioning
- negotiating meaning
- orienting to new role

The explanatory conceptual framework was derived from the analysis of this study's data, using these coded instances of sensemaking. The framework places sensemaking at the centre of a proposed model for interpreting CE leaders' leadership challenges as triggers for sensemaking, and proposes that CE leaders' identity construction results from sensemaking that resolves ambiguities arising in their institutional environment.

Furthermore, the model proposes that sensemaking processes can facilitate reframing of their leadership challenges into four frames as proposed by Bolman and Gallos (2011),

serving to reframe their challenges according to four commonly encountered aspects of academic organizational life.

As Bolman and Gallos (2011) argue, in basing their reframing model around the processes of sensemaking,

We'd all like instant clarity about the complexities that we face and a clean slate to begin our academic leadership, but we are rarely that fortunate. Academic leaders bring their own ways of studying and interpreting what they see. ...A key challenge for...any academic leader is how to make sense of complex circumstances, recognize available choices, choose the best path forward, and convey all that to others in a compelling manner. (pp. 17-18)

Bolman and Gallos (2011) argue that sensemaking involves three steps: “notice something, decide what to make of it, and determine what to do about it” (p. 18).

However, Bolman and Gallos propose that the process is at the same time constrained by three features: sensemaking is “incomplete and personal”, it is “interpretive”, and it is “action oriented” (pp. 18-19). Therefore, Bolman and Gallos emphasize, “*reframing* is the deliberate process of looking at a situation carefully and from multiple perspectives, choosing to be more mindful about the sensemaking process by examining alternative views and explanations” (p. 23). They argue that it requires leaders to slow down, to ask themselves “what’s happening here structurally?...what people issues are at play?...what are the political dynamics?...what’s the meaning of this situation?” (p. 24).

These sensemaking processes were evident as the development of codes, categories and ultimately themes unfolded during the analysis of this study’s data. The next section explores the first three themes, connected to identity, answering the question “Who are we?”

## 5.4 Identity Themes: “Who Are We”?

The second assertion from the study findings is that CE leaders’ identities are constructed by the meaning-making evidenced in their interviews, and can be represented by three themes: these leaders are **passionate advocates** for lifelong learning, **committed to**

**servings** their students, their communities and their teams, and are **connected to provincial colleagues** in similar roles at other colleges.

As presented in Chapter 2, Albert and Whetten (1985) define organizational identity as the characteristics of an organization that are “central, distinctive, and enduring” (p. 265), and these characteristics answer the question “Who are we?” (p. 265). Such “identity claims” (Whetten, 2006) are complemented by Tajfel and Turner’s (1986) Social Identity Theory, which is argued by Ashforth and Mael (1989) to explain the social classification process that offers the individual a perception of belonging to a human group.

This study presents findings that articulate an expression of shared identity of CE leaders which is consistent with Ashforth and Mael’s (1989) characterization of the search for identity: it is informed by “existential motives...including searches for meaning, connectedness, empowerment, and immortality” (p. 22). These themes of shared identity arose from the analysis of the participant interviews, in which participants reflected on their leadership experiences internal and external to their organization, as well as their self-perceptions of their achievements and challenges. These CE deans/administrative leaders characterized their leadership identity in three ways: they are passionate advocates for lifelong learning; they are committed to serving their students, their communities and their teams; and they are connected to provincial colleagues in similar roles at other colleges.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) add that individuals may identify as members of a number of sub-units or as collective members of one sub-unit. The findings of the present study reflect this phenomenon, drawing from participants’ characterizations of their identity within their organization as distinctly associated with the unique CE deliveries - particularly in centralized CE departments. Here, the CE team is seen to be the only academic unit at their college that is delivering CE programming; they recognize that their students are unique to the college; and they see themselves as most capably and strategically positioned to meet their needs.

There is therefore tension that is evident in the data, wherein CE leaders emphasized their unique ability for their department to meet the needs of CE students – a market that may



otherwise be forgotten or dismissed if not for the efforts of the CE department. They demonstrate a strong sense of advocacy on behalf of these students, while at the same time articulating the desire to be accepted, embraced, and included in the broader academic culture.

The following subsections discuss each of these three identity claims in turn, making reference to previous research that explores similar experiences to those of participants in the present study.

#### 5.4.1 Passionate advocates for lifelong learning

In expressing the first of three identity claims, participants in this study described that they are passionate advocates for lifelong learning. They are inspired by their students, they are ambassadors and advocates of continuing education within their institutions and in their communities, and furthermore, they are engaged in continuing education themselves.

As Coates (2013) and Braverman (2013) have argued, leaders of Continuing Education bear the responsibility of driving institutional commitment and support for communities experiencing economic downturn and evolving workforce development demands. It is evident from participants' narratives in the present study, that these leaders are embracing the identity of advocates for their institutions' important contributions that can be made through lifelong learning.

Furthermore, the passion with which this study's participants described their roles as the uniquely qualified and sole advocates for Continuing Education in their organizations, confirms Puusa, Kuittinen, and Kuusela's (2013) findings that centrality and distinctiveness are not enough to describe organizational identity. In their study of organizational change and identity construction, Puusa et al. found that an emotional dimension is also an important element of organizational identity. While the present study does not focus entirely on organizational change as the context for studying identity, this study's finding of "passionate advocacy" does support Puusa et al.'s assertion that there exists an emotional dimension to organizational identity. In the

present study, emotional expressions were particularly evident in context of sensemaking language of “making a difference”, and the expressions of extremes (“we *love* what we do”; “we *never*” forget CE”; “I’m very passionate about CE”) in their characterizations of the meaning that lifelong learning holds for them personally and professionally.

Similarly, Landry (2011) described findings that revealed a passion that university Continuing Education leaders expressed about the importance of their role as the “voice” of Continuing Education at their institutions. According to Landry, “all participants spoke with passion about...the rewarding experience of being involved in university continuing education” (p. 10), and they felt that it was important to be included and heard on key university committees as they represented the interests of Continuing Education stakeholders. Much like the participants in the present study, Landry’s participants expressed the importance of their role as advocates for lifelong learning in their institutions.

#### 5.4.2 Serving others – students, communities, CE teams

The second identity claim arising in this study’s findings highlights the significance that participants attributed to their role of serving and meeting the needs of their students, their communities and their teams that they lead. Similar to Landry’s (2011) findings, the present study reveals that this service orientation brings meaning to the role of CE leaders; it was the common thread in their responses to the interview questions regarding the meaning that their role brings to their lives. As Landry states, “participants feel a sense of mission, accomplishment, and the potential of being of service. They feel rewarded by what they do, and they feel they can and do make a difference in the lives of learners” (p. 9).

Holbeche and Springett (2004) establish a “business case for taking questions of meaning seriously” (p. 3). In the present study, “meaning” is the way in which these Continuing Education leaders connect themselves in an emotional way to their organizations’ clients/customers/stakeholders – recognizing all the while that ultimately, those whom they serve are contributing to the generation of revenue for their institution. It can be

argued that the present study provides evidence that leaders who are cognizant of the meaning of their unit's contribution are motivated to achieve successful organizational change and business outcomes (such as proposed by Holbeche and Springett) - whether consciously or subconsciously.

Certainly, this finding that emphasizes leaders' identification with a service orientation resonates with Greenleaf's (1970, 1996) servant leadership theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. Furthermore, this finding is also aligned with Klenke's (2003) spiritual leadership model, in that individuals' "[hunger] for meaning in their lives" (p.59) may be met through leadership opportunities that involve "relationships, connectedness, power, influence, and transformation" (p. 59). Arguably, participants in the present study described these very kinds of service-oriented experiences in their responses to questions about the meaning they derive from their roles both inside and outside their institutions.

#### 5.4.3 Connected to provincial college colleagues

The third identity claim contains a paradoxical message regarding the connectedness that participants experience in their leadership roles. Participants of this study described the support and encouragement that they derive from their relationship with provincial colleagues who hold similar roles at other colleges. However it is important to note that they compared this sense of connectedness as a contrast, or counterbalance to the isolation that they frequently experience at their home institutions.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) identified that 'who am I?' questions may be answered by statements of organizational identity. In the case of the present study, participants are identifying with the group of individuals who hold similar roles outside their organization, as opposed to within their organization. In essence, the employer organization is not providing the answer to the "who am I" question, but rather it is an outside organization to which leaders feel connected in their role as Continuing Education leaders. (Note: no attempt was made to compare the degree to which participants felt connected to their colleges versus to the provincial Heads of Continuing Education committee. It is reasonable to assume that these leaders would in fact

demonstrate an organizational identification with their institution. But in terms of identifying with a subgroup of colleagues, the study finds that participants felt a strong connection with their provincial colleagues that was in contrast to the isolation that was frequently described with reference to experiences at their home institution.)

As Albert and Whetten (1985) have argued, sensemaking leads to resolving the need for individuals to feel part of a group. This study found that while Continuing Education leaders feel isolated locally, they are defining themselves in a social environment - the provincial Heads of Continuing Education committee - that offers a perception of belonging to a group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

In Sveningson and Alvesson's (2003) study of one manager's narrated self-identity construction, a metaphorical representation of identity as "struggle" (p. 1188) illustrates the striving for meaning and integration that characterizes a leader's experience of their identity. There is a similarity to this metaphorical theme that has emerged in the present study; in the metaphorical role titles that were drawn from this study's interview data, the roles of 'explorer', 'mountaineer', 'coach', 'chaplain', etc., all contain an element of overcoming barriers, challenges, or obstacles in the pursuit of a goal. The present study achieves a modest contribution to Sveningson and Alvesson's suggestion for future research regarding how people perceive themselves in organizations and/or distinct social groups. In this case, this finding provides an example of leaders' perceptions of experiencing an identity connection to a distinct social group outside their organization that satisfies Albert and Whetten's (1985) 'need to feel part of a group'.

Finally, in Landry's (2011) study, the essence of 'connectedness' was found to be an important element of Continuing Education leaders' experience. Much like the present study found, Landry's participants spoke of the value of strong support networks through national and regional professional organizations. This connectedness to extra-institutional networks was also paired with the need for, and "importance of increased awareness and strengthened support from colleagues and peers institutionally" (p. 9).

The next section moves from the study's assertion of Continuing Education leaders' shared identity, to that of their shared leadership challenges.

## 5.5 Leadership Challenges: Contexts in Which We Lead

The third assertion from the study findings is that participants' leadership challenges can be represented by three themes as evidenced in the study data: leading amidst **complexity**, experiencing almost **constant change**, and counteracting **marginalization** of CE activity from the rest of the college.

Thread throughout these three leadership themes is a contributing element of subcultural tension. As Schein (2010) describes, culture and identity are organizational influences, and Schein recognizes that tension may arise among and between subcultures as they seek alignment toward shared goals. The subculture of Continuing Education is different from that of the full-time post-secondary academic departments, wherein the unique CE student target market is paired with the subculture of the CE faculty who are predominantly part-time employees of the college. Continuing Education leaders in this study described the challenges of leading an entirely non-full-time faculty team – whose professors are not always well supported by the institutional infrastructure for Professional Development and Human Resources support. At the same time, there was acknowledgment that these CE faculty members bring a unique contribution to the college, given their close and active ties with their profession that they bring to their virtual and face-to-face classrooms.

Furthermore, a subculture of 'nimbleness' and entrepreneurialism pervades the leadership of CE, as evidenced by this study's data. The ability to quickly develop new programming to meet emerging labour market needs and local interests was seen by participants to be a unique and defining characteristic of CE leaders' teams' abilities.

Mirroring the findings of Locke and Guglielmino (2006), the present study provides evidence of subcultural experiences of change, with several participants recounting differing perceptions of change experienced by support staff, faculty, and administrative members of their teams, much like the findings of Locke and Guglielmino in their study of subunits experiencing organizational change at a community college. Locke and

Guglielmino found that four stakeholder groups represented distinct subcultures, and that successful adaptation to change was facilitated by the breadth of change, enabling each to adapt within their unique subculture. While the present study also found subcultural influences in the experience of organizational change, the focus was on the experiences of the administrative Continuing Education leaders themselves.

Leslie and Gappa (2002) studied the subculture of part-time faculty and compared their experiences to those of full-time faculty. Much like the participants of the present study reported, Leslie and Gappa found that part-time faculty were less likely to have engaged in professional development than their full-time faculty colleagues. Similarly, Roney and Ulerick (2013) studied part-time faculty engagement, and found that decreased engagement was represented by infrequent attendance at divisional meetings, feelings of disengagement from the college, and a lack of available resources for part-time faculty. The present study's findings confirm these experiences, by way of the CE leaders' efforts to counteract these disadvantages through purposeful communication and attention to the professional development needs of their faculty.

Finally, a comparison can be made to Ayers' (2005) findings in a study of organizational change at a rural college, where subcultural tensions were found to interfere with alignment of employees toward common goals. It is noteworthy that in one example provided in the present study, such subcultural tensions were resolved by intentionally reinforcing the distinctive nature of the subculture in that unit and creating a clear separation from the mainstream academic units of their institution.

Turning from the specifics of subcultural influences back to the broader perspective of Continuing Education leadership in general, Landry's (2011) qualitative study of the realities of practice for Continuing Education leaders at Canadian universities takes a similar approach to exploring CE leaders' experiences as does the present study. Landry identified perceived threats to "resources, decentralization, positioning of the unit, and academic credibility" (p. 9) of CE units as sources of tension that impacted CE leaders' experience of their roles. Furthermore, Landry's study emphasized the "sense of

vulnerability” (p.10) that was expressed by most participants about the future of their units.

Many parallels between Landry’s (2011) study and the present study are evident, as demonstrated by the three leadership challenges that emerged as themes in the present study. With the background of the subcultural influences described above, these three themes are explored in the following subsections.

### 5.5.1 Leading amidst complexity

The first of three themes that arose from participants’ experiences of leadership challenges related to the tremendous complexity of their portfolios and of their organizations’ complex approaches to the administration and delivery of continuing education. As described by these CE leaders, the boundaries between portfolios at their institutions is blurred or is blurring, there is a persistent lack of organizational clarity, and varying levels of senior executive leadership support confound their efforts to provide strategic leadership to their teams and for their organization. Further compounding the complexity of their leadership roles, they require a multi-disciplinary expertise to manage the varied programming that they administer, while their faculty subject matter experts are not available on a full-time basis to engage fully in their academic roles.

The literature review, as presented in Chapter 2, did not reveal any studies of Continuing Education leadership that specifically explored the concept of complexity in the challenges faced by CE leaders. However, several theoretical applications of complexity thinking to the study of organizations and organizing were introduced in the presentation of theories of organizational change in Chapter 2 that can be useful to the study of Continuing Education in higher education. While this study did not set out to explicitly explore any of these theories of complexity in organization, the fact that the notion of complexity arose as one of the major leadership challenge themes in this study reaffirms Stacey’s (1995) argument that organizational change cannot simply be conceptualized with models that assume change leads to stable states of equilibrium and predictability. The present study supports the argument for further study in this area. Of interest, would be an exploration of Wheatley’s (1999) biological systems model, which could

potentially be invoked to represent the complexities of leadership as expressed by participants in this study. Alternatively, a physical sciences metaphor, as developed by Fris and Lazaridou (2006), proposes a quantum paradigm of leadership, where complexity, chaos and unpredictability reign. Studies that explore the application of these paradigms to the leadership of Continuing Education could add further insight into the conceptualization of the leadership complexities that participants of the present study experienced.

### 5.5.2 Leading and experiencing constant change

The second theme of leadership challenge that arose from the analysis of participants' experiences described the almost constant change that these Continuing Education leaders are experiencing and leading. They described structural changes in their organizations; changes to their academic and/or administrative portfolios; changes in the higher education landscape that are influencing Continuing Education; adaptations that are underway in their organizations and in their units to embrace the online learning environment and other flexible delivery strategies; and finally, the changes that they are leading within their own teams to respond to these various influences on Continuing Education administration and delivery.

Maitlis and Christianson's (2014) literature review found that various authors theorize that organizational change is a potential trigger for sensemaking; it is this proposed linking that is built into the conceptual framework for the present study as presented in Figure 5.1. While this study does not test or challenge this theoretical connection, but rather assumes so, it can be argued that the findings of this study support the notion that organizational change is one of the drivers of sensemaking processes that aim to resolve identity ambiguities.

An earlier study that did explore this phenomenon is that of Mills, Bettis, Miller and Nolan (2005), wherein a merger of academic units was shown to increase and encourage airing of differences and tensions between subgroups. That study's focus on a merger is not dissimilar to the organizational changes described by participants of the present study as they recounted the ongoing pendulum swing between centralization and



decentralization of Continuing Education administrative structures in their institutions. It is possible that these decentralization (or centralization) changes are triggering behaviours in this study's CE leaders and their teams that are similar to those of the participants in the Mills et al. study.

The experiences of organizational change that participants of this study shared can be compared to those in Landry's (2011) study of university Continuing Education leaders' experiences. Landry found that the challenge of restructuring every few years (between centralization and decentralization) revealed "a sense of vulnerability among most continuing education leaders about the future of their units" (p. 10).

Continuing with the comparison to organizational change studies presented in Chapter 2, it is of interest to note that as Tippet (1998) identified, understanding organizational culture is key to successful academic reorganization. The present study supports Tippet's argument, with this study's participants honing in on culture as an important element of their teams' experiences of change. As presented in Chapter 4, several participants acknowledged the role that culture plays in facilitating positive – and unfortunately negative – experiences of organizational change, whether it be structural or procedural in nature.

Similarly, the present study gathered data that suggests an agreement with Pamuk's (2008) finding that "the greater the perceived threat to an individual's self-concept, the greater the negative attitude to reorganization" (p. 103). In one example of this phenomenon that arose in the present study, a participant recounted how they addressed the negative attitudes amongst their team toward an organizational change, and that they needed to help those team members reinforce their self-concepts in order to facilitate the success of the change initiative for their team.

Kezar's (2005) model of collaboration and change processes, mirroring Lewin (1947), presented a three stage model of change. Kezar's case study of change in a similar higher education context to that of the present study, found that successful collaboration involves three stages: "building commitment, commitment, and sustaining" (Kezar, 2005, p.103). In the present study, collaboration was an important element of the changes that

CE leaders were experiencing and leading. Similar to Kezar's findings, the participants in the present study described having to build the case for collaboration with their academic colleagues, secure commitment from colleagues and their teams, and sustain this change. Furthermore, the present study adds an important factor to this collaborative change model, with the emphasis placed by several participants on the visible and consistent support from their senior executive leaders in all three stages of collaborative change.

### 5.5.3 Experiencing marginalization

The third and final theme that illuminates the experience of Continuing Education leaders in this study is one of persistent marginalization, and these leaders' efforts to counteract such pressures within their organizations. Participants described their experiences - as well as their teams' experiences - of institutional marginalization, including patterns of isolation, feeling different, and being forgotten.

The challenges of leading a team whose members feel marginalized from the larger organization were mentioned repeatedly by many participants. Also recounted were the many instances where participants demonstrated counteracting these marginalizing influences, by doing such things as speaking up on behalf of their teams' activities; reminding senior leaders as well as colleagues and other institutional stakeholders of the important role that CE plays in the academic continuum at their college; insistence on not being treated differently in policy and procedure development where doing so would negatively affect quality and/or credibility of CE deliveries; intentionally building partnerships with other academic units; and seeking opportunities for collaborative work with other teams at their institution. These intentional strategies demonstrated by participants in this study gently push against such marginalization that persists, despite claims that CE is no longer a marginalized entity at institutions of higher education (Coates, 2013).

In Stephenson's (2010) study of university Continuing Education leaders, this perception of organizational dynamics in which marginalized teams seek acceptance by the broader institution is reflected in the experiences shared by participants in the present study. Similarly, Landry (2011) reported that "while relationships are generally positive,

research participants feel there is a lack of understanding and awareness about continuing education, which poses a challenge for those involved in the practice of continuing education in finding their place, their identity, and their voice” (p. 9).

Miller and Plessis (2014) also explored the challenges associated with administering units that are perceived as sitting on the margins of the institution. Similar to Landry’s (2011) study, Miller and Plessis (2014) identified themes of marginalization and identity; however they also discovered that while some leaders of CE felt marginalized at their institutions, other CE leaders had challenged that notion, arguing that they envisioned themselves as “a ‘portal’ to the university, opening doors for people, mobilizing knowledge and preparing adult learners to be successful” (p. 7). These leaders were successfully embracing the balancing act required to navigate blurry departmental boundaries.

The present study reinforces Miller and Plessis’ (2014) findings that Continuing Education leaders are aware of, and are addressing the need to gently push against persistent marginalizing influences.

Having explored the six themes of identity and leadership challenge in sections 5.4 and 5.5, the next section undertakes to integrate these findings into a pluralistic model of leadership that provides a new perspective on the shared experiences in the context of the evident diversity of leaders who participated in this study.

## 5.6 Reframing our Leadership Experiences

The fourth assertion arising from this study’s findings is that common themes of identity and leadership arising from this study are juxtaposed against the evident diversity of individual participants as seen in the metaphorical representation of participant leaders’ roles presented in section 4.1.1. This juxtaposition of diversity against commonly experienced challenges lends itself to overlaying these themes onto Bolman and Gallos’ (2011) reframing model – thus emphasizing the variety of approaches that these diverse leaders are taking and can take to address their shared leadership challenges.

### 5.6.1 Introducing the rationale for reframing

The analysis presented in Chapter 4 included the deductive analysis of data using a-priori codes pertaining to sensemaking and identity, combined with the frequency analysis of the question responses. This analysis led to the identification of five initial themes of leadership challenges that consistently emerged whether the context of the question was local, or was focused on the environment external the college. These initially identified challenges were:

- Maintaining strategic vision
- Managing tensions that result from perceived differences
- Leading teams that feel marginalized
- Resource/capacity/revenue generation challenges
- Managing constant change

Additionally, leadership achievement themes were identified through this analysis:

- Leading change
- Building cohesive teams
- Breaking down institutional barriers
- Developing strategy

Finally, the metaphorical analysis of interview data led to the unique metaphorical representation of leadership roles for each participant, emphasizing the diversity of leadership approaches they bring to their roles:

- Mountaineer
- Competitive Coach
- Navigator
- Chaplain
- Explorer
- Shepherd
- Entrepreneur
- Chef de Cuisine
- Builder/Developer

Member checking with this study's participants confirmed the value that such metaphorical representation can have in crystalizing a symbolic representation of identity. All participants concurred with the metaphorical leader role that had been assigned to their cameo, and they expressed an appreciation for the new perspective that this creative representation lent to their perception of themselves in their roles.

These metaphorical representations take a slightly different stance than those developed for the participants in the qualitative study of Continuing Education leaders conducted by Stephenson (2010). In that study, Stephenson used allegory and symbolism to explore the experiences of Continuing Education leaders in the university setting. Stephenson proposed a means by which CE leaders can construct meaning from their roles; that study's model proposed six styles of leadership – including “colonial, educational, facilitator, hybrid, mediator, melange, and radical” (p. 64) – as symbolic representations of the CE leaders who participated in Stephenson's study. While Stephenson's representations are articulated in the context of a style, or approach to leadership, the metaphorical references assigned in the present study personify the metaphor in the form of a representative role or position. Despite this methodological difference, there remain similarities in the findings of the present study to those of Stephenson's study in the characterization of the diversity of leadership that exists in the Continuing Education field.

Having established the diversity of participants' leadership in this study, the proposed reframing model is now introduced. Drawing on earlier work by Bolman and Deal (1991, 2008), Bolman and Gallos (2011) present a model for interpreting aspects of organizational life in a thematic grouping of four commonly encountered leadership challenges in higher education:

- Building institutional clarity
- Fostering productive working relationships
- Managing difference
- Enacting a powerful vision (p. 10)

This Bolman and Gallos model utilizes a metaphorical representation of each of these organizational experiences as “frames”, which they label ‘machine’, ‘family’, ‘jungle’, and ‘theatre’, respectively.

The conceptual illustration of the present study's findings in Figure 5.1 positions the Bolman and Gallos (2011) four frame model as a resulting outcome of a sensemaking process, that facilitates “reframing” the perspective lens through which a leader may approach leadership challenges.

The findings of the present study demonstrate an affinity to the Bolman and Gallos (2011) model that these leaders of CE may have, as evidenced by the nature of participants' commonly shared leadership experiences, particularly in the context of leadership achievements and challenges. At no point during the interviews or in any of the recruitment material did I introduce the Bolman and Gallos model of interpreting leadership challenges in higher education. While I was familiar with the Bolman and Gallos model from prior reading, I did not initially attempt to align emerging themes to this model as I was coding and analyzing the study data; it was during an “aha” moment as I was writing the findings that I noticed that the leadership challenges and achievements themes that initially emerged from the data were remarkably similar to the four themes that Bolman and Gallos (2011) present.

Furthermore, I noticed that the challenges that participants of the present study had articulated could be addressed by variously approaching these challenges from the perspective of their collectively demonstrated *achievements*. Admittedly, my initial assumption around presenting this potential model of leadership was related to the identification of commonly held *challenges* – but it was the commonly shared *achievements* that led to the recognition of fit that this model has for the circumstances of Continuing Education leaders who participated in this study. In essence, challenges are reframed by viewing from the perspective of achievements. Given their propensity for learning as demonstrated by their personal passion for lifelong learning, there may be some appetite among Continuing Education leaders to share and learn together by viewing their own leadership experiences through the lens of their colleagues' perspectives in this way. This pluralistic model of leadership in the higher education setting is arguably well-suited to support the reflective practice of Continuing Education leaders such as those who participated in this study.

Returning to the diversity of leadership represented in Chapter 4 by the metaphorical roles attached to each participant cameo, Figure 5.2 below illustrates the dominant frame with which each of the nine metaphorical leadership roles most closely align, as represented by the shading in the table. Cells with darker shading represent the dominant

frame for each metaphorical role, and cells with lighter shading represent a secondary frame for those roles that align with more than one frame.

Participant Cameos – Metaphorical Leadership Role	Four Frame Leadership Model - after Bolman and Gallos (2011)			
	Building institutional clarity  (structural) <i>Machine</i>	Fostering productive working relationships  (human resources) <i>Family</i>	Managing difference  (political) <i>Jungle</i>	Enacting a powerful vision  (symbolic) <i>Theatre</i>
Mountaineer				
Coach				
Navigator				
Chaplain				
Explorer				
Shepherd				
Entrepreneur				
Chef				
Builder				

*Figure 5.2* Metaphorical Leadership Roles assigned to participants, and their alignment with the Bolman and Gallos (2011) reframing model of leadership.

As described by Gallos (2008),

Each frame captures an important slice of organizational reality, but alone is incomplete. Reliance on any one perspective can lead to mistaking a part of the field for the whole, or to misinterpreting the root cause of events or challenges. Together, however, the four frames harness the pluralism in the organizational theory base, acknowledging its richness and complexity while organizing the major elements for easy access, recall, and application. (p. 166)

The following subsection discusses the alignment of various leadership challenges described by participants in this study to each of the four leadership frames proposed by Bolman and Gallos (2011).

### 5.6.2 Aligning leadership frames to shared experiences

The four leadership frames that Bolman and Gallos (2011) present in the context of the higher education organizational environment have their origins in the leadership reframing model introduced earlier by Bolman and Deal (1991) for the broader leadership audience. Gallos (2008) played a role in refining the model, which was ultimately presented as a practical guide for higher education leaders by Bolman and Gallos in 2011 in *Reframing Academic Leadership*. The four elements of this model are each explored in relation to the present study's findings as follows:

#### **Structural frame: Building institutional clarity**

The structural frame is metaphorically represented by Bolman and Gallos (2011) as the 'machine', and is typically the lens through which the leader views organizational tensions, including "differentiation and integration...centralization and decentralization...tight boundaries and openness to the environment...[and] bureaucracy and entrepreneurship" (Gallos, 2008, p. 173).

As presented in Chapter 4, participants in the present study described many challenges related to dealing with blurred boundaries between academic departments. Factors contributing to the prevalence of overlapping mandates included curriculum ownership claims, quality concerns, competing efforts to generate departmental revenue, and well-intentioned attempts to meet the needs of various stakeholders already served by Continuing Education. Furthermore, the importance of senior executive support and clear messaging regarding the role of Continuing Education in their institution plays a key role in mitigating these factors that contribute to a lack of institutional clarity.

Additionally, the identity questions of "who are we?" that were asked by CE leaders – and also by Vice Presidents Academic across the system who were seeking clarity from CE leaders themselves (Heads of CE, 2015) - can be traced back to the above mentioned issues related to institutional clarity. The frequency with which participants of this study



made mention of these institutional clarity tensions suggests that this frame plays a key role in the organizational life of the Continuing Education leader.

### **Human resources frame: Fostering productive working relationships**

The human resources frame is metaphorically represented by the ‘family’, and represents “the symbiotic relationship between individuals and organizations” (Gallos, 2008, p. 166). It is through this lens that the leader experiences the tensions between “autonomy and interdependence...participation and autonomy decision making...self-regulation and external controls...[and] meeting individual needs and meeting organizational needs” (Gallos, 2008, p. 174).

Participants in the present study described challenges and opportunities related to developing and nurturing internally-oriented relationships – with members of other academic teams, with departments such as Information Technology, Marketing, and Contract Training, and with Program Advisory Committees – all in the context of their shared organizational goals in providing excellent academic programming and student experiences.

For the purposes of applying this frame to the leadership of Continuing Education, external relationships must also be considered as important elements of the relational environment which impact leaders’ experiences. As described by participants in this study, these external relationships involved key local stakeholders in workforce planning and development such as industry associations, chambers of commerce, employer human resources departments, and workforce planning boards. Participants also related the importance of their relationships with representatives of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Colleges Ontario, and the Heads of Continuing Education. With the many changes taking place in the higher education landscape (described in Chapter 2), it is particularly important for leaders of Continuing Education to nurture and develop these external relationships in support of their colleges’ missions to meet the evolving educational needs of their communities.

### **Political frame: Managing difference**

The political frame is represented by the ‘jungle’, and embodies the tensions arising due to the contrasts between “similarity and diversity...empowerment and control...[and the] individual [versus the] collective “ (Gallos, 2008, p. 174).

From the experiences of the participants in this study, themes of marginalization and isolation permeated the data as presented in the findings in Chapter 4. Participants shared experiences of leading teams that feel marginalized, and many also expressed feelings of marginalization and ‘otherness’ themselves, particularly as related to the difference in their roles as academic leaders compared to those of their colleagues at their own institutions. Many participants recounted pride in their achievements of counteracting these marginalizing influences, with examples of sticking up for their teams, advocating on behalf of their students and their faculty, and managing the fears that their team members expressed regarding the long-term viability of their units.

Layered upon the impact of these marginalizing influences and impacts are the complicating dynamics of subcultural influences, as described in Chapter 2 and as found in Chapter 4. At times these subcultural elements that emphasize difference were found to interfere with Continuing Education leaders’ efforts to develop and maintain these relationships with colleagues across their institutions.

### **Symbolic frame: Enacting a powerful vision**

Finally, the symbolic frame is metaphorically represented by Bolman and Gallos (2011) as the ‘theatre’, and it is here that innovation and individuality bump up against tradition and shared vision (Gallos, 2008).

As presented in Chapter 4, participants expressed the challenges they experienced in providing strategic direction and long-term vision for their teams and for their institutions. In many cases however, they also viewed these experiences from the positive perspective of personal achievements. They valued their ability to make a difference in the lives of their students and to contribute to their communities’ economic well-being. It was in the context of this frame that participants revealed the passion they felt for the

work in which they are engaged, and that they derived meaning from their service to their students, to their communities and to the teams that they lead.

In summary, as Gallos (2008) states,

The multi-frame model...offer[s] a workable template for expanding frame choices and understanding alternatives. It says to leaders, "Study your own thinking and discover which frames are least familiar or least palatable to you. Those are the ones you should learn more about." It also expands the role and contributions of a leader: leaders in essence become teachers who expand the framing capacities of their organizations and those who work in it. (p. 176)

The next and final chapter brings the study to a conclusion. Implications of the study's findings, its contribution to the field of educational leadership, as well as the study's limitations, are presented in Chapter 6. The resulting recommendations for future research and final remarks close the study's conclusions that follow in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Ontario college Continuing Education leaders (namely deans and/or administrative leaders) and the tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities that present in their leadership journeys.

Globalization, shifting demographics, growth of the knowledge economy, technological advances in online learning, and governments' increasing expectations of measurable performance gains are impacting higher education institutions' visions, missions and day-to-day operations. As a result, organizational leaders must turn their attention to be more responsive to external factors and to internal organizational dynamics and operational efficiencies. These influences are leading to various tensions, dilemmas and opportunities for leaders in higher education.

Furthermore, the lines are blurring between the traditional mandate of Continuing Education and that of the rest of the higher education institution. Continuing Education leaders must perform a balancing act as they weigh both real and perceived threats and opportunities that are impacting their units and their institutions. This study captured leaders' experiences as they navigate the complexities of these challenges.

Sensemaking (Weick, 1976, 1979, 1995) was identified in the design of this study as a lens through which these experiences could be analyzed and interpreted. The study has led to the presentation of a conceptual model that illustrates the ways in which leadership challenges and achievements are experienced by Continuing Education leaders. The model also incorporates the thematic representations of identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) found in this study.

Sensemaking was found to be a useful theoretical perspective through which to analyze Continuing Education leadership experiences in this case study. Three thematic representations of these leaders' identity were found: they are passionate advocates for

lifelong learning, they are committed to serving their students, their communities and their teams, and they are connected provincially and yet at times, isolated locally.

Similarly, leadership challenges were found to be represented by three commonly-held themes. Complexity, constant change, and persistent yet not insurmountable marginalization emerged as challenges faced by these leaders. Furthermore, despite these commonalities of identity construction and leadership challenges, this case study found an evident diversity in the metaphorical representation of participants as unique individuals. The juxtaposition of this diversity against commonly experienced challenges led to overlaying Bolman and Gallos' (2011) reframing model, wherein leaders can see opportunities to view challenges through different lenses.

The implications of this study contribute new learning to the field of Continuing Education leadership in the Ontario college sector. Indeed, the findings present an opportunity for Continuing Education leaders in the province to learn from one another's experiences, and to strengthen the role of the collective leadership of Continuing Education in the higher education sector. The study also presents an opportunity for senior executive leaders in the Ontario college system to develop a deeper understanding of the role that they play in championing the important contributions that Continuing Education leaders and their teams are making.

Notably, this was not intended to be a case study of sensemaking processes per se, but rather used sensemaking as a theoretical lens through which to analyze experiences in order to identify themes related to leadership experiences. However, this undertaking has suggested possibilities for future research that would in fact delve into the very nature of these sensemaking processes in order to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon as it applies to leadership in the higher education setting. These contributions and recommendations are presented in the next sections of this chapter.

The first section of this final chapter discusses the implications for practice that the study's findings present for leaders of Continuing Education in the Ontario college sector.

## 6.1 Implications for Practice

In discussing implications for practice, I reiterate my declared bias that I introduced in Chapter 3: I myself am a dean of Continuing Education at an Ontario college, and thus I was interested to explore with my colleagues the challenges and the opportunities that we share as leaders of Continuing Education in the Ontario college system. During the course of my data gathering interviews, one of the participants ‘turned the tables’ during their interview and asked me some questions about the study itself. An unedited excerpt from my reply reveals my underlying sense at the time that Continuing Education leaders had much to learn from each other regarding our shared experiences of changes that are influencing our leadership of Continuing Education:

*Well that’s what interested me about designing the study in this way...because that’s certainly what I’ve been living too. Like how are we experiencing this shift? And at every institution these shifts are being responded to a little bit differently. But I think we’re all sensing change underfoot. And how do we manage that? How do we lead through it? How do we lead our teams through that changing landscape? And what are the influences? What are the opportunities? What are the tensions and the dilemmas? Where do we hit walls? Where do we see open doors? Right?*

It was from this perspective of deepening my understanding of my own leadership role, and making a contribution to the field from which others may learn, that I set out to answer the questions I shared with this participant, and more broadly to answer the research question posed at the beginning of this chapter and in the introduction to this dissertation.

One outcome of this study is a proposed conceptual framework for interpretation of the experiences of Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders in the Ontario college sector as they navigate the changing landscape of higher education. The data were analyzed to provide a thematic representation of tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities that Continuing Education leaders encountered and anticipated as shared in their interviews. Interpretation of data through the lens of sensemaking processes facilitated the development of this conceptual model; while this is not a study of sensemaking

theory per se, it is a study of leadership experience that is interpreted by utilizing an assumption that sensemaking is at play and therefore provides a framework for the analysis of such experiences.

Themes related to identity construction and leadership challenges were identified for CE deans/administrative leaders, answering the questions “who are we?” and “in what context do we lead?” These themes articulate shared leadership challenges, and emphasize that CE leaders’ identity is associated with their role locally in the context of their own organization, as well as to the provincial network of leaders who hold similar roles at other colleges.

The findings emphasize a recognition of the complexity of the role, and the importance of senior executive support in championing the contribution that Continuing Education makes to the organization and to the community.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the affinity Continuing Education leaders may have to the Bolman and Gallos (2011) four-frame model for approaching leadership challenges in higher education. The application of the Bolman and Gallos (2011) model of higher education leadership presents an opportunity for Continuing Education leaders to relate shared challenges to shared collective achievements, and to learn from one another’s unique approaches to their leadership practice. In other words, this study presents an opportunity for Continuing Education leaders to “reframe” their unique challenges from the perspective of the successes that they and their colleagues in Continuing Education have already achieved. Furthermore, this study reinforces the importance of the network that exists between Heads of Continuing Education colleagues, wherein members can learn from one another and share these achievements as examples of overcoming commonly encountered challenges.

These types of leadership models are ultimately just a tool for initiating conversation and self-reflection that can lead to a deeper understand of one’s role as a leader in a complex world. Exploring the challenges and opportunities of leadership through a new lens such as the conceptual model presented in this study may encourage Continuing Education leaders to explore other models – those presented earlier in Chapter 2 as reference in this

study, for example, or others in the vast compendium of the broader literature – and such explorations will only serve to further enrich the leader’s experience who takes on this self-reflective work.

The methodology of this study has also suggested an implication for practice that I had not considered until I was well into the final writing of this dissertation. As I re-read passages in Weick’s (1995) *Sensemaking in Organizations*, I realized a real and immediate implication of having undertaken this study that I could apply to my own leadership practice – and that is the reflective practice of sensemaking itself.

Weick (1995) articulates a mindset for both the research and the practice of sensemaking: “Research and practice in sensemaking needs to begin with a mindset to look for sensemaking, a willingness to use one’s own life as data, and a search for those outcroppings and ideas that fascinate” (p. 191).

One of Weick’s (1995) stated implications for practice, or “maxims for action” (p. 182) for the practice of sensemaking encourages thinking about challenges, or problems, using verbs rather than nouns. In other words, Weick encourages leaders to think about *organizing* rather than the *organization*; to think in terms of *action* that considers *process*, rather than finding solutions to problems; to ask, ‘what is *happening* here?’ As Weick posits,

Verbs capture action that lays down the path for sensemaking. Verbs keep things moving and that includes the structures involved in sensemaking and the shifting demands to which those structures are trying to accommodate... .People who think with verbs are more likely to accept life as ongoing events into which they are thrown, and less likely to think of it as turf to be defended, levels of hierarchy to be ascended, or structures to be upended. (p. 188)

This exploratory case study has not only resulted in the development of a proposed conceptual framework for interpreting leadership experiences; it has also illuminated the role that sensemaking itself can play in the reflective practice of the leader. Taking the perspective of Weick’s (1995) approach to theory building through deliberate use of



verbs and gerunds as a semantic device, it became apparent to me how useful this approach could be in ‘reframing’ issues from static *problems* to active *processes*. Turning one’s perspective from problem solving to understanding the actions behind a challenging scenario brings a fresh approach to envisioning leadership that I had not encountered prior to engaging with the sensemaking literature in the undertaking of this study.

In the next section, the implications of this study’s findings are extended to the broader contributions that this study offers to the field of Educational Leadership, and the administration of Continuing Education in the Ontario college sector.

## 6.2 Contributions to the Field

This study appears to be the first of its kind in Ontario and in Canada, in that it presents a conceptual framework that integrates the theoretical concept of sensemaking into a comprehensive model for the interpretation of Continuing Education leadership experience. This exploratory case study is an addition to the field of Educational Leadership, especially in respect of Ontario colleges.

The findings extend understandings of contemporary experiences of Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders in Ontario. As referenced earlier in Chapter 2, and in the discussion of Chapter 5, there have been a number of studies that have explored educational leaders’ experiences, and some of these studies have certainly taken place in Canada. However the present study presents an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that Continuing Education leaders in Ontario colleges are encountering on their leadership journeys.

For aspiring or existing Continuing Education leaders, this study may shape further understandings of the unique leadership challenges and potential opportunities that may be encountered in the organizational life of a Continuing Education leader. Certainly the proposed model of reframing one’s leadership perspective through different lenses may encourage reflective practice that expands the capacity of Continuing Education leaders to manage the complexities of the role. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the important

role that the provincial network of Continuing Education colleagues plays in supporting and developing Continuing Education leaders in the Ontario college sector. This study highlights the need for Continuing Education leaders to communicate the contribution that Continuing Education is making in colleges and in their communities. The study suggests a need for internal and external story telling and ‘self-promotion’ to both elevate the recognition of Continuing Education and the dialogue around the contributions that are being made. Finally, the study encourages a strengthening of the provincial Heads of Continuing Education network that would adopt a provincial voice which is heard as expert, empowering of new members and encouraging of them to embrace their role as strategic leaders of the college sector’s initiatives (to achieve a highly skilled workforce for the future). Leaders of Continuing Education are encouraged to harness the power of such a provincial network - a necessary support for leaders who at times find themselves isolated in their roles locally.

For other college leaders outside of Continuing Education, this exploratory case study may provide insight regarding the significant role that they – and especially senior executive leaders - play in supporting the mandate of Continuing Education at their institution and in the Ontario college sector. The findings of this study suggest implications regarding the role of Continuing Education in driving institutional commitment to addressing labour market challenges, as suggested by Braverman (2013) and Coates (2013). As articulated by a number of participants, their senior executive leaders were instrumental in providing institutional clarity, with visible and vocal support signaling the important role of Continuing Education to the rest of the organization.

The present Ontario-based study found that, similar to Stephenson (2010), Continuing Education leaders believe that they have an important role to play in contributing to their institutions’ efforts to meet the educational needs of their communities’ constituencies. Themes of making a difference, contributing to peoples’ lives, providing access to education for under-represented populations, were evident in this study, and confirm similar findings to research by Stephenson (2010) and Landry (2011). Certainly, this study speaks to the contributions that Continuing Education leaders are making toward the preparation of skilled workers who will contribute to the economic well being of their

communities (Greene, 2001; O'Sullivan, 1999; Starratt, 2004). As well, the study also emphasizes the role the Continuing Education leaders are playing in serving individuals' needs for self-development and personal growth. Thus, the findings of this study present an understanding of the experiences of Continuing Education leaders who are impacting both the greater societal purpose as well as the more individually-focused purpose of education.

Global influences on higher education were outlined in Chapter 2, including "technological innovation, globalization, mass communication, mass culture, and rising consumer expectations" (Mulford, 2008, pp. 4-5). In particular, the rising demand for - or expectation to deliver - online programs and courses was a frequently mentioned by participants as an influencer of change in higher education and also of change in Continuing Education in general. The delivery of online learning was often a source of tension when mandates for delivery weren't clear, with some colleges treating this as a centralized delivery through CE, others distributing ownership of online courses across academic schools for each discipline, and yet others implementing a blended approach that saw online delivery across all units including CE, with varied approaches to administrative ownership and delivery.

To a certain extent, performativity measures (Blackmore & Sachs, 2007) such as accreditation and quality reviews, are in some instances driving this and other examples of decentralization of Continuing Education, which align deliveries more closely with full-time post-secondary academic units and their full-time faculty experts. Blackmore and Sachs (2007) speak to the 'emotional impacts' on leaders who must manage the paradox of increasing performativity measures in tension with the evident desires (as displayed in this present study) of leaders to feel they are serving their students, communities, and teams. Blackmore and Sachs emphasize the tension that arises when leaders must balance performance with passion. Such a paradox is evident in the findings of this study.

The frequent references to organizational change experienced by participants of this study reflect the assertion made by Craig (2004), Fong (2013), Hanft and Knust (2009),

and Stephenson (2010) that administrative restructuring is a commonly shared experience of leaders responsible for part-time studies in post-secondary sectors. These organizational changes may be also contributing to other leadership challenges related to complexity of leadership portfolios such as clarity of role, managing differences, and building productive working relationships.

Furthermore, the challenges of organizational subcultures and the influences on identity and leadership challenges were evident in the participants' descriptions of interactions and transactions with leaders from other departments who questioned the quality of CE courses; tensions of an 'us versus them' dynamic could be heard in a number of the stories participants retold of their efforts to manage the differences in delivery mode and faculty complement.

On a broader scale, this study suggests a confirmation of Weick's (1995) theory that ambiguities lead to questions of identity. Examples of such ambiguities demonstrated in the findings includes blurred boundaries, role overlap, organizational changes, changing demographics of college students – each suggesting the changing higher education landscape is blurring the mandate that once was clear for Continuing Education. These ambiguities undoubtedly are contributing to the complexity of leadership challenges as well as the fundamental identity question "who are we"? Blurred boundaries and overlapping mandates are leading to tensions of ownership, duplication of effort, and as found in this study, triggering leaders' sensemaking narratives related to identity construction.

Coates (2013) refers to a history of marginalization of Continuing Education; however the findings of this study suggest that marginalization persists, at least at some of the colleges represented in this study. Given the important role that CE stands to play in contributing to the solution of the skills mismatch (Miner, 2010, 2014; Kerr, 2011), it will be increasingly important to understand and address these marginalizing experiences as described in Chapter 4, and to learn from the successful strategies that a number of participants employed in addressing these challenges. This, and other recommendations

for future research are presented in section 6.4. Prior to considering future research recommendations, however, the limitations of the present study are presented next.

### 6.3 Limitations

As with any study, some methodological decisions have introduced limitations on the generalizability of the findings. Two limitations are identified for the present study.

First, as described earlier in Chapter 3, the findings of this exploratory case study are not intended to be generalizable but are intended to provide insight into the experiences of Continuing Education leaders in the Ontario college setting as they navigate the changes in higher education and changes within their own institutions that are impacting their leadership experiences. However, the experiences of leaders who participated in this study may arguably be representative of other administrators at this level who encounter similar challenges and opportunities as those described by participants in this study. The purposive sampling was intentionally designed to ensure that a wide variety of voices was included, with the intention that the findings would be representative of small and large institutions, various organizational structures, diverse geographical locations, and varying years of experience in the role of Continuing Education leader. As such, the impact of this methodological limitation has been minimized to the degree possible by these study design elements.

Second, the sampling strategy employed in this study limited the reporting of some findings that were associated with participant attributes. As reported in Chapter 4, a number of matrix analyses were conducted in addition to the primary inductive and deductive coding analyses. These supplementary matrix analyses compared question responses and theoretical codes against participant attributes, and suggested that there were some interesting themes that could potentially be developed that would speak to the impacts on leadership experience that were associated with variations in organizational structure, size of college, size of department, and other attributes of the participant sample. However, these findings were not included in this report, as they carried a risk of introducing deductive disclosure, due to the small number of participants who individually represented each of these distinct attributes. It was therefore possible that

individual participants would be identifiable in the reporting of such findings. Thus, in order to preserve participant anonymity, these matrix analyses are not presented. A study drawing from a larger population, with a broader representation of the higher education sector, could facilitate presenting such analysis while preserving the ethical element of confidentiality and anonymity for participants.

Identification of these study limitations presents an opportunity to propose future research that could be designed to mitigate these limitations. Such recommendations are included in the suggestions for further research in the next section.

## 6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Through the course of this study, a number of ideas and suggestions for future research have emerged, either from the participants themselves, or arising from the analysis of the data, and the nature of the subsequent findings. Building on this study's findings, examining the proposed conceptual framework in further depth, or examining the proposed conceptual framework in a new context all present opportunities for future research. Additionally, the limitations of this study present obvious suggestions for future research.

Methodological changes could address the limitations brought about by the need to protect confidentiality and anonymity in this case study that arose due to the small provincially-based population and sample size. Similar research could be conducted with a broader population, such that a sample may be drawn that is proportionally a much smaller subset of the larger national population. Because this study drew from a relatively small population, and the sample comprised approximately one third of the population, there was risk associated with presenting any analysis of data that correlated participant attributes with responses and subsequent themes. The preliminary data analysis suggested there were some interesting themes that could potentially be developed and relate to variations in organizational structure, size of college, size of department, and other attributes of the participant sample. But such analysis could not be included in this manuscript as it was possible that such analysis could reveal individual identities.

During the course of the data gathering interviews, participants were asked about their perceptions of their Continuing Education students, and of the impact that Continuing Education programming has in their communities. In their responses to these questions, several participants commented on a gap in research that describes the impact that Continuing Education has in the communities they serve. While I was able to locate one example of such a study (conducted by a consultant for an Ontario community), there appears to be an opportunity to conduct research that would explore the economic as well as social impact that Continuing Education programming has for communities in general.

The completion of any study is bound to prompt further studies that may explore one or more findings in further depth. In this case, the present study found that in some instances, there remains persistent marginalization of Continuing Education leaders and/or their teams. While leaders who participated in this study described that they successfully countered these instances of marginalizing or isolating institutional behaviours, the question remains: what drives this marginalization, and how is it affecting leaders of Continuing Education teams and their ability to meet the needs of their students and their community? Future study is recommended that would explore why such marginalization persists in a contemporary higher education landscape that depends on the success of Continuing Education to meet evolving labour market needs.

Similarly, the completion of any study may prompt an examination of a proposed conceptual framework in further detail. In the present study, the findings propose a model for interpreting the experiences of Continuing Education leaders in the context of sensemaking processes. Further study of these sensemaking processes as they apply to the academic leadership context could shed light on the interpersonal and transactional dynamics that such leaders experience. Exploring the ways in which leaders respond to sensemaking triggers, and how these experiences inform their leadership practice – would build on the finding of this study. My experience analyzing the interviews in this study, suggests a narrative analysis may be useful, that more deeply studies the language used by participants to describe their experiences may be of value.

Another extension of the present study's findings would be an application of the Bolman and Gallos (2011) model of academic leadership through the use of a survey questionnaire such as the Leadership Orientations Survey Instruments (Bolman & Deal, 1990). Such a study could potentially validate the assumption made in this study (that the Bolman and Gallos reframing model is in fact a good fit for interpreting the experiences of Continuing Education leaders).

Furthermore, the exploration of Continuing Education leaders' experiences through the lens of sensemaking processes could be extended to an exploration of Continuing Education leadership experiences that takes the perspective of a *sensegiving* (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) lens. In other words, a research question may ask "in what ways do Continuing Education leaders provide meaning for their teams and for their organizations by way of their sensegiving leadership actions?"

Finally, the proposed conceptual framework may be found to apply in other contexts. Future studies within higher education could explore the application of this conceptual framework to the leadership of other units that may experience similar identity challenges when they are perceived to be isolated from the central engine of post-secondary academic delivery at their institution.

Having presented recommendations for future study, the next section offers a few final thoughts on the insights that have emerged from this study, and closes with a reflection on my experience of undertaking this study.

## 6.5 Summary and Final Remarks

The completion of this dissertation culminates a four-year journey for me that has illuminated the unique challenges, achievements, and opportunities that inform the experiences of Continuing Education deans/administrative leaders at Ontario colleges. It has been a privilege to explore these experiences with leaders who have such passion for the role that Continuing Education plays for our students and for our communities. For me, there have been two significant outcomes from having completed this study. The first is outward facing, wherein I have developed a deeper understanding of the role that



Continuing Education can and must play in our communities. The second is inward facing, with a newfound appreciation for the role that sensemaking plays in a leader's understanding of the organizational context in which one leads.

With respect to the first outcome, I reflect back to the beginning days of my doctoral journey. A few months prior to beginning the Doctor of Education program at Western University, I had the good fortune to read Dr. Ken Coates' (2013) paper entitled "Reinventing Universities: Continuing Education and the Challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". Dr. Coates' exposition on the impact of Continuing Education in the Canadian university sector was an impetus for me to develop a broader and deeper understanding of the role that Continuing Education can play in our higher education system. Coates argued that Continuing Education leaders must embrace their role and seize the opportunity to make a difference in our communities' and our country's economic and social success; however he cautioned that the initiative to do so must come from Continuing Education leaders themselves:

They cannot...wait for the campus mainstream to rediscover their role and mission. Rather, if continuing education professionals wish to be part of the reinvention of the Canadian universities, they will have to do this through imaginative initiatives, renewed confidence in their core mission, and a conviction that a broad and comprehensive approach to post-secondary education, including continuing education, is essential for Canada's economic and social success. It is to Canada's good fortune that the continuing education professionals in this country are keen to respond. (p. 11)

The present study extends Dr. Coates' assertion regarding the role of Continuing Education in the Canadian university sector to that of the Ontario community college sector. The findings of this study suggest that the provincial Heads of Continuing Education network may be just the forum to engage in such a collective effort, seizing the opportunity to apply the findings from this study and others in the field to a bold, comprehensive strategy for supporting the higher education needs of lifelong learners.

Secondly, I reflect on the way in which this study's application of sensemaking theory has opened for me a new way of approaching my leadership experience. It is my hope that this dissertation provides a platform for other leaders in higher education to consider this approach to understanding our role and the challenges and opportunities that present themselves on our leadership journeys. I am grateful for having had this opportunity to step outside my familiar comfort zone to problem solving, and have had my eyes opened to the value of reflective practice and interpretation of experience through qualitative study. Weick's (1995) "Sensemaking in Organizations" has formed a basis upon which I will consider future organizational challenges and opportunities. As Barbara Czarniawska (2006) argues,

Karl Weick's influence on both the form and the content of present organization theory has been profound. He turned the attention of organization scholars from structures to processes, from organizations to organizing, from the relevance of academia to the relevance of the field, from mystification to imaginative interpretation. In his writing, he combines metaphors originating from natural sciences and humanities in a flawless and sophisticated way. His works are a source of wisdom and of consolation. His insights remain relevant in spite of changing organizational practice and academic fashions. And like few scholars in organization theory, he is unwaveringly attentive to all the new cues, incorporating them into his frame and adapting his frames accordingly — an inveterate sensemaker. (pp. 1671-2)

It is with these outward and inward facing perspectives that I conclude this dissertation. With the research question asked and answered, it is time to apply these findings in the next steps of my lifelong learning journey.

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## Appendices

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## Appendix A: Western University Ethics Approval



Research Ethics

### Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Pamela Bishop  
**Department & Institution:** Education, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 108070  
**Study Title:** Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** June 07, 2016  
**NMREB Expiry Date:** June 07, 2017

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Letter of Information & Consent		2016/06/01
Recruitment Items	Recruitment E-Mail	2016/06/01
Western University Protocol	Received June 2, 2016	
Instruments	Interview Protocol	2016/05/13

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

[Redacted]  
Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member  
[Redacted]

## Appendix B: Fanshawe College Ethics Approval

### Fanshawe College Research Ethics Board Review

#### Approval Notification of Proposed Research Involving Human Participants at Fanshawe College

<b>Protocol Number:</b>	16-06-10-1
<b>Principal Researcher(s):</b>	Susan Cluett
<b>Research Protocol Title:</b>	Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders
<b>Research Project Start Date:</b>	June 1, 2016
<b>Expected date of termination:</b>	November 30, 2016
<b>Documents Reviewed:</b>	Protocol; Interview Questions; Letter of Information and Consent; Recruitment Email

Based solely on the ethical considerations raised by the research proposed in the application, the Research Ethics Board has completed its Delegated Review of the above Research Proposal and **Approved** the Project on June 21, 2016.

#### Comments and Conditions:

Please note that the REB requires that you adhere to the protocol reviewed and approved by the REB. The REB must approve any modifications to the protocol before they can be implemented.

Researchers must report to the Fanshawe REB:

- a) any changes which increase the risk to the participants;
- b) any changes which significantly affect the conduct of the study;
- c) all adverse and/or unexpected experiences in the course of carrying out the study;
- d) any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study.

Researchers must submit an REB Amendment/Extension form annually for all ongoing research projects. In addition, researchers must submit an REB Annual Review/Status Update form at the conclusion of the project.

**ETHICS APPROVAL DOES NOT CONSTITUTE PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH, AND APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING THE PROJECT MUST BE OBTAINED FROM THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY IN WHOSE AREA THE RESEARCH WILL TAKE PLACE, OR IN THE CASE OF COLLEGE WIDE SURVEYS THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING.**

Members of the FCREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the FCREB.



Scott Veenvliet on behalf of  
Otte Rosenkrantz, PhD  
Chair, REB  
Fanshawe College

June 21, 2016

Date

## Appendix C: Potential Participants' College Ethics Approvals

### Research Ethics Board CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

<b>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b> Susan Cluett, EdD Candidate, Western University		<b>DEPARTMENT</b> Dean, Faculty & Continuing Education, Fanshawe College		<b>NUMBER</b> 16-015-C
<b>INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:</b> Common College Application				
<b>INVESTIGATOR SUPERVISOR:</b> Dr. Pamela Bishop, PhD, Education, Western University, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]				
<b>SPONSORING AGENCIES:</b> NA				
<b>TITLE:</b> Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders				
<b>APPROVAL TYPE:</b>	<b>APPROVAL DATE:</b>	<b>APPROVAL PERIOD (YEARS):</b>	<b>COMPLETION REPORT/ RENEWAL DUE DATE:</b>	
DELEGATED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FULL <input type="checkbox"/>	June 27, 2016	1 year	June 27, 2017	
<b>CERTIFICATION</b>				
<p>The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the [REDACTED] Research Ethics Board and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">[REDACTED]</p> <hr style="width: 30%; margin: auto;"/> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Approval of the Research Ethics Board by:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">[REDACTED]</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chair</i></p>				
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>This Certificate of Approval is valid for the term indicated provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.</i></p>				



[Redacted]

July 21, 2016

To: Dr. Pamela Bishop and Susan Cluett  
Email: [Redacted]

RE: Review of Ethics Application – File # 16-11

Dear Dr. Pamela Bishop and Susan Cluett,

Thank you for applying to the Research Ethics Board (REB) at [Redacted]. I am pleased to inform you that the review committee has approved your application to conduct the following study at [Redacted].

**“Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders”**

You may now begin your research.

Please note that your REB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the procedures and documents as described in the final version of the Ethics application documents submitted to the REB as of this date. Should you make any substantive changes to your research beyond what was described in these documents or should you wish to do any research beyond what was described in the application, you will need to re-apply for Ethics Review and approval. You are not permitted to implement any changes until you have received the written approval of the [Redacted].

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e. interview log sheets, signed consent forms, etc.) in a secure place along with the data collected and ensure that the data are destroyed in accordance with the procedures approved in the submitted REB application.

Please remember to complete a Study Completion Report once your study is complete and submit it to the REB.

All the best with your study.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



September 15, 2016

Dear Dr. Bishop and Ms. Cluett,

REB file # 6004305

**Title: Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders**

---

Ethics Approval

Original Approval Date: September 15, 2016.

Expiry Date: September 15, 2017.

---

We are writing to advise you that the Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research study, for a period of **one year**, under the REB's delegated review process. Please note that approval is based on the following:

- a) The REB must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise.
- b) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported to the REB immediately.
- c) The study is approved for one year: if needed, apply for a renewal before the expiry date.
- d) A study completion form must be submitted to the REB upon completion of the project.

This approval includes appendices submitted with the application (participation invitation and consent). Please quote your REB file number on future correspondence.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your study.

Yours sincerely,



Applicant Name **Dr. Pamela Bishop**  
Applicant Address **1137 Western Road, London, Ont. N6G 1G7**

Date **August 17, 2016**

REB application # and Project Title

**#268 Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario College:  
Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education  
Deans/Administrative Leaders**

Dear Applicant Name

The [REDACTED] Research Ethics Board involving Human Subjects has reviewed your ethics review application and documentation and grants approval for the above-named study. The approval is based on the following:

1. The [REDACTED] REB must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise.
2. Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported immediately.
3. You have one year approval for the study; if needed, an annual renewal form will be required at that time.
4. A study completion form is submitted upon completion of the project. This form can be downloaded from the [REDACTED] website:  
[REDACTED]

On behalf of the committee at [REDACTED] I would like to wish you every success with your project.

Sincerely,

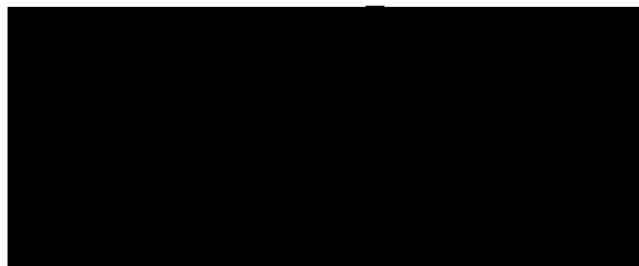
[REDACTED]

Co-Chair  
Research Ethics Board Involving Human Subjects

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].



October 6, 2016

Susan Cluett  
Dean, Faculty of Regional and Continuing Education  
Fanshawe College

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Reference: 2016-10-Cluett

Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders

Dear Ms. Cluett:

The [Redacted] Research Ethics Board, by means of a (Full) Board Review, has approved your proposal entitled 'Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders' for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS2) and [Redacted] Research Ethics policy.

In accordance with the Tri Council guidelines and the [Redacted] Research Ethics Policy, your project has been approved for the duration of one year. At the end of each year, the [Redacted] Research Ethics Board will ask for the submission of an annual report.

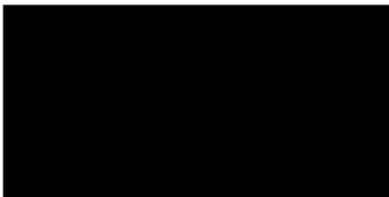
You are reminded of your responsibility to advise the [Redacted] Research Ethics Board of any adverse event(s) that occur during the period of this study. An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the [Redacted] Research Ethics Board within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the [Redacted] Research Ethics Board. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures.

On behalf of the [Redacted] Research Ethics Board, I wish you success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]




  
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability  
 For  
Research Involving Human Participants


---

**REB NUMBER:** 200  
**REPORTS REQUIRED:** Completion Report  
**TYPE OF REVIEW:** Delegated  
**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. Pamela Bishop  
**CO-INVESTIGATOR:** Susan Cluett  
**DEPARTMENT:** Faculty of Regional and Continuing Education, Fanshawe  
 College

**TITLE OF PROJECT:** LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR ADAPTING TO CHANGES IN  
 ONTARIO COLLEGES: TENSIONS, DILEMMAS AND  
 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION  
 DEANS/ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS

**APPROVAL PERIOD** October 3, 2016 to October 3, 2017

A delegated review was completed by members of the  Research Ethics Board in which they examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human subjects in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the College's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2. As a result,  *has approved your application to conduct research* using human participants at 

Please include a statement on all documentation which participants will receive noting this application has been reviewed by and received approval from the  REB.

If you intend to use the online data collection tool Survey Monkey (or any other on-line data collection tool covered by the U.S. Patriot Act which allows the U.S. government to access data residing on U.S. servers), please specifically mention this fact in the information and consent letter.

This approval is for the research protocol described in the above-numbered application. If you wish to make substantive changes to any part of the application documentation you have provided for approval (i.e. to change items such as the research protocol, the information and consent letter, survey or questionnaire wording etc.), these proposed changes should be handled through a Change Request Form. [Change Request Form](#)

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB immediately with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol. [Adverse Events Report](#)

The Tri-council Policy Statement requires that the ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, a final report. Please note that it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to submit a Completion Report when all interaction with human participants is complete. Should you wish to continue your research beyond



Certificate of Ethical Acceptability  
For  
Research Involving Human Participants

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the approval period, you must request further approval from the REB. [Completion or Renewal Request Report](#) .

On behalf of the REB, we wish you the best of success with your research at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
Research Ethics Board

Approval Date: **October 3, 2016**



Susan Cluett  
c/o Western University  
1137 Western Road  
London, ON  
N6G 1G7

October 7, 2016

**REB application:** [REDACTED] **Susan Cluett - Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders**

Dear Researcher,


The [REDACTED] Research Ethics Board (REB) has considered your application for ethical review of your research study and related documentation, and hereby grants approval for the above-named study. This approval is valid for a one-year period commencing on October 7, 2016 and will expire October 7, 2017. The approval is based on the following:

1. All protocols from your revised application submitted on October 3, 2016 are adhered to;
2. Any unanticipated issues that may increase risk to participants or have other ethical implications that may affect participants' welfare must be reported to the REB immediately and without delay;
3. The REB must be informed of any substantive protocol changes prior to any changes being implemented;
4. If you require an extension, a study renewal request must be submitted no less than 30 days prior to the expiry of this approval; and
5. Upon completion of the project, a study completion report must be submitted on or before the expiry of this approval.

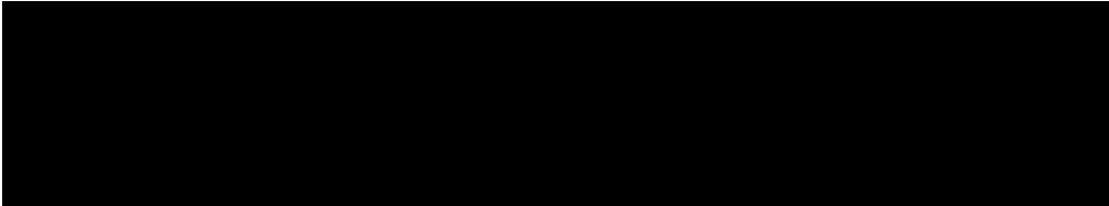
Forms for all reporting requirements will be distributed to you by email. Please submit all documentation and communications to [REDACTED]

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. On behalf of the REB, I'd like to wish you every success with your project.

Sincerely,



Chair, Research Ethics Board



August 17, 2016

Susan Cluett



Re: Submission to Research Ethics Board for Approval of Research Protocol

Dear Susan,

The [redacted] Research Ethics Board (REB) received your application to do research involving humans on July 8, 2016 and determined your application met the conditions for expedited review. Our review at this time concluded with a decision of *Approved as Submitted*.

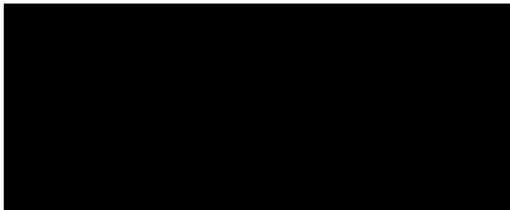
**Approval # 20160817 – Susan Cluett**

This approval expires August 17, 2017. Should you require an extension please contact the REB one month prior to your approval expiration.

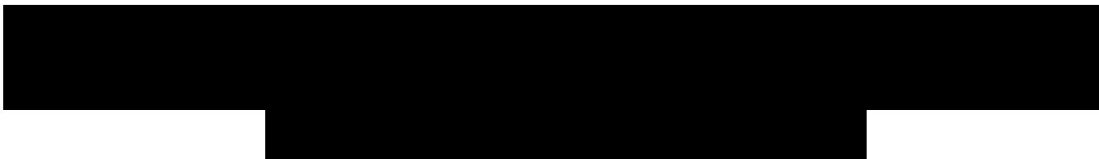
Please note your responsibilities under [redacted] including that you are required to report any changes from your research protocol, any adverse events, any unforeseen harm, or any unanticipated risks or problems.

Best wishes in your research.

Sincerely,



Chair, Research Ethics Board







August 29, 2016

**Principal Investigator: Pamela Bishop      Student Investigator: Susan Cluett**

**Research Study: Leadership strategies for adapting to changes in Ontario colleges: tensions, dilemmas, and opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders - [Redacted]**

This application was subject to:

Full Board Review        Delegated Review   

Dear Ms. Bishop and Ms. Cluett:

I am writing to advise you that the Research Ethics Board (REB) of [Redacted] has granted Approval to the above-named research study, baring the following edits. [Redacted]

[Redacted] Additionally, it was stated in the application, "written notes from our interview [will be kept] in a separate locked cabinet in my home office". As per PHIPA storage requirements (as documented on page 18 of the Multi-site Application Form regarding where paper files are kept) if possible please keep any paper files in a locked cabinet, in a locked office, but not a HOME office.

When the modifications have been confirmed by our Research Office, your research may begin.

You have one year to complete the project from the time of approval. Should you require more time to complete your project, you will be required to submit a Renewal and Amendment form, in order to obtain ongoing ethics approval for your project. This must be submitted prior to REB approval expiry. Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process as well, prior to its implementation. Both a Renewal and Amendment form and a revised [Redacted] must be submitted to the REB coordinator for review by the REB.

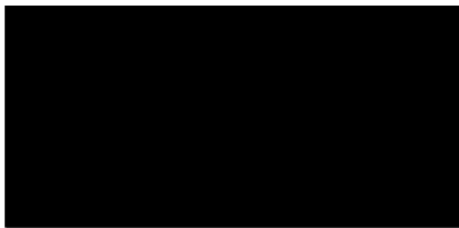
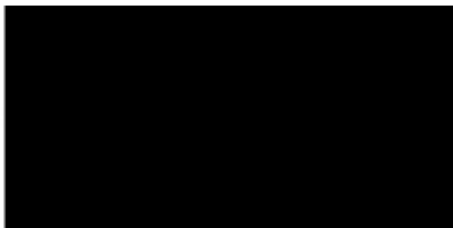
Any adverse or unanticipated events should be reported to the REB within five business days of the event by filling out an Adverse Event form. The REB reserves the right to review your file at any time to ensure that research is being conducted in accordance with all [Redacted]

Once your project is complete, you are required to submit a Completion and Termination form. This form must be submitted as a final report about your research to the REB.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact [Redacted]

Sincerely,



**[REDACTED] Research Ethics Board  
Certificate of Approval to Conduct Research**

**Protocol #: 2016-JUL-BISHOP**

This is to certify that the [REDACTED] Research Ethics Board (REB) has approved the application for the research project titled:

**“Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders”**  
to be conducted by:

**Dr. Pamela Bishop.**

The members of the REB are satisfied that this research project, as described in the application package, meets the appropriate ethical standards as set out in [REDACTED] Policy [REDACTED] – Research Involving Human Subjects.

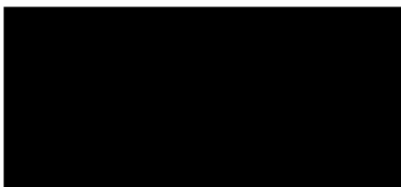
This certification is valid for one year from the date indicated below. If the researcher(s) wish to continue their study beyond the date indicated below, they will be required to submit an [Annual Research Renewal Form](#).

If at any time during the course of the study the participants or researcher(s) encounter any adverse events, they are required to report them to the REB immediately, per [REDACTED] Research Involving Human Subjects. Please ensure you provide the REB contact information in your letter of information and email invitation to participate.

If at any time researchers wish to change any aspect of the study (e.g. data collection, recruitment procedures, research personnel), the researchers must inform the REB of the proposed changes and [request their approval](#) prior to implementing any changes.

Upon completion of the project, and no later than one year from the date indicated below, the principal investigator is required to submit a [Project Completion Form](#) to the REB.

The members of the [REDACTED] REB would like to wish the researcher(s) well in their research.



November 1, 2016  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Approval Date

[REDACTED]

October 4, 2016

Susan Cluett

[REDACTED]

Re: [REDACTED] Institutional Approval for research entitled:  
*Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders*

Dear Susan,

I am pleased to advise you that [REDACTED] has granted you institutional approval to conduct your research entitled "*Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders*" at the College.

Please note that your Institutional Approval is contingent upon adherence to the procedures as described in the final version of the application documents that you have submitted to the REB.

Should you make any substantive changes to your research processes from what has been described in these application documents, or should you wish to do any research beyond what was described in the application in the future, you will need to re-apply for REB approval and for [REDACTED] Institutional Approval.

To proceed with your research you can contact [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I wish you all the best with your research.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

## Appendix D: Letter of Information and Consent



**Project Title:** Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders

**Document Title:** Letter of Information and Consent

**Principal Investigator + Contact:**

Dr. Pamela Bishop, PhD, Education, Western University, [REDACTED]

**Additional Research Staff + Contact:** Susan Cluett, EdD Candidate, Education, Western University, [REDACTED]

### Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study about the experiences of Continuing Education (CE) deans/administrative leaders at community colleges as they lead their staff and professors through the changing landscape of higher education. As the administrator responsible for Continuing Education at your institution, your experiences are relevant to the themes of this study.

### Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of CE leaders as they navigate the tensions, dilemmas and opportunities that arise in response to changes in the Ontario College sector.

The purpose of this interview is to explore your leadership experience in light of any organizational and/or college sector changes that your continuing education department has undergone up to five years ago. This interview will include questions about your professional reflections regarding your role as an academic administrator in this changing environment.

### How long will you be in this study?

There will be one study visit for the purpose of conducting a 60-90 minute interview with you. You will also have an opportunity to review your interview transcript within one month of the interview.

### What are the study procedures?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in one semi-structured interview at a location convenient for you. The interview should take between 60 and 90 minutes. With your permission, I will be recording our interview on a digital voice recorder. You can ask me to stop the recording at any time during the interview, and, of course, I will not resume the recording unless you agree. With your permission, I may be writing some notes during our interview as well. I will also meet with you for 30 to 60 minutes to review your interview data at a later date.

**What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

Participation in this study may provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on the meaning that they derive from their work, and to reinforce positive experiences associated with serving students, faculty and their community through their roles in Continuing Education. Participation in the interview process may prompt self-reflection that reveals an increased sense of self-worth and identity associated with your role you enact through your work in Continuing Education.

Potential benefits to society may result from providing evidence of the effects of organizational change on CE leaders; this study may propel further research in the areas of leadership complexity and organizational change as they relate to the college context, as well as serving to further promote the value of studying questions of identity and meaning in the workplace.

**Can participants choose to leave the study?**

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed please let the field researcher know.

**How will participants' information be kept confidential?**

Your privacy will be protected in the following ways:

You will not be identified in the reporting, publication or presentation of this research; as field researcher, I will assign pseudonyms to each participant and their institution. Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. Note that because of the small pool of potential participants, and despite my best efforts, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Personal information (name, college of employment, and email address) will be collected for the purpose of arranging interviews, and returning transcripts for your review. These personal details will be recorded in a schedule of interviews on a calendar which will be stored independently from any personal or work related calendars, and will stored electronically in an encrypted file on my laptop. You will only be identified on field notes and transcriptions by pseudonym and/or coded identifier. A master list cross referencing names and colleges with the pseudonyms and coded identifiers will be stored separately, in an encrypted file on a memory stick stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Scanned copies of the original signed consent forms will also be stored in an encrypted file on a memory stick, stored in a locked cabinet in my home office.

I will keep the audio recordings and written notes from our interview in a separate locked cabinet in my home office. Data without personal information will be stored on my laptop computer, which is password protected. This laptop computer is backed up on a hard drive in my home office; this back-up hard drive is also password protected. Data without personal information will also be backed up on a memory stick that will be stored in this locked cabinet in my home office.

In accordance with Western University policy, these data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years. No one but the Principal Investigator and me will have access to the information collected for this study. However, while unlikely, it is possible that representatives of the Western University

Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Also note that while I will do my best to protect your information as described above, there is no guarantee that I will be able to do so. If data are collected during the study, which may be required to report by law, I have a duty to report.

After 5 years, all paper documents will be shredded. All electronic documents will be destroyed by deleting them from my laptop, and by physically destroying backup memory sticks that had been stored in the locked cabinet in my home office. All audio recordings will be physically destroyed as well.

#### **Are participants compensated to be in this study?**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

#### **What can participants expect of any publication of this study?**

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact the field researcher and I will provide you with a copy of the published material.

#### **What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time.

I will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

#### **Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have questions about this study, please contact:

**Primary Contact, Principal Researcher:**

Dr. Pamela Bishop, Associate Dean (Graduate Studies)

**Secondary Contact, Field Researcher:**

Susan Cluett, EdD candidate.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca).

---

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research study with me. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

#### **Consent:**

Please refer to the consent form on the next page, which all participants are required to complete and sign.



**Consent Form**

**1. Project Title: Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders**

**2. Document Title: Consent Form**

**3. Principal Investigator: Dr. Pamela Bishop, PhD**

**4. Additional Investigator: Susan Cluett, EdD Candidate**

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

YES  NO

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research

YES  NO

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

YES  NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date (DD-MMM-YYYY)

## Appendix E: Recruitment Email Script



### Email Script for Recruitment

**Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research**

You are being invited to participate in a study that we, Susan Cluett (Field Researcher) and Dr. Pamela Bishop (Principal Investigator) are conducting. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of Continuing Education (CE) deans/administrative leaders at Ontario community colleges as they lead their teams through the changing landscape of higher education. Please review the attached Letter of Information and Consent for more information about this study.

Your participation would involve one 60-90 minute interview, at a location of your choosing. I would also follow up with you to review your interview data with you after our interview. You would not be compensated for participation in this study.

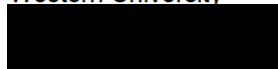
If you are interested in participating in this study, please indicate so in a reply email to me, the Field Researcher. If you do agree to participate, you can provide me with the signed consent form when we meet for our interview.

If you would like more information about this study please contact me, the Field Researcher, or Dr. Pamela Bishop, the Principal Investigator, at the contact information given below.

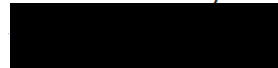
I look forward to hearing from you in the next week.

Thank you,

Susan Cluett, BSc, MEng  
EdD Candidate & Field Researcher  
Western University



Dr. Pamela Bishop, PhD  
Principal Investigator  
Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), Faculty of Education  
Western University





## Appendix F: Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

**Project Title:** Leadership Strategies for Adapting to Changes in Ontario Colleges: Tensions, Dilemmas, and Opportunities for Continuing Education Deans/Administrative Leaders

**Researcher:** Susan Cluett, EdD Candidate

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Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of Continuing Education (CE) deans/administrative leaders at Ontario community colleges as they lead their teams through the changing landscape of higher education.

The purpose of this interview is to explore your experience of institutional responses to changes in higher education, and any resulting organizational changes that have occurred at your institution over the past five years. This interview will include questions about your professional reflections regarding your role as an academic administrator in this changing environment. Questions will relate to your perception of your role as a leader, and the meaning that you derive from your work.

This interview should take between 60 and 90 minutes. I will be recording our interview on a digital voice recorder. You can ask me to stop the recording at any time. I will be writing some notes during our interview as well. I will keep the audio recordings and written notes in a locked cabinet in my home office.

You will not be identified in the reporting of this research; I will give pseudonyms to each participant and their institution. Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity.

Questions: (Semi-structured - the order may vary, depending on the participants' responses.)

1. What is your current title and how long have you been in this position?
2. What roles have you held prior to your leadership of CE?
3. What, if any, responsibility do you have for leading your college's online deliveries across the college? Part-time studies across the college? Evening, weekend onsite deliveries?
4. Can you please describe your current organizational structure of your CE department and the reporting relationships of CE within your college?
5. If these structures and/or relationships have changed over the past five years, please describe these changes.
6. Are the boundaries between the mandates of various academic departments and CE clear at your college? Do you experience any challenges, dilemmas and/or tensions related to overlapping mandates? Opportunities?
7. What changes in higher education do you perceive to be influencing CE delivery and/or administration at your college? Can you elaborate?
8. What do you believe to be the most challenging issues for you as leader of CE at your college?
9. What do you perceive to be the most significant opportunities for CE at your college?
10. What do you perceive to be your most significant leadership achievements as Dean of CE?

11. What unique challenges, dilemmas and/or tensions do you encounter leading your CE team (in comparison to the other Deans' challenges at your college)?
12. Has your role as leader of CE changed in any way over the past five years?
13. How do you perceive your role as leader of this CE activity? What words would you use to describe your identity as a leader of CE? Can you please elaborate about those descriptions/words?
14. How would you describe the students who you serve?
15. How would you describe the impact that CE has in your community(ies) that your college serves?
16. What have you learned from others leaders in similar roles to yours?
17. What does your work mean to you in your role at the college?
18. In what ways does your work bring meaning to your life outside your role as a leader of continuing education?
19. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about that I haven't asked?
20. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask of me?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research study with me.

## Curriculum Vitae

<b>Name</b>	Susan Cluett
<b>Post-secondary Education and Degrees</b>	<p>Western University London, Ontario, Canada 2017 Doctor of Education</p> <p>The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 1997 Master of Engineering</p> <p>Queen's University Kingston, Ontario, Canada 1986 Bachelor of Science (Honours), Chemical Engineering</p>
<b>Related Work</b>	<p><b>Fanshawe College</b> Dean – Faculty of Regional and Continuing Education 2013-2017</p> <p>Dean – Centre for Community Education &amp; Training Services 2010-2013</p> <p>Chair – School of Health Sciences 2008-2010</p> <p>Professor/Coordinator Pre-Health Science School of Health Sciences 2003-2008/2006-2008</p> <p>Professor (non-full-time)/ Co-op Consultant (non-full-time) School of Manufacturing Sciences 1990-1994, 1997-2003/ 2000-2003</p>
<b>Other Experience</b>	<p><b>Shell Canada</b> Engineer, Gas Development 1986-1989</p>

### Other Training and Qualifications

- Leadership Development Institute for Potential Deans and Directors (Association of Canadian Community Colleges), 2009
- Heads & Chairs: Challenges in Academic Leadership (Centre For Higher Education Research And Development, University of Manitoba), 2008
- P.Eng. earned in 1989 (membership voluntarily cancelled in 2000)