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**WOMEN AND AUTHORITY:
TRANSITIONING INTO A ROLE OF ASSIGNED AUTHORITY AS A
GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT IN A LEADERSHIP CLASS**

by

LORRI SULPIZIO

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
University of San Diego

January 2010

Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

Women are assuming positions with significant formal authority, yet women still remain underrepresented in many areas of the public sector (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Additionally, women in formal positions of authority have increased opportunities to exercise leadership and address challenges while mobilizing people toward change. Formal positions of authority include the role of mother, schoolteacher, senator, or senior executive. It is rare for women to receive any practice for the authority roles they assume and as such may find the roles accompanied by interactions and processes that are unfamiliar to them.

The role of Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) provides women the opportunity to practice, and hopefully improve upon, their ability to learn about, demonstrate, and manage authority. Thus, this study investigated the experiences of six female graduate teaching assistants in a semester long graduate leadership class that used case-in-point pedagogy. The purpose of this research was to better understand women's experience as they transitioned into a formal role of authority as a GTA. Three research questions framed this study: 1) How do female graduate students in a graduate-level leadership class experience the transition into a role of formal authority, 2) How do female teaching assistants in a graduate-level leadership class experience, understand, and think about themselves in a role that has a great deal of formal authority, and 3) What are female teaching assistants' perceptions of how, if at all, their authority was used in the service of leadership?

A grounded theory approach was used that incorporated some elements of feminist research principles. Data collection included multiple interviews with the

participants over the semester, observations of the leadership class, document review of participants' journals and reflection papers, and a final group interview with five participants to discuss the themes that emerged as a result of the preliminary analysis.

Findings indicate that a complex process of finding and using their voice characterized the women's transition into their role. Additionally, the women experienced tensions around understanding themselves and the leadership class system as a whole; these tensions needed to be reconciled before the women could employ strategies for demonstrating their authority.

DEDICATION

For every woman who hopes to discover the power in her silence, and find her voice when she has something to say.

For my family—the people who give my voice meaning.

Acknowledgements

For a project of this magnitude a few pages can't begin to convey the gratitude I feel toward so many people for the continued guidance, support, encouragement and help. The success and completion of this dissertation is truly reflective of the work of a connected group of people. And, as in most of the significant and worthwhile accomplishments in a person's lifetime, this accomplishment "took a village."

I would first like to thank my participants. These six women gave time out their already full schedules for interviews and emails, and their willingness to be open and expose the depth of their experience is the main reason this research project yielded such important conclusions and contributions. I am grateful for their commitment.

I would like to thank my two best friends, Kim Schielke and Jackie Mendez, both who contributed in countless ways over the four and a half years it took me to complete my degree. They adopted my family and spent time with my kids on my nights away for class. Jackie provided unending technological and computer support and lent me her recording equipment. And both Kim and Jackie continually gave me encouragement to persist and complete my degree. Their friendship is unmatched and unsurpassed.

I would also like to thank my sisters. Tricia created the graphic depiction of the model that resulted from the data. She did in five minutes what would have taken me over an hour. And Teri was always available when I needed to talk.

I began my doctoral education in the Fall of 2005 with a cohort of 12 people. Almost five years later, we remain close friends, having shared in so much in our process to obtain a PhD. We cultivated a supportive and nurturing friendship, not only in the classroom, but over weekend get-aways, girls-nights-out, leadership book club, and

family holiday parties. We came to understand each other's journeys for this advanced degree—the obstacles, the challenges, the joys. Writing endlessly in “The Cave” with Kira, Jan, John, and Mark gave me the needed collective energy to get the first full draft of my dissertation done. Conversations with Julia over the frustration of adaptive work provided a necessary outlet when I started getting frustrated and overwhelmed. And Robin, my future business partner, sharing with her the ups and downs of everything from meeting the committee's expectations to digging deeper into the data, let me know that I was not alone in this process. To my entire cohort—Thank You.

While I recognize my own hard work and dedication, my dissertation would not be what it is without the push and drive of my committee. I selected my members thoughtfully and purposefully, knowing the consequence would be high standards and expectations. The three intelligent and incredible women I had the opportunity to work with made this process challenging, enlightening, frustrating, and fun. I firmly believe the product I have to show for my work is a result of the process they demanded of me and pushed me through.

Terri Monroe would always ask a question that did not really have an answer, just to get me to think about all of the possibilities. She opened up her classroom and imparted upon me a love of group relations work, an appreciation for the power of metaphors, and my new found ability to “hold steady” in my reflective silence.

Lea Hubbard's passing comment, “sometimes life gets in the way of life,” remained in my mind as I struggled to complete draft after draft. This little gem of a statement will be one I repeat to myself and to others as I remember how much Lea's

guidance—especially around methodology and analysis—allowed to successfully persist despite life sometimes getting in the way.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Many women are finding opportunities to assume positions with significant formal authority, and yet, women remain underrepresented in many areas of the public sector (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Additionally, women in roles of formal authority have the increased opportunity to exercise leadership and address an adaptive challenge while mobilizing people toward change. This could occur in the role of mother, elementary school teacher, senator, or businesswoman. Traditionally, women receive little practice for their roles of authority and as such may find the roles accompanied by interactions and processes that are unfamiliar to them. In this study, authority is defined as power that is conferred upon someone in exchange for a service, and may be formally assigned authority, or a positional role such as a CEO, college president, member of congress, or earned informal authority that is gained through trust and respect (Heifetz, 1994; Monroe, 2002). All types of authority, whether assigned or earned, is accompanied by power, and often includes access to resources, decision-making responsibilities, and includes some level of control over people in a group.

The role of Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) provides women the opportunity to hold a positional role of formal authority while pursuing an advanced degree. In this role, women get to practice, and hopefully improve upon, their ability to demonstrate and manage authority. Many higher education institutions utilize graduate students to teach a variety of courses, mostly undergraduate introductory courses (Shannon, Twale, & Moore, 1998). The GTA position is well recognized and carries its own status within the system of higher education (Park, 2004), and is accompanied by a variety of

responsibilities and expectations. Most GTAs find themselves, not as assistants, but as the course instructor, having experienced minimal, if any, training (Roach, 1997).

Finding themselves in a position to provide instruction and feedback to students, assess and evaluate student work, and interact with other instructors, can bring on uncertainty, pressure, and stress (Austin, 2002). Included with the GTA role is a significant amount of formal authority—the authority over the students' learning and evaluation, as well as access to departmental resources, and curricular decisions. In the context of the Graduate Teaching Assistant position, other complexities related to authority arise. GTAs function simultaneously as both students and instructors within the same institution. This multiplicity of roles impacts a GTA's relationship with other faculty in the department as well as with other graduate student colleagues (Svinicki, 1994).

While much research has been done on the training and experience of GTA's to become more effective teachers (Marincovich, 1998; Prieto & Altmaier, 1994), and on the importance and advantages of effective mentoring for GTAs (Corcoran & Clark, 1984; Girves & Wemmerus, 1988), relatively little attention has been given to the interrelatedness between the GTAs assigned authority and their earned authority. In short, few studies have examined the lived experience of authority that female GTAs occupy. One reason for this might be that the concept of authority as a positional role is often embedded in the concept of leadership.

In both popular culture and academic literature, women in roles of formal authority are often discussed in the context of leadership, and a woman who holds a role of formal authority is referred to as a "leader" (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heifetz, 2007;

Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Missing from this perspective is a clear distinction between a woman who occupies a role of authority, and someone who exercises leadership, or mobilizes a group toward adaptive change (Heifetz, 1994). While the resources that accompany formal authority provide many useful tools for exercising leadership, simply holding a position of formal authority does not guarantee that a person exercises leadership. In this study, leadership is defined as mobilizing a person or group of people to address an adaptive challenge—challenges and problems that have no clear answer or solution (Heifetz, 1994). In other words: a woman may hold a role of high formal authority and not demonstrate any leadership.

When authority and leadership are viewed as distinct concepts, it creates two perspectives on women and authority that inform this study, 1) roles of authority—both formal, positional roles as well as earned roles—are accompanied by resources that provide opportunities for the exercise of leadership and 2) embedded in the traditional understanding of positional authority are concepts in which women often face psychosocial struggles, which impacts both their personal and professional lives with hierarchy, control, and power. These two perspectives suggest that an understanding of women's experience with formal authority might provide useful information on both women's ability to hold meaningful roles in the public sector, and women's ability to exercise leadership.

Additionally, some scholars have found that gender does impact people's perceptions of positional formal authority, devaluing the role of formal authority if it is held by a woman and having an inability to associate femaleness with the concepts of power, competence and authority (Kram & McCollom-Hampton, 1998; Lipman-Bluman,

Fryling, Henderson, Moore, & Vecchiotti, 1996; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). These findings suggest formal authority roles may be difficult for women, and that women might benefit from development and support specific to their experience with a position of formal authority. Understanding the impact and influence of gender in relation to authority roles and behaviors may provide information to assist women in managing their formal authority in more effective ways.

Background to the Study

This research study focused on the experience of female Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) transitioning into a role of formal authority. The women who participated in the study were Teaching Assistants (TAs) in a unique leadership class that is specifically designed to help students reflect deeply and critically on the theory and practice of leadership and authority. The pedagogy used in the course is often referred to as case-in-point and is based on methodology from group dynamics theory. This background section will provide an overview of the concepts relevant to this study, an exploration as to why this study is significant, and how this research design supports inquiry on women and authority. It will include a discussion of the conceptual perspectives on authority as well as some perspectives on gender and authority. The class context and the pedagogy employed during the class will be introduced in this section.

The focus on the dynamics of leadership and authority in this class dictates the purpose of the teaching assistants. In addition to being responsible for the students' learning, the teaching assistants use their role as TA to examine their own authority and their efforts to exercise leadership. The women entered their role of TA with an understanding of the leadership and authority distinction and they maintained a conscious

awareness of the authority dynamics and used that awareness to inform their own strategies for exercising authority. As a result of their heightened awareness, the data from this project was especially rich. The focus on authority dynamics is a unique aspect of the leadership course, one that made studying women and authority in this context especially relevant based on the explicit attention to authority dynamics.

Gender, Leadership, and Authority

Over the past few decades, the leadership literature has been saturated with research and theories about gender issues in leadership, business, and organizations. The focus of much of the literature concerns gender differences in leadership styles (Bass, 1981; Chemers, 1997; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Loden, 1985; Rosener, 1990), and suggests that the female way of leading, or women's style of leadership, might even be more effective than traditional male styles (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; Helgesen, 1990; Lipman-Blumen, 1992). One significant conflict has emerged from the study of women in leadership, and many authors suggest that women, whose behaviors are characterized by collaboration, cooperation, and a resistance to hierarchy and traditional applications of power (Book, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Lipman-Blumen, 2000; Miller, 1982; Rosenthal, 1998), might struggle in organizations that are gendered and characterized by hierarchal structures and autocratic behaviors (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1977).

The tendency to value collaboration and relationships and downplay power dynamics creates a tension when women operate in an environment that is characterized by hierarchy and reinforced by differentiated personal power. This begs the question: how do women experience a role of formal authority and attempt to exercise leadership

when many of the characteristics implicit in authority are in direct contradiction and conflict with many women's behaviors?

This issue becomes important when we consider that despite relevant progress in today's public sector women still hold significantly fewer positions of formal authority compared to men. This includes positions as business executives, positions in public government and politics, and positions in professions such as law, religion and medicine (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). This under representation of women with formal authority might seem surprising given that many scholars suggest that those hoping to lead must meet new challenges, deal with more complex issues, and attend to a relational global economy with openness, connectivity and new ways of thinking (Hirschhorn, 2007; Senge, 2004), characteristics of leadership styles that have been associated with women's ways of leading (Helgesen, 1990; Lipman-Blumen, 1992).

Given the fact that women have been credited as having leadership skills critical for addressing today's complex problems, it may seem surprising that women remain underrepresented in the highest authority positions where the chance to exercise leadership commonly occurs. The previous fact results in several questions: Why, with women's proclaimed effective style of leadership are they not reaching high-level organizational positions? What is preventing them from gaining or thriving in positions of formal authority? If women typically use effective leadership styles, what is it about authority roles that might cause them to remain absent? The following explanations have been offered as answers to the above questions; 1) males have historically held authority roles and as a result, male behavior has been established as normative, 2) other people's perceptions and expectations of women in authority roles put them at a disadvantage, and

3) women's family and domestic responsibilities may hinder their ability to move up the chain of command into higher positions of formal authority (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). While these explanations offer a perspective for women's absence in high-level authority roles, these suggestions do not consider how all of those factors impact women's actual experience with authority, specifically the experience with transitioning into a new role of formal authority. This study begins to address the issue of women's underrepresentation in high-level authority roles by examining a very particular experience of women with authority—that of female teaching assistants in a leadership class. The data from this project, while from a very specific context, investigated if any obstacles and struggles diminished the women's ability to effectively take up their TA role. As a result, the study suggested that the transition into a role of authority presents unique challenges for women and that the process of women finding their voice is complex and dynamic.

A transition into a role of formal authority occurs when a person acquires a new position not previously held, or by moving up within a hierarchy into a position characterized by more power. For example, a student who completes her education and accepts a job as a teacher would experience the transition into the teacher-role; a role defined by power and control over a classroom and the students in the class. This role of formal authority is quite different from the role of student, which has little or no power and control over others. Similarly, a graduate student who accepts a position as a teaching assistant also experiences a transition into positional formal authority, in that increased power and responsibility accompanies the role of graduate teaching assistant.

While there is some scholarship available on the consequences of women managers taking up authority (Snee, 1994), and the implications of authority for feminist pedagogy (Luke, 1996), no studies have looked at the specific ways women experience the transition into a role of formal authority in an effort to exercise leadership. As a result, there is a need to better understand the experience of women as they transition into a role of formal authority and attempt to exercise effective leadership. Understanding women's experience when attempting to effectively demonstrate their authority while transitioning into a formal position of authority might provide a better understanding of how to support and develop women as they attain increased levels of formal authority.

Authority, Power, and Leadership

Authority and leadership are closely related, often used interchangeably, and considered to be synonymous. However, some scholars differentiate between authority and leadership, using the term authority to signify power that is conferred in exchange for a service and leadership to signify working toward change or an adaptive challenge (Heifetz, 1994; Kotter, 2001; Monroe, 2004). The difference that has evolved from this perspective treats authority as something someone *has* that can be acquired and maintained, and leadership as an activity, as something someone *does*. This distinction is significant in that having some form of authority may be a critical element to exercising leadership. From this perspective, the way in which a person takes up her role of authority becomes significant to the way in which that person may or may not effectively exercise leadership.

Power is inherent in authority both historically and culturally. Power has been defined as imposing one's will on others or having control over others and has been

considered an individual and collective property (Durkheim, 1997; French & Raven, 1959; Weber, 1957). Traditional power, or power over others is associated with masculine constructs and women seem to connect more with mutual empowerment that focuses on giving power to others (Holvino, 2007). The leadership and organizational literature suggests that women may struggle with traditional notions of power, especially the association of power with dominance and control, and as such, have difficulty with traditional conceptions of authority (Jacobson, 1985; Jones, 1993). Northouse (2007) relates the concept of power to the concept of leadership, claiming, "Power is the capacity or potential to influence others and have the ability to affects others' beliefs, attitudes and courses of action" (p.7). Burns (1978) discusses a relational power that both leaders and followers should use to achieve their collective goals. From this perspective, power is a desirable entity that assists those with authority to exercise leadership. It is problematic for women however, if they are socialized to operate in ways that dilute power and if they exist in a culture that considers the exercise of power a contradiction to femininity (Holvino, 2007). One way to understand women's struggle to gain roles of formal authority and women's absence from high leadership roles might be to examine women's experience transitioning into positions of formal authority.

Power is a central aspect of formal authority, and as women transition into a role of formal authority, they gain new or increased power. The experience with new or increased power impacts women in a way that makes demonstrating authority difficult or challenging. Understanding how women negotiate various boundaries in this transitional phase where they are gaining more power, provides the opportunity to expose women's relationship to authority and the exercise of leadership.

Power dynamics directly impact graduate teaching assistants who struggle with issues of perceived credibility and authority. Since many graduate teaching assistants begin graduate school shortly after the completion of their Bachelor's degree, there is often a small difference in age between the GTAs and the students they teach. This may lead to problems and challenges in classroom management (Roach, 1991). GTAs may encounter additional challenges because they do not have the same amount of authority over their class as full-time university professors do (McMillen, 1986) and they may not feel completely justified in exercising their authority (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985). Roach (1991) suggests a need in "teaching GTAs about the power dynamics of a classroom, especially in terms of how power and its use affects not only classroom management but also learning" (p. 179).

Research on female graduate teaching assistants in a leadership class that uses case-in-point methodology is an appropriate environment to study women and authority. In this context, students learn about leadership and authority, paying explicit attention to the dynamics and relationship of authority and leadership. This class employs a methodology based on group dynamics theory that focuses on the group-as-a-whole, unconscious processes, and individual defense mechanisms present in group life. Additionally the course takes a contemporary approach to leadership, distinguishing leadership from authority (Daloz-Parks, 2005; Heifetz, 1994), and challenging students to recognize how their own thoughts, behaviors, and group dynamics impact their ability to meet the adaptive challenges presented in the class. In this leadership course, Graduate Teaching Assistants, a teaching associate team, and two primary instructors provided the class with multiple levels of authority, somewhat like a hierarchy for exploration. This

course differs from more traditional leadership courses because of the application of case-in-point teaching (described in the next section), and the underlying theoretical frame that informs the course pedagogy. The structure of the class, which will be explained in more detail in the methods section, provided many opportunities for participants to experiment with, learn about, and understand leadership and authority. The theoretical frame that shapes the course will be reviewed in depth in Chapter Two.

Case-In-Point Methodology

Case-in-point methodology as a tool for teaching leadership evolved out of the Group Relations tradition (Daloz-Parks, 2005). Group relations work utilizes an approach that has a theoretical framework based on the psychoanalytic study of groups, and the explicit focus on the dynamics of authority and leadership. This framework provides an experiential learning environment based on techniques and strategies developed by the Tavistock Institute of Social Relations, which blends psychoanalytic theory with social systems theory (Rice, 1965). Combining Group Relations' techniques with the case study method forged by Harvard Law and Business Schools, case-in-point teaching uses the actual activity and behavior in the classroom as material for learning and practicing leadership (Daloz-Parks, 2005). Instead of using traditional lecture methods, the teacher allows a case to surface from the class itself. This means that the actual leadership class becomes the case study and the immediate experience of the students in the class, as well as the graduate teaching assistants and staff group, is used to illustrate course concepts and themes. This work may also be referred to as the *here and now*—where the members of the class, including the teaching group, attempt to study their own behavior, as it is unfolding.

Due to the non-traditional nature of this pedagogical method, students often experience a higher level of anxiety than they are used to experiencing in their other courses. This anxiety or disequilibrium must be met by a safe space, or holding environment, that allows the students the freedom to work with their own behavior, the behavior of their classmates, and the behavior of the graduate teaching assistants and teaching staff as it is unfolding (Daloz-Parks, 2005; Heifetz, 1994; McCallum, 2007). Assisting and promoting student learning is one of the responsibilities of the graduate teaching assistants in their formal authority role, as they must maintain a classroom setting that is secure enough to support the students while learning in the unfamiliar environment and often uncomfortable situations that may arise (Alderfer, 1976; Rice, 1965).

The various opportunities to explore and work with the dynamics of authority and leadership makes this case-in-point leadership class an appropriate context to begin an inquiry into women and their role of formal authority. The leadership class theory will be described in further detail in Chapter Two, while the particular structure of the course used for data collection will be described in Chapter Three.

Statement of the Problem

One formal position of authority is the Graduate Teaching Assistant position at a university. This position is a significant one within university departments and provides opportunities for graduate students to gain experience teaching and working within the academic setting at their university. While a significant amount of research has been done on mentoring, training, teaching skills, and generating community among GTAs (Desjardins, 1993; Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1991; Milner-Bolotin, 2001; Williams &

Roach, 1992) little work has been done on how the increased role of authority impacts and influences female graduate teaching assistants. The absence of research in this area is significant considering Rhode and Kellerman's (2007) claim that less than a quarter of full professors are women despite women being over half of college graduates.

Additionally, women's experience with roles of formal authority has been studied largely from a leadership perspective, i.e. focusing on women's style of leadership when in a position of formal authority. Missing from the literature is a perspective that considers women's experience with authority as distinct from women's experience with leadership (Heifetz, 2007). This perspective is important when viewed in the context of women's current absence from many of the public formal authority roles. Rhode and Kellerman (2007) state that,

In the United States, women are a majority of the electorate but hold only a quarter of upper-level state government positions and 16 percent of congressional seats, and women account for about a third of MBA classes, but only 2 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs. (p. 2)

It is possible that women's experience with authority, not women's style of leadership, may impact women's ability to effectively acquire and maintain positional roles.

As previously mentioned, formal authority is accompanied by dynamics of power and hierarchy, and when viewed in the context of gender, research suggests that women may struggle with traditional notions of power and hierarchy. Specifically, there may be characteristics of the transition into a new role of authority, such as GTA, that presents challenges for women and inhibits their ability to maintain their position, as they move forward in their organization or exercise leadership. A transition into a new role of formal

authority may be accompanied by increased power, i.e. ability to make significant decisions, or increased responsibility and accountability. We do not know enough about women's experience with a transition into formal authority—both the elements that might cause women to struggle with authority as well as the elements that might enhance women's ability to demonstrate authority. Consequently, the development and support that may assist women in those roles is not well understood. Perhaps, women's relationship with authority may explain their success in various positions and when exercising leadership in ways not explained by leadership style.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to address the gap in the literature on the experience of female graduate teaching assistants as they transition into roles of formal authority. Thus, this study examined the experience of women entering a role of formal authority, specifically the strategies used to demonstrate authority and exercise leadership in their role of TA. This study examined the factors that enhanced and diminished the TA's efforts as they attempted to acquire their authority and transition into their new role. Additionally this study collected data in a leadership class that focused on increasing understanding of authority and leadership. As such, this study examined the impact of authority awareness on transitional authority development.

This study examined the dynamics of power and authority when women attempted to take up a role of formal authority as teaching assistants in a graduate leadership class. This topic is not adequately covered in the literature, and very few studies address this experience, nor do studies address issues related to the ways in which women transition into and manage their authority while attempting to develop leadership

effectiveness in themselves and others. Additionally, whereas much of the leadership literature uses authority and leadership interchangeably, e.g. the executive leader (formal authority) of the company, this study furthers the discussion of leadership and authority as distinct ideas—related to, but not synonymous with each other. Finally, this study furthers the discussion about authority, women, and the role of culture and context in defining women's experience with both.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the gap it fills in the literature, for the potential immediate impact it could have on women attempting to work with their authority and exercise leadership, and because it contributes to approaches in the training, support, and development of graduate teaching assistants. Much of current literature on women and authority either discusses authority and leadership synonymously or deals with the philosophical elements of women and authority, mainly women's difficulty in positions of authority with holding power (Freeman, Bourque, & Shelton, 2001). In contrast, this study addressed the practice and experience of authority, specifically how women worked with their roles of authority in order to exercise leadership. Critical to this study is the distinction between authority and leadership, which has begun to infiltrate the leadership literature (Daloz-Parks, 2005; Heifetz, 1994), but not in a way that uses gender as a lens for understanding the difference.

The role of graduate teaching assistant is something many graduate schools incorporate into the graduate-student experience. The results of this study may provide information on ways to prepare graduate students to work with their formal authority in the role of teaching assistant in order to more effectively work with students. This

approach may also be appropriate for students who obtain their advanced degree and continue to transition into the role of professor or teacher, a role defined by formal authority within a university department.

Understanding the transition in role when formal authority is increased may be significant for other contexts as well, such as getting a promotion, or entering a new professional position. This study also suggests the need for future research to better understand the transition that occurs for women when their formal authority is increased.

Finally, little work has been done to address authority development that is separate from leadership development. While much attention has been given to the development of leaders, there is little work, to date, on developing someone in their role of authority. This study may begin to address that gap and provide clues for ways to support and assist women with their roles of formal authority.

Research Questions

1. How do female graduate students in a graduate-level leadership class experience the transition from the role of student, which has no formal authority, to the role of teaching assistant, which has a high level of formal authority?
2. How do female teaching assistants in a graduate-level leadership class experience, understand, and think about themselves in a role that has a great deal of formal authority?
3. What are female teaching assistants' perceptions of how, if at all, their authority was used in the service of leadership?

Sub Questions

1. What challenges and obstacles do participants perceive impede their ability to demonstrate authority?
2. At what times do the participants perceive themselves to be demonstrating authority?

3. What reasons do the participants give for choosing to demonstrate authority?
4. What elements facilitate the participants' efforts to demonstrate authority?
5. What elements impede the participants' efforts to demonstrate authority?
6. What factors do the participants perceive other teaching assistants use in assigning them informal authority in the graduate-level leadership class?
7. How do the participants perceive other teaching assistants responding and reacting to their demonstrations of authority in the graduate-level leadership class?
8. In what ways, if any, do the participants' ideas about how they define and think about authority change over the course of the semester?
9. How do the participants perceive other teaching assistants demonstrating authority?

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

This research project aims to better understand the experience of female graduate teaching assistants as they transition into their role and take up their authority within the higher education classroom system. This study is grounded in two overarching theoretical frameworks: authority theory, and the group relations theory that undergirds the leadership class, which employs a particular approach for understanding, practicing, and learning about leadership and authority. This research project occurs in the context of a unique graduate leadership class with a specific population of female graduate teaching assistants who are transitioning into their role as a TA. The leadership class in this study where the women held their role of teaching assistant uses a particular leadership theory and unique methodology for teaching about authority and leadership. Both the theoretical underpinnings of the class as well as the methodological pedagogy will be thoroughly reviewed in this chapter.

In order to provide a contextual understanding for this particular study, academic research is reviewed on the role of graduate teaching assistants (GTA), and different theoretical perspectives on authority from the fields of organizational studies and leadership. Included in this discussion of authority is an overview of the historical evolution of authority as a concept, and the relation of authority to both power and leadership. Additionally, literature related to the transition into a new role of authority, as well as literature on women and leadership will be presented to provide the specific context of this research project.

This chapter begins with a review of the theoretical framework that informs the leadership class in order to understand the context in which the group of GTAs in this particular study experienced beliefs about leadership and transitioned into their role of authority. A review of authority theory including different definitions and philosophical understandings as well as the implications these definitions have for this study is reviewed next. The final section examines the relevant scholarship on women and authority, focusing on the gender-related literature in the fields of leadership and organizations. Reviewing the past and current gender-specific literature in this field illustrates the perspectives shared by many scholars who believe a women's experience differs greatly from that of men. This literature is important because it provides insight into how women's experiences are embedded in a process of cultural socialization, and suggests that women face barriers when in positions of authority due to their socialization, gender norms, and expectations.

Reviewing the relevant bodies of literature allows a critical examination of previous scholarship related to this research project and helps to identify significant gaps in the research. Currently, there is little research on how the transition into authority roles impact or are experienced by women. Also, little work has been done on the experience, training, or support of graduate teaching assistants in the area of power dynamics and their authority role as a course instructor. Finally, the literature on women and leadership does not delineate between the exercise of leadership and a role of authority. As a result, there is no adequate theory about women and authority, specifically, how authority can be used to exercise leadership (Heifetz, 2007). This study on authority roles within the very specific context of the leadership class can begin to address the issues above.

This leadership course used for this research project is based on the theoretical model and methodology of group dynamics. Group dynamics theory attempts to explain how people carry out their roles within the different systems, organizations, and groups that they belong (Forsyth, 2006; Gillette & McCollom, 1995). A group can be as few as two people, and members of a group interact or work together toward a common purpose or task. Fundamental to group dynamics theory is the idea that unconscious processes drive people's behavior and that social dynamics, including the exercise of authority and power, impact how people work and interact (Bion, 1961; Stapley, 2006). Central to understanding the dynamics that take place in groups, is understanding the defense mechanisms and assumptions that occur when people participate in group work (Gould, Stapley, & Stein, 2004). The participants in this study enter their role of teaching assistant with an understanding of the processes described above. Those processes and how they inform the leadership course used for data collection will be described in the next section.

The Leadership Class: A Group Relations Context

The leadership class provides an experiential learning environment based on techniques and strategies developed by the Tavistock Institute of Social Relations (Rice, 1965). This style of learning began in the U.K. after WWII, with the work of British psychologist Wilfred R. Bion, whose work with treatment and rehabilitation of psychiatric patients convinced him to consider the group with which the individual is a member, and not solely the individual as a way to explain and understand behavior (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2003). The development of group dynamics theory and application, and the design and structure of group dynamics work has evolved to include

the study of much more complex group phenomena. One principle influence was A. Kenneth Rice, who began to implement a more real world, applied approach to understanding group dynamics that he called group relations. Group relations include the specific methodologies implemented in the classes and conferences that were developed by A.K. Rice and the Tavistock Institute. Group relations are based on the more expansive group dynamics theory.

Under Rice, the focus of group dynamics shifted to the interactions of authority and leadership, and Rice stated that the main task of group relations work is to provide participants the opportunity to learn about leadership (Rice, 1965). This approach has evolved and now occurs internationally, emphasizing the interdependence of individuals, the relationships among individuals and their environment, and the behavior of the social system as a unique entity in a way that focuses on the collective unconscious of organizational life. The focus on leadership and authority makes this theory an appropriate and effective framework and pedagogical approach to learning about leadership. The leadership class used in this study implemented this approach for the purpose of teaching leadership in an experiential way that concentrated on the interactions of authority and leadership. It is within this context that the GTAs in this study worked.

The purpose of working with a group dynamics theory is to help people learn how to work with emotion and knowledge while understanding the changing and complex circumstances that impact how groups and organizations learn, work together and develop. At the core of this theoretical lens is the assumption that group processes influence and drive individual behavior. Specifically, group relations classes provide an

experiential learning environment where participants have the opportunity to exercise leadership, understand roles of authority, and engage in personal development (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2002). For this reason, the GTAs in this class have the opportunity to examine how their own behavior might influence others—both their students and the other GTAs. The GTAs have explicit conversations about their authority and work throughout the semester to develop themselves in their role.

Using the theoretical lens of group dynamics, the group relations class activities and assignments vary significantly from other more typical leadership courses. While many general leadership courses may utilize group dynamics theory as one component of their course content, this leadership course utilizes a specific pedagogical approach that differs from typical leadership classes. This leadership class uses a unique language to express course concepts and promote learning. For example, the course uses metaphors as a way to map situations, explain what is going on, and clarify complexity (Daloz-Parks, 2005). For incoming students, the activities and the language used seems foreign, unfamiliar, and often uncomfortable, however as the semester progresses, many students begin to recognize the usefulness of the course for both leadership learning and leadership practice.

The leadership class discussed here has four tiers of personnel or membership, and the GTAs in this study are situated in the middle of the authority levels. This class incorporates the two lead instructors, a group of teaching associates with more administrative responsibilities than the teaching assistants, the teaching assistants, and the students. While the students are the primary focus of learning, the teaching assistants are also in their role to increase their capacity for exercising leadership and working with the

methodology of the class. In essence, the teaching assistants enter the class very aware of the authority structure and practice exercising leadership while working with their role of authority. The entire system—the teaching group and the students—all employ the methods of the class, such as working in the here-and-now, case-in-point learning, and understanding the theory of group-as-a-whole. Essentially, the GTAs have had at least one semester of experience with these methods, having previously been students in the class. This puts them in the position to be more familiar with the course concepts and able to help the students, yet still working towards increased understanding and application of the processes.

Group-As-A-Whole

The theory of group dynamics begins with the assumption that the group exists as its own unit of analysis and that several processes occur (Alderfer, 1976; Astrachan, 1970). These processes can occur in formal organizations, such as businesses, as well as in less formal settings, such as within a family or group of friends. In this study, the leadership class is considered an organization and all of the members of the class create the system. Within the system, intra and interpersonal processes occur at an individual level and concern the individual's relations with him or herself and with others, respectively. Group-level processes examine how the member is related to the system and how, when in groups, people behave on behalf of group or parts of the group, and their actions are a product of the group's own life and mentality (Wells, 1985). Intergroup processes involve the relations between factions or subgroups and may develop based on race, age, sex, or ideological differences (Alderfer, 1977). Finally, interorganizational processes refer to the relationships an organization or group has with other organizations

or groups. These processes are their own behavioral systems, related and connected to each other. In order to understand group behavior any one of these processes may be the focus of examination, as they each provide clues as to what might be going on within the system, i.e., what challenges or conflicts the system might be facing. The staff group, which includes the lead instructors, teaching associates, and teaching assistants, are constantly monitoring and exploring these different processes, trying to determine which ones are impacting the group and how to intervene to assist in the students' learning. However, the processes operate similar to radio stations—each are always operational. A person may tune into 103.7, however that does not mean that 93.3 is not broadcasting, simply that one has chosen to focus on and amplify another station (Wells, 1985). In other words, these processes constantly occur within group life and members of the system, especially those in authority roles, such as the staff group in the leadership class, decide what issues to take up. In this way, the staff group, which includes the teaching assistants, can use their power and authority to direct the students' learning towards the processes they feel are most relevant for the study of leadership.

Examining organizations for the purpose of leadership development through the theoretical lens of group-as-a-whole includes understanding that individual behavior is based on people's embeddedness in a group that has a life of its own. The group, as a whole, is its own entity, and certain characteristics and processes of the group life can be used to explain people's behavior, and as such, improve the group's effectiveness. For example, individuals may take on certain roles based in part on their valence—or tendency to act and react in a certain way—and in part on the way, they have identified with other members of the group. While people certainly have propensities to act in

particular ways, viewing behavior as a function of the group allows for an explanation that acknowledges the powerful influence of the dynamics of the group as a holistic system that in some respects is greater than the sum of the individual parts (Hayden & Molenkamp, 2002). For example, a student may have a valence toward challenging authority based on a troubled past with authority figures. In this instance, that student may take on the role of constantly challenging the lead instructors, or perhaps the TAs. Other students may come to expect this out the student and allow that person to remain in the role of challenger for quite some time. One of the responsibilities of the staff group then, is to help the students identify that group process and recognize how the group is impacted so that the students can then recognize how they might practice their own authority and leadership in order to intervene within the group.

A group-as-a-whole perspective also includes certain assumptions that explain how individuals behave when in a group. Specifically, this theory maintains that people rely on certain defense mechanism to deal with the tensions that exist from group participation (Gillette & McCollom, 1995; Stapley, 2006). One example is “projection” where individuals split parts of themselves off and project them onto another person (Wells, 1995). Projection is a defense that allows people to manage the anxiety that comes from wanting to hold on to what is good and let go of what is bad. For example, a woman might react with contempt and resentment toward another person who constantly speaks out in the group, believing the speaker is arrogant or overly dominant. However, the woman may be reacting to her own unrecognized desire to speak out in the group, or her own tendency to dominate in other situations. While projection serves as a method for

reconciling tensions between good and bad, it also provides a basis for individuals to empathize and identify with each other (Wells, 1995).

One critical aspect of group-as-a-whole theory is the belief that unconscious processes drive individual behavior and create the group life (Gillette & McCollom, 1995; Stapley, 2006). The theory ascertains that many individual actions are based on unconscious assumptions, judgments, valences, and thought patterns. When working with the group-as-a-whole, one challenge is to uncover some of the unconscious patterns that dictate group identity and effectiveness. In the leadership class, the students attempt the difficult task of becoming more aware of the unconscious processes going on within them as well as within the other members of the group. The students are encouraged to reflect deeply on their own thoughts and reactions to discover ways to manage the tensions, resentments, and interpersonal issues that often disrupt group effectiveness.

The group-as-a-whole theory enables the students to “consider not only the more obvious and rational processes that are occurring in society, but also the irrational processes that are occurring ‘beneath the surface.’ These are the processes that people are not usually aware of, or, if people are aware of them, they are not fully understood” (Stapley, 2006, p. xx). From this perspective, all events and behaviors become data for learning, as the events and behaviors are viewed as being driven by our unconscious processes that could provide relevant information for understanding group issues. For example, every leadership class begins with a song chosen by a member of the teaching staff. The staff has a large amount of freedom in their song selection, and the entire class is encouraged to listen to the song with awareness to the reaction and feelings that surface while listening. Another example of the unconscious at work is placement of chairs and

placement of peoples seating arrangement. While many people would believe that the group simply enters the room and sits where a seat is available, the unconscious processes at work influence whom sits by whom, who sits in the middle of the room, who avoids the front of the classroom, and what chairs might be left empty. It would be a significant piece of data, for example, if a teaching assistant was surrounded by empty chairs, perhaps illustrating an issue for the group-as-a-whole around anxiety with power and authority.

One method for working with the group-as-a-whole theoretical lens is to work with case-in-point methodology. This approach allows the students to use themselves, their classmates, and the teaching staff as a case study for examining real life group dynamics. With this method, the feelings, experiences, and situations are genuine and current, creating an environment that is ripe for learning about the exercise of leadership.

Case-In-Point

Case-in-point methodology is a way of both teaching and learning—both the teaching staff and the students are challenged to stay attentive to the behaviors of the class as they occur in real time, in the here-and-now. The teaching staff uses the information to guide the students' learning, while the students attempt to increase their capacity for effectively working with the here-and-now.

Case-in-point methodology requires an ability to work in the here-and-now and connect real-time behavior to the larger purpose of the class. This approach requires presence and awareness of actions, thoughts, and behaviors in real time. When working in the here-and-now the members of the system attempt to study their own behavior as it unfolds. One purpose of this methodology is to make issues related to leadership more

alive so the learning experience is more real, cognitively and emotionally integrated (Cox, 2007). Essentially, case-in-point learning assumes that the classroom system replicates and mirrors the functions of work systems and outside organizations, and the classroom can be used to create similar dynamics to what happens out in the real world so that students can practice exercising leadership.

While this approach is both innovative and unique to learning about leadership, it comes with some risks—one being that the students will be resistant to the disequilibrium and vulnerability that results from their own behavior being used as course material. One helpful element for the students is the fact that the teaching staff's behavior, i.e., the lead instructor and the teaching assistants, is also up for examination, scrutiny, and analysis. In effect, the teaching assistants struggle to observe, interpret, and analyze in the same way the students do, and to some extent, given their role of formal authority, the teaching assistants may often feel more pressure and tension to successfully interpret the raw data of the classroom dynamics.

The case-in-point approach asks the members of the class to think about every action that occurs, from the comments that are made to the location and placement of individual's seating. Comments are referred to as interventions, and students are challenged to think about the interventions—if they are useful, effective, sloppy, ignored, etc. Perhaps one person or group of people are staging all the interventions, perhaps certain people are always interrupted, perhaps someone makes a comment but gets ignored by the group—everything is data for the case and should be analyzed and examined through the lens of leadership, organizations, and relations (Cox, 2007).

In order to practice case-in-point teaching and learning, a person must navigate back and forth from the dance floor to the balcony (Heifetz, 1994). The metaphor of getting to the balcony is useful to understand both case-in-point methodology and working with the here-and-now. Getting to the balcony allows a person to view a room from above and get a perspective that includes the entire situation, not just the limited personal perspective from which many people operate. Being on the balcony requires a person to leave the *dance floor* or the action, and reflect on what might be happening from a more holistic perspective (Heifetz, 1994). This practice becomes difficult because to exercise leadership, a person must balance simultaneously being on the dance floor with being on the balcony. This reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983) is something the students and teaching assistants spend the semester trying to improve in order to develop the capacity for this practice. Being able to apply reflection-in-action, and move from the dance floor to the balcony may be especially helpful for those in authority facing difficult problems that require leadership.

Using the class as a case gets more complicated as the students work through the differences of being on the dance floor or on the balcony and attempt to develop competency in doing both. Interactions on a dance floor may be fast and constantly moving, or sometimes slow and calculated, however the task is for the members to recognize patterns and analyze how the patterns affect the larger system and the class purpose. The challenge becomes working in the here-and-now and staying present and in tune to everything going on—both within the self and within the larger classroom system.

The balance between the balcony and the dance floor, and developing the skill of reflection-in-action is a requirement of working in the here-and-now. Being able to

reflect on and analyze processes in the present moment allows for more thoughtful action that might better serve the group's purpose or address the problem or conflict that has arisen. In order to use the class as a case the students need to be constantly present, and able to interpret and reflect upon the system—both what is occurring and what is not occurring. Often students, and even teaching assistants, get stuck in one place or another. Some may stay on the balcony and observe, attempting to reflect on others actions and analyze the situation without ever taking the risk of getting involved. Others might become lost in the dance and continue to make comments and interventions in class without ever taking the time to stop and reflect. Being able to remove yourself, especially when situations get heated is an important skill—being able to pull back and consider what might be going on allows for better assessment and understanding of complex situations (Daloz-Parks, 2005).

Cox (2007) asks his students to think about the people being quiet in the room. He asks people to consider if the quiet students are reflecting on the balcony or simply sitting out the dance? And if they are sitting out, is that okay or might the group be missing a voice or perspective that is valuable to everyone's learning. Additionally, should the group invite and encourage the quiet students to join in, and are those students able to withstand the heat of joining? Or perhaps the class should let the quiet students join when they are ready? But what if they never feel ready? It is these types of questions that occur in the here-and-now of every class session that students are asked to consider as they think about leadership and authority through the raw data of the classroom as a case.

Throughout the semester, the students improve in their ability to navigate from the dance floor to the balcony and back to the dance floor, and increase their capacity for

dealing with the tension and disequilibrium that result from here-and-now work. They improve in part, due to the shared language and use of metaphors that characterize the case-in-point methodology. Essentially, the students learn to speak a new language of leadership—a language that clearly distinguishes leadership from authority—where authority and leadership are not used interchangeably, and particular words capture the experience of discomfort and uncertainty most students feel. The language used in the class more accurately reflects the process of leadership as addressing adaptive challenges and authority as power conferred for a service, and the students become more aware of what is going on, both with themselves and with the larger system of the leadership class. Additionally, the language helps to unpack the complex process of leadership and authority by differentiating between the behaviors and processes of each, so that the students can recognize and articulate the experience.

Language and Metaphors

Very specific terms are associated with the theoretical lens of case-in-point methodology. Much of the theory comes from Heifetz (1994) approach to leadership and authority that distinguishes leadership from authority. One element of the distinction involves the tasks and challenges that face a person, group or organization. Leadership deals with adaptive challenges—problems that have no known solution and often require a change in value or attitude to successfully address. Authority, on the other hand, deals with technical problems—problems that have a routine or procedural solution. While those in authority are positioned to exercise leadership and address adaptive challenges, they do not always do so (Heifetz, 1994). According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), one of

the most common sources of leadership failures is the tendency to treat adaptive challenges as technical problems and use routine or procedural methods to address them.

In addition to understanding the difference between adaptive challenges and technical problems, the students must understand the tendency and frequency for work avoidance. Work avoidance is the resistance to adaptive work and includes the many defense mechanisms people employ to resist the tension, pain, anxiety, or conflict associated with a true adaptive challenge (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). It occurs in the leadership class when students get sidetracked and distracted by discussion that superficially addresses the course content but does not get at the true purpose or the deeper issues that are present. An example of this would be when students express the desire to discuss the course readings or course assignments. A general discussion of the course readings is much less risky compared to a discussion that acknowledges the student's internal competition with each other for the best grades or for the lead instructor's attention. Work avoidance is common in the class, especially because adaptive work is more challenging and more risky. One aspect of the here-and-now is for the students to identify work avoidance and find ways to help the class get back on track.

Certain metaphors are a part of the course language and identify feelings, emotions, and system dynamics. These metaphors help create a picture and an association that can make analysis more clear or tangible. For example, a pressure cooker reflects the classroom as a container and represents the varying levels of heat that may exist at any point and time in the classroom. Systems can only take so much heat, so part of exercising leadership is the ability to detect when the heat in the pressure cooker is too high and reduce the heat, i.e., manage the stress, before an explosion occurs. At the same

time, too little heat, or no heat at all might signify work avoidance, as some level of heat accompany most adaptive challenges (Daloz-Parks, 2005).

Two other metaphors commonly used are the harp and the barometer (Daloz-Parks, 2005). A harp represents a person's own tuning. Certain topics, issues, conversations, or people may pluck a person's harp strings and make that person feel anxious or come alive. This is often a clue that an issue is significant within us, or a clue that we feel connected to a topic of conversation. Feeling the harp strings become plucked may be a sign to intervene and get on the dance floor. Similarly, a barometer is an instrument that measures pressure in the atmosphere. Students are encouraged to use themselves as a barometer to measure what might be occurring for the group. For example, if one student feels bored it is likely that many students are also bored. Like the harp, using the self as a barometer can indicate appropriate times to intervene and speak up (Cox, 2007). Using the self as an instrument is a special skill that requires a commitment and willingness for introspection and personal scrutiny. This skill demands an intense connection to the experience of the group, yet a simultaneous separation in order to be connected equally to the self (Smith, 1995). The students face the difficult task of being aware of their harp strings and being able to use their selves as an instrument, two assignments that require much mental focus and organizational awareness.

Another word that is commonly used to reflect a powerful group dynamic is *holding*. Sometimes a person will be said to be "holding" something for the group. Group dynamics theory claims that a particular person or an issue or an emotion on behalf of the rest of the group. For example, white women often "hold" the need to be nice or

polite regardless of their feeling of anger or resentment. Also, a student could “hold” the issue of grading and evaluation, being the one to always bring up concerns or speak to the issue of grades despite the fact that several other students have similar concerns.

Recognizing what a person may be holding is important because the issues people hold impact how they interact with the group and how the group receives them. For example, a student who is holding the issue of grades and frequently speaks to that issue could eventually be viewed as avoiding the more difficult work, and may be seen as incompetent in doing the more challenging adaptive work. Often, an important issue or dynamic will be “held” by a person, due in part, to other people’s unwillingness to take up the issue or own their part in the issue, or it might be that this person represents some group resistant to those in authority (i.e. the instructors who have the power of assigning grades). These dynamics affect the group’s overall effectiveness and can often derail organizations from achieving their purpose. Understanding the complexity of how individuals hold an issue on behalf of the group is an important one for exercising leadership.

Joining and Factions

Throughout the semester, the students and teaching staff develop factions as different people join with each other around different issues. Factions might form around obvious groupings, such as a faction of ethnic minorities, or a faction of young males. However, factions can also become more complicated, may occur unconsciously, and may occur against someone’s will. The factions within the group may change over the course of the semester based. As such, paying attention to the different factions that are present at any particular time may indicate what issues are alive in the group and might

provide cues to the group's adaptive challenges. Certain factions may also receive projections from others and ultimately hold onto issues on behalf of the larger group. For example, a group of young white males may receive projections regarding social privilege and carry the issue of leadership obligation—that is the group expects the young white males to exercise leadership since white males dominate authority positions in most public sectors (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007).

Factions can be a result of individuals joining with others around a particular issue. For example, one student might raise the issue of course readings and express a concern over the lack of discussion around the assigned readings. Several students may echo that concern and join with the first student, speaking to the importance of using the readings as a way to understand leadership theory. From their perspective, discussing the readings would be very purposeful. Another group of students might disagree and join together, claiming that the readings are a technical approach to leadership and the group should aspire to do more adaptive work around power and the desire to have power in the class. For this second group of students, the first group might become a faction associated with work avoidance—the repeated desire to discuss readings becomes a cover for the unwillingness to work with the tension and anxiety over admitting the desire for power.

The teaching assistant group may become its own faction and hold issues of authority or questioned competence; however, one phenomenon that often occurs is a *parallel process* between the TA group and the student group. Essentially, like all organizations when viewed from a systems perspective (Senge, 2006), the issues and tensions in the TA group mirror those occurring among the students—the processes in one group are parallel to the processes of another group. One example of this could be the

notion or belief by the Teaching Assistants who are former students, that the course is much easier for current students than it was when they took the class. Similarly, the students may be working with the belief that the course was easier the last time it was offered, based on information they have heard from past students. In this situation, the process of the teaching assistant's parallel the process of the student group—both the are struggling with their own work, perhaps questioning their competency to effectively uphold their role in the class, and as such, they find comfort in the belief that the work was easier for the people who experienced the class before. The teaching assistants, who have more experience working with case-in-point methodology and in group-as-a-whole theory, can use the phenomenon of parallel processes to help understand what issues might be most prevalent for the student faction. By using data from their own experiences, i.e., what is prevalent with the teaching assistant group, the TAs can learn to better understand the emergent group dynamics and issues present within the student group, recognizing the parallel processes of the two experiences. Parallel processes occur among the subgroups and factions of a larger system and can be used to recognize the larger systemic issues facing the organization, in this case, the leadership class.

Finding allies becomes a powerful way to feel competent and gain confidence within the group. Group members may become allies for several reasons, such as after experiencing and recognizing a parallel process, or after connecting over an experience or event. When members of a group join, they can become allies and thus strengthen their ability to take up a position of authority. Allies can help each other feel more secure before an intervention, and often motivate each other to speak. The interpersonal

relationships that form become power tools for driving behavior as well as for the issues they indicate are present for the group.

Boundaries

One aspect central to understanding group dynamics is boundaries. A group does not exist unless people belong to it, yet group membership is filled with boundary issues. Who belongs to the group? Who does not belong to the group? What must a person do to maintain group involvement? How do people reconcile group inclusion when elements of the group and individuals change? Can a person belong to the group and maintain their own identity (Smith & Berg, 1987)? These are issues of boundary management and understanding how boundaries impact group work and individual members is critical for leadership, authority, and group dynamics. Boundaries do not only present group members with challenging questions, they also provide comfort and security and assist people in making meaning of their experiences, essentially by helping define what is “me” and what is “not me” (Stapley, 2006, p. 20), defining what is “mine” or “not mine,” and defining roles and responsibilities in the groups people belong to.

Monroe’s (2002) categories of boundary management include five that explain the central boundary issues that groups experience. While some boundaries are explicit and clearly defined, such as a fence that separates one house from another, other boundaries, such as who makes up the popular crowd at a high school, are implicit and more difficult to see. According to Monroe, all groups and social systems have boundaries and a system’s boundaries are an essential element in a systems identity. Monroe suggests that boundary management is a critical aspect of the authority role and “by observing how, where, why and with what effects boundaries are managed, the practice of authority is

revealed” (p. 58.). From this point of view, the leadership class encourages the students and the teaching assistants to pay attention to the system’s boundaries and to contemplate how they are present and how they impact the group.

The five categories of boundaries include: task boundaries, role boundaries, membership boundaries, time boundaries, and territorial boundaries (Monroe, 2002). Task boundaries are based on the goals of the group and they outline duties and responsibilities of members in order to get their work done and achieve their purpose. In the leadership class, the tasks of the students differ from the tasks of the teaching assistants, yet both groups are working toward a similar purpose: to increase their capacity for leadership and improve their ability to work with authority dynamics. Additionally, the tasks in this leadership class differ from other graduate courses the students take, and becoming comfortable with the tasks in this unique course often takes over half of the semester.

Role boundaries define behavior appropriateness within the group and subgroups varying relationships. For example, a student may behave in one way when on a lunch date with friends; however, those same behaviors may not be appropriate for a lunch meeting with employees or with a boss. Role boundaries also identify expected behaviors for group involvement, such as defining how much the teaching assistants should interact with the students. People experience conflict and tension when their own role expectations do not align with the group’s expectations. For example, a person may want more decision-making power or want to be included in certain meetings but his or her role in the group does not mandate for that. Often people may have multiple roles in a group or may develop an undesirable role, such as the student who speaks up all the time

in class and does not leave any space for others to talk who may eventually assume a role of the class know-it-all.

Membership boundaries are important in that they clearly delineate the in and the out of a group. The distinction between those who are included in a group and those who are not helps the group form its identity (Monroe, 2002). In the leadership class, students are either masters or doctoral level. Membership in those categories is accompanied by a level of status as the doctoral students work towards a higher degree. Also the teaching assistants have their own group that has a higher level of authority than the students. Other membership boundaries may be defined based on race, age, religion, or sexuality. Subgroups may form based on membership that is more fluid, such as those students who resist the methodology of the course and those who accept it.

Temporal boundaries have to do with the beginning and ending of group activities, and clearly outline member commitments to the group, while territorial boundaries have to do with the location, space, and territory used by a particular group. For the leadership class, territorial boundaries are significant in that the students break off in their small groups in the second hour and utilize available rooms in the Leadership Studies Building. Often the classrooms are occupied on a first come first serve basis, even if one group has utilized the same classroom for several weeks. This invokes issues of territory and how small groups respect each other's workspace.

For both the teaching assistants and the students, managing boundaries becomes a central task for the group, especially considering the association of boundary management to the functions of authority (Heifetz, 1994; Monroe, 2002). If the lead instructor repeatedly violates the temporal boundary—ending the class late—the students

might become resentful and eventually, lose respect for authority. The teaching assistants have to manage their role boundaries and realize that the negative feelings the students have toward the teaching assistants are most likely associated with the TA role, not the TA as a person. Managing boundaries provides an additional level of complexity for the students and teaching assistants to work with as they attempt to navigate through the course and improve their capacity for leadership.

Summary: Learning and Practicing Leadership

The methodology for the leadership course based on the theory of group dynamics with application techniques from Rice's (1965) group relations approach creates a unique experiential environment for the students to learn about leadership and for the teaching assistants to practice their ability to exercise leadership from an authority role. Through a group-as-a-whole perspective, using the class system as a case-in-point, the students and teaching staff work in the here-and-now, which requires real time awareness to group processes. These processes include interpersonal relations as well as individual and group assumptions and norms. As the leadership class becomes an entity of its own, the group members are challenged to examine the unconscious elements that exist underneath the surface in order to expose the real issues that the group is facing. Essentially, this task assists in exercising leadership and addressing the adaptive challenges the group might be facing.

This class employs its own unique language and the use of metaphors to help the students better understand and articulate group processes and components of leadership. For most students, this pedagogical approach and the theoretical lens are unfamiliar. Students are introduced to Heifetz (1994) theory of leadership and authority and various

literatures from the field of group dynamics to assist them in understanding the perspective and approach that drives the course. The leadership class methodology, while unique and challenging, is not always accepted by all students. Many resist the theory and approach throughout the semester. However, many students realize that this approach to leadership provides tools and strategies for dealing with complex systems and a complex world (Daloz-Parks, 2005). One purpose of the teaching assistants is to support the students in their learning. Because the teaching assistants have previous experience with the class methodology and are more familiar with the language and activities of the class, they have the ability to practice their own authority and work with the students throughout the semester.

A unique aspect to the teaching assistant role in this class is the explicit attention and awareness to authority that informs the teaching staff group: the teaching assistants, the teaching associates, and the two lead instructors. In their role as teaching assistant, the TAs receive support from the two lead instructors and have the opportunity to work with their role and examine their own behavior as they transition into their authority. As the literature review will illustrate, teaching assistants do not typically receive the type of support and real time practice that the women in this study received as teaching assistants in this class. In the following section, the literature relevant to teaching assistants is reviewed.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

The role of a graduate teaching assistant occurs in most universities and provides the opportunity for Master's and Doctoral level students to teach while completing their graduate work. In some cases, a GTA is the lead instructor of a course, usually an

undergraduate course, and in other cases, such as the case in this leadership course, the GTA provides teaching assistance to a lead instructor. Most graduate students expect a teaching assistantship position to be a part of their graduate academic experience. In addition to providing tuition reimbursement, an income stipend, or earned units toward the degree requirement, many graduate assistants use the teaching assistant role as a preparation and apprenticeship for careers in academia (Marincovich, Prostko, & Stout, Eds., 1998). The graduate teaching assistantship is important not only for the experience students get as teachers, but also for the socialization opportunity into the future professoriate of higher education (Davis, 1987; Ronkowski, 1998).

Due to the fact that most current faculty served as teaching assistants and the GTA experience was the primary preparation for their teaching career (Nyquist, Abbott, Wulff, & Sprague, 1991), the quality of training programs for GTAs is important not only for the experience of the TA's and the students they teach, but also for the development of the TA's into the future professoriate of higher education (Davis, 1987; Ronkowski, 1998).

Ironically, while the GTA role is intended to prepare and train future faculty members, not much training and preparation are provided to graduate students in their position as teaching assistants (Diamond & Gray, 1987). While some universities attempt to support the GTAs by providing teaching manuals that cover a variety of topics (Lowman & Mathie, 1993), offering workshops and opportunities for role play (Goodlad, 1997), or providing a mentor (Adams, 1992; Volkmann & Zgagacz, 2004), most TAs have not had explicit training in teaching, and feel like the 'sink or swim' model is in effect (Lowman & Mathie, 1993).

There is a significant amount of research on mentoring relationships and the positive impact of the interaction between faculty and new graduate students. Corcoran and Clark (1984) determined that graduate students show greater career advancement and research productivity when they have had frequent professional interactions with faculty. GTAs claim that mentoring is the most effective form of training, more so than either seminars or training programs (Jones, 1993). Boyle and Boice (1998) described a model of systematic mentoring, where the GTAs met regularly with their mentors and kept notes during their meetings, and found that the systematic, planned mentoring program worked better than spontaneous, natural mentoring that often happens by chance.

Mentors can also provide helpful information on the politics of the department, the regulations of the university, unspoken and cultural norms, and information on other department faculty (Brown, 1985; Kogler-Hill, Bahniuk, & Dobos, 1989). It is often within department politics and in the enactment of unspoken norms where issues of power and authority surface in a department yet, these important topics are not explicitly talked about. The mentoring relationship is a place where GTAs could gain insight into authority dynamics, but it appears as though this is a missed opportunity and graduate students do not learn how to best exercise their own authority or the challenges they may face in doing so.

While the mentoring literature emphasizes the beneficial outcomes of such relationships, it also suggests that women and minorities have a harder time obtaining mentors and report less satisfaction from the experience. Women may feel less satisfied with their mentor relationships because they are not receiving the support they need in the area of leadership (Adams, 1992; Burke, 1984; Collins, 1983). These studies in the

mentoring literature suggest a need for more research on women and the support they receive in the GTA role. While mentoring relationships provide some support to the GTAs on a variety of topics, it is not clear from the literature that typical mentoring relationships include any discussion about the authority role embedded in the GTA position or the power dynamics in the student-teacher relationship. In fact, while most GTA training focuses on the instruction and teaching aspect of the role (Lowman & Mathie, 1993), few training approaches include any attention to the fact that the GTA position is a position of authority within the classroom and is accompanied by power and control over resources.

One explanation for the lack of training on authority and power issues is the fact that those dynamics are not well studied or well understood, especially in the education sector. Aguinis, Mitchell, Quigley, Lee, and Tedeschi (1996) found that authority and power relationships between students and faculty in higher education have not been adequately studied, and the few studies that have been conducted do not have a clear, conceptual definition of power. Specific to the role of graduate teaching assistants, this lack of attention to the power and authority dynamic may be problematic considering a “teacher’s main role in a classroom is that of influence, power, and the communication thereof” (Roach, 1991, p. 178). Roach found that most graduate teaching assistant training programs focus on the instructional strategies, leaving out the operation and influence of power that exists in the classroom.

Lowman and Mathie (1993) conducted a content analysis of 18 teaching-assistant manuals, which resulted in a breakdown of topics into four major categories: professional socialization, intellectual, interpersonal, and organizational. They found that the most

common topics dealt with effective teaching and were in the categories dealing with intellectual and interpersonal tasks. Authority Issues were included as a part of the interpersonal tasks, however, only half of the manuals included “relating to students as an authority figure” as a topic. Further, less than 30% included the topic of “control issues,” less than 20% included anything about professional image, and only 11% of the manuals included information on resolving conflicts with students.

The assumption prevalent in higher education, specifically in relation to teaching assistants, is that content knowledge and instructional competence are the same (Andersen, 1988; Andrews, 1985). Ignoring critical dynamics of power and authority that are present in the higher education classroom can present problems and challenges for GTAs. Sewell (1998) argues that no one has “composed a detailed and complex portrait of how authority works in the pedagogical lives of teaching assistants” (p. 1). This lack of attention and training about authority impacts graduate teaching assistants’ ability to perform competently in the classroom.

GTAs are challenged for many reasons as they attempt to establish, exercise, and maintain authority in the classrooms. Since many graduate students enter their program shortly after finishing their Bachelor’s degree, there is usually a small age difference between the GTAs and the students they teach, which can lead to problems with classroom management. Furthermore, students often do not perceive GTAs to have the same legitimate authority as their full-time university professors, making the position and role more difficult for the GTAs (McMillen, 1986).

While many professors have years of experience in classroom teaching, the role of instructor may be a new one for graduate students, and as a result, they are “awkward

and unsure about its enactment” (Roach, 1991, p. 179). Often, GTAs do not feel completely justified in exercising authority or know how their students will respond to their actions (Boehrer & Sarkisian, 1985). Their uncertainty suggests a need for “teaching GTAs about the power dynamics of a classroom, which includes information about an instructor’s control over students, and how power and its use affects not only classroom management but also learning” (Roach, 1991, p. 179). The higher education literature on graduate teaching assistants suggests there is a movement toward increased and improved training of GTAs, however, as this review of the literature suggests, this training should not focus solely on the instructional aspect of GTA duties but must begin to include the complex dynamics of authority that are associated with the role. Sewell (1998) states that in order to understand “more completely how new TA’s become authoritative teachers, one must investigate the processes involved in that quest” (pp. 11-12). Part of that authorization processes involves making knowledge about authority explicit as a GTA acquires, understands, and learns to behave in her role of teaching assistant (TA).

The role of TA in the particular leadership class examined in this study is unique compared to other TA roles that might exist in other disciplines, such as science or English, in part because of the purposeful and explicit content of the class, which focuses on authority. While the teaching assistants in this study grade papers and interact with students, similar to tasks of GTAs in most classes, GTAs in this study are guided in their actions by a very specific curriculum and pedagogy that centers on learning about and improving one’s capacity to exercise leadership while working with the authority dynamics and interpersonal relations of the class. Most of the GTAs participate in this particular leadership class in order to develop and practice their capacity to exercise

authority. Because the leadership course focuses on power dynamics and unconscious group behavior, the TA's have the opportunity to work with their own power and behavior, as well as work with the larger group, in order to be more effective in their authority role as a teaching assistant.

The GTAs in this study entered their role with an understanding of the leadership / authority distinction, and they recognized the complex process involved in the exercise of both leadership and authority. However, as the data reflects, while the women's experience in this study was characterized by a non-traditional process for taking up their authority role, they were still very influenced by traditional conceptions and practices of authority. The following section provides an overview of the theoretical concept of authority, through a review of the seminal authority literature, and outlines the definition of authority that informed this study.

Understanding Authority and Power

The concept of authority has been applied philosophically, religiously, and politically and is defined in multiple ways. Further, the concept of authority is used in different disciplines with different definitions. In this study, authority is defined as "power conferred in exchange for a service" (Heifetz, 1994, p. #). This definition is appropriate for this study because first, it is philosophically consistent with my personal perspective on authority and the authority dynamic, and second, it is the theoretical model behind the leadership class that provides the context for this study. I will present this theory of authority in more detail after an explanation of how authority theory has evolved in the discipline of organizations and leadership. This particular approach to authority—viewing authority as power that is conferred for a service, and as something

that is distinct from leadership—has emerged from within the leadership literature and is a result of an evolutionary concept of authority.

Weber (1947) created a view of authority focusing on “legitimate” authority, and termed “imperative coordination” to define the probability that certain commands by a specific person or source would be obeyed by a particular group. He distinguished three types of authority: rational legal authority, which is based on a set of codes or rules, traditional authority that is based on a respect and belief in historical customs, and charismatic authority that is based on the outstanding and extraordinary characteristics of an individual. The definition of authority used in this study includes all three elements of Weber’s definition, but it does not distinguish context from character in the way Weber does when separating rational legal authority from charismatic authority. This means that the view of authority used for this study does not consider charisma, as its own isolated property of authority. Often, someone with positional authority can use charisma to earn additional authority among the people she serves. For example, someone may have authority based on codes or rules and be an outstanding charismatic individual. For example, in the case of the graduate teaching assistants in this study, they have been given rational legal authority based on the rules of their university; at the same time, they may use their charismatic authority and personal characteristics to connect with the students.

In this study, positional authority is considered an assigned role. As such, the GTAs, the lead instructors, or even the students within that role can use charisma as a tool for demonstrating authority. Charisma can result in earning authority—gaining the respect, admiration, and trust of others that accompanies a person’s behavior. From this

perspective, a person's authority is largely based on the relationship with others. So much so, that even within an assigned role of authority, people must *earn* the trust and respect of others and establish a connection with others in order to fully take up the role and be received.

Weber's classic view of authority also suggests that authority is contingent on the sanction of power by others, a view that has persisted over time. Weber grounds his definition of authority in an understanding of social order and rules, and distinguishes authority from power by claiming that power occurs when one person can impose his or her will on another, despite any resistance, while authority exists when there is a belief in the legitimacy of the power. However, while Weber's view acknowledges the necessity of others in the sanctioning of authority, his view is more applicable for authoritarian groups and traditional hierarchical organizations based on the hierarchy embedded in traditional and rational legal authority. Those aspects of authority may not fit as well for other organizations where the approach to authority is more cooperative and relational (Harrison, 1960; Kahn & Kram, 1994; Meissner, 1971). The GTA class that provides the context for this research does have elements of rational authority, i.e., there are two lead instructors who are full-time faculty, which by the rules of the university have the highest position of authority in the class, however the approach to authority in the class maintains that anyone—a student, a GTA, an instructor—can acquire and demonstrate authority based on a variety of factors.

Authority has also been defined as a right to do work, or a given right to perform roles (Cartwright, 1965; Gilman, 1962; Katz & Kahn, 1978). The right to work suggests an authorization process that requires the consensus of others. Katz and Kahn (1994)

claim, “organization members are authorized not simply when they are assigned responsibility for tasks, (i.e., delegated authority) but also when they are supported by others who are either formally or informally connected to those roles” (p. 18). This perspective of authority implies that the conferral of the power is not only necessary, but also required for authorization. While this is true on some level, the relationship between those in authority positions and those below may not always be one of conferral and support. While a college student does enter the higher education system with an understanding that a professor will evaluate her work and submit a grade, that student may not confer the same level of authority on a graduate teaching assistant. In this instance, the graduate teaching assistant has been given a position of authority over a group of students by an advisor or Dean, and by virtue of her position, she has authority—the authority to assign readings, to assign grades—however the students within the classroom she is teaching may not support her authority in the same way they support a full-time professor (McMillen, 1986). Regardless of the students support, the GTA’s positional authority remains.

Meissner’s (1971) definition of authority includes an analogous relational aspect, yet runs into a similar problem. He defines authority as “a dynamic and reciprocal relation between two or more persons in which one claims to be a bearer of authority, and at least one accepts the claim of the bearer to be authoritative in some areas of his own existence” (p. 60). Again, the implication here is that the acceptance of authority occurs by one or more of the people for whom the person is authorized over. This approach to authority encounters a similar problem to the ones described above in that positional authority may be granted to someone without consensual support of those in lower

positions within the organization. Meissner goes on to say that in order for authority to be functionally legitimate, the claim to authority must be accepted. The question that arises from this is: accepted by whom? A Department Head that hires a Graduate Teaching Assistant has not only accepted that person's authority, but has granted it as well. Must the students in the class accept and authorize the role? Meissner suggests that would be so. "Authority would consist of the relationship between two or more persons by which one party lays claim to the cooperation for subservience of the other party and the other party accepts this claim" (p. 31).

Meissner's (1971) perspective implies a power over relationship, and puts the validation of the role in control of those who do not have the power. While a power dynamic definitely exists with authority roles, the power dynamic is not the exclusive means to validate an authority role. Positional authority is legitimate and is accompanied by power and access to resources. However, regardless of who accepts and supports authority, the notion of authority as relational and requiring some level of conferral by others is common to organizational definitions. From these perspectives, authority can be viewed "as a process of interpreting power rather than an entity that can be possessed in one fell swoop" (Sewell, 1998, pp. 11-12).

Furthermore, authority is common to all organizations, and despite the objection to the specific person in the role, everyone acknowledges the presence of authority when entering a social system: students acknowledge the authority role of professors; business people acknowledge the authority role of their managers and executives. Consequently, Milgram (1974) points out that a system of authority is a basic requirement of life, and obedience to that authority is a psychological means that connects individuals to a

political purpose. This perspective is shared by current scholars of authority who claim that authority relations and dynamics are present in all group and organizations and assists with protection, direction, and order of social functions (Heifetz, 1994; Monroe, 2002). From this lens, authority becomes an important social system and relational process.

According to Heifetz (1994), direction occurs in the form of vision, goals, techniques, and even strategies. Direction helps clarify where a group needs to go. Protection includes recognizing threats and assembling a response. This could include negotiations with industry competitors or internal issues that have imposed negative pressure on the group. Finally, order includes “orienting people to their places and roles, controlling internal conflict, and establishing and maintaining norms” (p. 69). People in groups and organizations depend on those in authority roles to provide direction, protection, and order. Organizations have developed multifaceted systems of authority in place to provide direction, protection, and order to the people within the organizations. While those three social functions certainly aid in the address of an adaptive challenge, most often, it is the technical problems—the problems where an appropriate response is predetermined, that drives the work of authority. At the same time, those with the resources to provide effective direction, protection, and order, may have the most opportunity to address and adaptive challenge, mobilize people for change, and exercise leadership.

Certainly, authority is critical to the functioning of our social life, and is present in all phases of organizational life. Simon (1962) claims that the decision of authority is helpful when we want to attain a certain goal and have an inability to know the proper

way to achieve the goal. Sennett (1980) illustrates the basic need for authority describing the way children need and use authorities to guide and reassure them, while adults find fulfillment in being authorities, using it as a way of expressing care for others. Katz and Kahn (1994) describe the work of developmental attachment theorists (Ainsworth, 1973, 1980; Bowlby, 1980; Klein, 1959) to illustrate how early attachments and relationships to primary caregivers, parents, and significant others' are implicitly about authority, since parents and caregivers are people's first experience with authority figures.

People's initial experiences translate into a template for their expectations in authority relations. Katz and Kahn (1994) describe a person who had "powerfully negative experiences with untrustworthy primary caregivers. Initially, the person will maintain the belief that those in authority cannot be trusted" (p. 25). The person may become a defensive subordinate; believing that others are deceitful and those in positions of authority are manipulative and punitive. In an authority role, the person may act "in ways that lead subordinates to withhold and defend themselves, allowing the person to confirm the belief that others cannot be trusted" (p. 25). These initial experiences lead to what Katz and Kahn have called internal models of authority that are deeply embedded in each person. These models will impact how people interact with others and experience the authority dynamic.

Many people associate authority with dominant behavior or a controlling relationship. Milgram (1974) describes authority as a system that consists of a minimum of two persons sharing the expectation that one of them has the right to prescribe behavior for the other" (pp. 142-143). Milgram claims that a legitimate authority is a person who is "perceived to be in a position of social control within a given situation" (p.

138), and that the “power of an authority stems not from personal characteristics, but from his [sic] perceived position in a social structure” (p. 139). This position may be thought of as the one carrying the “emotional expression of power” (Sennett, 1980, p. 4) or as the one “in charge” (Blass, 2000). In their social roles, people may experience the one in charge in a negative way. For example, a student may have a teacher who assigns too much work or gives exams that are too difficult. An employee may have a boss who constantly assigns undesirable projects or does not allow days off. It is the association of authority with domination and the abuse of power that has given authority a bad reputation (Simon, 1962). Many people have, at some point in their lives, experienced the negative aspect of authority. This is significant for those who move into a role of authority, such as the GTAs, because they must consider how a person’s past experience with authority impacts their current one.

While authority has often been considered a negative concept, leadership, on the other hand, is thought of as something positive. The concept of leadership invokes thoughts of motivation, change, and inspiration, while the concept of authority invokes thoughts of power, dominance, and control. The notion of followership is central to both leadership and authority, suggesting, perhaps, a link between the concepts of authority and leadership. When viewed through the context of the leadership-authority relationship, definitions of authority have evolved with the evolution of leadership theory as a discussion within the field of leadership studies. This more recent work has viewed authority not as sanctioned power (Smith & Berg, 1987), but as something conferred upon someone by a group of constituents (Gould, 1993; Heifetz, 1994.) Monroe (2002) explains that the word conferral “captures the same dynamic and relational qualities as

‘sanctioned,’ but perhaps better conveys the idea that authorization can be informal and implicit as well as formal and explicit” (p. 43). The implicit nature of a conferral suggests the possibility of unconscious and unintentional awarding of authority based on factors such as age, appearance, race, and etcetera. This is especially important considering how social structure has its own hierarchical system, and certain ages, races, and religions have more privilege than do others. This social system can be dependent on context, for example, in the leadership class, which occurs at a Catholic University, an older priest who wears his black clerical clothing with a white collar may gain a high level of formal authority from the other students and even the teaching staff. The priest may not intentionally earn this authority and many of the students or staff may be unaware that they have conferred the authority upon him. From this point of view, it becomes important to unpack the unconscious processes that people utilize to award authority to others as it may impact individual behavior and group life. This also suggests that authority may be awarded via an assigned position or earned based on personal qualities.

The definitions above capture the complex qualities of authority, and the teaching assistants experience these complexities throughout the semester. The authority of the TA’s incorporates the formal, assigned and informal, earned authorization processes Monroe (2002) described above. Further, social factors, such as the TA’s age, appearance, academic level, and etcetera, will influence their demonstration of authority and the authority they perceive has been conferred upon them by the members of the leadership class. This conferral may differ and vary within the different contexts of the leadership class, and while it may occur unintentionally, the differing levels of conferral will have an effect on the TA’s in their role. For example, the TAs may perceive a

conferral of a significant amount of authority from the students but not from the other TAs. It is the unconscious and unintentional processes related to authority that impact how a TA might demonstrate authority, and these processes should be considered in the study of the participants.

Heifetz (1994) defines authority as power conferred in exchange for a service. Monroe (2002) explains how the addition of service to the definition of authority helps distinguish the concept of authority from one of blind obedience based on coercion or dominance that prevailed in more traditional views of authority from past literature. In addition, Heifetz clarifies that coerced behavior does not constitute a conferral of authority and Monroe illustrates this notion with the example of a mugger using a weapon to elicit deferral from a victim—this would not be considered an act of authorization. Authority, Monroe claims is “power responsible to some common standard or value or purpose that is shared by both those who exercise authority and by those over whom it is exercised” (p.43). In the classroom, the common standard or purpose is the students’ learning. The perspective that an instructor’s purpose is to serve the students is not common to all classrooms, however, in this leadership class, the entire teaching staff group attempts to use their authority in the service of the students’ learning.

Heifetz’s (1994) definition of authority not only informs the philosophy of the teaching staff, but is also a large part of the course content presented to the students. One of the students’ tasks is to first learn the theoretical model of authority as power conferred in exchange for a service and then to attempt to apply it throughout the course. In this way, the students become very aware of their own authority and aware of their reaction to the authority of their GTA and the lead instructors.

This brief review of authority illustrates the evolution of authority as a concept and highlights some central aspects of authority that occurs when a person occupies an authority role. First, there is a common perspective in the literature that, on some level, authority does not stand on its own, and has a relational aspect to it, requiring, the support, acceptance, or conferral of others for legitimate authorization. The complexity remains as to who must offer authorization—the person or people who granted the position, or the person or people who come under the one who has been authorized. One perspective might include the possibility that it is both groups who, at some level, must sanction the authority. A second perspective that results from this review is the notion that authority is imbedded in people's internal models of behavior that evolved from first experiences with primary caregivers. This perspective suggests that the experience of authority varies from individual to individual, and that to understand the true nature of authority and its social impact, the concept must be viewed in the context of individual experiences. Finally, this review illustrates the evolution of authority as a concept, beginning from the hierarchical structure of Weber's (1947) definition to Milgram's (1974) experience with authority and obedience, to the current theory used to frame both my research project and the leadership class that authority is a conferred upon power that is accompanied with the expectation of a service (Heifetz, 1994; Monroe, 2002).

The definition of authority as power conferred for a service is appropriate for this study because of the definitions implications for the topic of women and authority. First, some scholars note women have trouble with the concept of power (Freeman, Bourque, & Shelton, 2001) and suggest women have been more comfortable when they use power in the service of others (Miller, 1982). The traditional conceptions of authority equate

power with domination or control, not as the capacity to move people toward their purpose. Women are likely to struggle with the concept of coercive power and feel uncomfortable using their power over others, while connecting with using power in the service of others (Miller, 1982). Also, the notion of a conferral of authority and the implication of a shared common standard value or purpose suggests a relational aspect of authority that women are more likely to connect with (Helgesen, 1990; Lipman-Blumen, 1992). Therefore, on one hand, while women might experience a disconnection in using power to exercise authority due to the association of power as something negative, a conferral of authority as a shared standard around common values may provide an avenue for women to connect with a role of authority. This tension—the simultaneous connection and disconnection to the dynamics of power and authority—and the impact it has on a woman's experience in her role, needs to be better understood when examining authority from a gendered perspective, which this study attempts to do.

A feminist and gendered perspective on authority and leadership is complicated, yet important to consider when attempting to research women and authority. Many feminist theoretical perspectives explicitly reject the hierarchical ideals that are associated with definitions of authority and focus on perspectives of consensus and harmony (MacKinnon, 1982). They argue that a hierarchical structure and *power over* others is not the manner that women behave in their authority roles (Miller, 1982). Specific to leadership, women have been said to operate more comfortably and effectively in environments that promote cooperation and collaboration, and often reduce their own authority when working with others (Helgesen, 1990; Rosner, 1990). Other feminists do not criticize authority itself, but more the fact that women have not had

much access to it, due in part to the relationship of authority to dominance and oppression (Jones, 1993).

One aspect that drives the feminist perspective on authority is the way in which many feminist scholars have defined authority. When using a more traditional model of authority, the feminist perspective maintains that women struggle with the power and dominance over people associated with authority roles. As a result, women do not have equal access to authority positions because the properties that define those positions are unfamiliar and uncomfortable for women, making it more difficult for them to exist and work within the traditional authority concept.

One approach suggested in the literature is to reconstruct authority in a way that dispels the notion of power as conceptualized as domination and control over others. This reconstruction would validate the cooperative and relational aspect of effective authority that uses power in a way that aligns with women's behaviors and operating strategies (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Jones, 1993). The social conception of authority as someone official and knowledgeable, with the assertiveness to speak out, works against women who do not hold many high-level official positions, have issues with their own knowledge, and have trouble getting their voice heard within a group (McIntosh, 1985; Tannen, 1990).

In order to reconstruct authority in a way that includes women's experience in the definition, perception, and practice, that experience needs to be examined and studied. This research project aims to discover a more accurate description of the experiences of women with positional authority in an effort to deconstruct and better understand the complex, and often-difficult practice women have with traditional conceptions of

authority. Specifically, this study aims to dispel the myth that authority is simply dominance and oppression and contribute to the reconstruction of what Jones (1993) described as an authority embedded in compassion and character.

This study uses Heifetz (1994)'s definition of authority as power conferred in exchange for a service because of the distinction within the definition between types of authority—both formal and informal—and a clear distinction between authority and leadership. The literature shows two types of authority—formal and informal (Heifetz, 1994; Monroe, 2002)—with formal being used to mean a positional role that is granted to someone, i.e. a mayor of a city, and informal authority is based on implicit expectations for a service. Other scholars have used the term organizational and personal authority (Gould, 1983), apparent and substantive authority (Hirschhorn, 1997), and authority from above compared to authority from below (Obholzer, 1994). These distinctions are important, especially for women who have a greater tendency to operate from a role of informal authority.

Differing constraints accompany formal and informal authority. While formal authority is accompanied by specific expectations that are tied to the role, i.e. a police officer will ticket a reckless driver. Vroom and Jago (1988) explain how the formal role constrains the behavior. For example, a police officer cannot pull someone over and tell the driver what to order for dinner (Monroe, 2002). Informal authority is based more on one's feeling toward another person, even if those feelings are not conscious, yet even informal authority carries the expectation of a service. For example, as a student in the classroom gains informal authority with the other students, that conferral of authority could be accompanied by an expectation that the student with informal authority will

address the teacher, speak on behalf of the group, or understand and explain the assignments. For the GTAs, they work to manage and develop informal authority with each other and with the students. By earning authority based on things such as character, behavior, and knowledge, the GTAs can gain the trust of the students, which leads to the students' willingness to accept the GTA's supports, feedback, and assistance. In their effort to earn authority, the GTAs must consider boundaries—both personal and systemic boundaries. Specifically with the students, the GTAs have to maintain appropriate boundaries in their authority role.

Managing boundaries is an essential task for those in authority roles. Boundaries make clear the distinction between what is in and what is out and, as previously mentioned, can be both physical and overt, or flexible and covert. Personal boundaries define roles and expectations for people's interactions with other. One critical element of boundaries is the creation of a secure environment that Monroe suggests is "needed to foster developmental learning processes in groups, organizations, and communities. These include shared traditions and authority relationships that facilitate productive work and help to contain the inevitable stress" (source, date, p. 50.). Alderfer (1976, 1980) suggests that the secure environment is a critical element of the authority role. Boundaries help establish a clear sense of purpose and keep group members on task. They can include time boundaries indicating the start and end time of a group meeting and group work, or role boundaries that clarify what is expected and appropriate behavior for different members. The GTAs get to practice their boundary management in the leadership class. For example, they are responsible for keeping the lead instructor held to time boundaries; they are challenged to maintain role boundaries with members of their

doctoral cohort who are not TAs, as well as personal boundaries with the students of the class.

Using the concept of boundary management as an essential task of authority assists in the distinction between authority and leadership. While authority is a role that can be taken up and managed, leadership is an activity that is done to help a group balance the tensions that accompany an adaptive challenge (Heifetz, 1994). Often leadership is exercised to help a group orchestrate change (Kotter, 1990). More literature is calling for leadership that asks the difficult questions and requires authenticity and presence to a genuine purpose (Hirschhorn, 1997; Senge et al., 2004). The relationship between leadership, authority, and power is complex with power accompanying roles of authority in a way that makes the exercise of leadership possible. It is problematic that women struggle with issues of power, and as a result have difficulty taking up their roles of authority and then often encounter resistance to exercising leadership. It is important for women to have the opportunity to exercise leadership from within their roles of authority. In order for this to occur, a clearer understanding of women's experience with their role of formal authority is necessary.

Authorization in Role

The role of the GTA in the leadership class used for this study is unique and unlike most GTA positions in other disciplines, such as in the sciences or in medicine. In this role, the GTAs have a very clear and explicit focus on authority and leadership that they use to guide their behavior. In addition to assisting the professor and supporting the students' learning, the GTAs also strive to improve their own capacity to take up their role and demonstrate authority. In the leadership class, which will be described in more

detail in the Methods section, many layers of authority are present. The class includes two lead instructors, both of whom are full-time faculty, three teaching associates, all of whom have extensive experience with the class methodology, the GTA group, and the student group which consists of both doctoral and master's level students.

A large piece of the authorization process and demonstrating authority is impacted by the multiple and complex interrelationship that the GTAs have with other members of the leadership class system. For example, several of the GTAs were in the first year of their doctoral program, as are most of the students in the leadership class. This makes for an interesting dynamic in that the GTAs have positional authority over their doctoral classmates in the leadership class, but not in another class that includes all first-year doctoral students. Additionally, one of the Teaching Associates was a first-year doctoral student, who had a higher positional role in the leadership class (due to her experience with the teaching method), and thus she had a higher status than the other TAs or doctoral students in the class.

The explicit awareness of authority dynamics by every member of the leadership class makes studying the authority of the GTAs a very distinctive approach to studying authority in that unlike other GTAs who may not be conscious of the authority dynamics that accompany the role, the GTAs in the leadership class explicitly work toward authorization and throughout the entire semester they strive to increase the effectiveness of their authority by training and practicing the different elements of their role, such as working with students, working with other members of the staff group, examining the impact of their actions and comments, and evaluating the effectiveness of their behaviors.

In doing this, they transition into their role, taking their authority and the impact of their authority on the members of the leadership class very seriously.

The transition into a role that has an increased amount of formal authority is difficult and complex, and accompanied by a variety of emotional, social, and cultural processes. From this perspective, training GTAs to understand those processes and feel competent in their role would enhance their effectiveness as teaching assistants.

Furthermore, the literature makes it clear that many social, personal, and structural factors influence one's ability to transition into a role of increased formal authority. The process is complex and marked by an emotional journey for the person making the transition (Leach, 1990; McRae, 2004; Portillo, 2008). GTA's who enter their teaching assignment often with little preparation or previous experience would then face the additional challenge feeling authorized to be in the classroom.

Leach (1990) suggests authorization includes four processes: establishing position power, competence, self-authorization, and group member authorization. These processes are often complicated by what Leach calls "multiplicity of roles" (p. 298), such as holding the role of student and employee as in the case of a graduate student who also works for the university. The multiple roles may impact not only a people's feelings of competence and their perception of their own authority, but also how they allow authorization of others in the group.

McRae (2004) describes her transition into a role of formal authority as an instructor, as one marked by the influence of race, class, and gender. She significantly felt the influence of social factors. Coming from a working class background, she felt fearful of not being sufficiently prepared; she carried with her the experience of invisibility and

having her accomplishments credited to affirmative action, rather than to her own merit and work ethic. The tension that results from the impact of social influence, such as gender, race, religion, or age, on authority roles becomes a significant barrier to women attempting to demonstrate authority. Additionally, scholars have described a struggle among working class women who feel a tension between the new authority role and the desire for a continued connection to family and community (Tokarczyk & Fay, 1993). The tension between the private sector of family life and the public sector of organizational life has been cited as a common obstacle for women wanting to achieve higher levels of authority (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These struggles may impede establishing oneself as legitimately placed in role, a component critical to obtaining authorization (Sennett, 1980).

The *Women's Ways of Knowing* project (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) provides one example of the implication of how gender-typed behaviors impact women's experience with authority. The authors found that knowing through silence creates a dependency on external authority for information. This submission to an external authority would seem to make knowing through silence an undesirable state for women. The silence described however, is not one characterized by fear of speaking, rather one defined by reflective awareness and conscious internal dialogue. Perhaps Belenky et al.'s (1986) perspective on silence as a direct bi-product of patriarchal oppression is too limiting and narrow of a view. Schweickart (1996) states, "my silence was indicative, not of my subservience to the authority, but, on the contrary of my intellectual autonomy, my independent effort to understand" (p. 307). Heifetz (1995) and McCallum (2007) suggest silence may be an effective tool for exercising leadership, and

may contribute to the creation of a safe and supportive space for people to work. Viewed from these perspectives, silence may be considered an important asset, and even a form of power, to those in authority, and perhaps a critical element in exercising leadership. One element of the GTA's experience may reflect how they use silence and use their voice as they transition into their role.

Individuals who wish to accept a position of formal authority and lead a group must possess emotional and intellectual capabilities (Alderfer, 1990b). The transition into that role requires a feeling of authorization accompanied by support, and training (Leach, 1990; McRae, 2004). In the medical profession there is a growing concern that the transition to doctor is stressful and rapid, and that medical students lack both the confidence and the clinical skills for the transition (Berridge, Freeth, Sharpe, & Roberts, 2007). McRae (2004) suggests additional barriers when transitioning into any new role of authority that results from perceived competencies and social expectations based on gender, race, and class. She suggests a person should "start by identifying and owning one's special contribution to the work" (p. 235). One aspect of this ownership is overcoming the barriers that result from membership in an underprivileged group, such as a minority race, age, or religion. It is important to consider how one's race, ethnicity, and age may be considered minority in some contexts and majority in others, causing people to question competence in certain contexts while not in others. For this reason, the internal reconciliation of one's own competence, especially in a context where one might have minority status, is important for an effective transition into a role of authority. Leach (1990) describes the transition as defined by identity shifts, such as self-concept, dependency on mentors, empowerment, and isolation. Current literature does not include

research on women who are in a role of formal authority in the context of a leadership class where explicit attention is given to the dynamics of authority and leadership. This context will provide additional insights into the processes and experiences that accompany the transition into more formal authority.

Women, Leadership and Authority

This final section will review perspectives on social norms, gender differences, and gender development that have influenced much of the literature on women and leadership. This review is included as evidence to support the need for research on women and authority for the purposes of better supporting women in their role as leaders and prepare them for the struggles and barriers that result from gender socialization and gender norms. Many of the traits associated with authority and leadership are not traits normally associated with female-appropriate or normative behavior (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Understanding the complex influence of socialization and women's relationship to traditional conceptions of leadership may assist in understanding how women experience authority. Additionally, the literature on women and leadership does not distinguish leadership from authority. Often, the descriptions of how women lead may in fact more appropriately describe how women are demonstrating their authority. This research project attempts to delineate when women are demonstrating authority and exercising leadership.

From a social constructivist perspective, gender gets imposed on children from birth based on the influence of parents, caregivers, peers, and media, (Casey & Fuller, 1994; Maccoby, 1988; Pierce, 1993; Pomerleau, Bolduc, Malcuit, & Cossette, 1990; Witt, 2000), and these social norms and values construct our notion of gender-appropriate

behaviors as we grow into adulthood (Chaplin, Cole, & Zahn-Waxler, 2005; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Murphy, 1996; Martin & Ross, 2005). In general, people align masculine traits and behaviors with leadership traits, which puts women leaders “at a disadvantage because associations about women are typically inconsistent with those about leaders” (Eagly, 2007, p. 128). How then, do women transition into a role of formal authority and exercise leadership in a social context that does not associate feminine behaviors with leadership or authority?

The literature on women and leadership has undergone a significant shift in the past two decades. In the 1990s, women’s leadership was characterized by an essentialist view that claimed women had leadership styles distinct from men, claiming that women operated in collaborative, relational, and democratic ways (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Rosner, 1990). These perspectives addressed women’s absence from high-level positions by claiming that the hierarchical and autocratic manner in which men exercised leadership was contradictory to the ways in which women operated.

More recent research has suggested that the context is paramount in understanding women and leadership, and other factors, such as women’s role as mothers, women’s relationship to power, the absence of mentors, and a gendered organization, may provide keys to that understanding (Freeman, Bourque, Shelton, (Eds.), 2001; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Yoder, 2001). In addition, the capacity to empathize, listen, care, and achieve connection with others, traits associated with women’s effectiveness in organizations (Marshall, 1984) is currently being considered a vital element for anyone who wishes to exercise leadership effectively regardless of gender (Heifetz, 1994; Hirschhorn, 1997; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004).

This shift in the leadership literature signifies that an examination of leadership differences based exclusively on biological sex not only reduces the influence of cultural, social, and organizational factors, but does little to further the development and practice of effective leadership. What becomes important in the study of women and leadership is not a comparison of how women differ from men in style or behavior; but understanding the factors that contribute to women's continued struggle in attaining high positions of formal authority. Understanding women's experience as they attempt to take up their role of formal authority may begin this inquiry. Instead of suggesting that women must navigate a delicate balance between masculine and feminine behaviors, understanding the experience of a woman in a role of formal authority may offer improvements for women's leadership development programs, particularly in a context that is challenging male-centric notions of leadership and authority.

Several authors suggest why women remain drastically underrepresented in high-positional roles. Rhode and Kellerman (2007) point out that in the past 25 years, many women have "aspired to leadership on the same terms as men; they have made the same choices as their male counterparts but confront an additional set of obstacles" (p. 6). Gender stereotyping is still very present, and when characteristics associated with masculinity such as dominance and assertiveness, are also associated with leadership (Glick & Fisk, 1999), it occurs to the detriment of women (Maher, 1997), often resulting with women experiencing a double-standard. When women attempt to lead like men, assertiveness appears abrasive, and dominance is considered unfeminine and cold (Mayes, 1979; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). It would seem that the collaborative and relational qualities assigned to women's ways of leading would be viewed as a positive

contribution to a group or organization, however, those qualities become associated with weakness and an inability to make tough decisions. The male-as-normative model that is present in current organizations may create challenges for women attempting to take up various roles (Eagly, 2007). This study attempts to understand the dynamics and influence of gender stereotyping in relation to authority roles and behaviors so that women may, perhaps, manage their own authority in more effective ways.

Research has shown that women are viewed very differently and have a different impact on their groups when in a position of formal authority. Green et al. (1981) found that female co-consultants were not respected or viewed as capable of working toward the task as their male counterparts. Burton (1983) studied the regression of small groups and discovered that the female-led groups were significantly more regressed. Burton suggested that gender, race, and consultant experience level impacted the members' perceived status of their consultant.

Similar to Burton (1983), other scholars have concluded that gender has more influence and impact on members and on the group than level of authority (Cytrynbaum & Hallberg, 1983; Green et al., 1981). These findings suggest that gender may be a significant and critical element when holding roles of authority. And when considered along with the social constructivist perspective that claims our social norms and values determine appropriate roles and behaviors, this research suggests that holding roles of formal authority may be problematic for women. If members of a group tend to devalue the formal authority if it is held by a female (Cytrynbaum & Brandt, 1979) and if group members lack the ability to incorporate femaleness with the concepts of power, competence, and the exercise of authority (Taylor et al., 1979) effectively taking up a role

of formal authority might prove particularly difficult for women. It is important for the field of leadership studies, to attempt to understand women's experience with formal roles of authority, in light of the research described above. Understanding women's authentic experience might provide clues into ways of supporting and developing women to operate effectively in their formal authority roles.

While a significant amount of research suggests that women are often devalued, disrespected, and perceived as ineffective in their role (Cytrynbaum & Brandt, 1979; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Reed, 1979) it is important to acknowledge that other scholars have found no difference between males and females in their formal authority role with small groups (Patrick, 1980; Tischler, 1980). Additionally, the influence of cultural, structural, and social issues may be enough to question the findings of the studies that suggest women might struggle in roles of formal authority (Cytrynbaum, 1995; Cytrynbaum & Belkin, 1998). However, results generated from pure quantitative analysis, as most of those were, on a topic and experience that has the complexity and richness of authority should be examined very carefully.

Despite the few research studies mentioned above that suggests gender may not have a significant impact on authority, there seems to be adequate support from other research in psychology, leadership studies, and sociology to conclude, that, despite the complex effects, gender does make a difference in roles of authority, especially in times when group members experience high levels of stress and anxiety (Cytrynbaum & Belkin, 2004). Cytrynbaum and Belkin conclude that, "powerful unconscious or covert conflicts in response to women in authority still persist despite recent external cultural and political changes and shift in women's role expectations, behavior, and attributed

stereotypes” (p. 450). This study attempts to address those unconscious and covert conflicts by examining, not the effect of gender, but the experience of gender on women with formal authority, in the hopes that a better understanding of the experience will provide insight to more effective practices for women attempting to hold a role of formal authority.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

In this section, I describe and discuss the research methodology used for this study and the assumptions that I brought as a researcher to this inquiry. Both the selected methodology and my a priori assumptions on this project's topic influenced my approach to data collection, data interpretation and data analysis. This chapter discussion will focus on the specific methods for data collection and analysis that I used in my work, however, equally as important is the rationale for my assumptions and the decisions I've made, such as writing in first person, taking a holistic perspective that is rooted in feminist inquiry, and using grounded theory both for the methodology and as a way to interpret the data.

Qualitative Methodology

I believe that to truly understand the participant's experience a researcher must attempt to understand the complexity of the systems that influence their life. Based on previous research, it is evident that women's experience with leadership and authority is complex and dynamic; influenced by social, psychological, cultural, and structural factors. I used qualitative methodology to understand and study graduate teaching assistants' experiences with authority. I selected qualitative research methods for several reasons, the first and most primary is that from a constructivist perspective, meaning-making is ongoing and interpretations of reality are dynamic and in constant change over time (Merriam, 2002). Strauss and Corbin (1998) cite qualitative research as a way to study the intricate details about a person's feelings, emotions, and thought processes, and these details will be critical for a thorough understanding of the complexity of their

experiences in transitioning into their role and taking up their authority. Another reason for choosing qualitative methods is that in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis allowed me to probe deeply into the rich experience of the participants and to triangulate my data (Patton, 2002).

Grounded theory

Based on its flexibility and emergent nature, I used grounded theory for both my methodology and theoretical approach (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Grounded theory, unlike other approaches that focus on a particular aspect of human experience, focuses on generating theory and “emphasizes the steps and procedures for connecting induction and deduction through the constant comparative method...and testing emergent concepts with additional fieldwork” (Patton, 2002, p. 125). This method resulted in the simultaneous data collection and analysis and allowed me to generate interview questions based on themes that had begun to emerge in the data. This method also allowed me to constantly check the categories to determine if some surfaced only in the beginning of the semester or continued to surface throughout all the data. This method, much more complex than a linear method, was appropriate given the complexity of the data collection and the complexity of the leadership that was used as the context for the study. Recognizing that no one comes to a research project with a blank slate, the grounded theory approach assisted me in making sense of the data in light of my understanding of previous scholarship and research on women and authority.

One element of grounded theory methodology is an “open-minded, framework-free orientation to the research domain at the outset” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 18). One aspect of this open framework is the concurrent process of data collection, gathering,

analysis, and interpretation—all of which results in a theory that emerges from the data and is grounded in the data. Another essential principle of grounded theory includes the writing and sorting of analytical memos, which moves the data from descriptive to a conceptual or theoretical level (Lempert, 2007). Memo writing helps root the researcher in data analysis while enhancing the level of abstraction for analytical ideas (Charmaz, 2006). I wrote memos throughout my data collection process. These memos allowed me to find my own voice within my data, gave me permission to formulate my own ideas, and allowed me to play with those ideas, expanding them and reconfiguring them, as I collected and analyzed, and delved fully into my role as researcher, with the intention of producing a theory that would be sufficiently robust to become part of a larger academic conversation (Charmaz, 1983).

Grounded theory's open framework allowed an iterative process to occur continuously between data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I conducted a round of initial interviews and observations, then read and coded the transcripts from the observations and interviews to inform the next round of interview questions. I immediately transcribed those interviews and began coding and analysis of that round of data, and then used that information to inform future interview questions. This process of collection-analysis-collection and analysis of my data occurred for the entire duration of data collection. In contrast to a methodology that would guide a researcher to collect all data and then begin the analysis, grounded theory strategies "allow for imaginative engagement with data" creating a space for the unexpected to occur and for imaginative interpretation of data that allows new theories to emerge (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 25).

For example, I intended to focus the second set of interviews on the issue of boundaries, as much of the authority literature suggests that managing boundaries is a main function of demonstrating authority (Heifetz, 1994; Monroe, 2002). However, after a preliminary analysis of the transcripts from the first set of interviews, and after my first two observations of the class, several other themes emerged that were more salient. I looked for repeated patterns and ideas that surfaced among multiple participants. For example, the themes of voice and competence, as well as the tension between being right or wrong, were more reflective of the experience of my participants. Thus, I allowed the participants experience and the categories that emerged from their experience to guide me in the second round of interviews. A similar process occurred with interviews three and four. I used the analysis of the completed interview transcriptions to guide the focus of the remaining interviews.

My investigation of women and authority was informed by the findings discussed in the literature review, particularly the idea that gender is socially constructed, exercising leadership is gendered, and that women may be perceived differently than men in roles of formal authority, and those perceptions might impact the way groups experience authority dynamics and attempt to work toward their purpose. In order to preserve the academic integrity of my research and present useful findings from the data, I used existing theories of authority, as a scaffold for this current project in a way that allowed my data to generate new understandings about women and authority from the ground up. One benefit to using grounded theory is the theoretical flexibility that grounded theory allows. Grounded theory is a general methodology, and while it is not free from a theoretical lens—many attribute it's roots to symbolic interactionism (Clarke,

2005; Locke, 2001) indicating that meaning is constructed in interaction—it is a methodological theory that “can adopt any epistemological perspective appropriate to the data and ontological stance of the researcher” (Holton, 2007, p. 269). While I did not impose one particular theoretical frame on the collection or analysis of this data, the lens of group dynamics theory and the philosophical approach to authority used in the leadership class informed my research questions and my research process. The perspectives I described in the previous review of the literature consider group dynamics theory and authority theory as a critical lens for how women experience authority roles. It is with this lens that I approached my data, aiming to discover a new theory to reflect and capture the experience of women in their role of authority as graduate teaching assistants.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) discuss a theory-method linkage, claiming that “generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relations to the data during the course of the research” (p. 5-6). Patton (2002) explains this theory-method linkage by stating, “That how you study the world determines what you learn about the world” (p. 125). In short, using grounded theory allowed me to use my data to arrive at a theoretical explanation of how women take up, maintain and manage their authority.

Assumptions Driving the Research

Patton (2002) describes holistic inquiry as an approach grounded in the assumption that the whole is understood “as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its parts” (p. 59). Patton describes the classic parable of nine blind people touching parts of an elephant to illustrate the relationship between the whole and its parts. When each person touched only a part of the elephant, they did not have an accurate

sense of the whole. The one touching the tail believed she was holding a rope, the one touching the ears thought of a large fan, the legs felt like tree trunks. “The holistic point is that one must put all of these perspectives together to get a full picture of what an elephant actually looks like” (p. 62).

Similar to the problematic assessment of the elephant when only individual parts were analyzed, understanding the experience of the participants without attention to the many parts of their lives that informed and impacted that experience would have rendered an incomplete assessment of their experience with authority. For example, many of the teaching assistants felt that the outside relationships they had with members of the teaching staff directly impacted the staff’s authority dynamics. Some of the teaching assistants had significant roles with each other and with the lead instructors that were unrelated to the leadership class. These relationships are examples of the many parts of the participants’ lives that influenced their experience. Another example is the many roles the participants had to manage in their lives and how those roles influenced their experience as TAs in the leadership class. The participants held a variety of personal and professional roles, each impacting and influencing not only their position and status within the classroom system where they were a TA, but also the interpersonal relations they had with each other.

The participants of this study were students and instructors, and this gave them a dual role within the single system of the classroom where they were expected to both teach and learn. The occurrence of multiple roles is a challenge for TAs who exist simultaneously as student and teacher (Svinicki, 1994). These roles—that of student and of teacher--existed alongside the many other roles they occupied as the women attempted

to demonstrate authority as a TA, assist the students' in their learning, and push themselves to learn and improve their capacity for leadership. Each participant had additional roles that influenced their experience as a TA. For example, all but one of the participants worked other jobs, outside their role of student and TA, and one was a mother. These additional aspects of the women's lives shaped their understanding of their experience and informed how they made sense of their role as a TA. In order to fully and completely understand their experience as a TA, I realized that I needed to understand the multiple parts of their lives that may have contributed to their TA experience.

Coming in with a holistic perspective in mind, I approached the research project, not viewing the women as a definitive or isolated whole, but rather as a part of a larger system in which they held a role of formal authority as teaching assistants in the context of a very particular leadership class. While the leadership existed as its own entity with its own structure and culture, the class was embedded in a University that also had a defined structure and culture. In many instances, the structure and culture of the class differed from the structure and culture of the university; however, each of the contexts influenced, shaped, and constructed the attitudes and behaviors of the women. While each participant was a part of the teaching assistant group, the teaching assistant group was part of the larger staff group, which was part of the larger system—the leadership class—that included almost 80 first-year masters and doctoral students. Those students were also part of the university and most of them had additional courses or experiences at the university at the same time as their enrollment in the leadership class.

The analysis of identifying the parts and wholes provides a perspective that recognizes the impact and complexity of each component of the system on the

participants' experience. For example, one participant felt very comfortable with her authority within the small group of the teaching staff, but did not feel the same level of comfort with the students that she directly supervised. Another participant felt very effective and competent in her role as instructor for a completely different class in the department, but did not feel the same level of effectiveness and competence in her role as TA. Attempting to get at a level of analysis that addressed the depth of the women's experience with authority and striving to unpack the complexity of their experience was aided through holistic inquiry. A more holistic inquiry was an important and valuable part of my research providing me with an understanding that a complex system of wholes and parts exists in a dynamic relationship where every part contributes to the greater whole.

Understanding the different contexts that impacted the women's attitudes and behaviors became extremely important for a thorough analysis of how and why women take up their authority. Several contexts existed that were influential in shaping the women's experience: the psychological context, the social context, the cultural context, the organizational context, and etcetera. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) describes the context as the various settings in which action occurs—the physical, temporal, historical, cultural, and aesthetic. The context contains clues for understanding a person's experience, and even becomes the framework used to “place people and action in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say and do” (p. 41). One aim of this study was to unpack the complexity of the women's experience with authority in a way that has not been done by other studies. This was accomplished, in part, through understanding the depth of the contexts that shaped the participants' experiences with authority.

In the case of this research project, multiple contexts existed and needed to be considered in the overall understanding of the participants' experience with authority. First, the data for this project came from a leadership class, and that context became extremely important for the participants' experience. While the participants were current teaching assistants in the class, each one of them had previously experienced the leadership class as a student. Both contexts—that of student and that of teaching assistant—impacted how the women viewed themselves in their role and their behavior as they attempted to take up authority in their role. At the beginning of the class, most participants made direct comparisons to their own student experience and used the memory of their student experience with a teaching assistant as a reference for their own teaching assistant behavior. In fact, it is the *transition* between contexts: the role of student, where one has no formal authority, to the role of teaching assistant, where one is a designated formal authority that I studied in this project.

The concept of context that Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) describes was very influential on the participants and to my approach to data collection and analysis. The interrelationship of the participants' contexts with their role was especially meaningful in their understanding of their experience. For example, when the TAs viewed their work in the context of themselves being students, many of them felt less competent in providing feedback to the students in the class. In many ways, the context that the participants were feeling most connected with shaped the way they took up their role as a TA. To add to the complexity of the experience, often, the TAs were unaware of the contextual influence on their role as TA. Alternatively, stated simply: the impact of the context occurred as an unconscious process as the TA's attempted to demonstrate authority and

transition in their role. As a result, I became very mindful of the multiple contexts that existed for the participants, as well as their multiple roles, and attempted to understand the impact of each at an analytical level in order to generate a theory that was true to the complexity of the participants' experience.

Positionality, Feminist Research, Reflexivity

Due to the nature of this research project and my own experience and connections to the work—which will be described later—it is important to disclose my own positionality in terms of ideals and perspectives. By positionality I am referring to my “social location as a raced, gendered, classed” individual (Lempert, 2007, p. 247) I am a “white” woman (although my mother was born in Costa Rica), and would consider myself a feminist—that is, I feel gender is an important lens for explaining and understanding the way women and men operate, specifically, the way they experience leadership and authority. My methodological decisions were informed by feminist scholars and influenced by feminist research in ways that defined how I viewed myself in relation to the participants and how I attempted to relate and connect to the participants over the course of the data collection. I came to this project with the belief that, to date, there was insufficient understanding of women's experience with authority in the literature and that this experience was an important one to understand. For this reason, I chose to study women transitioning into a position of formal authority.

Lather (1991) says that to do feminist research is “to put the social construction of gender at the center of one's inquiry” (p. 71). I used a feminist approach, similar to what Lather described, to inform my approach to this project as a researcher. Additionally, I used a feminist lens as a way to understand the ways the participants made meaning of

their experience in the leadership class and with authority. In this way, feminist research informed both my data collection, i.e. relationship between participants and researcher, and my data analysis, i.e. the way I attempted to form categories and unpack the themes that emerged. In this project, I use feminist theory for the way it considers gender to be a social construction. In other words, gender is de-essentialized and understood as influenced by such things as context. Using a feminist lens and the assumption that gender is a critical and influential factor in the way people make meaning and relate to themselves and others, allowed me to understand the depth and breadth of how being a woman impacted the way the participants experienced their role of authority.

Based on my personal experience with the leadership class, I constantly reflected on my assumptions, my thoughts, and my own processes as a researcher. Feminist research points out that the researcher is always part of the study. With this in mind, reflexivity became an important part of this project, as I continued to monitor my own processes as a researcher who is embedded in the pedagogical model and methods of the course. That means that I continued to work with my own capacity for demonstrating authority and exercising leadership, and as such, my own learning often mirrored that of the participants. Additionally, I am philosophically committed to the methodology that the leadership course employs because in large part I have found that this method keeps me in a constant state of self-reflection, striving for continued development of my own ability to demonstrate authority and exercise leadership.

Patton (2002) writes about reflexivity as a “way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one’s perspective” (p. 64). This process—being attentive to the experience and research process while living in

the moment—was extremely important, because I was very much embedded in the pedagogical methods of the leadership course, having been both a student and a teaching assistant myself. Reflexivity is an integral component of feminist research and can take several forms, from explanations of how research issues were handled, to examinations of the researchers' positionality and how that influenced the work, to reflections on emotions, worries and feelings (Olesen, 2007). Despite the importance of reflexivity in the research process, especially in a project such as this one, where the researcher has multiple ties and connections, there are few straightforward ways to present researcher reflection (Maynard, 2004). Throughout this process, I struggled to find the best place to incorporate my own reflections, both analytical and personal that greatly influenced this project. Many of these reflections regard my own authority, my reaction to the participants' authority, or my perception of their lack of authority. Many of these reflections surfaced in the many phases of data collection and kept me intimately connected to the research—to the data, but to the participants as well, many of who have become my friends.

Not all of my reflections were positive, however, and at times, I struggled with anger and frustration—especially during the time of data collection and analysis, which overlapped over the course of the semester. In one instance, I left an interview very frustrated with the participant, feeling like she was not being as open as she could be with some of her answers. As I drove home, I took an audio journal—talking into my recording device, spilling out my frustrations as if I was talking to a friend. My inclination was to call my dissertation chair; however, due to her dual role course instructor of class, she was unavailable during the semester of data collection—which

further contributed to my frustration and anger. In this instance of anger and frustration, I recognized how I needed to “sit with” with the interview experience and let the intensity of my feelings calm in order to approach the transcript through the lens of researcher. I realized that I could use my emotional response to explore my experience with authority and my relation and position to others in the study, but I recognized the importance of coming to the transcribed interview without the bias from that immediate emotional response. In this way, I was able to use my reflections to remain self-aware and to own my own perspective and position (Patton 2002), while maintaining a solid researcher role to analyze and interpret data.

I kept a reflective journal over the course of this entire project—a journal that I maintained even during the chapter-writing phase of the dissertation. My reflectivity is woven through the pages of this dissertation and surfaces as its own chapter to conclude the research project. I used reflection throughout the research process to acknowledge my own bias and assumptions. Although every attempt was made to bracket my assumptions and my emotions that arose during data collection, this project became as much of a personal journey as it was an academic one, and I found myself engaged in learning and development—both academic and personal. I examined my own authority in the many roles I held in this class and in my life. I found my reflections useful; especially in the way that employing grounded theory methodology led me to not only reflect descriptively, but analytically and conceptually as well.

In many ways, I believe that it was my attachment to feminist research theory and principles—allowing for a connection with the participants, engaging in mutual learning, keeping women’s experience at the heart of the research—that enabled me uncover the

process of finding the women's voices. Owning my commitment to feminist research theory also allowed me to acknowledge the powerful impact this research had on me, personally, and it had lead me to believe that the data—the authentic representation of the women's voices—will eventually contribute to a larger conversation in feminist theory.

Selection of Site

This research project took place at a private, Catholic, liberal-arts university, located on the West Coast. The graduate leadership class at this university was selected for several reasons. First, the site was conveniently located, and conducting the research at this location did not require funding or expenses for travel. Second, the graduate leadership class at this university uses a non-traditional pedagogy that is designed specifically to learn about leadership and authority. The pedagogical method used is called case-in-point methodology (Daloz-Parks, 2005), and it is based on Tavistock-style group relations work. The unique methodology for this course was discussed in Chapter 2, and is revisited in brief below. The important element of this pedagogical model is the explicit focus on authority dynamics, power relations, and how each of these impacts one's attempt to exercise leadership (Daloz-Parks, 2005; Heifetz, 1994). Third, the class was structured in a way that gave the teaching assistants a primary role working directly with the students, e.g. grading papers, interacting with individuals and groups, which made their authority salient to the process and outcome of the class. Finally, I have worked with the primary instructor of the leadership course in the past and she expressed an interest in the work I wanted to pursue, as well giving her consent and support of the research project.

The Leadership Class: Authority, Structure, and Roles

The graduate Leadership class has a very layered and complex structure. One aspect of this complexity is that two classes operate simultaneously. One is the graduate leadership class that master's and doctoral students take in their first semester in the program, and the other is the *Consulting to Groups* course (which I will refer to as the TA class), in which the teaching assistants were enrolled. Both the leadership class and the TA class had separate instructors, i.e. the instructor for the leadership class was responsible for the curriculum and schedule of the class for the master's and doctoral students, while the instructor for the TA class took responsibility for the assignments and readings of the TAs. These two classes quickly become complex due in part, to the multifaceted interrelationship of the people involved. While the teaching assistants were students in their own class and had readings and reflection papers due, their role was to assist in teaching the Leadership class. In this role, they also worked closely with the instructor of the Leadership class, who monitored their work as a teaching assistant and offered support and guidance.

Each teaching assistant was assigned a small group of eight or nine students that would remain under their authority for the duration of the semester. The small groups did not change, and the teaching assistants had the responsibility of reading the work and assigning grades to the students in their small group. In addition to the two lead instructors and the teaching assistants, three additional people (who had previous experiences as TAs) constituted the teaching *associate* group, a sub-group who worked closely with the instructor of the leadership class and helped with administrative and

technical aspects of the class, i.e., get the readings and assignments on the course webpage, as well as worked to support and assist the teaching assistants in their role.

The Leadership Class Pedagogical Structure and Methods

The graduate leadership class where the data collection took place openly named both leadership and authority as principle topics (see class syllabus Appendix A). The emphasis on the dynamic relationship between leadership and authority is a principle reason I elected to use this leadership course to study women's experience with authority. Compared to other seminar or survey-type leadership courses where course content might focus on traditional aspects of leadership, this course is very experiential, and approaches the study of leadership in a very different way—a way that challenges student assumptions about leadership and makes the study of authority explicit and possible.

The leadership class uses a non-traditional pedagogical approach that includes a “here and now” session where the class uses its own behavior as a way to study and understand leadership. Referred to as case-in-point pedagogy, this method uses real-time behavior and events as material to learn about leadership and authority, and was structured in a way that provided the students opportunities to experiment with exercising leadership as they attempted to better understand the authority dynamics operating within the group—the leadership class. Case-in-point teaching blends the case study method with a discussion/dialogue method, and incorporates coaching, and reflective writing (Daloz-Parks, 2005). While case study method utilizes cases that are often removed from the students' immediate experience, case-in-point uses the immediate and current experience of the classroom as learning material. Based on the premise that we learn best

from our own experience, students' experience in real time becomes an integral component of the course content.

The here and now session occurred in the first hour of the three hour class, was referred to as the "large group session," and was characterized by an open dialogue that included the entire class—the students, the teaching assistants and associates, and the two primary instructors. During this hour, the instructor challenged students' traditional expectations for a graduate class and allowed the students to learn about leadership by studying their own behavior as it unfolded in real time. For example, the instructor, without giving the students the traditionally expected lecture on leadership or any guiding directions, explained to the class that the purpose was to learn about leadership and "so where would they like to begin?" The instructor then sat down and waited as the anxiety level rose among the students.

The tension and anxiety that resulted from this non-traditional teaching methodology was intended to create an environment that enhanced genuine learning in a way that mimicked the tension and anxiety of real-life organizations and situations. When people are too comfortable, there is "little incentive to change" (Monroe, 2002, p. 51). One of the approaches to learning about authority and leadership in this particular leadership class centered on containing the stress and anxiety, and monitoring how and when students' would speak out or intervene during the large group session.

Following the large group, and after a short break, the second hour included a case study evaluation by small groups of eight or nine students where the students were asked to present a case of a leadership failure to their small group and the group worked together to address the case. Each week, one student was given the role of Case Presenter

while another was named the Designated Authority. Both roles were outlined through course handouts [See Appendix B & C], giving the students a clear description of the purpose and function of each role. The Designated Authority was given the formal role of authority in the group during the small group meeting, and as such was authorized to exercise authority in ways that might serve the group. The designated authority for example, could have managed boundaries for the group, i.e. determined where the group would meet or if the group would take a longer break before starting the case presentation. While each student's individual case was the focus of the small group, the purpose of the second hour was to provide students more opportunity to understand the complex dynamics of authority and leadership and to address the larger adaptive challenges that might have been present in both the small group system and the larger system as a whole. During the second hour, while the students were meeting in their small groups, the teaching assistants met as a subgroup to debrief the occurrences of the first hour of class and prepare for the third and final hour of class when the students returned to a large group.

The final hour of class was reserved for a systems analysis of a student case. This last hour of class most resembled a traditional teaching approach in that the lead instructor of the class worked through a student case and performed the analysis on the white board in front of the entire student group. This exercise was intended to help the class learn to apply an integrated systems approach to a leadership dilemma by analyzing the real-life case of a fellow classmate.

The teaching assistants and teaching associates followed the schedule described above, with additional meeting times one hour before, and one hour after the three-hour

class meeting. These meetings allowed the teaching assistant group to discuss issues relevant to the class as well as to monitor their own process as a subgroup of the larger system. One aspect of the teaching staff meetings that added a level of complexity was the multi-layered structure of the authority roles within the staff group. The two classes operating simultaneously—the leadership class for the master’s and doctoral students, and the consulting class for the teaching assistants—had separate instructors. The instructor of the leadership class would not attend each teaching staff meeting in its entirety. Additionally, the teaching associate group and the primary instructor of the leadership class would leave the teaching assistants, and meet on their own at the end of the evening. These multi-layers and overlapping levels of authority resulted in a complexity that made for a very rich experience with authority for the participants.

A similar leadership class to the one used in this study occurs at Harvard University and Daloz-Parks (2005) presents an intimate look into the class: the students, the instructor, the pedagogical method, and the impact on the student’s learning about leadership in her book *Leadership Can Be Taught*. The Daloz-Parks book provides a detailed examination of the leadership course. Although this is not a class on gender specifically, often, gender is a subtopic and students are assigned readings on gender. In addition, due to the class awareness of interpersonal dynamics, gender relations are frequently a subject of discussion, review, and analysis in relation to leadership and authority.

The Role of the Teaching Assistant

The teaching assistants (TA) participated both with the students and with both primary instructors in several significant capacities over the semester. The primary

instructor for the Leadership class assigned each TA a small group of eight or nine students. The TA interacted primarily with their assigned group of students throughout the semester—grading papers, holding meetings and consultations, and assisting those students with any issues that arose. Additionally, the TA group participated in the large group—consisting of approximately 90 people—where the primary instructor would intervene with the class in a way that might challenge or help the entire student group to think about the course concepts. Intervening in the large group was one way the TAs could exercise their authority. This became a central aspect of the TA role as the large group and the here and now work that occurs in the first hour was a critical aspect to the experiential approach to learning about leadership and authority.

The TA group also met as an independent group in order to discuss technical issues, i.e. assignments, grades, as well as to address issues that were surfacing among and within the students related to leadership and authority. One aspect of the pedagogical model of this Leadership class is the notion of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983). While the TA group continued to monitor students, each TA was also asked to reflect on her own role within the class and the many subgroups. One requirement for their role as a student in the TA class was to complete a series of reflection papers over the course of the semester. This reflection, which included specific reflections about their own learning related to leadership and authority they experienced them over the semester, made studying this TA group very relevant for the purpose of understanding women's experience with authority. The reflection provided a method for the TAs to think about their role and how to best demonstrate their authority. Reflection became a principle strategy for exercising their authority. The participants reflected upon things that were

said by others, things that were said by them, and the behaviors of everyone in the system to guide their own actions.

Selection of Participants

Participants were selected from a sample of teaching assistants in the graduate leadership class that was comprised of five men and six women. Of the six women selected for this study, five of them held the role of teaching assistant and one of them held the role of teaching associate. Each of them had previously taken the leadership class as a student.

These teaching assistants were selected for several reasons. First, they have taken the leadership class in their own graduate work, thus all of the TAs had an understanding of the non-traditional methods of the class and were aware of the explicit attention to the concepts of leadership and authority. Second, the tension between their experience as a student and their experience as a teaching assistant is a critical aspect of the transition to authority I wanted to better understand. Third, the teaching assistants for this class had a desire to continue their own learning about leadership and authority. While the purpose of their role as teaching assistants was to assist with the Leadership class and assist the students, a secondary purpose was for them to successfully complete their own class (EDLD 580), which required them to work with their own capacity to exercise leadership and to better understand authority dynamics. Their specific awareness and understanding of authority, marked by their experience and desire to improve themselves in their role, made the teaching assistant group an appropriate group for participation in this study (See Appendix D for 580 syllabus).

Before the start of the class, all the female teaching assistants were sent a letter via email asking for their participation [See Appendix E]. In the email, the teaching assistants were given a brief description of the study and an explanation of their role as participants. Several of the teaching assistants replied to the request via email and asked additional questions about the specifics of the study. One teaching assistant expressed concern that she was not an appropriate person for the study, and we arranged to speak about her concerns over the phone.

After corresponding with the teaching assistants over the phone and via email, all six female TA's volunteered to participate. One of the participants ended up as a member of the teaching associate group, after having several semesters of teaching assistant experience in the Leadership class. This participant was included in the study, even though she no longer held the role of teaching assistant because, as a teaching associate, she remained a member of the staff group, and in her role of teaching associate, she worked closely with the TA's and with everyone else in the system. Due to my interest in women's transition into a role of authority, this participant seemed to align with that purpose as she was transitioning from teaching assistant to teaching associate and as such, her experience seemed relevant to this study.

The group of women who volunteered to participate came from several different backgrounds and they had different academic foci. Each of them was in the doctoral program in Leadership studies. They varied in age, ranging from 26 to 61, with one woman in her twenties, 3 women in their thirties, one woman who was fifty, and one woman in her sixties. The women also varied in professional experience, with one woman having over 40 years of formal authority experience as an Executive Director of a

center for adults with special needs, two of the younger women worked as Graduate Assistants in the department, and another had several years of professional experience in development. Additionally, one woman had several years experience in the K-12 education system as an administrator. Five of the six women ethnically identified as white, and one of the women identified as Asian.

Methods of Data Collection

Data collection occurred in multiple parts and included a triangulated method of participant data collected during the semester of the leadership class, in depth reflection journal and researcher notes I kept for over a year, and a eight-month post focus group with five of the participants. The data collection during the semester included: live observation of the participants in their role as teaching assistants, in-depth interviews, and document review of participant journals, reflection papers, and their final course paper. I took on the role of silent observer in five of the 13 classes, observing the TAs beginning from their initial meeting, which occurred one hour before the students arrived, and I continued to observe the TAs through the final hour, after the students in the other class had left. I took detailed notes, observing both the behavior of the TAs and any issues related to authority that might have been present.

My initial plan was to conduct four interviews with each participant—one before the semester, two during the semester, and one after the semester was over. I planned to use the four interviews to monitor and track the transition into the role as it occurred for each participant. Having all six participants agree to take part in the study resulted in an interview schedule that was more intense than I originally had planned. Additionally, one of the participants left town for an extended length of time. Thus, the interview phase of

the data collection resulted in four participants completing four interviews, and two of the participants completing just three interviews, for a total of twenty-two interviews.

Conducting the interviews over the course of the semester allowed me to get an in-depth and timely picture of the participants experience with their role as TA and their transition into a role of authority. The participants and I felt the intensity of this interview schedule; however, everyone became very dedicated to the project and was committed to see it through. The interview phase of data collection will be discussed further below.

Finally, for document review, I reviewed the journals and personal entries of two of the participants, the three reflection papers each participant wrote throughout the semester, and the final extended reflection paper they wrote at the end of the semester. Merriam (2002) claims, “a central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 37). The reflection papers were assigned as a requirement for the TA’s class, and the prompt required the participants to think about different aspects of their experience in their role. The first reflection paper included a prompt determined by the lead instructor, while the second and third papers were written on topics determined by the TAs. The role of teaching assistant created a space where many social worlds operated simultaneously.

The teaching assistants had to balance their experience as students, professionals, and as teaching assistants, in their work to assist with the students’ learning as well as provide support to the primary instructor. Additionally, the teaching assistants also had to manage those social worlds in order to be successful in their own class—the TA class. The TA’s personal experience with authority that occurred outside the context of their TA role, such as with a boss or with direct reports, also impacted their experience as a

formal authority in the class. Each of these varying contexts—their role as student, as TA, and their personal experience with authority—contributed to the ways in which the participants made meaning of their experience over the course of the semester. Their reflection papers provided a way for them to think deeply about the interaction of all these influences in the context of their experience with authority. These papers also allowed me to get valuable insights into the participant's social world and better understand their experience. The reflection papers and journals helped to inform my interview questions over the course of the interview schedule.

Patton (2002) suggests triangulation as a way to strengthen a study. He discusses the metaphor of a triangle as the strongest geometric shape, and used in research, this metaphor applies to the need to strengthen the methods of the study in order to subsequently strengthen the findings. Data triangulation using a variety of sources generates more data, and when I applied it to my research, it resulted in richer data and the type of “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) that provided depth and significance as I thought deeply about my research questions. I employed triangulation as a way to strengthen my study, using extensive observations, a series of in-depth interviews, and document review as part of the data collected during the semester-long leadership class.

Additionally, I met with the participants eight months after their course had ended in a focus group session. Five of the participants were present for the 90-minute session. I presented all the themes and categories in outline form, as well as a diagram of the model I had developed. I explained each category, using quotes from interviews and examples from observations. I explained the model of women’s authority in detail. I asked each of the women to verify their experience and provide comments or feedback. While the

women all connected with the categories and themes, they had trouble with the early version of the model, and as a result of this focus group meeting, my original model of women's authority changed to more accurately reflect the participants experience based on their own feedback eight months later.

As a result of these multiple processes, I had a tremendous amount of data to work with and I was able to correlate my findings and the themes that surfaced from one data point, i.e. the interviews, with the findings that resulted from the other pieces of the data—the observations and document review. Using a cross-coding process forced me to verify the themes that resulted from the analysis of one part of the data with the themes that emerged from another, ensuring that the theory I presented was grounded in all three elements of my data—observations, interviews, and the document review.

The category of voice was one example where triangulation produced richer data. I observed several participants tell the TA group that they did not feel like their voice was heard. I was able to follow up on this by asking each of the participants to describe specific instances when they felt unheard, and each was able to help unpack the theme of voice and how being heard or not heard felt in the context of the TA class. Finally, the participants also reflected on significant events in their reflection papers—and the theme of voice and being heard was one of those events, so I was able to read more about the significance of this phenomena, since the TAs who felt this theme most poignantly wrote about it in their papers. The fact that being heard or not heard occurred in each area of the data—the observations, the interviews, and the document review—allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of voice as well as confidently report this category as a significant finding.

The Interviews: Process and Procedure

Conducting the interviews several times throughout the semester allowed me to capture the experience of the participants' transition into authority. Since the focus of this study was how the participants' experienced the transition into the authority role of TA over the course of the semester, the schedule of interviews was ideal.

I entered the first interview with an interview guide that I used with each participant [Appendix F]. The purpose of the initial interview was to get a clear picture of the participant and to better understand her previous experiences with authority, in order to study her transition as she experienced her new role of formal authority as a TA. In this first interview, I wanted to get a sense of their perceptions about the TA role, including both their thoughts on their own upcoming role as a TA as well as their previous experience with the TAs when they were a student. Additionally, I asked about their perceptions and definitions of authority and leadership as well as how they explained the relationship between the two and how they felt authority could be exercised. This first interview provided me with the participants' preliminary thoughts and feelings about authority, and I was able to track when and how the changes occurred in their thoughts and feelings over the semester as they transitioned into their authority role.

Grounded theory methodology helps maintain a simultaneous process for data collection and analysis, with each aspect informing the other (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), and thus this method drove the emergent process of the data collection. As a result of this methodological process, for each subsequent interview I used the preliminary data analysis from my observations and the previous interview to inform interview questions in the following interview. My intent was to get an in depth look at the experience of

each participant, recognizing that each TA would have her own unique encounter with authority. I formulated questions from situations and interactions that I observed during the class, asking for further explanation or description of a particular situation. For example, for some participants the interviews focused more on their interactions with the students in their small groups, for others the focus was on their interpersonal relationship with other TAs and members of the staff group. The focus of each interview was based on my sense of the significant elements of the TA experience and was determined by each participant's experience with authority as I began to understand it through the data collection-data analysis procedures. The one thread common among all interviews was the emphasis on the experience of authority and the transition into the TA role.

The interviews occurred in various locations, determined by what was most convenient for each participant. I conducted some interviews at the women's workplace, some at their homes, and some on the campus of the university. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was audio recorded. I made a special effort to connect with each woman on a personal level to create a safe interview space so that each participant would feel comfortable sharing her authentic experience with me.

I approached each interview casually, trying to create the feel of a conversation not a formalized, scientific interview. Thus paying explicit attention to the power dynamics involved in empirical research, attempting to minimize the hierarchical and charged relations that often exist between researcher and participants (Devault & Gross, 2007). Often, we began the conversations talking about general topics, i.e. classes in the doctoral program or recent news of the upcoming election, before moving into the subject matter of my research. A significant piece of this research project was the process of

connecting with the participants around their authority and their experience as a TA; a process that was aided by my own openness about my experience—both as a TA and as a doctoral student conducting research in an environment that for me held significance in many contexts. Acknowledging my many layers of connection with the research environment positioned me, in some ways, as an insider, and required me to acknowledge my values and ideological positions toward the class, the TA role, and the people involved in the study (Charmaz, 2007). One example of this is the connection that I had with the primary instructors, as both are members of my dissertation committee. This dual relationship with the Leadership and TA class instructors was often a struggle, as I distanced myself from my faculty advisors, giving up my own faculty support, in order to preserve confidentiality for my participants.

My disclosure of my own struggles in my role of researcher, i.e. the distance I felt from my committee chair, my own experience with authority in the class, my memory of my role as a TA, helped create that safe space where participants shared more openly and authentically. Over the course of the interviews—the conversations—I learned a great deal about the women, not only as TA's but also as people, as I'm sure they probably learned about me. In this process, they became my friends, people that I came to care about, and people whom I value far beyond the information they shared with me for this research.

Data Analysis

Analysis began immediately and continued throughout the data collection process, keeping consistent with the guidelines for grounded theory methodology (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Beginning analysis at the early stages of data collection was critical for

a thorough examination of the data, given the vast amount of data I collected for this project.

I entered the data analysis phase using the coding analysis procedure developed by Patton (2006). Patton suggests having a categorical framework for making sense of the vast amounts of data. He suggests that, no matter what approach is used to analyze the data, an initial framework, including preliminary categories, is necessary to begin the organization process. As I intensified my study of grounded theory methods, I slightly altered my approach to analysis, applying Strauss and Corbin's (1998) suggestion for a tiered approach to data analysis, which includes a system of open coding—an approach that allows categories to emerge from the data. It became very important to me that I allowed my data to generate the categories; however, keeping in mind the themes that surfaced in my literature review, I used the general framework of relevant themes to start making sense of the data. For example, early on in both interviews and observations the category of “voice” surfaced from the data. My literature review of the socialization of gender illustrated that the issue of voice was salient for women both in the way that they are heard and in the way they attempt to find and use their voice (Tannen, 1990). From my review of the literature, I had the concept of voice in my mind and understood the significance of voice for women in authority, yet it was the data that emerged from the participants that brought the category of voice to life for this study.

I had the fortunate experience of working closely with the third member of my committee (who was not involved in the leadership course) during the data analysis phase. During my data collection, I undertook an intensified study of grounded theory. This study was done in conjunction with my data collection/data analysis in order to

allow me the opportunity to apply the theoretical concepts of grounded theory methodology to my own data. I met four times with my committee member over the course of the semester-long Leadership class where data collection was taking place, and together we reviewed sections of transcripts, discussed emerging themes, and began to organize the data. This partnership was especially helpful for me to begin the organization process of such a large amount of data. It provided me the opportunity to generate themes and codes and get feedback on my analysis. I believe the mentoring I received at the onset of the analysis process prepared me for the task of analyzing all of the data once collection was complete.

Limitations of the Study

Restricting the number of participants to only six participants limited the breadth of the study, however, the design addressed this limitation through a purpose, not of providing large generalizations on the topic of taking up authority, but by “enriching the repertoire of social constructions available...[by] forming questions rather than in the finding of answers” (Donmoyer, 1990, p.182). While the small participant sample and the very specific context and setting prevented this study from having large generalizable implications in the traditional scientific sense, this study was not designed for generalizability, rather to begin a specific exploration of women and authority.

Another limitation was my own work with case-in-point methodology, authority, and leadership. I am very aware of my biases and opinions about women and authority, as well as women and leadership. I know my a priori assumptions impacted the way I approached each interview and each observation, influencing what I chose to record and how I analyzed and interpreted the data. Peshkin suggests, “One’s subjectivity is like a

garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17). To address this limitation, I acknowledge these subjectivities and the assumptions that resulted from the onset of my research proposal, and I made every effort to use my assumptions and subjectivities as a virtuous quality of my research. One way I did this was by constantly monitoring myself—my feelings and sensations—as they were happening during the research process. Peshkin cautions researchers against attempting an objective perspective, as that is seldom, if ever, possible. Feminist methodologies suggest that proposing the existence of objective social realities denies, “That reality is humanly and socially constructed within a historical context. It also denies the importance of human subjectivity and consciousness as part of knowledge creation” (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 467). Feminists, especially Harding (1993), claim that strong objectivity can be achieved by making explicit and acknowledging our own positionality and reflecting on our position within the world. This perspective was helpful to me and I frequently revisited research strategies of feminist methodologies as a way to assist me in bracketing, understanding, and monitoring my own position through the research process (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Specifically, I owned the emotions—both the good and the bad—that resulted as a part of the research process and as a result of my position within the leadership class system. At times I struggled with understanding my researcher role while a silent observer, I felt connected to some of the participants during interviews, and I often reflected my on my own place as a doctoral student, hoping to one day evolve into a feminist scholar. By owning these elements of myself, I was better able to understand the elements of the women’s experience and analyze and interpret the data.

Another potentially limiting factor was my own role and relationships with the leadership class the participants. I believe this may have only potentially been a limitation, because I think my history and relationship with the Leadership class provided me with an understanding of the methods and ideology of the class. I had recently held the role of Teaching Assistant, and two of the participants were students in the class when I was a TA, although neither of them was in my small group. Additionally, I have experience with the woman who held the role of teaching associate, as she was both a student in the class and a TA at the same time I was. My own role as a TA and my connection with the TA group impacted not only my perceptions of their behaviors but our interpersonal relationship during the research project. I found myself often observing in the large group and silently hoping my participants would speak out and intervene. I found myself writing, on several occasions, that I missed the female TA voice and I actively sought it out. In many ways, I wanted the TAs to effectively demonstrate their authority and take up their role with competence. As I mentioned earlier, I felt estranged from my committee chair who was also an instructor of the TA class, and I shared this struggle with many of the TAs as they shared some of their struggles with me. Additionally, I had a class with two of the TAs where we worked closely together on a small project. I acknowledged this connectivity at the start of my research and constantly reflected on my own positionality throughout the research. One positive aspect of my shared history was the empathetic stance I could achieve as I listened to the reports of their own challenges as new TAs trying to exercise authority. I attempted to remain aware of this dynamic connectivity and I used this awareness to help bracket my

positionality and my assumptions while I constantly checked my data collection and analysis to ensure I completed this project with integrity.

Acknowledging my subjectivity, a priori assumptions, and the resulting bias made my research process as transparent as possible. As the subjectivities and assumptions surfaced in the data collection and analytic processes, I was forthright in reflecting on the impact they might have had on the research. Although this did not eliminate this limitation, acknowledging my subjectivity enabled me to “manage it—to preclude it from being unwittingly burdensome—as I progress through collecting, analyzing and writing up my data” (Peshkin, 1998, p. 20).

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Analysis

The analysis procedure outlined in the previous chapter resulted in detailed answers to the three main research questions and the various sub questions. In addition to answering the primary research questions, the analysis resulted in the creation of a theoretical model of women and authority based on the experience of the participants transitioning into their role of authority as graduate teaching assistants. The results and findings presented here are a result of grounded theory methods, in that I generated every category and every theme directly from the data: the interviews, the observations, and the review of the participants' written documents.

In a chapter titled "Leadership, Authority, and Women" Ronald A. Heifetz, an expert on authority and leadership suggested that women have not "generated an adequate theory of authority to replace or improve the traditional practices of men" (Heifetz, 2007, p. 325). The findings from this research project begin to address that problem by presenting a theory of authority that is grounded specifically in women's experience. Additionally, Heifetz suggests that there are "interesting gender differences" in the practice of both authority and leadership, and that women and men can learn much from each other (p. 313). This study attempts to begin the process of unpacking the practice and experience of women's authority, and as a result starts to answer the gap that Heifetz and others (Jones 1993; Miller, 1982) have identified.

A detailed analysis of the data resulted in five key findings:

- 1) The TA's experienced the process of finding their voice as the most significant element of exercising their authority in the role of Teaching Assistant (TA).
- 2) The TA's discovered that the process of finding their voice was complex and constantly changing, and involved bringing one's authentic self to the role and managing their external (speaking) and internal (listening) voices.
- 3) The TA's realized that effective authority included non-traditional conceptions of authority, such as using emotion, confidently owning personal experience, and speaking from a place of not-knowing.
- 4) The teaching assistants worked to manage personal tensions that arose from the interaction between their self and the leadership class system. They also experienced tension from the influence of social norms. Managing their tensions lead to strategies the women employed in order to find their voice and meet the demands of exercising effective authority.
- 5) The teaching assistants were able to find their voice and increase their capacity for exercising authority based on their explicit awareness of, and attention to, their role of authority. This suggests that authority development might be a useful process for women, and that exercising authority is a skill that can be learned and taught.

As I present the findings, I am very conscious of the temptation to simplify the presentation of the results by discussing each category or theme as if it was exclusive.

None of the categories generated from the data can be explained in isolation and in fact, the analysis of the data reflects their interconnectivity and interrelatedness.

One significant finding of this project was that women experienced the transition into their role of authority through a combination of dynamic influences and challenging interactions that became either a tension they had to manage or an opportunity to develop a strategy—a method of exercising authority—they could employ for finding their voice and demonstrating their authority. These influences and interactions were shaped by the participants' experience with three forces: 1) their sense of self, 2) their understanding of the system of the leadership class, and 3) social norms, assumptions and expectations.

A brief background on the six participants is helpful in order to understand how each participant experienced their role of authority and interacted with the forces of the self, system, and society. Often, it was the little details of their personalities, their experiences, and their beliefs, that drove their experience with their authority role. The following information is intended to help the reader get to know the participants in a way that brings them to life and makes them more human, resulting in a better understanding of their individual transitional process.

The Participants

Teresa is a 36-year old with six years as an administrator in the K-12 school system. She has five years experience teaching middle school. Teresa is Asian and very committed to her Christian faith. She said her faith and religion is one of the most important aspects of her life. She is married and has taken time off work to be a full-time doctoral student and focus on school. She was entering her first year of the PhD program in leadership at the time of this study.

Katie is 30 years old and identifies as white/Caucasian. Katie was entering her second year of the PhD program in leadership and has a graduate assistantship position in the department. Her desk is outside the office of Dr. Michelle Thomas, the lead instructor of the leadership class. Katie also works closely with both Dr. Thomas and Dr. Chapman, who is the instructor of the TA class and Department Chair of Leadership Studies, on specific leadership programs for the department. She sits less than 10 feet away from Peggy, another one of the TAs who is a close friend of hers. Katie has a diverse educational background, having studied sociology, religion, criminology, sexuality, divinity/theology, and now leadership.

Emily is between 60-65 years of age. Emily has forty years of experience as an Executive Director of a program for adults with developmental disabilities. Her area of specialization is developmental disabilities. She was entering her first year of the doctoral program in leadership at the time of the study and identified herself as white/Caucasian. Emily also teaches master's level classes at the university.

Vanessa is 34 years old and entering her first year in the PhD program. She works for the University in the alumni center as the Director of Annual Giving. She identifies with the white/Caucasian racial group and is agnostic. In addition to specializing in non-profit leadership, Vanessa has experience with marketing and telecommunicating.

Peggy is the youngest member of the teaching assistant group. Peggy is 26 years old and in her second year of the doctoral program. She holds a graduate assistant position with the university and works closely with Dr. Gina Chapman. Peggy's desk is directly outside the office of Dr. Michelle Thomas and about 10 feet away from Katie, another TA. Peggy describes herself as "agnostic/spiritual—not religious."

Jen: 50-year-old “white-American” with twenty years experience in roles of positional authority. Jen had recently completed her MA in leadership at the University and was entering her first year as a doctoral student in leadership studies. Jen is a member of the Teaching Associate group, and has been a Teaching Assistant the two previous years.

Introduction

The three social forces that shaped the participants behaviors—the self, system, and society—drove the transitional experience of the women and impacted the way the women demonstrated authority throughout the semester. These forces impacted their assigned role as teaching assistants as well as the earned authority they worked to gain with each other and with the students throughout the semester. The interaction of the self and the system created tensions that the women worked through and needed to balance and manage, while the social forces surrounded the women’s experience, and influenced all aspects of their self and the system they operated in [See Figure 1]. These categories—the self, the system, and social forces—have distinct definitions that arose from the data, which I will define here. The *self*: individual factors that influence behavior and contribute to interactions between the person and the system, such as personal background, disposition or mood, and personal demeanor. The forces of the self may include a person’s tone of voice, their style of dress, their religious or political beliefs, and affiliation. The *system*: organizational and structural elements that influence behavior between the system and the person. These elements may include the policies, rules, purpose, and personnel structure of the organization. *Social forces*: socio-cultural

factors that influence and shape individual and systemic behavior, such as social norms, behaviors, ideologies, beliefs and traditions.

Social forces surrounded the experience of the women influencing both the self and the system significantly. For example, the social conception of gender appropriate behavior impacted each of the women throughout the semester. While the women each had their own way of expressing their gender, which was a part of their self, that expression was greatly influenced by their interpretation of socially appropriate gender expressions. This exemplifies the considerable influence that social forces had on each woman, making the self a category that was shaped by social forces while interacting with the system.

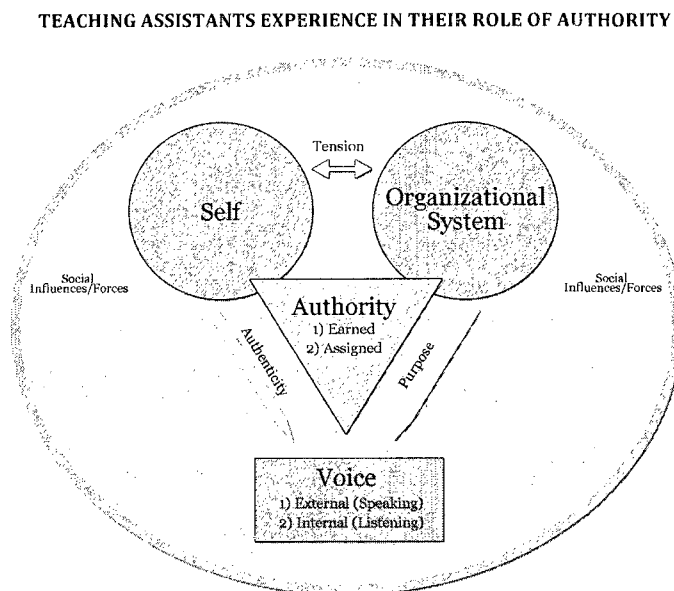


Figure 1. A model of women's authority

As I mentioned previously, none of the categories occurred in isolation, in fact the exact opposite process existed. The women experienced dynamic interactions of the self

and the system, while they managed or were challenged by the influence of social forces, or both. These interactions resulted in multiple tensions the women had to negotiate over the course of the semester. The pressures drove the strategies or techniques the women utilized to engage in the process of taking up their authority. In many instances, the strategies and tensions overlapped and the women began to recognize that simply managing tensions became a primary strategy for exercising authority. The women began to question their tensions to determine whether they should use their external voice or really tune into their internal voice and the voices of others. This was evident when the women felt vulnerability regarding their competence to effectively TA, as well as when they faced their personal definitions of femininity and found it to be defined by social norms. These two examples were situations that created considerable tension for the participants, but also became tensions that some of the participants managed and reconciled in a strategic way that allowed for the exercise of authority.

Based on their experience in their role of TA and the process of trying to find their voice over the semester, the women discovered that two components were essential for exercising effective authority: authenticity and purpose. Authenticity involved the women bringing their true self to their role and speaking with confidence from their own experience. Purpose involved the women's commitment to the larger system—the leadership class—and their efforts to act on behalf of the purpose of the class. When the women acted authentically and on behalf of purpose, they were able to find and use their voice in a way that allowed for the effective expression of authority. These two components, authenticity and purpose, were the critical elements that the women felt

contributed to their understanding and discovery of voice, specifically how to find and use their voice in their assigned role of authority.

The Transition into Effective Authority

This study addressed the research question: How do female graduate students in a graduate-level leadership class experience the transition from the role of student, which has no formal authority, to the role of teaching assistant, which has a high level of formal authority? Before I elaborate on my findings, it is important to acknowledge that the context in which the TAS were working was a class designed with an explicit focus on authority and leadership. Every participant was consciously aware of her role of authority, was expected to and attempted to work with that role, understand it, and feel comfortable in it throughout the semester. The explicit awareness on authority makes this a very particular context to answer my research questions. On some level, the women were focused on working with their authority and trying to improve upon it—which most of the participants indicated that they successfully did. I suspect the findings would be quite different in an environment where improving on the authority role is not an explicit focus, for example in a biology class, or a corporate setting. I specifically chose this leadership class with the hope that the focus on authority would result in data rich in both depth and breadth on the topics of authority and leadership.

The main aspect to the women's transition into their role of authority was the discovery of their voice and what it meant to use voice to exercise effective authority. In doing this, the women learned that their experience with effective authority looked and felt very different from traditional models of authority. Involved in their transition

process of bringing their authentic self to the position of teaching assistant was the management of many tensions that surfaced within each woman and their ability to develop strategies that would enable them to take up their role and find their voice. The women recognized that once they managed their tensions, they could use elements of these tensions as strategies for either speaking or listening—two important ways they used their voice. While the women developed several strategies for achieving effective authority, each strategy focused on some aspect of helping them to gain voice, allowing them to negotiate and earn power and to stay focused and work toward purpose. By working toward purpose, the women worked toward the goals and mission of the class, as well as the goals and mission of their own role of authority. In this case, the women had two purposes in their role, one was to assist and support the students' learning, and the other was to practice and improve on their own capacity to understand and exercise authority and leadership.

The Transition into a Strategic Practice of Voice.

Each of the women evolved over the semester and became more comfortable with the balance of their external and internal voices. Using their external voice involved speaking, while using their internal voice involved listening to their own inner voice—the voice of their conscience and voice of reflection—as well as to the voices of the other members of the system. The women discovered that in order to find their voice they had to bring their authentic self to the role of TA. This meant that sometimes they worked with their emotions to understand their own and others behavior. Allowing themselves to connect with their emotions and use them to enhance their authority differs from transitional practice where those in authority often suppress their emotional reactions and

consider it a negative influence. In other times, authenticity meant working to value aspects of themselves like their age or femininity and viewing those pieces of themselves as a strength, not a weakness. This occurred around the issue of age, where the youngest and oldest TA had to own their age and use that as a tool for her authority, not as a detriment.

I found that the women struggled in many instances at the beginning of the semester because they felt like they were not heard or recognized in the group. One task of the women in their role was to make interventions—comments or actions that intervene in the current conversation or situation in order to assist with learning and purpose. Interventions are necessary when the group becomes off task, is avoiding their work, or has gotten away from the purpose of the class. The predominant method that the TAs used to intervene was through the use of voice. Over time, the women transitioned to a place where they better understood when to use their voice, how to make quality interventions that were received by the group, and when to sit with an idea and reflect on it, allowing others to take up the vocal space. Peggy transitioned explicitly into a place where she felt she could maintain her authority without constantly speaking, yet still be recognized and not overlooked by the group.

Peggy felt “invisible” among the TA group in the beginning of the semester, and that invisibility resulted in her feeling unheard by the TA group even when she spoke. While Peggy struggled with the implications of feeling invisible, she attempted to stay very reflective and focused on the purpose of the class, which was for her to support the students in their learning as well as for her to improve her own ability to exercise authority and leadership in her role of TA. As the semester progressed, she listened

attentively, tried to be aware of how and when others spoke, and attempted to intervene in a conversation, and what impact the comment had on the group. By the middle of the semester, Peggy transitioned into a place that did not equate visibility with being vocal. Initially, this was a struggle for Peggy and the other women because authority is traditionally equated with speaking out and being explicitly heard. Peggy describes how she became “comfortable with knowing that having a voice doesn’t always mean using my voice. So feeling like I’m part of a group doesn’t always mean I need to talk.” Peggy discovered she could learn a lot about the other TAs, the students, and the issues that the group was facing by listening to others. Peggy was also able to learn a lot about herself by listening to her own inner voice—her inner reflections and conscience.

Part of the TA’s transition involved an increased understanding that one can exercise authority with a great deal of effectiveness and power without excessively speaking. As the semester progressed, the women recognized that much learning occurred by remaining attentive and aware, and they transitioned into a balance between using their external, speaking voice and their internal, listening voice. Teresa echoed this sentiment by describing how, over the course of the semester, she felt a lot of power in her silence—in her ability to really tune into the voices of others and gain an awareness of what was going on in the larger context of the system as a whole. The women demonstrated how people in authority often have to manage many issues, tasks, and conflicts at once, and that processing information is a critical skill of those in authority. The women’s transition was characterized by the revelation that, while in an authority role, speaking is not the only method for demonstrating power, and that there is considerable power and authority in attentive listening. Additionally, they learned that

speaking, just for speaking sake, is not a way to exercise effective authority; that authority comes from speaking in a meaningful way that furthers the group's purpose.

Five of the TAs began to understand the importance of meaningful speaking by watching others take up space with comments that seemed unrelated to furthering the group's purpose. Teresa commented, "I think that sometimes people talk over people or re-state things not because they need to be re-stated, but because the person wants space and time." Wanting space and time is typical of traditional authority, where speaking the longest and the loudest is a method used to dominate a group or push a single perspective. The women revealed that effective authority is not about dominating the group, but about fostering and supporting the group in its work. In this way, the women began to monitor their comments, striving for thoughtful interventions.

Vanessa spoke admirably about a male TA who did not talk "that much but had a lot of really insightful things to say" when he spoke. Vanessa used this male TA as an example of how effective use of voice is not determined by the frequency of speaking, but rather by the significance of the comments. She admitted to wanting to develop that skill in herself. Vanessa said she spent the semester trying to understand how she could use her voice as a strategy to reflect her authority. She described her transition as:

Trying to understand what having a voice means in terms of not just exercising my voice but determining how can I provide really good things too. So I'm trying to work on that and realize that what I say is not necessarily always eloquent but I feel like it contributes a lot, and that it's heard.

Vanessa described two essential components to using voice within an authority role: saying things that "contribute," to the group's work, and being heard by the group. The women recognized that often, people who repeatedly speak but do not contribute anything meaningful end up not being heard. The women transitioned through the

semester to a place where they managed their voice in such a way that allowed for meaningful contributing comments that the other members would hear and recognize. In order to do this, the women had to balance how much they spoke, and had to listen intently to the voices of others in order to hear what issues other members were speaking to. This became a strategy of speaking with quality over speaking with quantity.

The TAs began to recognize the importance of quality over quantity when speaking out or making interventions. The women achieved the level of quality they desired by speaking from their authentic self. This occurred over the semester and symbolized the women's movement towards understanding how to use voice as a strategy to exercise authority.

The women also transitioned into their role by learning to balance their own speaking with listening to the voices of others—those voices who were speaking and those who were not. Katie described feeling like she improved in her ability to really tune into the environment and the circumstances and identify the possible missing voice. For example, early on in the semester, I observed the TA group discuss how among the students, middle-aged men seemed to take much of the speaking space and the voice of the younger women seemed to be “lost.” By recognizing what group might be missing, Katie felt she could raise the issue so that others might notice and discuss it, or she could reflect on what the missing voice might signify, waiting for the appropriate time to bring it up.

The TAs worked on increasing their awareness to the student voices in the large group setting in order to help the students recognize their own dynamics in the leadership class. Each participant “drew the leadership class” in their final interview. This drawing

allowed the women to graphically represent the system in anyway they felt was most appropriate. Each woman then described her drawing to me after she had completed it. In her drawing, Vanessa depicted the “prominent voices” of the student group in a different color than the other students. She distinguished those voices from the others based on her belief that voice is a significant element of authority and can be used to enhance or impede a person’s demonstration of authority. As part of their transition, the women improved their listening in order to recognize the prominent voices of the students and analyze those comments in order to understand how an individual was connecting with the group, working toward purpose, and exercising authority.

The seminal feminist literature talks about how women must find their voice in order to become powerful contributors to the public sector of life and to take control of their environment in the private sector of their life. The theme of silence and how to break that silence is a pervasive theme in much of feminist literature (Belenky et al., 1987; Gilligan, 1982; Iglesias & Cormier, 2002), however the complex process of what it means or looks like to find one’s voice or exercise one’s voice has not been fully understood, examined, or articulated. Voice became a central theme specific to the women’s transition into their role of authority, and the data suggests that the process of knowing how to use one’s voice, while extremely complex, involved a willingness from the women to be themselves and speak from their own experiences. Over time, they gained an increased awareness of the interplay between their external and internal voice. As they continued to work toward managing the tensions that challenged their authentic self, the women faced intense interpersonal relations and strong social influences that

impacted how they interacted with others and how they expressed their authority through their use of voice.

Finding One's Voice: Two Essential Components for Authority

The purpose of the TA role was to support the students in their learning, assist the lead professor with grading papers and managing students, and also to improve their own ability to demonstrate authority and exercise leadership. The women were able to find, use, and manage their voice by working toward their purpose and operating with authenticity. These two elements: purpose and authenticity, became the *essential components* that the women committed to in their role as TA.

Purpose and Authenticity

In their transition to a new role of authority, the TAs came to understand purpose as their sense of direction and the way they could establish value for their work.

Authenticity was reflected when the women's behaviors were consistent with their values. Since they were working on behalf of a larger student group and on behalf of the entire leadership class, remaining true to values and purpose was one way to address adaptive problems and challenges. For the TAs, authenticity – being authentic about their feelings in working with the students, the challenges they were facing, and their feelings in working with the other members of the teaching staff- was a way to really explore themselves in their role. This was an important aspect to their transition and to their experience with authority.

Authenticity provided a way for the women to maintain their authority while saying, "I don't know" without seeming incompetent. Admitting uncertainty is not a typical character of traditional authority. The typical expectation of those in authority is

to know the answer, not admit doubt or indecision. The TAs discovered that they could maintain their authority and still say “I don’t know” if that expression included an authentic attempt to seek out the best ways to approach a situation or a problem. The women discovered that they could earn the trust of the staff group and the trust of the students by admitting their uncertainty, not by pretending to have an answer when they did not. The TAs also discovered how difficult authenticity can be, since, often; being authentic involves owning one’s feelings or the parts of oneself that influences and impacts reactions with others. Vanessa described her experience with authenticity, the work she did to increase her capacity to be authentic, and how authenticity with a spirit of inquiry helped her interact with the students in her group:

So I was challenged to bring my authentic self from the beginning. But how do you gain that skill? I think baby steps, you know, you try it, you see how good or bad that was and you try a little bit more and see how you do with that.

Vanessa’s quote illustrates how the women worked to bring their authentic self to the role—how that skill was something they had to improve upon over the semester. This was not something that came easily to the women because acting authentically included owning various parts of themselves that women often tried to avoid or ignore. For example, Katie ignored her anger toward the lead instructor, instead displacing that anger toward another TA. As Vanessa described, the women had to take “baby steps” in gaining the skill of being authentic—in making sure that their values and true self were reflected in their actions. All of the women felt that this occurred for them throughout the semester. The women found clues to their authentic selves in the reactions they had to others, especially other members of the staff group.

Vanessa highlighted an important piece of authority that the women each encountered at some point in the semester: the challenge and struggle they faced in attempting to exercise authority with an “authentic self.” Yet, while each woman struggled at times trying to find her authentic self, they never stopped working toward the discovery of authenticity because they realized the value in exercising authentic authority. While striving for authenticity helped her approach situations with clarity and purpose in mind, Vanessa also believed that it also helped others work toward an authentic demonstration of authority. Vanessa describes:

But it seemed like when I really was willing to bring my authentic self and to own those parts of myself that I didn’t really want to own, that it certainly helped me but it also seemed to enable other people to bring them, their authentic selves. And I think it is easier for women to do, for the most part we’re more accustomed to expressing emotion than men are.

Vanessa’s comment suggests that authenticity might be contagious, and that when some people exemplify authentic behavior it can become a part of the culture and expectation of the group, aiding others to do it as well. Additionally, Vanessa’s comment suggests that one element of authenticity is expressing emotions—another uncharacteristic element of traditional authority. Although not every TA linked emotion with authenticity, they did all express exploring a depth of their inner person as a way to tap into authentic feelings.

The women revealed that being authentic included allowing themselves to be in touch with their feelings and to then use those feelings as an indication of the significant issues they were experiencing. For example, Peggy got very angry over an interaction she had with Emily, and she reflected on her anger to determine how she should react to the conflict she perceived had arose between her and Emily. Jen also was able to use her

feelings of anger and frustration as a way to uncover deeper feelings of dissatisfaction about her role responsibilities. By using their emotional response, and not suppressing it, the women were able to voice issues that had real significance for the leadership class. Additionally, the women learned to notice the emotional responses of others and they recognized that their behavior, even unintentional behavior, impacted other people.

For example, members of the TA group told Peggy she had a tendency to exclude people, and while Peggy disagreed with that statement, she allowed herself to authentically reflect on this feedback and said,

I think I have more self-awareness as to how I portray myself, definitely like what cues am I giving off that people aren't included. Because I don't think that I am that way, or I definitely don't want to be that way—to exclude people. So I think that [the feedback] is helpful.

In receiving feedback and reflecting on that feedback allowed the TAs to be honest with themselves about how their interactions impacted others in the system and made understanding interpersonal relations a bit easier. Teresa connected with the idea of using authenticity to “monitor emotional reactions.” She wrote in her reflective paper that she noticed some people were receiving her as negative at times when she did not feel like she was being negative. Teresa worked to get in touch with her authentic feeling in order to “identify the triggers to my negative responses and challenge myself to think or act differently.” Teresa felt that if she could get in touch with her own biases and judgments and identify them as they occurred she would be able take up her role of authority and exercise leadership with more intention and purpose. In this way, Teresa felt like she could better understand what it was about her own behavior that caused others to interpret it as negative—an interpretation she did not want others to have.

Part of the work for the women was determining when they were reacting authentically to something and when they were just attempting to speak up or demonstrate authority for authority's sake. For most of the TAs, a physical reaction signified an authentic reaction. Teresa described how she tried to get "really in touch with that heart beat, or the sweaty palms" that occurred when she was having a reaction. Those physical cues signified a reaction, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, and the TAs began to use those cues as a sign that they felt strongly about a particular issue. Teresa used those cues as a way to really focus internally and reflect on what the issue meant for her, and what it might mean for the group. By doing this, she felt she was better able to determine if she should act on the reaction or hold it inside.

Katie used the physical response as an indicator that she was having an authentic reaction to something or someone. When she was "feeling the nervous stomach and the heat rising a little on [her] neck", she knew she wanted to bring up an issue and the physical feeling was a sign that she was coming from an authentic place. However, exercising authority from this place was often risky for the women. Often, it meant confronting another person, confronting authority, or raising an issue that was difficult for the group. When the women attempted to exercise authority in this way, they risked putting themselves out there and the reaction others might have. Throughout the semester, the lead instructors worked with the women, helping them understand how committing oneself to the job of authority is often accompanied by risk due to the increased responsibility that is expected from those in authority roles. At times the women risked isolation and loneliness, other times they risked angering a friend, and at other times, they risked physical pain or sickness.

Peggy tapped into her authentic self and allowed herself to get so in touch with her feelings that she became physically ill. She was committed to the group and committed to the purpose and one event elicited such a reaction from her that she was unable to remain in the class. Peggy describes her reaction:

I literally, like my body, like my whole entire body was aching. And like I'm still aching a lot. I know that it's because of this cold and I've been coughing a lot, so lots of like muscles are sore and stuff like that. But I literally was so uncomfortable in the meeting that I was, like I'm physically ill and I knew I can't be here.

Peggy's experience illustrates the intensity of authentically committing oneself to a role, and the consequences that can occur when someone surrenders their entire self over to their work. Peggy allowed herself to use her emotional response, instead of suppressing her response, she let it surface, and however, when it did, it literally took her out. Many times through the semester, the women felt pain—physical, mental, and emotional pain—as a result of their work as a TA. But the women discovered that it was risking the chance of pain that ultimately allowed them to feel like they were effectively taking up their role and working toward purpose in the leadership class. Typical demonstration of authority does not involve the use of emotion, in fact, often, the opposite occurs and those in authority mask their emotions and approach their role as detached and distant. All of the women in this study, however, fully committed to their role and their purpose, giving their entire self over to their role of TA. As a result, the women had physical and emotional reactions as they tried demonstrating authority. The physical cues that occurred were an indication that an authentic reaction was occurring and the women worked hard to reflect on the deeper meaning of their authentic reaction so that they might bring it forward to the group through a demonstration of authority.

Teresa felt that at times it was risky to disclose her comments and bring her authentic self because it meant she had to open herself up and put her heart out for the group to see and for the group to use. But after she experimented with self-exposure she realized that it was safe, and that nothing bad happened—no one made her feel stupid, no one made fun of her. Teresa also felt that the group received her interventions with acceptance. When Teresa brought her authentic self to the group, she said it “left a place for me to continue reflecting and to say why did I need to say that, or what’s going on in my heart?” That process—bringing an authentic self and the reflection that resulted—helped Teresa feel like she was working toward the class purpose in her role as a TA—to both improve her own ability to take up her role and to raise issues for the group that might assist the students’ learning. Teresa felt better able to take up her authority when she worked from a place of authenticity and constant reflection as it allowed her to use her emotions to raise meaningful issues for the group.

Jen commented that working authentically meant working with a purpose. She explained how every group has a purpose for its existence, and working toward that purpose was a critical task of those in authority. Jen was very committed to her purpose as teaching associate—assisting the students and the new TAs, and improving her own ability in her role. She said, “first of all, having a purpose is huge. It’s like the thing that I must have now. I don’t do anything now without me trying to be as solid in my purpose as I can.” She described how when she’s “faced with all the difficulties and the weird things that happen in a group” she goes back to her purpose for guidance on how to act and react, specifically in a role of authority.

Jen continued, described a time during the semester that she felt “very ineffective” and completely unable to get her “message across” because she felt like she was operating at “cross purpose.” She described, not being “sure what I’m operating at in terms of where my purpose is at.” And the lack of clarity over her purpose, in reference to her role in the system and with the TA’s and the lead instructors, left her struggling to find a strategy that would help her feel more effective in her role of authority as a teaching associate. Katie echoed the importance of working with purpose. Katie said, “I am beginning to think that by reaching out to others, to build interdependence that is centered on purpose, I may be serving purpose in the most connected way I know how so far.”

Much of the women’s decision around speaking or not speaking centered on their commitment to the purpose of the group. Jen said, “there are times when you can be focusing on your purpose and I know that in order to facilitate the purpose of the group I should shut up.” She continued,

I’m in touch with the purpose of the group and I’m going to be quiet because it’s going to serve the purpose. Other people need to speak, other things need to come up and if I talk it will be my perspective which is probably they’ve already heard. That’s usually the reason I would shut up.

The TA’s felt that purpose and authenticity were the essential components of effective authority, because they provided the women with a direction and method for their actions and thoughts in their role of TA. The women, however, were faced with tensions throughout the semester that impeded their ability to effectively demonstrate authority and challenged their capacity to remain purposeful and authentic in their role. Much of the women’s transition centered on managing and reconciling these tensions and

finding ways to develop strategies in order to effectively remain purposeful and authentic in their role.

Finding One's Voice: Managing Tensions

In their struggle to take up authority, the women realized they needed to find their voice but also to understand how to use their voice in a way that enhanced their authority. The women were especially challenged in this endeavor when their authentic experiences violated traditional notions of authority, and demanded that they remain authentic to their self and use their emotions and vulnerability as tools for effective authority.

Tensions of Self: Identity, Vulnerability, and Contradictions

In order to remain authentic to their self they needed to have a clear sense of identity but in this context their identity was being challenged by the multiple roles they were expected to assume and by their ideologies regarding femininity. And as students and as TA's, the women's confidence and sense of self was in turmoil. When they felt uncertain about their sense of self, they struggled to find their fit within the system and their ability to effectively demonstrate authority was hindered.

Even when the women felt confident in their ability to be a TA, when they found aspects of themselves that did not fit the TA role they lost confidence. Jen commented, "I still do a lot of negative talk to myself and put other people on pedestals." Jen described feeling uncertain about herself in her role, being in an "in between space" around feeling very vested in wanting to be a TA and a feeling that she will never get it right. Peggy and Emily searched for a better understanding of themselves so that they could better work with the students and be effective in their role. Peggy described how she wanted to "figure out how I can best take on this role through balancing who I am, with challenging

that with which I am comfortable.” Moreover, Emily said she was trying to find “more insight into [her] behavior” so that she could approach her role in a “thoughtful way.” The women’s comments reflect a tension between their belief on what the authority role demanded and the person they think they were—often a person who was challenged to meet the demands of the role. Emily wanted to better understand her own behavior so that she could better understand how to approach her role, while Peggy knew she needed to challenge her comfort level, and Jen felt worried she might not get it right. The women revealed the challenge that arose from the feeling that they might not meet the expectation of the role they agreed to occupy. This tension impacted the way they used and managed their voice.

As the women figured out their role and became more secure in their ability to effectively TA, they figured out how to take up their authority in the complex system of the leadership class. The tensions around self that the TA’s experienced centered on their ability to acquire and demonstrate earned, or informal authority in the class. In the authority literature, there are different terms to distinguish positional authority from the authority gained through action or interaction with others. I am using the terms *assigned* and *earned* authority to reflect that distinction. I feel these terms more appropriately convey the idea of authority (compared to Heifetz’ (1994) use of formal and informal authority) and illustrate the difference between an assigned role of authority, such as a TA role, and the earned authority one gains through established trust, expertise, or respect. The teaching assistants held positional authority in a leadership class that had several layers of authority. The women were required to demonstrate their authority with the student group—over which they had more positional authority, with each other—

where they all had equal positional authority, and with the teaching associates and lead instructors—in which they had less positional authority. In essence, while the women all had been assigned authority through their role as TA, they felt a tension around their sense of self as they attempted to earn authority amidst the TA group and the staff group that would allow them to intervene effectively and exercise leadership.

Using the terms assigned and earned to describe the women's authority better captures the essence of their experience. One reason for this is that the concepts of formal and informal (Heifetz, 1994) authority are difficult to navigate, as they have many overlapping features. Often, informal authority follows formal authority after someone with positional power earns the trust and respect of others based on behavior not based on positional role. However, informal authority can occur independent of formal authority, which is often the way many women have achieved their power and exercised leadership (Heifetz, 2007). The challenge to further the understanding of authority is due, in part to the ambiguous language used to describe the terms. The women made sense of their role through their understanding of their assigned position and their desire to earn more authority in the eyes of the instructors, the other TAs, and the students. Therefore, living up to the expectations of their assigned authority, and working to develop more earned authority was a central aspect to the women's transition.

Jen, the Teaching Associate, defined assigned authority as “the person in charge,” and Emily suggested that assigned authority came from a position that allowed someone to direct others to do work. Katie acknowledged the complexity of the two types of authority, saying she viewed authority as contributing to the purpose by influencing it or

giving voice to it, but she suggested that the contribution could occur without assigned authority.

Teresa questioned whether a person had to demonstrate effective authority in order to validate their assigned authority role. She described the complex relationship between the two types of authority:

I think of people that are placed in positions of authority that sometimes don't use it, so then they lose their authority. People don't turn to people that are placed in those positions, they turn to others that they think can do the job.

According to Teresa, simply holding a role of assigned authority does not guarantee that others will appoint any authority to that person if they do not do the job effectively.

Teresa described how someone with assigned authority might not gain any earned authority if they fail to take up their role and demonstrate authority effectively—to “do the job” and help fulfill the purpose of the group. In essence, Teresa was suggesting that earned authority soon follows positional authority, when purpose is fulfilled and people's expectations are met. Navigating through their assigned authority and striving to earn authority was further complicated for the graduate teaching assistants based on their dual role as student and instructor within a university department. All six of the participants were doctoral students as well as teaching assistants. Their identity of student—a role that has little formal authority—often conflicted with their role of TA—a role in which the women were expected to demonstrate authority over other students, some whom were also doctoral students. The TAs dealt with the deeper level of complication through the fact that they were not only TAs in the leadership class (EDLD 550/600) but also students earning credit for their role as TA in a consulting class (EDLD 580). This multiplicity of roles can often complicate the authorization process (Leach, 1990).

Holding the dual role of student and instructor created complex dynamics that were confusing and difficult to reconcile.

Much of the tension and confusion centered on the expected behavior pattern associated with their two roles. The pattern associated with the role of student is one of a learner, while the pattern associated with an instructor is one of a teacher. Attempting to be both a learner and a teacher in the same context was difficult for the women and definitely created a tension. From this tension, the women often experienced contradictory feelings—feelings that as a learner they could own their inexperience, yet as an authority figure they should have mastery and expertise of the subject matter. Four of the women reported how, when they took the course as a student they felt the TAs “had all the answers,” and “were hiding something,” and “were all-knowing.” Now in their role of TA, they were faced with the reality that “we really don’t know that much more than the students.” However, the expectation remains that based on their authority role as TA, they must have more information than do the students. Often, their two simultaneous roles—that of TA and that of student in a consulting class—were blurred and caused confusion. This confusion directly impacted their ability to take up their authority as a TA, and influenced how they interacted with each other, with the students, and with the lead instructors.

On several occasions in the interviews, the women and I had to distinguish if the question was referring to their work as a TA in the leadership class or referring to their work as a student in the consulting class—for which they were a TA. Katie described the ambiguity in the multiplicity of roles and how she attempted to work out the differences in her mind:

I do see a clear distinction between student and TA. So I'm a student in 580 and a TA in 550/600, which strangely enough, I guess I'm a student and a TA in 580, but I'm not a TA for that purpose. Right, for the purpose of 580?

I guess I don't know if I'm earning credit for being the student or for being the TA. Because I'm doing learning, I mean I'm opening myself up to learning in 580 that will earn me credit towards a degree. So that's sort of one piece of it. Part of that involves being a TA, which is... I mean there's sort of two TA roles, right? I'm student and TA, and I'm just TA to the students in 550, 600, right? I'm not a student for them, I'm not a student with them, I'm not enrolled in their course.

Katie's comments reflect the initial confusion that she and three other women also felt around their multiple roles and the difficulty they had asserting their authority with the students over whom they had positional power compared to with the other TAs with whom they shared equal authority and their own student status in the consulting class. For example, Vanessa noted that she did not feel as confident interacting with the students because of her feelings of incompetence, yet she felt more comfortable with the other TAs and better able to take up her authority in the staff group. The women interacted more with each other than with the student group, providing for more opportunity to earn authority with each other more than with the students. Instead, the women entered the semester dealing with the imposter syndrome, unable to internalize their success and feeling fraudulent, especially with student interactions. One explanation is that the women's role as a student—a role defined by the desire to learn and improve—hindered the women's ability to feel confident in their role as a TA. As the women got more comfortable with the students and with their own selves in their role, they felt more comfortable with their authority in the leadership class. This aspect of the women's transition reflects the potential for learning in authority roles.

The confusion and tension over the women's dual identity as student and TA created uncertainty over how to best take up their role in the leadership class and how to

reconcile the tensions of being both a TA and a student. One element of the struggle was the women being able to admit that as an authority figure, they were not experts in the field, that in fact, more of their identity was a learner. Typical applications of authority include owning expertise—the expectation is for those in authority to have the answers. In their willingness to be learners, the women had to allow their authority to exist in the presence of not having all the answers.

In their initial reflection papers, each TA wrote about their intention for their own learning in the course. They were very thoughtful and clear about wanting to learn more “about myself as well as develop my ability to take up the role and engage in leadership.” They expressed wanting to learn how to “push people” as an authority figure, and to “practice being a better mentor and coach.” One TA had the goal of becoming an organizational consultant and felt that the support and guidance of Dr. Thomas and Dr. Chapman, the lead instructors, would provide her “relevant skills and rich insights” about effectively being in an authority role.

The women seemed to feel very comfortable in their role as a student. However, in contrast to their eagerness to learn and develop personally in their role of authority and as a leader, the women held a great deal of tension about the authority aspect of their role. In their first reflection paper, four of the women reported feeling “anxious” and “hesitant” about their work as a teaching assistant. Another TA reported, “being more than a little daunted by the responsibility” of the TA role. It was clear that the authority aspect of their role created anxiety and tension and that the women entered more comfortable in their role as student than in their role as TA.

While the women seemed to articulate a thoughtful distinction between their consulting class where they were a student and the leadership class where they were a TA, they experienced challenges with the dual roles. Often this surfaced in the way the women made sense of the expected behaviors for each of their roles. For example, as a TA the women graded papers, provided feedback, answered their students' technical questions about the class, and attempted to provide interventions in the large group. As a student in the 580 consulting class, the women wrote reflection papers and did additional readings. However, they were reflecting on their TA role and receiving feedback and evaluations from the lead instructors on their behaviors as a TA. Receiving feedback from the lead instructors facilitated the TA's learning; yet, it challenged their identity as a TA. One incident, which I describe below, occurred during the semester that significantly impacted the TA's sense of identity and confidence as a TA and made them question their authority in their role of TA.

Early on in the semester, Dr. Michelle Thomas wanted to use the feedback given to a student by one of the male TAs, Steve Dingman, as a learning exercise for the other TA's to show what might be more effective and less effective when responding to student work. The lead instructor changed a significant amount of his comments and for four of the female TA's, the grade changing exercise created a huge problem. Katie, Peggy, Teresa, and Vanessa quickly took offense to the grade-changing exercise, suggesting that Dr. Thomas was somehow eliminating the authority of the TAs by changing the comments they wrote to the students in their group. One principle element of the TA's authority was to grade the student's papers and provide feedback. The women felt that

this authority was diminished if their work was going to be changed by the higher-level teaching staff before it was returned to the students.

Katie and Vanessa described their sense of frustration when they were told there were “no wrong answers,” and that they should “take up their voice and make this work happen.” And then “when we do that, then it’s taken back”—they said—it’s erased because it really was a wrong answer. Katie described how she questioned if the authorization to be a TA and give comments to the students was ever fully there—if she was ever fully trusted in her ability to give feedback.

Peggy echoed Katie’s sentiment. She described how when the grade change incident occurred she was “really upset” because while she understood the importance of giving effective feedback to the students, having the professor just: “go through and change it will totally mess up how I’ve been doing grades, and it could mess up the students’ mind and ultimately—where is OUR authority? And it’s like we’ve been granted this authority but we’re not going to have a collaborative conversation about this. The grade is just going to be changed.”

The women continued to have very strong reactions to Dr. Thomas changing Steve’s grade. They brought it up for consecutive weeks in the staff group meeting. Three of them wrote about it in their reflection papers, and all four of them spoke very passionately about the incident to me in interviews. Even Jen, the teaching associate who had a higher position of authority in the staff group and was one of the people giving feedback to the TA’s commented to one of them, “Don’t worry. I don’t change grades and comments when I read the TA’s feedback.”

Jen's comment further illustrates the sensitive identity the women held as they entered their role and the prevailing thought that somehow, the grade changing exercise was not successful in helping the TAs learn to be more effective with their comments, but instead usurped the authority that the TAs thought they had been given. While this example illustrates how fragile the women's sense of self-authority was at the beginning of the semester, it also shows the complexity of operating as both students and TAs—the complexity of holding a role of authority without holding proclaimed subject expertise. As a student, you accept and expect feedback from your instructors; however, in an assigned authority role you expect to have the authority to give feedback that will be honored by your professor. The women expected their tutelage to occur in the background, not in a space where the other TA students could see. In this instance, the TA role and the women's struggle to self-authorize themselves in that role felt undermined and therefore the grade-changing incident reinforced their thoughts that their authority was undeserved.

Teresa felt like the four younger women—Katie, Peggy, Vanessa, and herself—somehow wanted to protect the TA whose student feedback had been changed by the professor by coming to his defense. Interestingly, none of the four women ever had their comments or student grades changed, yet the four of them had the strongest reaction to the incident. The women even developed a term based on the incident to define having comments changed and authority eliminated: “Dinged,” based on Steve Dingman's name. Vanessa explained that her reaction to the incident was based on the fact that the grade changing made her feel like the environment was “not terribly safe.” She said that it was difficult because on one hand, the instructors were trying to empower the TAs to bring

their own perspective and then to completely change Steve's grades seemed like "a violation."

The grade-changing incident poignantly affected the TAs and impacted them in several ways. Being "Dinged" was one of the main incidents that raised several issues for the women over the semester. Not only did it challenge their sense of self and shake their identity as a TA, the incident demonstrated how sensitive and fragile authority relations can be in a system. They were angry, they felt their authority was violated, felt lied to after being told from the lead instructor's that "there is no wrong answer", and felt Dr. Thomas was perhaps overstepping the boundaries of her own authority.

At the heart of the being "dinged" is the TA's insecurity and uncertainty about their identity as a TA. Katie mentioned a few weeks after the incident that she realized it was not even about a grade change, but about the women's belief in their own ability to self-authorize and their perception of the legitimacy of the lead instructor's authorization as well.

Tensions of Self: Age and Authority

While the women significantly felt the impact of the role tension, they also felt a significant tension around issues of age and femininity. Peggy, Katie, and Emily seemed to feel the impact of social identity more than anyone did, because they embodied both the younger and older members of the TA group respectively and explicitly named their struggle with their authority around their age. At the beginning of the class, a tension around age surfaced with the female TA's. Similar to the tensions already described, the issue of age impeded the way the women related to one another, and caused the women to struggle in their role of authority and question their competence and ability to

effectively intervene in the group. On one hand, the younger TAs were struggling with finding ways to take up the authority they had been granted by the lead instructors. On the other hand, the older TA, confident in her years of experience as an Executive Director, struggled to find ways to connect with her younger doctoral classmates who seemed to speak a different language. But the impact of the women's age was not only limited to the language the women attempted to speak, it also impacted the way they were able to hear each other and work together. The women felt the impact of age on how others related to them and how they related to others. The way they identified with age also influenced their assumptions about the pairs and alliances that they formed and how visible they believed they were in different parts of the system.

Emily was the oldest member of the TA team, and early on, she felt like her age prevented her from having a voice in the group. She explained,

I'm an old lady and if I had to guess about why that would potentially not give me a voice in the group is that I think most people look at older women and think by the time they reach that age they probably should have accomplished whatever it was they were going to accomplish and what's wrong with me that I haven't?

Emily believed that people would have a tendency to view her as not serious about being a doctoral student based on her age, and she felt that in order for the other TAs to accept her authority and work with her as a member of the staff group they would need to understand that she was very serious about being a doctoral student. Additionally, Emily was very conscious of the mental model associated with the "old-lady identity" and she felt compelled to not live up to that mental model. Emily explained further, "and I don't want to come across as the finger-wagging, older lady. So I think I'm literally prostrating myself so that people don't see that in me, which makes me, I think, come across as incompetent or silly."

Embedded in Emily's feelings about her identity was her sense that society reserves educational pursuits for younger people. In doing that, Emily felt society might question her dedication and intention to her role—both as a student and as a TA. Despite her years of experience as an Executive Director, or the fact that she had more professional experience than any of the other TA's, Emily's identity around her age disconnected her from the other women. This disconnection is exemplified by the continuous conflict and strain depicted in Emily's relationship with the other women TAs.

While Emily dealt with her identity as an “old lady,” Katie and Peggy were challenged by their identity as young females. Katie came into the TA role having had some experiences where she felt people did not perceive her as having the capacity to effectively demonstrate authority due to her age and appearance. In her first experience with case-in-point methodology, in the summer class where she was a member of the administration team, Katie experienced the large staff group feeling “a little disappointed” about the majority of the students being young and female, as if that demographic had less capacity to effectively learn. Based partly on that experience, Katie connected with the youthful identity, which presented a complex interaction between the authority she felt she had and the authority she felt others were willing to allow her. Katie connected the experience to her role as a TA and described how she really identified with her youth and how she believed her youth and other's perception of her youth contributed to her inability to use authority. She talked about feeling like her authority was restricted due to her youth. She said,

I can't use my authority because I'm young. Or I don't have authority because I'm young. I know that it's, I'm not using my authority because I think I'm

young, but it's not that I don't have it, but that I'm not using it because of that. That's sort of my excuse, maybe?

Katie acknowledged that the impact of identity was not only felt by the other members in the system who might not allow her to use her authority due to her youth but she also felt it, and provided her with an excuse to not exercise authority. Peggy also came into her role as a TA feeling like her age often influenced how others viewed her authority. Peggy was younger than were most doctoral students, and she taught undergraduate classes in the department where she would “often get confused as a student on campus.” Despite feeling like her age allowed her to connect with her students, she also questioned if her students challenged their other professors in the same manner they challenged her.

One aspect of Peggy and Katie's struggle was their mental model that older people more frequently and effectively held assigned authority roles. The challenge for the younger women—Katie and Peggy, especially—was to speak from their experience of being young. When they remained authentically in touch with their actual age and spoke from the personal and professional experiences that had lived, they maintained an effective command of their authority role.

Tension of Self: Femininity versus Masculinity

Throughout the semester, the women dealt with conceptions of femininity and its impact on authority. The women confronted, early on, what it meant to be a woman with authority and how femininity and social conceptions of gender impacted their demonstration of authority. This was a very critical aspect of the women's experience in their role as TA and the data suggests that gender stereotyping continues to have a profound effect on women attempting to hold an authority role. At the core of the

women's tension over femininity was the issue of owning and using personal power, while not allowing social conceptions of gender appropriate authority to dictate behavior. The struggle for the women was to remain authentic to their true self and bring that self to the role. Some of the women felt the pull to use their femininity as a powerful tool for authority, while others struggled to separate masculine behaviors from authority norms.

For the women who wanted to use the power of femininity in a purposeful way to take up their authority role, it became crucial to understand the relationship between the two.

The TAs, one in particular, learned that the consequences of violating gender-appropriate behaviors significantly impacted the way others perceived their authority, and as such, impacted the way others heard and received their voice. Additionally, the femininity of the two lead instructors—both whom had perceived masculine characteristics—added an additional level of complexity to the TA's understanding of gender identity and authority.

The issue of femininity surfaced during class at the beginning of the semester when Dr. Michelle Thomas suggested that Emily, who was the least feminine of the women TAs by socially defined standards, was “holding the issue of femininity for the TA group” meaning that the issues of feminine behavior had been placed with Emily, and that the other women weren't taking responsibility for their own femininity and how that was contributing to the group. Essentially, instead of the women equally owning and working with their femininity and the impact femininity had on the leadership class, the TA group, the women in particular, allowed that issue to situate with Emily.

To Dr. Thomas' comment, Emily replied that no one had ever called her feminine before. The TA's began to consider Emily's comment and think about what it meant to be

feminine and how femininity was impacting the TA's authority. A few weeks later, in the TA group meeting, the question was raised to the staff group asking who among the teaching staff is the alpha male? The TA's were using the term alpha to represent the person with authority and command of the group, the person to whom others follow and may even defer. The use of this metaphor illustrates how the social conception of gender norms was present among the staff group. While an alpha male exists in the animal kingdom, it is often used metaphorically when applied to people, given that the human social structure is not technically led by one alpha male that everyone follows. The use of the metaphor however, is not surprising given that leadership attributes are associated much more with masculine traits, suggesting that the person who exhibits a strong, aggressive, and dominant style is the alpha male.

Jen, the member of the teaching associate group, was the first to suggest an answer to the question of who held the role of alpha male. As she began to speak, she hesitated in her reply, but eventually pointed to Emily, saying she was the alpha male in the TA group. Jen explained that there were differences in the way that women engage a group, in a way that indicates how women are allowed to compete. She implied that Emily engaged the group in a manner atypical of women. The exchange over the alpha male and the fact that a female was named to be the possible alpha male in the TA group suggests that there are still many limitations around gender for issues of authority. Consistent with Katie's sense that the assertive or aggressive female gets "written off," Teresa acknowledged how she was put off by Emily's manner. Teresa reported about telling Emily, "There's an aggressiveness about you that shuts me down." Eagly (1987) claims that sex difference is the driving force for social roles and that men and women's

social roles define appropriate behavior. Clearly, Emily's behavior and personal characteristics did not fit the other women's perception of feminine behavior. As a result, she was labeled as the alpha male. The troubling aspect of this label was the gender limitation it suggested. When Emily demonstrated dominant and aggressive behaviors, she was given the label of alpha *male*, as if a female could not be aligned with the word *alpha*.

Around the discussion of alpha male evolved a discussion on alpha female, and who might hold that role. The identity of the alpha female took on a negative association with traditional conceptions of authority. Issues of competition and owning power defy social norms for femininity and are not in line with how women are socialized to operate. This presented a struggle for many of the TAs, and while they desired to fully own their role of authority and wanted to exercise authority clearly and effectively, underlying gender stereotypes presented an obstacle.

The younger TAs were not able to voice the competition they felt with Emily, being the oldest member of the TA team with the most positional authority experience. Additionally, Emily's identity shared many common factors with the two lead instructors; another issue the younger TAs were unable to voice. The TA's struggled with Emily's identity because Emily did not fit their picture of traditional femininity. Peggy described struggling to connect with Emily's demonstrations of authority because:

She wasn't doing it in a way that is consistent with my mind of how women should approach things, which is really hard for me to say because I'm very aware of all these stereotypes and these expectations. And I know that they're socially constructed. But at the same time I think that she's kind of represented this masculinity slash femininity thing this semester. So I think part of it was that I was just so turned off by the way that she was attacking.

Katie echoed this concern in a similar way. Katie expressed being frustrated around the way Emily would bring things up to the group because Emily's manner was inconsistent with Katie's idea of appropriate female behavior. Katie said that maybe Emily was "making us look bad, like as women." However, Katie continued to explore what the issue of femininity meant, both for herself as a TA and for the system of the Leadership Class. Katie brought up how Emily was not only identified as the alpha male but also how Emily commented early in the semester that no one has ever called her feminine, and Katie questioned "Do you have to be called feminine to be a woman?" and "Why can't she be the alpha male? Why does she have to be the alpha female?"

Dr. Michelle Thomas suggested that the issue the women were having around Emily's behavior might be linked to the latent competition surfacing among them. Since each TA had the same level of assigned authority, the women were, in a sense, competing for earned authority among the other TAs and with the lead instructors. Competition is a value and a practice not typically associated with women, and socially, women are expected to foster connection—to "play nicely" with each other—however in many settings, competition among women is present, but masked under other behaviors. The women transitioned to recognize how competition was not mutually exclusive with connection, and that their competition could actually enhance their role, causing everyone to perform more effectively. The women faced the challenge of owning their competition and admitting their desire to gain authority and power among the group. Dr. Thomas contributed to the conversation, saying that with women, competition is hidden in a way that "allows women to retain deniability". Dr. Thomas suggested that women mask their desire to compete and to win, and downplay the benefit of gaining the power that

accompanies victory. Instead, women behave politely and nicely, attempting to hide their drive for power and competition. The data, such as the comments by Jen and Dr. Thomas, illustrates the women's tendency to "play nice" and remain polite to each other. Also consistent with this finding is Peggy's report of sensing a "cum bi ya sentiment" from the women in the TA group and Teresa suggesting that the women behaved in ways that preserved other's feelings.

None of the younger female TAs owned the identity of being the alpha female. Jen, the teaching associate who was older than all of the TAs except Emily, commented on the reluctance for of the younger women to assume the role of alpha female, and suggested the role of alpha female might be a risky one to own:

So Dr. Thomas seemed to have some distinction[definition] about what it meant to be an alpha male, like as if that was the person who takes up the authority. And I don't even know what it's like in a wolf pack, but my sense is that there are times when we are or are not an alpha female. And what I feel like the younger women in the group are doing is pretending that they're not, or they don't want to own it.

I think a piece of it is being liked or not being liked. Being alpha female is a step up into a piece of competition. You have to put yourself into that and actually own it and name it. And you could end up being like a high school experience where you're torn down fairly viciously by the other females in the pack for doing that. It's dangerous. It can be a dangerous position if people are still operating, especially with females, to operate in that way. And the other thing is then you are also positioning yourself against the alpha male. You're actually saying I'm on par with the alpha male in the group, which is a pretty scary thing to do.

For the young TAs in this study, the reluctance to own any part of the alpha female identity signified not only their reluctance to own the competition and desire for the power that accompanies authority, but also signified the pressure the young TAs felt to conform to traditional notions of appropriate feminine behavior. The additional finding from this research project is that conforming to appropriate feminine behavior not only

prevented the women from owning the competition among them and admitting to their desire for power, it limited the women's ability to exercise authority because it prevented them from recognizing the true feelings that they had—the feeling that they desired power, and their anticipation to be good in their role of TA.

The issue of feminine behavior caused tension among the women that negatively impacted their ability to work together and prevented them from speaking authentically and owning authentic feelings such as the latent competition, their anger with each other, their disapproval over each other's actions, and their jealousy with each other. The tension and conflict that ensued caused many hindering relations that at times, caused the women to lose sight of their purpose.

Teresa reported how she sensed Emily's non-conformity to the other women's sense of feminine-appropriate behavior impacted how the women connected with each other. She said, "it seemed as if she [Emily] felt out of that loop and was rebelling against that, and blamed Katie and Peggy." Teresa continued to describe how the women created factions and subgroups among them based on who worked at the campus and who knew each other previously. She said:

All three of them teach classes there [Katie, Peggy, Emily]. If anybody should feel out it's Vanessa and I. Vanessa works there. I should feel out. I never felt out. It's like if anything, they all had more things in common than I had with ANY of them. So I think there was definitely competition of how they viewed each other

I know Vanessa and I made extreme efforts to try to include her [Emily], because we both felt that she was hurting. There's still a tension between Katie and Emily. Even to the very last day they can't hear each other.

Katie described how she was very aware of the implications for women in roles of authority and did not want to compromise her femininity in taking up her role. Fix formatting. She said,

I had a really hard time finding the like, angry, like bitch side of me in the TA group, in the class in general, I just had a really hard time finding that. Which I identify as, I try to avoid going there because I perceive that it may block me from going places I have ambitions about; because that's happened in the past. So if I'm perceived as being aggressive, assertive, a bitch, I may not get to the places where I want to get to.

So I think that translated into my role in the TA group, hard to find my like, anger, power type thing. So the authority I did take up was of a different tone. And [I] fell back on the logic and the reason, because angry, assertive, the bitchy type of taking up of authority sometimes gets written off as irrational or not logic. You know, not based on logic, like you're letting your emotions get the best of you.

The women felt the pressure of the social roles defined by sex difference.

The women really explored what femininity and womanhood meant to their authority role as a TA. They felt the tension of their own feminine identity—what they believed it was and was not, what they believed it should or should not be—and ultimately they faced the consequences of those tensions as they tried to interact with each other, with the lead instructors, and with the students. Their feminine identity, both their personal identity and their identity as perceived by others, clearly had an impact on all aspects of their authority, as evidenced by the perceptions and comments from Katie and Peggy around appropriate female behavior and Emily's method of exercising authority. Ultimately, the women's social conceptions of authority impacted the way they were able to interact with each other, making it impossible for some women TAs to join with others, even if they shared a similar purpose. Further, the emotions that surfaced for the women around the issues of gender and femininity often drove conversations and served as a form of work avoidance—issues that distract people from their purpose and from addressing adaptive challenges—for the female TA group. The data from this study clearly suggests that issues of gender are very prevalent for women in roles of authority—so much so that understanding the experience of women in authority must

include an understanding of the impact of the social construction of gender and of how gender appropriate behaviors influence a woman as she demonstrates authority.

Identity had a significant impact on the system. The challenge for the TAs was to understand the impact of their identity and work with their authority around the identity issues that surfaced—something they attempted to do throughout the semester. One aspect of this work the women tried to accomplish was allowing the feeling of vulnerability to surface and to use the feeling as a clue that a substantial issue was present and alive within them, perhaps signifying the need to intervene some way in the conversation or with the group. Often the feeling of vulnerability occurred for the women around the tensions that created contradictions and conflicting feelings.

Tension of Self: Vulnerability and Contradictions

The women experienced contradictory feelings between being a student learner and an authority expert. They also felt tension between their feminine and masculine selves, and faced the fact that when in authority roles, pushing people and exercising leadership often results in being disliked and speaking hard truths that others are not willing to hear. Peggy was explicit in both her interviews and in her reflection papers about her desire to be liked. Teresa claimed she resisted commenting on some topics in order to not hurt other's feelings. Often the tension around the desire to be liked and not hurt other people's feelings, and the desire to exercise leadership, resulted in contradictory feelings and even, contradictory actions. For example, while the women each wrote in their reflection papers about their desire and intention to learn and improve their ability to hold an authority role, they had very stark objections when Dr. Thomas, the lead instructor for the leadership class attempted to give them feedback and improve

their ability to respond to the students. Similarly, three of the women suggested that a female should be able to be the alpha female and take up the role with confidence and assertion, however, when Emily exhibited more masculine-type behaviors, they credited her with “not doing it right.” Katie went so far as to disclaim that she tried to avoid the label of being emotional and not exhibit the “aggressive, bitch” behaviors that women sometimes do.

The contradictions and tensions that I observed among the women, and that the women described in the interviews, illustrates the challenge of holding an authority role among all of the dynamic tensions that make it difficult to align one’s actions with one’s expressed words or values. There are several examples that illustrate the difference between the women’s espoused theories and their theories-in-use (Argyris, 1980). Essentially, this was the split between what the women wanted to do, or said they did, and what they actually did. For example, Katie said she believed that behaving in an assertive and commanding manner in order to take up her authority was a good thing for a woman, however, throughout the semester; Katie withheld comments and actions as to not come across as a “bitch.” Also, Jen expressed a commitment to helping the TAs learn and improve in their role, however she then made it clear to the TAs that she “would not change their comments or grades” in the manner that Dr. Thomas did.

Often, the actions and theories in the women’s mind were contradicted by the actions that the women actually did, exemplifying the challenge the women faced when trying to manage the many tensions that surfaced in their role—being a learner or an expert, being masculine or feminine, helping people learn or usurping their authority. The women eventually considered working with two contrary ideas simultaneously, such as

being both masculine and feminine when demonstrating authority, or competing with each other while still maintaining a connected relationship. Another example of a contradicting issue the women faced was being liked and disliked. Often, those attempting to exercise leadership run the risk of being disliked when they challenge people to make hard choices and face adaptive challenges. Both Dr. Thomas and Dr. Chapman spoke about this to the women, and the women recognized this for themselves in the interactions they had with students who were struggling with the class, or in the conflicting interactions with each other. On one hand the women acknowledged that in order to exercise leadership and take up an authority role you have to “push back” on people and they described how the high potential of being disliked when exercising leadership. However, despite their purpose to exercise leadership through their authority role, the women often behaved in ways that would increase the likelihood of being liked, again, revealing the tough task of following through with espoused theories. As example of this was when the women tried to come to Steve Dingman’s defense when his comments were changed, or refraining from speaking if they thought the comment might hurt someone’s feelings, something Katie, Peggy, and. Teresa acknowledged doing.

Teresa said,

I didn’t want to attack anyone, I didn’t want to offend anyone, I didn’t want to hurt anybody’s feelings by saying what I had to say, so I kept thinking how do I say what I have to say in a loving way that’s not going to hurt somebody?

In one of the classes, I observed that Peggy selected a song to play before the large group session began. After the song, one student commented that he hated the song and though it was a horrible pick to start the session. When Peggy reflected on this incident later in the TA group meeting and in one of her interviews, she said that she was

relieved he hated the song because she would rather have him hate the song than hate her. Peggy repeatedly mentioned her desire to be liked by both the students and her fellow TAs, and she said that often, the desire to be liked informed her behavior and possibly impeded her authority in that she would soften her comments or reduce a conflicting issue to prevent a disagreement.

Teresa interpreted the “push back” of leadership in a slightly different way. She described her own concern, not necessarily about being liked, but about hurting another’s feelings. Teresa reported how she felt moved to raise an issue to the group but had to really think about how to present it because she said, “I didn’t want to hurt anybody’s feelings by saying what I had to say, so I kept thinking how do I say what I have to say in a loving way that’s not going to hurt somebody.” Teresa struggled with this throughout the semester because she recognized the value of raising tough issues even if it resulted in others feeling temporarily hurt. Eventually, Teresa transitioned into the place where she let purpose guide and she spoke from an authentic commitment to herself and the group, allowing her to voice challenging issues.

At the core of their contradicting feelings and behaviors is the challenge for those in authority roles to allow personal vulnerability—the vulnerability that comes with allowing yourself to be disliked or the vulnerability that accompanies leadership interventions that might hurt someone’s feelings. The women worked at this throughout the semester with the guidance of the lead instructors, and increasing their tolerance for vulnerability occurred as the women become more effective in their role. Allowing vulnerability allowed the women to be learners. It allowed them to accept feedback, it

allowed them to admit uncertainty, and it allowed them to disclose and work with the various emotional responses they had.

Allowing themselves to be learners without compromising or sacrificing their authority is one example of how the women reconciled the tension of the dual role of student/TA. In their journals, the women described how they worked on owning their fears in front of others and opened up aspects of themselves:

Early on in the semester I was very conscious about sounding intelligent, not asking dumb questions, and understanding the multiple pieces of my role. In essence, I felt that my authority within the group could come from a façade that was masking some of my fears, uncertainties, and adaptive work in order to be taken seriously by others. I'm not sure that desire is entirely gone, but I do know that this isn't the crux from where I am operating now. I really resonate with Ford's (1997) ideas of letting go and relinquishing control.

The quote above speaks to the women's movement away from the traditional exercise of authority where fears, emotions, and uncertainty has to be masked in order to prove power and be "taken seriously." In allowing themselves to work with those emotions, the women experienced feelings and needs that they were better able to express to others. For example, Teresa said,

By owning my feelings of loneliness and isolation I am declaring a need for others, companionship, affirmation, relationship, etc. which goes against the norms of independence in academic culture.

Teresa's quote reflects with the women's experience that redefined their authority in ways that varied from traditional conceptions. The women worked with their desire to be liked and their need for affirmation as they pushed themselves to exercise authority, even if it resulted in loneliness or internal anxiety. As the women worked to find and use their voice, they encountered needs for support, for belonging, and for relationship. The women recognized that these needs did not obstruct their authority; on the contrary, the

companionship often enhanced their ability to demonstrate authority and speak the issues of the group. The power that the women found in their connection with each other will be discussed in a later section. Additionally, the women recognized the complexity of their feelings, and really tapped into their internal selves to examine how their feelings and needs were part of the larger groups dynamic. Teresa said,

I have begun using myself as an instrument to see if my feelings about belonging, relationship versus isolation, loneliness are present in the undercurrents of our interactions as a group or whether they are mostly mine to hold and work through.

I have always kept tight boundaries around me and do not let people into my life very easily. Opening up and speaking more freely with the group has been very difficult, but necessary in order to help me learn and grow.

Allowing oneself to open up to the group was a way the women took up their authority role—it ensured they were speaking from their true selves and helped them access their emotional responses. However, the women opened up, vulnerability was often the result. Because the women typically guarded themselves, they had to practice “using themselves as an instrument and this occurred as they transitioned into their role and become more comfortable with their vulnerability. In allowing themselves to be vulnerable, and allow both themselves and their fellow TAs access to their authentic self, the women opened themselves up to the possibility of a both/and situation, in contrast to an either or. Instead of being either a student, with little authority, or a TA, with significant authority, the women learned to be both. Peggy discussed how she was able to leave behind the idea of a “right or wrong” and not question, “Did I do the right thing,” but instead examine the situation and try to understand it better—again allowing for a both/and possibility: something that may be both right and wrong. Additionally, the women worked with wanting to be liked by others, while recognizing that the work of

authority and leadership may require challenging people in ways that push their comfort level. Again, the women worked toward holding onto the vulnerable feeling of being disliked by others at the same time as being able to continue to do the work of authority and leadership.

Interpersonal Tension: Anger and Dissention

In addition to the tension of the self the women experienced tensions related to their interactions and relations with other TA's and other members of the staff group. Many of the women struggled with their feelings of anger. They became angry with the lead instructors, with the students, and with each other. They faced the challenge of dealing with their anger in the context of their authority role and reflecting on what their anger might mean for the larger group and the struggles in the system. For example, Jen was angry about the lack of clarity over her role and the addition of Dr. Chapman to the class who filled the role Jen felt was hers. And Peggy explicitly expressed anger toward Emily in her journals and interviews, yet was unable to outwardly name her anger to the group until the last day of the class. Vanessa was bothered about being identified by Emily as a faction with Peggy and Katie, because she claimed they had "rejected" her in the past and were viewed "as one" entity, something Vanessa did not want to be included in.

Additionally, several of the women felt the tension of dissenting from the group and the consequence of disagreement. Some of the women's behavior in the class and in the TA meetings reflected a belief that agreement is good and reflects friendship while disagreement is harmful and reflects poor leadership style. This was illustrated by their desire to be liked and the pervasive "politeness" and "cum bi ya" sentiment that several

women reported existed among them. However, the women openly expressed their feelings of dissent in their journal entries and in their interviews. The lead instructors, Dr. Chapman and Dr. Thomas, worked with the TA's to consider the possibility that dissent in the group is a useful tool for determining an adaptive challenge and that working with feelings of anger and dissent does not equate to destructive relationships.

Interpersonal Tension: Anger

The women experienced a complicated tension over their relationship with the two lead authorities in the class: Dr. Thomas and Dr. Chapman. All six participants expressed admiration for the experience and expertise that Dr. Thomas has in the leadership class philosophy and in group relations methods, however, despite their desire to connect with her, four of them expressed a distance from her or a lack of connection. Throughout the semester the TA's expressed anger that the course was "easier this time around" for the students than it had been for them. Jen, now in the role of teaching associate, described being frustrated that the TAs had a syllabus and their own instructor, Dr. Chapman, to support them in their work. She described how Dr. Thomas did not set her aside and say, "now let's talk about you as a 580 student." Instead, Jen took up her role the way she wanted to. She took her own initiative for writing a journal and recording her reflections to use them as tools for what might be surfacing with the group. She said, "I came up with my OWN syllabus (laugh). I wrote my OWN journal, saying I'm going to write a journal because obviously I've got to do something else because I'm getting credit for this."

At the core of their frustration was anger toward the lead instructors. In many ways, they used their anger as a bracket for the lack of connection many of them felt with the instructors, particularly with Dr. Thomas. Each of the women described Dr. Thomas' demonstration of authority in a very positive way. They referred to her as a "guru" and said her authority was "extremely clear and not muddled." They described her as having a "command" of the class and of the students and being "masterful" at intervening with the students and supporting their learning. At the heart of their opinion of her authority style is their desire to connect with her and be viewed positively in her eyes. When incidents occurred that challenged this connection the women got angry, yet they did not express their anger directly at Dr. Thomas. The "Dinged" grade-changing incident exemplifies this. The women reacted strongly for weeks to this incident and felt their authority had been usurped before they really got a chance to apply it to the students; however none of the women explicitly addressed Dr. Thomas and owned their anger with her for changing the grade.

The women also got angry at the technical errors or problems that surfaced throughout the class. For example, Katie expressed frustration that Dr. Thomas had not written the movie assignment until the movie was actually playing in the class. Emily was frustrated that Jason, one of the teaching associates, had not released the grades to the students by the specified deadline. And Jen was angry that Dr. Chapman never met with the teaching associates without the teaching assistants. At the core of all the anger toward the higher authority roles was the desire for connection with the people in those roles. Often the feeling turned to jealousy when others were perceived to have a greater connection with the lead staff. Jen, the teaching associate, was able to own her frustration

and jealously over a male teaching associates close relationship with Dr. Thomas and the fact that he was going with Dr. Thomas to Thailand to do some work with her around leadership.

Katie explicitly owned and named her anger toward Dr. Thomas in her final paper for the TA consulting class. In doing this, she acknowledged that she was angry and frustrated about “not feeling joined or collaborated with” by her advisor and supervisor, and she had a perception that “Dr. Thomas has avoided joining with me in my time at USD for whatever reasons and representations.” Katie claimed that many of her efforts for advocating for the TAs, such as in the grade-changing case, was a result of a “desire to criticize or interact with the figure of authority” she hadn’t been successful at connecting with.

The desire for connection was very strong with the women, and many of their behaviors reflected attempts to connect with certain people or disconnect with others—both their TA peers and the higher teaching staff. In many ways, a connection with a higher level of authority served as a form of authorization and could even be viewed by others as a way to earn some authority. The women all expressed a desire to connect with Dr. Thomas—Jen explicitly named wanting to have a close relationship with Dr. Thomas—due, in part, to Dr. Thomas’ expertise and ultimate authority in the leadership class. The women perceived a connection with the lead authority to signify successful earned authority, as if being close with the Dr. Thomas reflected the women’s ability and expertise in the work. Peggy felt authorized when she was asked to be a TA by the two lead instructors, and the multiple connections that she had with Dr. Chapman, served as a comfort for her as well.

The women had difficulty expressing their anger because they valued “being liked” and having “allies,” two things that they believed anger would impede. Additionally, anger and other emotions are seen as impediments to authority, so the women struggled at times to find a strategy for using their anger in a way that served their own purpose and served the group. As a result, the women would not publically own many of the feelings they expressed in their interviews or in their reflection papers. While one woman could report in an interview that “Emily was making the women look bad” or that she was “doing it wrong,” she could not voice that to Emily and the teaching staff group. Additionally, it became easier to direct the anger at other people or other situations than to direct that anger at the highest authority, especially when that authority is evaluating your work and assigning a grade. The women were faced with the challenge of using their anger as a clue or sign for a relevant issue, and recognizing that anger and disagreement does not prevent positive connection.

Interpersonal Tension: Dissention

Some of the women expressed difficulty in speaking up if they knew that what they had to say would challenge the normative discourse of the system or directly challenge authority. Teresa described the difficulty in being a voice that stands alone. After the election most of the teaching staff group was talking with positive sentiment over Obama taking office. During the conversation, Teresa felt that not only was her perspective missing from the group, but also the group wasn't naming the possibility that any other perspectives might exist. Therefore, after feeling her body react to the conversation, Teresa felt she could take up her own authority by speaking. She describes the feeling of urgency to intervene with the group.

And I felt at that moment intense pressure to, I can either speak or not speak, but if I don't speak then it would seem as if I'm colluding. So if I don't say anything I'm agreeing with everybody and I felt at that point that another voice had to be heard. And I thought also that the group needed to know that there were other perspectives and that that was important for us to bring back to the large group because that was...we were mirroring what was going on. And obviously it was very much there. And I felt really a very strong physical response to have to say something.

In this situation, Teresa exemplified the complexity in managing one's voice and how the women worked to determine if and when to speak up. As the conversation was occurring between the TAs, Teresa was reflecting on the conversation and her place in it. She recognized that by not speaking she was contributing to the assumption that there was one prevailing perspective. Teresa used purpose to guide her decision to speak up in her thought that the situation faced by the TAs might mirror a situation within the student group. In her role at TA, Teresa had the purpose of assisting and supporting the students in their learning, so by raising the issue of the lone voice, or allowing for a voice of dissention, Teresa thought she was addressing a large systemic issue. Exercise authority in this manner required Teresa be thoughtful and reflective on both her own emotional response and the potential larger purpose of her role. She described the difficulty of the situation:

And it's very hard to be the lone voice and I expressed to the group that I was really frustrated with them and really annoyed that they would assume that we would all agree and believe the same thing. And that if you didn't believe the same thing that you were narrow-minded or placed into some kind of stereotype. And I wasn't confrontational with the group, but I was very expressive in saying there are other voices to be heard.

Teresa felt lonely and isolated, and she felt like she took a risk. She said, "if I open my voice, open and say what I have to say, I'm leaving myself out there for an attack, very obviously for an attack. But I need to say my piece." Teresa found the

courage she needed to self-authorize and express her position, even if she was alone in that opinion. However, Teresa experienced the isolation effect of voicing a lone opinion. Teresa said she felt, “lonely, but not regretful, I didn’t regret saying what I said, but it did feel very lonely. And I think leadership is sometimes very lonely. It is, especially for a woman too I think.”

Teresa experienced the effects of dissent in a system that supported one normative discourse. Often, within organizations, consensus is an underlying norm and the people involved contribute to consensus building at the expense of silencing other opinions and perspectives. Teresa demonstrated a significant amount of authority in her choice to speak up and provide the dissenting opinion despite knowing that the consequences might be loneliness and isolation. In Teresa’s case, she had a strong enough sense of self and was willing to bring her authentic self to the group. It is problematic when those in authority feel like they cannot contribute a dissenting discourse because of structural and systemic norms. Often, the dissenting discourse provides the alternate perspective necessary for leadership. At the very least, a dissenting opinion provides an alternative point of view. Remaining authentic enabled Teresa to work with the dissenting forces of the system and exercise authority in a way that was purposeful for her and the group.

Another way the women experienced dissent was in the interpersonal relationships that remained strained over the conflict and tension that manifested between Emily, Katie, and Peggy. The women disagreed over how women should appropriately take up authority, how women should speak and address the group, and how women should interact with others. The dissent between Katie, Peggy, and Emily that

surfaced around age and femininity was at some level a struggle with self-in-role. When people occupy an assigned role of authority, the self changes depending on the role they are in. The self-in-role determines both how a person acts in that role and how others receive them. For example, a person does not take up the role of professor in the same way that she takes on the role of wife, or mother. And people don't interact with others in a classroom the same way that they would interact with long-time friends during happy hour at a local restaurant. The self changes based on the role, and understanding the self-in-role can help people in authority understand how to act and interact with others, as well as understand how people might receive or respond to them.

Katie, Peggy, and Emily had an explicit conflict throughout the semester, and for the most part, they were unable to keep the focus of their interaction on their roles. Instead, they directed their anger and frustration with each other toward the person's self, without considering how the role impacted their interactions. This occurred most poignantly around the issues of age and femininity. While Emily came to represent the older non-feminine TA, Katie and Peggy represented the opposite—young and feminine. This dynamic exploded on the last full day of class with an interaction between the women TAs that was loaded with issues that had been festering throughout the semester. At this point in the semester, however, the women had built up so much tension around each other's identity and their perception of each other's self that they were unable to work purposefully within their role. It was as if focusing on the anger and frustration they felt toward each other served as work avoidance for their larger purpose. The three of them were not able to examine the issue of femininity and what that might represent for the entire group, including the student group. Instead, Katie, Peggy, and Emily remained

focused on one another, allowing their conflict to become personal, and they could not get any type of clarity around how their roles might indicate a larger systemic dynamic.

Peggy reacted very strongly with poignant emotions to their interaction on the final day.

She said,

Basically she just kept on not wanting to see any other side, just kept on, like she wouldn't even look at me. And finally I just, I don't know...well I got really upset about it and I ended up, I started crying, And I'm like, 'and you don't even look at me, you don't even want to engage me in anything and you know what? I'm done, I'm sick and tired of dealing with that and you know what? I don't care what you think,' pretty much.

The discussion above reflects the often-difficult interactions that occurred among those in authority roles within this leadership class when interpersonal tensions escalated to a level that impeded productive work. Once the work became personal and the focus on role was lost, purpose was lost and the opportunity for authority in the service of leadership was almost impossible. At this point, the women could not find anyway to productively use or work with their dissention and conflict. Working with the self-in-role was a significant challenge to these women who illustrated the desire and need to express and hold onto their emotions, and who had a tendency to struggle connecting with each other across their different identities and authority behaviors, as was especially the case with Peggy and Emily.

Systemic Tension: Structure and Competence

Systemic Tension: Structure

While the overlap of student and TA roles created a tension around the women's identity, a structural complexity from the design of the leadership class introduced a new level of authority that challenged the TAs. In addition to having the lead instructor of the leadership class, Dr. Michelle Thomas, the women had the added authority of Dr. Gina

Chapman who was the lead instructor of the consulting class. Jen, who began the semester having a slightly different experience than the teaching assistants, most poignantly felt this structural level of complexity.

Jen moved into the role of teaching associate after having been a teaching assistant for the past three years. The teaching associate role was a new addition to the leadership course structure. This role was designed to provide support to the primary course instructors, to handle most of the administrative and technical aspects of the course, and to provide support to the teaching assistants. Jen struggled with understanding exactly what was expected of her in this new role and how she could contribute to the system. She felt disconnected because she was “more removed from the students” in that as a teaching associate she was not assigned a small group of students to monitor and grade over the semester. She also struggled with the addition of another new role: the role of Gina Chapman, who was the primary instructor of the TAs consulting course. Dr. Chapman was brought in to work with teaching assistants, providing a more explicit configuration and structure to the Teaching Assistant class. The TAs and Jen knew that Dr. Chapman’s role was to work as the lead instructor for the consulting class the women were taking as students; however, they also knew that Dr. Thomas was the lead instructor for the class that they had their role of TA.

At the beginning of the semester, Jen clearly struggled with understanding how her role of authority fit within the Leadership class structure. She felt much ambiguity around her role and lacked clarity over her role expectations. Jen said:

So it’s not as clear of a structure as it was last year where I’m clearly the teaching assistant, I’m clearly in charge of supporting the students. Now I’m NOT a teaching assistant and I’m NOT directly supporting the students. And at the same

time, I'm not solely and directly supporting the teaching assistants because of Gina's, you know, role.

Jen struggled to understand where she fit because of her perceived lack of clarity in the duties and expectations of her new role. One element that led to her struggle was the expectation she came in with:

So it's difficult for me because I have thought that being in a teaching associate position I would just transfer what I had to the students as a teaching assistant and just sort of perform that same service for the teaching assistants. I mean, in some form. But it hasn't happened – and that's what I'm struggling with – it's not happening...

Jen anticipated working with the teaching assistants as she did with the students, however, when that expectation was not met she began to question the value of her role and how best to use the authority that accompanied the position of teaching associate. She said she continued to “do a lot of negative self-talk and put other people on pedestals,” which impacted her ability to demonstrate authority.

Jen's situation illustrates how role ambiguity can impede one's ability to work effectively within role and as a result impede one's ability to demonstrate authority. Jen did not know what she was supposed to do—the TAs supported the students, and Dr. Chapman was put in place to support the TAs. Essentially, Jen felt that her role as teaching associate had no real purpose, and she became frozen or paralyzed—unable to determine how to do her job. The lack of clarity over Jen's place in the system added an additional challenge to her transition. She struggled to find her place within the structure of the leadership class, and as a result, she struggled in exercising her authority.

Teresa also struggled, but with the members of her doctoral cohort who were students in the leadership class and whom she shared a research class with on a different night. She felt an unspoken resentment from them in the research class as if they were

reluctant to talk with her or connect with her because of her TA role in the leadership class. This issue was brought up in one of the classes that I observed and Dr. Michelle Thomas told the TAs that this was an issue about the TA's authority. Despite the fact that in the context of the other class Teresa had equal status with members of her cohort, her authority role as TA was powerful enough to impact her outside of the leadership class. Teresa described how she consciously altered her behavior and attempted to minimize her authority with her cohort in the research class. She said:

I minimize my authority outside of class, in the research class for example. I don't talk about it because there's no reason to give somebody a reason to think that you're trying to one-up them or make them feel bad; but I don't minimize the role. So minimizing the authority outside of like, not talking about it, not saying, 'oh we have so much work to do because we're TA's.' Why is that necessary? It's so not.

Teresa's example details the prevailing impact that authority has on people. The resources and power that accompany authority are often desirable and can lead to feelings of jealousy from those who do not have it towards those who do. This dynamic is amplified when people hold multiple roles in the same organization as the women did in this study with their dual role of student and instructor. The challenges that result from role ambiguity within an organizational structure have very real consequences for women in authority. Jen, Teresa, and several others worked to reconcile the ambiguity and find a way to resolve the tensions that resulted from the ambiguous situation so that they may work towards effective demonstrations of authority.

Organizational structure can create technical tensions, such as issues around routines, tasks, and policies, for those in authority roles attempting to follow the structural rules or guidelines. Throughout the semester, the women dealt with issues around the organizational structure that manifested itself in issues of authority. For

example, Emily was upset by one of the male Teaching Associates who did not release the student grades on time. Even though this task was part of the Teaching Associates role, Emily expressed her frustration and claimed she was going to release the grades herself in order to honor the time commitment that she set forth that the grades would “never be late.” In another example, Katie felt uncertain about how to use the documents provided by the lead Teaching Associates detailing how to comment on student papers. Katie resisted the “prescribed” feeling of following a script from the lead staff and refused to even open the document that gave her the directions for her margin comments, saying she wanted her feedback to come from within her, not from what one of the lead instructor’s had written. Emily and Katie’s experience reflects the desire to be in an authority role and have some freedom to demonstrate authority in a way that is not scripted, pre-defined, or limited by those in positions above. However, while the women struggled with systemic elements, at the root of this tension was the women’s resistance to the higher level of authority and the desire for more authority and power in their role. Jen named her desire to have Dr. Chapman’s role, and Katie, later in a journal entry, named her resistance to the authority of Dr. Thomas.

The tension that surfaced around structure was directly related to the women’s experience with authority and power—both the authority and power they desired, and their resistance to the authority of those above them. The structural aspects of the system caused the women to struggle to own their desire for power and their desire for a connection with those above them, and they worked throughout their transition on understanding this and trying to reconcile it.

Tension of System: Competence

Tension around self-competence reflected the women's uncertainty about their ability to effectively engage with the system in a productive and purposeful way. Despite many years of experience in other roles of authority, and despite being placed in the role by the two full-time faculty members, the women questioned their ability to effectively TA. When the women felt insecure about their competence, they did not demonstrate authority with much frequency, if at all. Issues around competence plagued the women largely in the first month of the semester.

The large group was a place where the entire class, students and teaching staff, met to work in the "here and now" and work with their actual behavior to demonstrate authority and exercise leadership. In my first two observations of the class, both which occurred in the first month of the semester, the women's voices were largely absent from the large group. Specifically, none of my participants spoke in the large group the first time I observed and only one of the female TAs spoke in the second class that I observed. This is significant data because the large group is a central aspect of the leadership class and the TAs task is to assist the students' learning by providing interventions that might guide the students to better understand the class concepts. Providing interventions in the large group is an essential piece of the TA's authority, and a clear sign that the TAs are attempting to exercise authority. The silence from the female TAs in the classes I observed hinted that something was obstructing their ability to exercise authority. The obstruction came primarily from the women's perceived lack of competence. The women questioned their qualifications and their abilities to be effective in their role and as a result, their authority was compromised until they were able to feel more secure in their

competence. When I asked them about this, they responded that they wanted to be “cautious” in the beginning and really look for data that they could put forth for the students to help the students. Teresa said, “I’m not sure what I see yet, I don’t know. So I’ll just kind of listen and watch.” Vanessa said she wanted to be “more interactive with” the students and in the large group and she reported feeling “like I’m falling down in that area, like I should be giving them more, but I just don’t know how to do that.”

Teresa had years of experience with authority roles as an administrator in the primary education system. She felt comfortable exercising her authority as an administrator because she knew she was experienced and qualified for the position. She brought this experience with her to her new TA role, yet she entered the semester with some reservations. Teresa said, “so I am excited to be in this role, and a little bit nervous. I question whether or not I’m qualified; I question my qualifications because now I’m just starting my doc program.”

Emily had also just entered the doctoral program, and like Teresa, Emily had previously taken the course as a student in the Master’s program. She entered the doctoral program assuming she would have to retake the course as student, but was presented with the opportunity to TA. Emily described her reaction to learning she could fulfill the course requirement as a TA instead of retake the course as a student,

When the opportunity to TA came up, at first I kind of shied away from it because I wasn’t sure that I had the skills to do what needed to be done. And then I decided I just needed to push myself and develop those skills.

Being assigned the role of TA was not enough to give the women the security that they had what it took to be effective in their role. The women questioned their own competence, and as a result, they held back on demonstrating authority. Much of this was experienced in their relationships with the students. Because of their position as a TA, the

women had authority over the students, and within the education system, the assumption is that those in authority have more knowledge and expertise.

Vanessa spoke about the TA role and the illusion that she had as a student that the TA's "have all the answers." She said, "I thought they seemed to know the all-knowing, and they just weren't sharing." As Vanessa entered her role, she wanted to find a way to be an effective TA even though she did not feel she was all-knowing. She said, "It's so funny now, being in this other role. You know that you don't know anything really. Not much better off than the students." Teresa echoed Vanessa's sentiment saying, "because I've had a semester of experience in the class already I just feel barely one step ahead as far as being a little bit more aware." But even feeling slightly more aware was not enough for the women at the beginning of the semester. Each of them still appeared to struggle with the exercise of authority. Much of the struggle for the women was due to their belief that those in authority should have the answers and should operate from a place of "knowing." The women transitioned to a place where they could view themselves not as "incompetent" but as learners striving to improve themselves in their role as a TA.

Vanessa explicitly named feeling incompetent as the principle reason for her struggle with intervening in the large group and demonstrating authority. She said,

It is the feeling of incompetence. Like I'm almost scared that they're going to ask me something that I don't know the answer to, or they're going to find me out. This whole illusion that the 'TA is all knowing' is going to be revealed, uncovered. And I don't want to be the one who blows our cover, you know?

The incompetent feelings are a result of the role being new and unfamiliar to the women. For many Graduate Teaching Assistants the role is new and unfamiliar, and without adequate training, many Teaching Assistants feel unprepared like they must 'sink or swim' once they enter the classroom (Lowman & Mathie, 1993). Again, the TAs in

this class had the benefit of awareness, openness, and reflection on their feelings. Additionally, the women had the support of the two lead instructors and the three teaching associates to assist them in the transition. The issue of competence was explicitly addressed in the staff group meetings the first month in both the classes I observed and the lead instructors assisted the women by helping them reflect on the source and depth of their feelings. This systematic mentoring (Boyle & Boice, 1998) and weekly feedback from the lead instructors significantly helped the women feel more secure in their role as TA, and aided them in their transition. The women reported that the assistance and support of the two lead instructor's were one of the primary elements that assisted them in their role and helped them transition into a more effective TA.

In this leadership class, the authority role was a specific and open topic of conversation. As a result, the women worked through the issues that challenged their power and influence in the classroom, the issues that deterred their demonstration of authority. Most TA mentor relationships do not focus on the authority dynamic of the role and instead focus on instructional strategies (Roach, 1991). The data from this project suggests that when TAs focus on the authority dynamic and become aware of the obstacles that impede their authority, such as anxiety over role and feelings of incompetence, the TA will feel more comfortable in role and be more likely to exercise authority. The women's consulting class, their 580 course, was designed for learning and evaluation of the women in their TA role. Katie said in her final interview:

I think the transition to understanding what's going on in the here and now has a lot less to do with logic and a lot more to do with representation. And the 580 class I think is key for that. It gave me a literal group [the TA group], so if something is going on in one faction of the group, we can look at the rest of the group, which gives us a whole lot of clues about what's going on with the faction, or the two or the one or whatever.

The women improved their feeling of competence through increasing their capacity to understand what was being represented from the members of the TA group—both the individuals and the various subgroups—as a way to better understand the larger class system and how they might use their authority in the service of the class purpose.

Understanding that representation occurred when the women allowed themselves to really listen attentively to what was said and what was not said in the group. This was a part of how the women learned to manage their voice over the semester. The women benefited from the practice of demonstrating authority and the practice of accessing their authority in their role as TA:

In the TA group it's a nice, sort of a nice playing field, just to look at like, okay what's the rest of my group doing? What's the rest of my team doing? If I can look to my teammates I can find clues, it's just a more present way to practice that.

This role of TA was designed for the women to practice, and they entered into the role knowing that they would encounter challenges but that they would also improve as TAs over the course of the semester. Katie's quote above illustrates the potential for learning in the role of TA, and how development and support can increase competency. Additionally, Katie revealed how the TA "team" learned from each other, and provided each other support and examples on the process involved in demonstrating authority. However, the women gained the most from accessing their own self and working with that self within the TA role. One woman said,

I think a lot of that has to do with self-access for exercising authority. So the fact that being able to access myself more fully is going to enhance, color is the wrong word, I always use the literal term. But it's like it would like flesh out my terms of authority, if I've got some real self-access going. And that serves the system, it serves purpose, it serves my group, which serves my learning.

The women worked with their feelings of incompetence and found ways to reconcile the feelings so that they may better demonstrate their authority. The reconciliation of their feelings of incompetence and their ability to work with those feelings were a large piece of the women's transition over the semester, as was demonstrated by their increased interventions in the large group and their willingness to confront deeper issues in their reflections at the end of the semester. In addition to the feedback and interaction with the staff group, the women found initial validation and authorization in their abilities when they were asked by one of the lead faculty members, Dr. Thomas or Dr. Chapman, to take on the role of TA. In some way, being asked to TA validated the women's skills and ability, even if the women did not recognize the ability themselves.

Peggy had the experience of being asked to TA by both Dr. Thomas and Dr. Chapman—the instructor of the leadership course and the instructor of the TA course. Peggy had entered the doctoral program the previous year, and after completing the leadership class as a student, she vowed she would “never” be a teaching assistant. She described her struggle with her two TAs, one whom she felt was not helpful to her learning and the other whom she felt was too young and “not very competent”—another example for Peggy that confirmed her perception that youth is a detriment for authority roles. Her experience in the leadership class was tainted based on her frustrations with her two TAs. However, over the summer, Peggy attended a weekend class that had the same methodology as the semester-long class, and there she gained a “better understanding” of the work and learned that “nobody is perfect and there is not a right way of doing everything.” Peggy's sense of competence in the work increased and she

began to believe in her ability to work with the dynamics of leadership and authority. Despite this positive experience, Peggy still felt unsure about the TA role, and while did not explicitly question her qualifications, she found ways to mentally validate her ability to effectively work as a TA. She had a conversation with the Department Chair of the Leadership Studies program, Dr. Gina Chapman, who was also going to be the teacher of the TA class.

I saw her [Dr. Gina Chapman] and she said that Michelle [Thomas] (the Leadership course instructor) had asked if I wanted to be a teaching assistant and that she wanted to relay the message to me and so of course like I'm like you know these two big wigs want me to be a teaching assistant and so that says something to me about my ability to do it maybe.

The women looked for ways to gain confidence and feel competent and secure in their role—finding security in the invitation to TA, as if that invitation was an honor only extended to a select group of skilled individuals. While several of the women said it helped their confidence that they were asked to participate as a TA, they also found comfort in knowing the newness of the role was a shared experience. One of the TAs said,

all of us are new, so that helps me feel more confident, obviously we're all coming in with our own abilities and experiences, but the fact that this is a new experience for everyone—I just feel a little bit more comfortable.

The awareness of their transition and the reflection on the feelings and thoughts that resulted from the transition helped the women find their voice, work with their power, and become more effective in their role. While this did not occur immediately, it certainly seemed to have a positive impact. Despite the focus of the course content on leadership and authority, the data suggests that explicit attention and awareness of TA authority

assists with the transition and may help Teaching Assistants be more effective in their assigned authority role.

Using Voice for Demonstrating Effective Authority: Strategies

As the women became more familiar with their role and the tensions they faced, they began to manage and reconcile their tensions and develop strategies for effectively exercising authority. While the tensions did not disappear, the women improved their ability to hold the tension within themselves and work with whatever issue was challenging them. Often, the tensions became strategies, as the women were able to use their anxiety as clues and tools for understanding the system and for intervening with each other and with the students. Essentially, the women used strategies to understand what they wanted to say and to use their voice in purposeful ways. Often this included speaking out, while other times it included listening.

Strategies of the Self: Finding Voice

Finding, managing, and using voice became the central theme that emerged from the data and was intertwined within and among every other theme, making it the most predominant element of the women's transition experience to a role of authority. The women used their voice to speak and make interventions, and used their voice not to speak, creating a safe space for someone else to find their voice. The balance of voice—using your voice to speak and holding steady to reflect or allow space for others to speak—was something each of the women confronted all semester long. Additionally, the women encountered issues around voice related to their social identity, such as their age, femininity, and political affiliation, as well as with the relations they had with others in the system, such as with the lead instructors and with each other.

Some of the TAs struggled to gain visibility both with the student group as well as with the other TAs. Feeling seen and heard meant a TA had a presence in the group and was holding her role of authority in a way that was impacting the system. The women attempted to use their voice strategically to gain visibility, mostly among each other and the staff group. However, they also used their voice to make interventions in the larger leadership class with the students. Speaking and strategically not speaking became the primary way the women demonstrated authority. When the women struggled with their voice, they also struggled with their authority.

Part of the women's challenge was to balance how much they and others spoke. One tool was to use their tension as a cue for when to intervene. The women experienced tension around each other's authority in relation to how often each used their voice. Teresa described a point in the semester when one of the TAs stopped speaking as frequently. Teresa and some of the other TAs noticed the difference, and Teresa said that while she did miss the person's voice, she felt there was more space for others to find their voice and demonstrate authority through speaking. The student stopped speaking at a time when Teresa commented that she "had been really struggling a lot more with identity and [determining her] place in the group and [her] authority in the group." When the one TA stopped speaking, Teresa really noticed the additional silence, and she felt more space for her own voice, a space she wanted to experiment with. However, Teresa was aware of not wanting to simply speak for the sake of speaking. Her goal was to be thoughtful and meaningful in her expression.

While Teresa did not express feeling invisible, she did report feeling as if she did not have much of a presence in the TA group, due in part to the frequency of other TAs

who dominated much conversation. Creating space for her own voice to be heard was a challenge for Teresa but she felt the process was valuable, and provided a platform for her authority. Teresa's experience reveals the multifaceted process involved in finding, managing, and using voice as a way to demonstrate authority.

Other TAs struggled with the feeling that other members of the staff group did not hear their voices. Jen described feeling as if she was "not listened to" but attributed it to being "low man on the totem pole." Emily had the experience of voicing issues yet feeling like the group did not receive them. When this occurred Emily said she felt invisible. She explains,

There's been a couple of incidents in the TA groups where I made a comment and nobody really took it up, which is no big deal, that happens. But then there would be several unrelated statements made after that and then someone would say essentially what I had just said and then people would take it up. And I don't know, I really, I think I used old language. I think part of it is my age and I think I use old language.

Emily's example illustrates the complex dynamic of identity and relations with the issue of voice and the consequences of working with people across and around difference. Emily felt that her "old language" was actually a different language, one that the other, younger TAs could not understand. Emily's situation suggests that the authority team, such as the staff group, needs to discuss ways so that TAs can hear and understand each other. If voice is a central strategy for women attempting to demonstrate authority, as this data suggests, the ability to understand each other's voices due to different languages is an essential element for the successful demonstration of authority. The challenge is that groups often operate as if everyone speaks the same language, and often, the variances in our language are subtle. If people speak a different language than others in the group, as Emily felt she did with her "old language," it becomes important to

develop the capacity for those in authority to learn how to be “bilingual.” This might mean adopting a language different than our own in order to understand and connect with others in the group.

The women in the TA group—the younger women and Emily as well—would have needed to learn how to speak a shared language on age and on femininity, the two areas over which they were unable to communicate. This issue comes back to roles, specifically how roles define who we are, even the language that we use. When people have a shared experience, they find it easy to communicate; however if two people have spent their lives in completely different roles, they might find it very hard to connect. For the women in this study, they tried, unsuccessfully at times, to connect around difference. This involved recognizing the value in another person’s experience and joining around an issue that was real and relevant to both people. For example, despite Emily and Peggy’s variant style of dress or personal demeanor, they both experienced perceived prejudices around their age. For Emily felt she was negatively received based on being old, while Peggy felt negatively perceived for being young. That shared experience, the prejudices that surround age, could have provided a similar language for Emily and Peggy to connect, however they were unable to move past their more obvious differences to uncover the possible connection.

When the TA’s felt as if they spoke a different language from the group, or that the group could not understand or hear them, they felt less competent in their ability to demonstrate authority. This was largely due to the fact that the women’s authority was directly connected to their use of voice, so when they felt their voice was compromised they felt their ability to effectively TA was compromised as well. The interaction of voice

with the women's feeling of competence illustrating the common occurrence of how a tension can be reconciled into a strategy. Jen acknowledged the positive aspect of authorizing oneself to voice competence but described her struggle with doing it. In her role of Teaching Associate, which was new to both her and to everyone else in the system, Jen struggled to find a way to demonstrate authority in a way that served the group's purpose. She attributed a part of this to her inability to voice her competence. Jen said,

And I have to admit that it would be better if I would own my competence verbally. ...you know initially I think, 'oh I shouldn't voice my competence because it will seem like bragging or arrogance.' So I have this arrogance issue. But I think now I'm starting to see that not verbally owning my confidence, there's something not right about that. There's something that doesn't work for other people I think too, maybe it keeps them from getting to know me, maybe it keeps—I'm just starting to work with this—but it might keep them from owning their competence when they're around me. In other words, it's possible that me keeping my mouth shut about it makes people more intimidated by it.

Jen described the necessary balance between exhibiting arrogance that many people resist and displaying a confident self that can also help others do the same. This is one of the many balances for those in authority roles—the requirement of how much to say or not say. This occurred, as Jen described, with owning competence, something she realized impacted other people. This exemplifies another risk of authority—the risk of seeming arrogant in the effort to claim competence. Knowing when to use their voice and when not to was a struggle for the TAs, and is cited by Tannen (1990) as an issue central to women and their ability to communicate. Additionally, Tannen (2005) says that women do not enjoy verbal dueling and are very concerned with being liked.

The above example illustrates the integrated aspects of the women's process transitioning into their role. In the effort to not come off as arrogant in their role, the

women internally held on to their competence, struggling to determine when to speak or not speak. Issues of voice, identity, and role are all related to this tension. Another element of this struggle was the risk of being disliked and the pressure the women felt to be liked. In that pressure they did not want to hurt others feelings or come across as bragging. Peggy explicitly expressed a desire to be liked, and worried that that desire might impede her ability to exercise authority, if; exercising authority meant putting her at risk for others not to like her. Jen's comment above echo's Peggy's claim in that Jen does not want to appear arrogant, and as a result be disliked by others.

How then, can women be expected to take up their authority, gain visibility in the system, and attempt to exercise leadership if they hesitate in speaking due to a fear of being disliked? Additionally, how can women who, like Emily, hold an identity that makes it difficult for others to receive her language when using, use her voice to demonstrate authority? These are critical questions for the study and development of women and authority and the findings of this research project suggest that women can find, manage, and use their voice effectively when they allow their authentic self to surface in their role. For example, Emily could own her identity and her "different language" and put that authentic experience out for the group to work with, claiming her own power in her personal experiences. One way the women accomplished this was to allow for reflection—time for listening to their inner voice.

Strategies of the Self: Reflection

Reflection served the women in several ways. First, it allowed the women time to think about a situation before reacting to it. This permitted the women to take extra time to consider the best way to respond, intervene, or deal with a particular situation. Second,

the women used reflection to get in touch with their role as a TA. This reflection challenged the women to think about themselves in their role and think about how and why they were responding to people and situations. Third, reflection helped the women view the leadership class from a systemic perspective, remaining thoughtful and aware of the multiple perspectives that existed among the members of the class. This often included reflection that allowed the women to be more considerate and tolerant of others, and while they were not always successful at remaining tolerant, each of them attempted to reflect on the perspective and place from which others' operated.

Heifetz (1994) used the metaphor of “getting on the balcony” to describe how often effective authority and leadership needs a larger perspective in which an individual steps back from the action—in essence, leaves the “dance floor” to gain a sense of what might be occurring at a systemic level. The women worked to achieve this perspective and reflection was a principle way they achieved it. The idea of reflection and taking time for inaction is not typical of conceptions of authority that are often centered on action. Often, people in a group expect those in assigned authority roles to make quick decisions and show decisive action; however, the women found power in doing the opposite.

Vanessa described the positive impact of reflection: “I feel like primarily through the reflection papers I was able to kind of get my thoughts around the concept of authority, and being in this role, and being part of this group.” The reflection provided a space for Vanessa to sit with the complexity of her role and think about all the parts of the system that she was working with. Often, the TAs became overwhelmed with the demands of the class—providing helpful feedback to the students, working in the here and now, working with the interpersonal dynamics of the teaching staff, doing their own

papers and readings—and the reflection allowed them to release the stressful parts of the system and put it out for the group to work with. Vanessa said,

Every time we would do these reflection papers, for me it felt like the next session I would go in and kind of get it all off my chest. So that was great for me. And once I did that I really did feel like I didn't have to hold it all anymore.

Teresa described how often, those in a positions of authority have to deal with situations that do not have clearly defined answers, situations where more time to reflect might help yield a better decision or a better action plan. She described her experience as a public school administrator and how she would take the time to think situations through. This worked well for her and she carried it into her role as a TA. Teresa described how people often demand immediate action and immediate answers from those in authority, but a lack of immediate overt action does not mean the authority is not acting on a situation—it might mean the authority is taking the time to really consider the best course of action. Taking time to reflect and think is something important for an authority role. Teresa explains,

You really can say look, I need the time to think about this and I want to get back to you because I need more clarity. And that has worked very well for me. And it's not thinking about it, it's really taking the time to think about it because people want answers right now, but I think that, for me, that works very well and then we're more certain. I mean there's no guarantee if all your decisions are going to be good ones, but I'm more certain at that point of what I want to bring to the group.

Often, the demand is for the person in authority to be able to think quickly and make sudden decisions. The suggestion that arises from the women's experience in this study is that authority might be more effectively exercised through acknowledging, as Teresa did, the need to take time to think and reflect. Often, taking some extra time allows those in authority to gain a new perspective that might prove more helpful. Part of

the being open and reflective is working on the capacity to view things in a different way. Systems and organizations are stuck with business-as-usual, but, as the women experienced, often doing things the way they have always been done does not accomplish much. Vanessa reflected on how to take up her role in a different way. She asked, “Why are we continuing to do this the same way? Maybe we’d accomplish more if we could say the same thing but in a different way. And that’s probably what I need to look at.”

In authority roles, working with the challenges and problems that require leadership means working with a situation that does not have a clear and definite answer (Heifetz, 1994). These situations are complex and the ambiguity of the “right” answer creates a tension and anxiety that can be used to guide the behavior of those in positions of authority. Most true challenges for those exercising leadership do not have clear answers, and people in authority roles find themselves in the position to address those challenges. In the case of the TAs, they faced uncertainty regarding how much to aid their students and how to manage the relations among each other, which, at one point toward the end of the semester became a heated and emotional conflict among Emily, Katie, and Peggy, when the tension among them finally erupted and was addressed. In their role of TA—a new position for each of the women—they did not have the benefit of experience to aid them in addressing challenging situations. The women recognized the value in reflecting on situations as they arose and not having a predetermined mindset. The women often felt like they did not have exact answers. They sometimes felt unsure of exactly what was going on, and all of them questioned, at some point, the best way to take up their role. Katie described how a reflective spirit of inquiry worked to provide guidance:

I think there's something about the tolerating uncertainty in learning some things that I feel like I have a hold on. Like...I'm trying to think of how to say it, I mean it's sort of the spirit of inquiry idea and it's sort of this embracing uncertainty idea, but those are jargon-y. So from my own experience I think that means when you don't know what's going on, can you stay there and be like an anthropologist? Be like, I don't know how I ended up right here, but what are the symbols or artifacts or words or feelings that I can identify in order to make sense of my experience.

Katie's quote reflects the women's process transitioning into their role. The women tried to learn how to say what needed to be said while they accepted their uncertainty and allowed themselves to be learners in their authority role. This occurred from embracing the non-traditional notions of authority, such as remaining reflective and focused when you "don't know what's going on" in order to make sense of the experience and determine a way to demonstrate authority with purpose.

Often demonstrating authority occurs from an unexpected and unfamiliar place. Tolerating uncertainty is facilitated by reflection, which allows the uncertainty a place to exist and allows time for the uncertainty to be clarified. Included in reflection and inquiry is the ability to be open and curious about aspects of the system. Many of the women found that openness allowed them to hold multiple viewpoints, other than their own. Being open to multiple possibilities helped them work with the dynamic and complex nature of the system, and with the dynamic and complex nature of their roles. One component that emerged from their openness and reflective inquiry was authenticity, as the women strived to reflect in a way that authentically represented their true self. Katie talked about "entertaining the opportunity to look at things from a different angle." She was encouraged to do this by both the lead instructors who challenged Katie and the other TAs to hold their role of authority with confidence, but with a "spirit of inquiry and curiosity." In this way the role of authority was taken up not as the person in charge who

is all-knowing, as in more traditional conceptions of authority, but as the person who has power in the system yet is willing to be open and curious to multiple possibilities. Katie described how that openness and spirit of inquiry is “really valuable” and allows “interesting things to come to light.” Again, this finding seems to reveal a non-traditional approach to demonstrating authority, one that might be common or resonate with women’s approach to authority.

Emily talked about being curious, and how that helped her make sense of the various pieces to a complex system or situation. When she encountered a situation that was not completely clear she would go into curiosity. Emily says, “I dissect situations and look at it from beginning. When I find a situation is curious that’s what I’m doing. I don’t always have the answers and it takes awhile to drag everything forward and then fit it into place.” And the lead instructor’s told the TAs that it’s okay not to know, but “just say you don’t know with authority.” The women worked with this throughout the semester, and for many of them, saying, “I don’t know” with authority included a confident authenticity and commitment to their purpose. If the women felt they were operating with authenticity and being driven by their purpose, they could accept not knowing and take time to determine what actions or answers were needed. Much of the challenge for the new TAs was to sit with not knowing without feeling as if their authority was lost. Not knowing is common to many new roles, especially roles of authority where the demands and expectation of service abounds.

Interpersonal Strategies: Joining and Factions

Throughout the semester, the women used each other to find support and motivation as they attempted to transition into their role. This relational aspect to

authority differed from the collaborative relational approach many scholars claim define women's leadership style (Helgesen, 1990; Lipman-Blumen, 1992). The relations the women TAs formed were not used as techniques for solving problems, but rather as support for authorization that enabled the women to exercise authority.

At the beginning of the semester Emily said, "One of the things that I think is important is to recognize the groups of people and what people are holding for each other." In some instances, as in the case of Emily who was holding the feminine/masculine balance, the relations that surfaced did not result in gaining a supportive ally. However, most of the women actively sought out allies for encouragement during the transition process into their TA role. Most of the women were paired with another person; and this did not always happen by choice. Being paired meant being connected or linked to another, and might have occurred by choice, as in the case of Katie and Peggy who were paired as the younger, female TA's that worked for the leadership department, or pairing might have occurred as a result of two people voicing or representing the same issue, as it did with Jen and one of the male TA's who repeatedly voiced concern over the structure of the class. As she entered her role struggling over several aspects, Jen found herself holding the issue of structure for the group, and she was paired with a TA who she felt, was not the best ally. Jen says,

It doesn't help that the only ally I have in this is the guy who deep-sixed himself in the first meeting with his whole drama around structure. ...so my ally is not the best ally in the world, since he is facing the same issue of not being heard around this because he's perceived in the role he's taken up. And I'm perceived in the role of course coordinator.

Jen's comments indicate that being paired with someone may actually impede authority. This idea was also reflected in Katie's comment that Emily was "making

[them] look bad, as women”—and that being paired with Emily could diminish the possibility for earned authority. The women worked to find a pair or an ally that would enhance their authority. The utmost connection could occur with those in higher roles of authority, in this case, with Dr. Chapman or Dr. Thomas.

Peggy found a connection and ally with Dr. Gina Chapman, who, in addition to being the instructor of the TA class, held several different roles with Peggy, i.e., advisor, supervisor, and mentor. Peggy felt comfortable with Dr. Chapman and had worked with her in several different capacities. The comfort she felt with Dr. Chapman helped Peggy when situations in the class became very uncomfortable.

Vanessa found a connection after raising an issue with a male member of the teaching associate group. She found out how a powerful connection can occur “with someone over disagreement or conflict.” This concept was difficult for her to really grasp, but one possibility is the authenticity that Vanessa used in raising the issue helped her stay very true to the purpose of the class and of the TA group. She exercised her authority to raise a difficult issue and confront the teaching associate, over a disagreement, but she used her experience to further the group objective. In this way, she felt a connection with the teaching associate who shared her desire to further the group along its purpose.

Connections and pairs occurred among and between the TAs throughout the semester. Peggy and Katie were a self-chosen pair through their friendship and similar interests, however, the group also paired them as the two young females who both work for the leadership department. While Vanessa and Teresa joined with Katie and Peggy around the young identity some of the time, they did not have as tight of a connection to

the young female identity as Katie and Peggy. Emily was literally “paired” with a male TA for her small group, but she did not form an alliance or obvious pair with any of the female TAs.

Teresa intentionally entered her TA role with a small amount of caution, wanting to get a sense of the other people involved. This was to establish trust. She described the importance of understanding the significance of relations and trying to deliberately form strong bonds:

You have to see who’s involved and see who you can trust. Who...and what the different voices are trying to say and what they represent and then how I fit into that. And I think that because I’ve jumped in too quickly in the past with schools or with a leadership role at a school that I have found more success in waiting a little bit, forming relationships first, trying to hear voices and establishing my voice in that.

Teresa really stressed the importance of relationships and how people in authority must take the time to establish quality relationship with others in the system. She related it to her work in the primary education system and how she would open the door, greet every single child, and make sure she knew something personal about each one of them. Teresa carried this over to her administrator role and she brought it with her to her role as a TA. She described how she has always exercised authority by putting people first and forming genuine relationships because even with the power and resources that come with most authority roles, Teresa says, “you can’t do it alone.”

The women experienced the “you can’t do it alone” philosophy several times throughout the semester. Katie mentioned how having Peggy and some of the other women encourage her to raise an issue made her feel more authorized to confront the group. Vanessa credited “the encouragement of two women” as a main reason she exercised authority over an issue that was important to her.

Katie questioned her ability to “self-authorize” in the situation where she knew that no one in the group has her back, “especially no other women.” And Katie described how she often felt like she joined with women over issues that were important to them, knowing that they would join with her when she felt something important. Often, some of the women found themselves raising an issue on behalf of another person, when it really did not have anything to do with them. For example, the previous issue about grading that was raised by four of the women, although it was really Steve’s issue. Katie called this “carrying other people’s backpacks.” Interestingly, the metaphor of carrying other’s backpacks becomes significant when the metaphor is expanded to include other elements of the backpack, i.e. what might be inside—such as elements of a person’s identity.

For the TAs, the relations they formed profoundly impacted their ability to demonstrate authority. The relations also provided support and “hallway conversation” where the women could discuss aspects of the class, or issues related to their authority that were troublesome or problematic. On one hand, the desire to form relations with others is consistent with the literature that suggests women are unwilling to own their desire for isolated power or power over others (Holvino, 2007; Miller, 1982), on the other hand, perhaps claiming that women are unwilling to own their desire oversimplifies women’s experience. In the case of the TAs in this study, they each expressed a desire to improve their capacity to demonstrate authority; however, they did not feel that their development had to occur at the expense of another TA’s development. Or, simply stated, the women, while they were clear about their desire to take up their role and exercise authority in the leadership class, they also recognized the interconnectedness of the system and understood the fact that authority does not occur in a vacuum, rather in a

related and dynamic context with others. Understanding how to negotiate those relationships with others was a central part of their demonstrations of authority and they managed their voice in order to accomplish this.

Interpersonal Strategies: Compassion

The women used compassion as a strategy for demonstrating authority. The compassion that the women felt and strived to maintain was very much a reflection of their experience. Compassion from Merriam-Webster's definition involves an awareness of others' suffering or distress and a desire to alleviate it. For those in authority, often it is the distress that provides clues to what change needs to occur, so being compassionate as a demonstration of authority can be complex. On one hand, being compassionate may be more reflected by telling a hard truth, than by masking the truth in order to spare someone's feelings. The women dealt with this as they used compassion as a strategy.

Jones (1993) addressed the topic of compassionate authority when she discussed how a feminist reconstruction of authority includes recognizing the place and identity of the other and how exercising authority should occur with empathy and around the creation of a relational network. In several instances, the women hesitated raising an issue or intervening in their own TA group because of the fear of hurting each other's feelings. Even when Teresa had a strong physical reaction to the conversation and felt like she wanted to exercise authority and speak, she hesitated. Teresa spoke explicitly about not wanting to hurt other's feeling. Specifically, Teresa was concerned about one person who she felt was "in a fragile state." Teresa said, "I was worried that she would be very angry with me or feel already even more separated from me. And I was already not feeling connected with her. I was very concerned that I would offend lots of people."

The pull for connection with the other female TAs was very strong, and that drove the women to remain compassionate to each other. An interesting authority dynamic surfaced in that the women expressed much more compassion for each other than for the students. They spent much more time in the TA group meetings that I observed talking about each other and the relational dynamics among the TA group, and less time talking about the students. This only bothered one TA, Emily, who explicitly wrote about her belief that the TAs spent too much time on themselves and her regret that more time was not spent on the TA's interventions and interactions with the students.

The TAs strived to demonstrate authority with compassion because that is what they felt the two lead instructors modeled. Vanessa explained, how she felt students weren't doing well on their assignments, but the response from the lead instructors Dr. Thomas and Dr. Chapman was one of compassion for the process of learning:

Seeing how they responded when we would talk about the students in the class and the struggles that we were having and even when we were talking about the questionnaires and the students not doing so well, they seemed to have such compassion for them and where the students may be at the time. And even though we would all want them to be further along then some of them were, there was always this feeling from them [the lead instructors], of compassion...

Even when students in the class expressed frustration and dislike of the course methods, the lead instructors maintained their compassion, modeling how demonstrating authority with compassion can help a system work toward purpose:

And still seeing that they [the lead instructors] had such compassion for the students wherever they were in the process. I think that really helped. If they had that compassion for them, then of course they're going to have more compassion for us too, being where we are in the stage of process.

The TAs experienced compassion as a positive element to authority, and although they did not have compassion at every moment in their role, their awareness to the benefit

of compassionate authority impacted the way they demonstrated authority through the semester.

Katie experienced compassion as an authentic exchange with another person that she described as having an element of love involved. She said,

So when you're working for someone who has authority and who will exchange with you and work with you and engage with you in a way that has that element to it; I think there may be a place for love in that. And maybe that's compassion, maybe that's mentoring, I mean maybe that's what's powerful about working with someone in that way. Someone who is in authority and yet can have a powerful exchange with a person who has less authority.

Dr. Thomas has spoken about the place for love when exercising authority or leadership, specifically the way people can use love to connect and engage in a very genuine and commitment manner. At the end of the semester, Dr. Thomas asked the TAs if they had “fallen in love with their small group,” and the women reported feeling uncertain and a bit uncomfortable at the thought of loving their student group. Katie interpreted Dr. Thomas' question to reflect the deep attachment that can occur among people who work together in a loyal and devoted way. The devotion can be to the purpose of the group, to the people in the group, or both. Essentially, the love present in effective authority can help people work across difference, become bilingual, allow vulnerability, and own their competence, because the love reflects a complete surrendering of the authentic self, over to the role.

Katie's comment illustrates to some extent the compassionate authority that Jones (1993) describes—the ability to work across hierarchical levels, not as if those levels did not exist, but as if the levels of authority were not means to prevent people from working together and connecting. Using compassion as a way to exercise authority and have a “powerful exchange with a person who has less authority” helped Katie and some of the

other TAs connect with their students around the students' learning—which for the TAs was a primary purpose in their role. All of the TAs strived to support and help the students with their learning, to help them “learn in this environment,” which for most people is unfamiliar and somewhat uncomfortable.

Remaining compassionate and seeking out allies (even allies in positions above them) were the principle interpersonal strategies that the women used to take up their role and demonstrate authority. These strategies are not typical content for training Graduate Teaching Assistant; however, the findings from this study suggest that they are important and significant elements of the TA's experience as they transitioned into roles of authority.

Authority for Leadership

At the heart of the women's purpose in taking on the role of TA was their desire to improve their capacity to demonstrate authority and as a result, improve their capacity to exercise leadership. The assumption embedded in the methodology of the class is the fact that authority and leadership are different practices, and while authority is not required for exercising leadership, the resources that accompany authority roles enhance the opportunity to exercise leadership. The women were able to distinguish their authority from the exercise of leadership, balancing the tasks required in their role of authority as TA, i.e., grading papers, intervening in the large group, with the tasks required for leadership, which demanded the capacity to identify adaptive challenges and addressing them. Being able to distinguish the dynamics of authority from the dynamics of leadership is an important skill for those in authority. While the TAs all hoped to exercise leadership within the class, they recognized that often, it was the exercise of

authority that the students needed over the course of the semester. The model that emerged from this data is an attempt to define the dynamics of authority reflective of women's experience in their role. This model can be used as a tool to guide authority development, with the assumption that those who are more capable in their authority role will most likely be more capable of exercising leadership.

Several of the TAs suggested that the exercising authority in the service of leadership begins with working up front around purpose and role, in addition to understanding what the self is bringing to the role, and understanding the role expectations as defined by the system. The experiences of the TAs in this study have shown the two essential elements of authority – defining and focusing on purpose and acting authentically. Katie described how exercising leadership is enhanced through the power of authority to influence “as informed by self-awareness and purpose.”

Katie felt that to exercise leadership one could “utilize authority in order to organize power,” and in this way, someone in authority could exert influence, “whether it's something that needs to be done efficiently, whether it's a routine, whether it's a change, whatever.” She continued:

And if in leadership you have a purpose that is adaptive, then you'd use power to influence that purpose, so for whatever adaptive thing you're dealing with, whether it's learning, whether it's change.

The women learned that exercising authority in the service of leadership is not a clear positive or negative experience, but is enhanced through an authentic commitment to purpose. Katie felt like she became better able to use herself as an instrument to gauge the group and make interventions. She felt more aware of group processes and she felt more security in holding steady and reflecting on a situation instead of immediately

acting on it. Teresa felt very good about her work with her students, and as a result, she felt she grew stronger in her identity as a TA,

I really connected with my small group. I felt that the comments that I made, that I was really connecting with them and pushing them just by things that they were doing as well. I just felt like there was this growth and also the encouragement I got from the professors and them saying how they felt about my comments. And they shared that I was timely, not judgmental, encouraging...so as I was getting feedback I was more and more comfortable with, okay I'm on the right track with my thinking. And because my huge role to me was to help the students. So I felt confident, stronger in my identity, definitely stronger in my identity and what I brought to the group.

Teresa's experience reflected how she really transitioned into her role, growing in her capacity to demonstrate authority and move the group toward purpose. Katie described how one result of her transition into role was "falling in love with her group." She said she loved "their growth and I loved witnessing their growth, the privilege of being there to witness it, the influence that I was permitted to have was all tied up in that, even though I had authority."

There were times in the semester that the women struggled with their authority and the need to explicitly exercise authority. This occurred with the women wanting to intervene in the large group, yet remaining uncertain of what to say or how to say it. This struggle speaks to the complexity of authority dynamics for a group of women who are balancing roles as students, as well as roles as TA's, and who feel the tension of the many aspects of the self, system, and society that influences and informs their behavior. Some of the struggle occurred with the women finding their place in the system and seeking the most effective way to exercise their authority for leadership and interact with others around purpose. Teresa explained,

I'm struggling with authority...I'm struggling with what appears to be the need to demonstrate authority. I don't think I have a need to demonstrate authority. I think

there needs to be times when authority is demonstrated. But I don't need to go around telling people that I'm in charge. I don't think that's important. I think if I can't accomplish what I need to accomplish without people recognizing me as an authority, then I'm probably not very good at what I do.

Teresa used “demonstrate” to mean a publically obvious expression of authority, and Teresa acknowledged that she felt often, effective authority occurs behind the scenes, especially if it is used in the service of leadership. Often, the exercise of leadership is accomplished with the resources that accompany authority but without the explicit declaration or recognition of being “in charge.”

The women all felt that their authority role as TA was an opportunity to exercise leadership, especially with the students. Vanessa struggled with not being able to help a troubled student; feeling like her inability to reach the student and get the student to improve in the class was a lost opportunity for leadership. While the TAs had dual purposes—to improve their own capacity and learning and to support and assist the students' learning—they felt the tension between working toward their own learning and dedicating sufficient time to the students. Many of the TAs named the assisting the students in their learning as the main purpose of their role as TA. Based on this, leadership opportunities arose through interactions and relations with the students. Vanessa described her effort to take up authority with one of her students,

But I probably am disappointed in myself that I wasn't able to help her more. And I tried I mean I said, at first I was a little scared of her, to be honest with you. But at one point I was like, this is silly. She clearly needs some help and guidance and she's not adjusting her path from this, from my feedback in writing. So I finally put on one of her papers, you know, 'let's talk. I'm here for you, why don't we get together and we can talk about where you are and where I'm coming from and how we can make this work.' And she never responded or got back to me and I was like, well I did my part. She didn't take it up

Using their authority for leadership allowed the women to get in touch with the purpose of the class and connect with others—both students and other TAs—around achieving that purpose. Often that resulted in compassion toward people, such as Vanessa described in her quote above. Other times it resulted in feelings of loneliness and isolation, as Teresa described when she voiced a dissenting view. And at other times it allowed for the feeling of love that Katie described. In each of the cases, authority for leadership included an deep commitment to purpose, a willingness to act authentically, and an openness to an emotional response.

Each woman had a unique and significant experience with authority. And while not every experience was characterized by a perfect transition into their role, each woman learned more about herself and more about what it takes to exist in a role that is accompanied by positional authority. At the end of the semester the women were happy the leadership class ended, but each felt some level of connection to the role TA that they would miss. For some it was the connection to the students in their small group, for others it was the connection with the other TAs, and for other it was the relationships with the lead instructors. Katie described the experience as connecting her to a larger issue that unites people:

It's not about skills, and it's not about a script because you don't know what's going to come. And it's like I have a suspicion that it's something about love. Can you love your group and love purpose? And I think that has a big, huge factor in it. That if we can't love each other, or if we're having difficulty doing that or having compassion that emerges as love for one another over an issue, how can we love purpose as our child and figure out how to use that as a bridge for us to figure out how to love each other?

Embedded in the women's experience was a desire to connect with each other, to connect with their students, and to be effective in their role. Their experience was defined

by emotional interactions and tension as they worked to find their voice and discover the best way to use their voice. The women had to hold many elements of their self, many elements of the system, and the influence of society as they worked with the influences and expectations that informed their behavior in their role of TA.

The model of authority [Figure 2] that emerged from the data captures the dynamic and interconnected experience of the women in their role of authority. The women managed the forces of their self, such as their identity, issues of competence, and their own thoughts and feelings, as they worked to find their voice and use their voice for effective authority. Additionally, the women encountered tension as they interacted with the system of the leadership class. Systemic aspects included the structural elements of the class and dynamics and relations with other members of the class, essentially, the women discovered the process involved in finding and using their voice when exercising authority in their role as teaching assistant. The model illustrates the tensions and the strategies the women experienced as they uncovered this process and transitioned into their authority as a TA.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS EXPERIENCE IN THEIR ROLE OF AUTHORITY

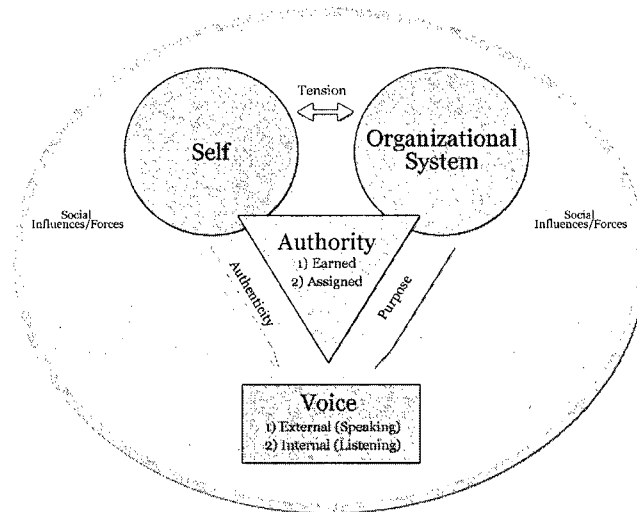


Figure 2. A model of authority

While the women balanced tensions from the interaction of their self and the leadership class system, they had to manage influencing social forces, such as social norms, and perceptions of socially appropriate behaviors. The women used their voice to negotiate their authority in the class, and while they each had the same level of assigned authority, their earned authority varied throughout the semester based on their own actions and their interactions with others. At the core of the women's understanding of effective authority was the driving value of purpose and authenticity [Figure 3]. The TAs felt their authority was effective when their actions furthered the purpose of the leadership class and when they brought their true self to the role. The components of authenticity and purpose are described below. The model generated from the data illustrates the complexity of the women's experience and may be used to guide a development program for improving women's capacity to exercise authority as well as support women in their role.

Authenticity: Bring your true self to the role

Speak from your experience

Recognize the value of an emotional response

Confidently own your features and tendencies (femininity)

Tune into your internal voice

Purpose: Act on behalf of the system or group

Recognize value in "not-knowing"

Take time to reflect on dynamics and processes

Balance external (speaking) voice with internal (listening) voice

Figure 3. Two essential elements of authority: Authenticity and purpose

This study suggests that effective authority can be learned and that for women the exercise of authority involved the discovery of how to use and manage their voice. The women discovered that this included not only speaking up and speaking out, but also taking the time to reflect on their inner voice while making space for others and listening. The women's experience with authority revealed non-traditional elements, such as admitting uncertainty, using emotional responses, using disagreement to foster a connection, and operating with one's true self. Many of these strategies are not typical of authority behavior, which suggests that in order to fulfill their potential for authority, and exercise authority effectively in their various roles, women need support and development. These findings suggest a direction for the future development of women transitioning into their roles of authority.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

This study attempted to understand women's experiences when transitioning into a role of formal authority as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). In that pursuit, many elements of the women's experience were examined, including the ways the women exercised authority, the challenges they experienced in their role, and the factors that assisted them or enhanced their capacity in their role as a teaching assistant.

The idea for this study emerged from my desire to better understand women's experience with authority. As I began my doctoral study and got involved with the case-in-point methodology for learning and teaching leadership, I began to view authority and leadership not only as distinct concepts, but also as concepts that had their own theoretical ideology and organizational application, i.e., the way an organization experiences authority is not the same as how an organization experiences leadership. While authority and leadership are interrelated and can sometimes be contingent on one another, I had a growing interest in increasing my understanding of authority, specifically women's experience with authority. I had experienced some considerable interactions around authority that involved gender, both in my own personal roles of authority, and in the roles I witnessed of others. Having read much of Heifetz' work, and much literature on the topic of women and leadership, I felt it was important to address the question Heifetz raised (2007) regarding the lack of an alternative theory of authority based on women's experiences. Finally, I had experienced both an academic and a practitioner's approach to "leadership development" and it seemed that leadership development was

common practice in many groups and organizations; however, the concept of “authority development,” on the other hand, was not as common of a practice.

I experienced my own authority development as a teaching assistant (TA) in a graduate leadership class. The dynamics and practice of authority were a principle focus and a driving concept of this class. As a TA, I was challenged to understand my own authority as it occurred with the students, with my fellow TAs, and with the primary course instructor. The explicit attention to authority was an added challenge on top of the other requirements and responsibilities I had in the role of TA, i.e., reading and grading papers, meeting with students, etc., however it was the attention and awareness to authority that increased my understanding of the complexity and impact authority dynamics had on the people within a system. As a result, I believe I became more effective as a TA.

From this experience grew my desire to better understand women’s experience with authority—the experience in which women transitioned into their role, and the experience in which women attempted to demonstrate and exercise authority. I selected the leadership class as the context for the study and the female teaching assistant group as the participants. One critical element to the context of this study is the explicit attention and awareness to authority dynamics that drives the leadership class methodology. This attention compels much of the TA behavior—both the overt behavior and the internal reflective processes. This attention to authority dynamics is a unique aspect to this leadership class making this particular approach to authority research distinctive from other contexts where those in roles of authority have little focus or attention on their role.

In this chapter, I will revisit the model of women's authority that was presented in Chapter Four and address the three original research questions, discussing how the findings of this study implicate several different topics in the leadership and organizational literature. Additionally, I will relate the findings of this study to some of the current literature on the topics of women and authority and introduce some new concepts that were suggested from the data, specifically the idea of women's authority development. I will discuss why my researcher reflections—presented in the footnotes of the previous chapter—were used to better understand the data and how the reflections added depth and connectivity to this research project. Finally, I will suggest some directions for future research related to women and the transition into a role of authority that will help expand the academic conversation on this topic.

The discussion topics in this chapter are based on the model and findings that I presented in Chapter Four. That model of women and authority reflects the data and the experience of the women—especially the process of finding, managing, and using voice—and drives many of my conclusions about how the TAs experienced their role and attempted to exercise authority. Central to the model is the interaction of the forces of the self, the system within the larger context of society and social influence, which resulted in various tensions that the women worked to manage and reconcile and they progressed in their role of TA throughout the semester.

The predominant strategy TAs used to demonstrate authority was voice. The women found their authority when they discovered their voice. Their experience in the role of TA illustrated the complexity of that process. The women strategically used their voice to speak and strategically decided when to remain silent to reflect or allow space

for others. However, the women also strategically found allies and acted compassionately in order to effectively demonstrate authority in their role of TA. The interrelatedness of all of the influences and tensions created a dynamic environment that really challenged the women's capacity to tolerate anxiety and ambiguity, while being thoughtful and purposeful about their use of voice and their demonstrations of authority. Much of the discussion below is embedded in the experience of the TAs as illustrated by the model.

The model of authority presented in this research project attempts to capture the multi-faceted experience of transitioning into a role of formal authority as a TA. The data from this project suggests that in order to support women transitioning into a role of authority, attention and awareness to the complex processes that occur as a result of the experience is critical. This attention will not only support the women in their transition, but also assist them in effectively exercising their authority.

A Model of Women's Authority

The model of authority generated from this research reflects the complex experience of the TA's with their role of authority. While more research is necessary to test if this model reflects the experience of women's authority in other contexts, the model might be a useful tool in designing authority development programs, as it outlines particular areas of the experience with authority that were most significant for the women in this study. Not only does this model provide a guideline for authority development, it also begins to generate an "adequate theory of authority to replace or improve the traditional practices of men" (Heifetz, 2007, p. 325).

This research project offers an additional perspective to the conversation in much of the feminist literature around the importance for women of finding their voice. This

study uncovers the process involved in finding voice—the tensions, the struggles, and the strategies that the women used in order to work with their authentic self in their role as TA. While most of the women entered the semester with mental models of traditional authority, such as authority as masculine, based on expertise, and suppressing emotion, the women discovered that actual authority and power came from bringing their authentic self to the role. Instead of trying to adjust themselves to fit the traditional conceptions of authority, the women's transition over the semester was characterized by a realization that their authority came from owning and using emotional responses, working with levels of femininity, and allowing for reflection as they balanced their internal and external use of voice.

The women began their transition into their role with an understanding of authority and leadership and a commitment to improving their capacity for both. In essence, the women entered the consulting class and chose to TA so that they could practice authority and leadership. In addition, they strived to make improving their authority a part of their transition. In doing this, they remained very aware and present to the authority dynamics among the members of the class and to their own practice of authority. The results of the data showed that the women determined two needs for effective authority: purpose and authenticity. In essence, these two components were essential for the effective demonstration of authority.

The definition of authority used in this study is power conferred in exchange for a service (Heifetz, 1994). The women accepted the power that accompanies the position of teaching assistant, such as the power to provide feedback and grades on assignments, in exchange for the service that was expected of them from both the students in the class

and the lead instructors. By focusing on purpose, and letting purpose guide their actions and behaviors, the women felt like they were using their power in a way that served the group and honored the expected service. For example, one of the TA's purposes was to support the students in their learning and assist the students in better understanding the course concepts. In the large group, the TAs offered interventions through comments made to the discussion. When their comments were guided by their purpose in the class—supporting and fostering the students' learning—the TAs felt confident that their intervention was a genuine attempt to assist the students, and was an effective use of their authority. Purpose helped the TAs use their authority in the service of the students' learning and assisted them in knowing their comments or action was not motivated by some other reason such as pride or ego.

Keeping purpose in mind and operating on behalf of their purpose provided clarity and guidance for the TAs as they transitioned into their role. In many cases the TAs struggled with different tensions that challenged ability to effectively take up their authority, but once they reconciled the tension and regained a focus on their purpose they were able to work towards demonstrating effective authority. Purpose helped the women in their role as student and in their role as TA. In the case of the interpersonal tension and conflict that surfaced, trying to work with the tension in the service of purpose helped the women bracket and control their anger and emotion. In many ways, purpose provided the women with a sense of what to do and authenticity provided them with a sense of how to do it.

The women experienced authenticity as a way to be effective in their role and as a way to help them with the interpersonal dynamics of the class. Being authentic meant the

women's values, feelings, and internal beliefs were consistent with their actions and reflected in their behavior. Authenticity helped the women to have genuine interactions with the other members of the staff group and with the students. Related to their authority, authenticity helped the women establish and maintain trust, which allowed the women to work with the other members of the class. When a person with authority has established trust, the members of the system are more willing to accept that person's power and are more likely to be mobilized to change by the person's interventions. In the case of the TAs, once they earned the students' trust, the students were more likely to accept the TA's feedback as genuine and learn from the TA's comments and interventions.

While the TAs recognized the importance of authenticity and purpose, each of the women experienced tensions around the influence of the self and the system. These tensions are illustrated in Figure 4. The women worked to balance their tensions, and in some instances reconcile the tensions as they developed and used strategies to find their voice and exercise their authority. The primary strategy the women used was voice—determining when to strategically speak and when to strategically hold their voice to listen or let others speak.

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE AUTHORITY: PURPOSE AUTHENTICITY

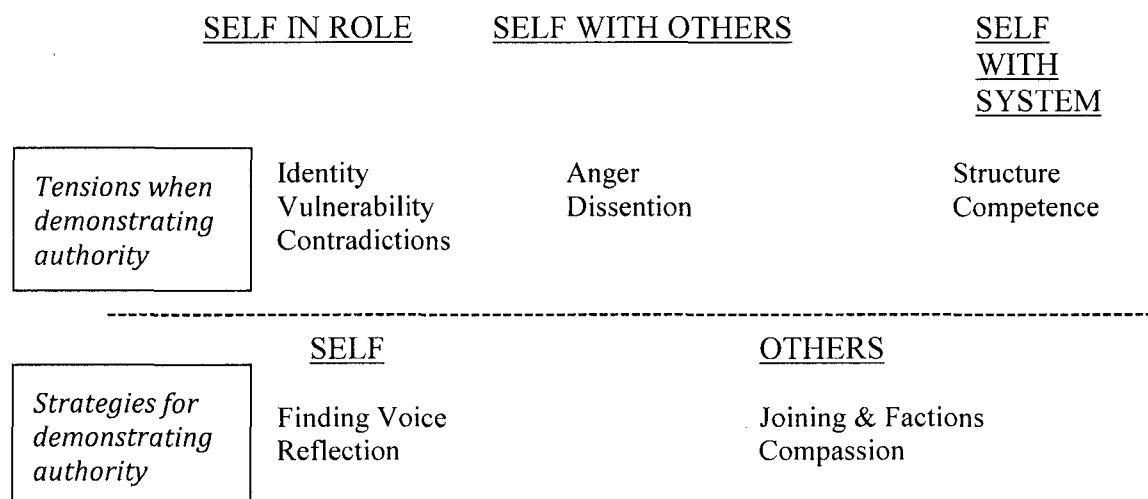


Figure 4. Tensions and strategies experienced in the role of authority

The graphic model generated from the data [Figure 5] depicts the women's overall experience with the transition into their role of authority as a TA. The women's experience was marked by complexity and overlapping themes as they developed their authority—both their assigned authority and the authority they strived to earn. This model is based on the belief that authority is its own skill; distinct from leadership and that the exercise of authority can be both learned and taught. The model provides a guide for women's authority development and can inform programs for supporting and enhancing women's capacity for effective authority. By understanding the influences of the self, system, and society, women can be better prepared for the tensions that exist with assigned authority roles. Women can learn to work with, and manage those tensions while they effectively develop strategies for exercising their authority in the system. Additionally, women can be taught the difference between assigned and earned authority and implement strategies specific to the development of earned authority within their system.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS EXPERIENCE IN THEIR ROLE OF AUTHORITY

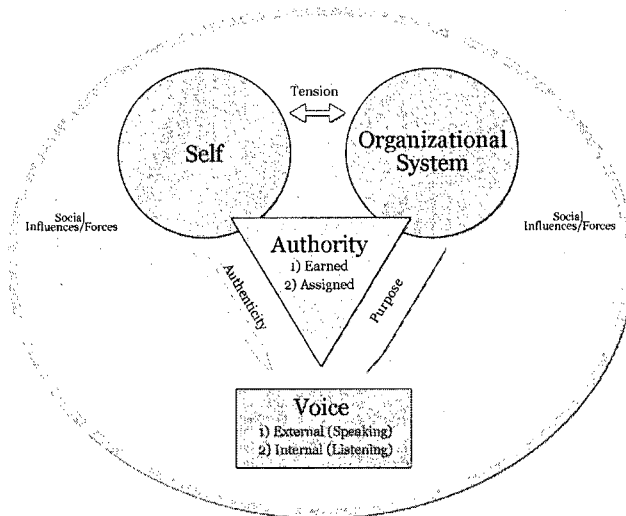


Figure 5. A Model of Women's Transitional Experience with Authority

Perhaps the most significant force was the influence of the self on the women's authority. The women found their voice by understanding the inner place from which they operated, and how that inner place impacted the way they interacted with others and with the structural elements of the system. Each of the women expressed an improved understanding of themselves at the end of the semester. For each of the women, this understanding involved how their authentic sense of self integrated with the defined role of TA in the leadership class. In many ways, the women's transition was a personal one. While it certainly involved the other members of the system, each of the women grew into their role gained insight into their own tendencies when demonstrating and working with authority.

Answering the Research Questions

The Transition into Authority: Research Question #1

This study attempted to answer the research question: how do female graduate students in a graduate-level leadership class experience the transition from the role of student, which has no formal authority, to the role of teaching assistant, which has a high level of formal authority? The women experienced the transition into the role of GTA, a role characterized by a significant amount of positional authority, with a combination of excitement and anxiety as they encountered a variety of tensions associated with their role. In their desire to improve their capacity for authority, the women learned that finding their voice allowed them to demonstrate authority, and this was achieved through a commitment to personal authenticity and systemic purpose. Much of their transition was characterized by the women's attempts to bring their authentic self to their role within the system and then manage and use their external and internal voice in the most effective way to exercise both leadership and authority.

Transition into Role

The transition into the role of TA occurred as a semester-long process for the women, however the experience was not linear, nor did it occur in discrete stages. The women's transition into authority in this study was similar to Leach's (1990) authorization process that included establishing position power, competence, self-authorization, and group member authorization. The significant difference in this study was the connection between finding voice and the women's authority. Additionally, the women's experience in this study reflected a more complex and interrelated process than was reported in Leach's research. While the TAs certainly experienced issues of

competence, self-authorization, and group member authorization, they did not experience these factors as isolated or exclusive. For example, it was the TA's issues around competence that impacted their self-authorization. Additionally, being authorized by a group member, which these TAs experienced as joining and finding allies, also improved their self-authorization and their competence. The interrelated and connected way in which all components of the women's experience integrated with each other resulted the generation of the dynamic model of authority, and not simply a linear presentation of the categories that emerged.

One behavior that assisted with the transition was the women's explicit attention and awareness to their authority and their desire to improve their capacity for demonstrating authority as a TA. The women recognized that, as new TAs they could gradually improve in their role and learn about their own authority over the course of the semester. Allowing for the gradual transition into the role of TA might be an important element for reconciling the challenges and tensions that occur when one enters the position for the first time. Often, when the transition into a new role of authority, like the TA role, occurs rapidly, students lack confidence and struggle to gain the skills necessary for the role (Berridge, Freeth, Sharpe, & Roberts, 2007).

The constant awareness and attention to their role allowed the women to reflect on their identity and their sense of self, while finding their voice. The explicit focus on authority dynamics allowed the women to be present to their experience with authority while working to enhance the transition into their role as TA. The other aspects of their experience that the women remained attentive to were the influences of both the system (the leadership class) and the larger social norms on their authority. The interaction of the

environments of the self and the system within the larger context of society, directly impacted the women's understanding of the social role of TA and required them to operate within each of the three contexts.

Perhaps the most significant of the three forces on the women's experience was the force of the self. The women found authority in the management of their voice, both their external speaking voice and their internal listening voice, and they found their voice through a process of bringing their authentic selves to their role of TA. In their position as a TA, the women worked with their own authority and tried to gain access into their inner processes, such as their assumptions, thoughts, and feelings. In doing this, the women were working with their self-in-role and trying to understand what that meant for their work as a TA. Because traditional conceptions of authority are based on ideas such as masculine traits, suppressing emotion, and all-knowing expertise, the women had to find a way to bring themselves to the authentically to the TA role and not try and fit a false self into the normative idea of authority, since that normative idea of authority was not reflective of the women's experience.

Understanding the self-in-role is critically important for those with assigned authority because the dynamics that drive both the interpersonal and systemic relations are driven more by the authority role, i.e., the power and characteristics of the assigned position, than by the personal characteristics of the persona occupying the role. The process of working with the self-in-role was challenging for the women in this study based on the women's tendency to personalize many of the dynamics. Over the course of the semester each of the women improved their ability to recognize the complexities that accompany an assigned role of authority and were able to find their voice through a

balance of authenticity and purpose—essentially a balance of self and role. Bringing one's authentic self to the role can be challenging for people with assigned authority to grasp because of people's sensitivity and desire to be liked. The women in this study certainly expressed the desire to be liked, and their challenge was to recognize that the students in the class were not reacting to them personally but to the role that they held in the system. Additionally, it can be difficult to work with a role of authority within the confines of a traditional conception of authority that does not reflect one's own experience, another challenge the women were faced with over the semester. In dealing with this challenge, the women used their authentic self in their role to reframe the experience of authority for women. This included moving away from traditional conceptions of authority and toward ideas of authority that embraced reflection, uncertainty, and femininity. The findings from this research might have a significant impact on women and authority in the way they uncovered the process of how women find and work with their voice in the effort to own their power and demonstrate authority.

As the TAs transitioned into their role, they improved on their understanding of self-in-role and better understood how role dynamics impacted their demonstration of authority.

Transitioning into the Self-In-Role.

Understanding the dynamics of how the self fits into role is a critical aspect for those in authority. The self—the individual factors that influence behavior, such as personal background, disposition, and personal demeanor—directly impacts one's role, however, at the same time, one's role—the expected behaviors that accompany a particular position—impacts the self (Thomas & Biddle, 1966). Often the role is defined

by the system it exists in, making the matter of self-in-role one rooted in forces of both the self and the system.

A delicate balance of the personal self and the assigned role is necessary to ensure that those in authority are remaining true to the systemic purpose while also being authentic. Often, receiving feedback becomes easier when a person understands how the self fits within the role and can accept feedback as criticism not on the personal level but on the level of the systemic role. In other words, if those in authority can separate their personal self from the self that exists in their role of authority they are often more willing to receive feedback and better able to connect with others around purpose.

For the TAs, when they struggled with issues of competence and felt tension around their identity they were struggling with how feelings of incompetence affected their feelings of their self. This occurred with the TA's interactions with some of students in the leadership class. Several of the TAs expressed on several occasions the desire to be liked—both by the other TAs and by the students. The TAs were reminded by the teaching associates and by the lead instructors that the students' negative feelings toward the TAs were feelings directed at them in their role, not at them personally. The lead instructors challenged the TAs to remember that often, people in roles of authority receive negative feelings and projections from others in the systems. In the case of the leadership class, this occurred from the students toward the TA's because the students perceived the TAs as having power and control over their grade in the class. Over the course of the semester, the women became better able to view their self in the context of their role as TA and understand how many of the dynamics that existed in the leadership class were a result of the role and the authority that they held within that role.

In other settings, the conflict of self-in-role can be potent enough to completely derail someone from their role—completely reduce their ability to demonstrate authority. At the beginning of the semester, Peggy explicitly named wanting to be liked, and Teresa described not speaking based on not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings or cause others to be mad at her. Both Peggy and Teresa were working on behalf of their personal selves, and when Peggy tried not to get disliked or Teresa tried not to hurt someone's feelings, they had lost the two purposes of their role—to help the students learn and to improve their own capacity for authority.

As the women progressed through the semester, they worked with the concept of self-in-role and transitioned to an understanding that sometimes, being disliked or causing others to be upset, accompanies the role of authority and is a necessary consequence of working toward purpose. The women discovered that the distinction between effective authority and ineffective authority occurs when the behavior of authority is in line with the system's purpose. When purpose drove the demonstration of authority, the risk of dislike or angering other members of that system became easier to accept and manage. Teresa experienced this when she finally spoke despite the fact that her intervention challenged the group's normative discourse. Teresa was working with purpose in mind and felt it was important for the group to hear. Although she felt lonely and isolated, she accepted and owned those feelings as an element of the process of demonstrating authentic authority and moving the group to address a challenge.

This aspect of self-in-role should be included in authority development because understanding how the self fits within the role allowed the women in this study to find and use their voice in an authentic and purposeful way. One purpose of this research

project was to better understand women's experience with authority so that women may increase their capacity in their authority role to not only begin to occupy positions of authority with more frequency but also begin to exercise leadership within those roles. Working with the self-in-role may be a significant challenge to women who are likely to express and hold onto their emotions, and who might have a tendency to struggle with connecting across different identities, such as the case with Peggy and Emily.

Essentially, working with the self in role requires those in authority to balance the influencing forces of the self and the system, both, which impact the concept of self, the concept of role, and the interaction of the two. Working with the self in role proved to be difficult for the women and something they continually worked on as a part of their transition. In many ways, one element of the complexity of the women's transition centered on the women understanding the dynamics and impact of self in role in the system of the particular leadership class.

Transitioning into Authority with Social Status

The women's social status had significant impact on their experience with the transition, particularly on their sense of competence, their identity, and on their relations with others. In this study, social status included the TA's age, perceived femininity, and religious and political affiliation. Peggy and Katie dealt with the issue of age and spent the large part of the semester feeling like their young age negatively impacted the way others afforded them authority. Emily experienced the impact of her age, but in Emily's case, she perceived herself to be an "old lady" and felt like her "old lady language" prevented her from communicating effectively with the other members of the teaching staff group. And Teresa felt like her tendency for conservative views both politically and

religiously isolated her from her more liberal colleagues. These issues of social status caused significant tension, so much that the women began to question their competence in their role of TA and impacted the way they connected with one another. In some instances, such as with Peggy and Katie, the women joined around the similarities in social status, while in others, such as with Emily and Teresa, it prevented them from joining or connecting with each other.

Portillo (2008) found that social status has a “remarkable degree of continuing power” (p. 152), and creates a power paradox when a position of authority, which has official status, is held by an individual with low social status. Additionally, social status forms expectations about authority and how authority should be demonstrated. As the women in this study experienced, often individuals in roles of authority “with traditionally low social status, women, racial minorities, and young people, have to explicitly shift the focus away from their social status and to their official status in order to prove their authority before they can access it” (Portillo, p. 154).

In Portillo’s (2008) research women would deny their social status in order to assert their professional identity saying, “I am not a woman, I am a cop.” In the case of the women in my study, they began to own the elements of their social status, and looked for ways to exercise authority despite the perceived limitations of their social status. One way the women accomplished this was speaking from the place of personal experience. For example, instead of holding onto the belief that youth would impede authority, the younger women began to speak from the experience of being young and find power in offering that perspective to the system. Each of the TAs clearly named the component of their identity that gave them a lower social status and attempted to work with it and

determine what larger meaning it might have for the group. For example, Emily said, “and the bottom line is that I am an old lady and I need to be able to sit with that and bring it forward.”

The ownership and awareness of the women’s identity that impacted their authority is critical element that facilitated the transition into the role. The impact of social status on organizational roles has been described by Merton (1957) and Meissner (1971) as a way to place an individual in relation to others. One significant implication of social status might be the how the social prejudices produce disadvantages for women in roles of authority and leadership (Eagly, 2004). Katie, Peggy, and Emily each felt that their age negatively influenced other people’s perceptions about their capacity to exercise authority as a TA.

The influence of social status reflected in this study as well as in other research projects (Eagly, 2004; Portillo, 2008) suggests that one component of women’s authority development should be educating people about the impact social status has on individual perceptions of authority. This might include helping women acknowledge and own their social status and learn how to voice it to the group in the efforts to use components of their identity as a way to achieve authenticity and effectively demonstrate authority.

Clearly, the TA’s and the system they were operating within was heavily influenced by the perception of appropriate female behavior. Emily violated that behavior and as such, was labeled as the possible alpha male. Being a female who had male associations gave Emily a lower social status in the eyes of the other women, especially Peggy and Katie. The issue of alpha male and alpha female became a difficult one for the TAs to reconcile. The alpha male situation illustrates the fact that gender norms and

gender-appropriate behaviors still occur and permeate people's thoughts and actions. The ways in which authority behavior aligns with those expectations greatly influences one's status and earned authority in the system. Jen, in labeling Emily the alpha male disregarded the fact that Emily was a female, and allowed traditional gender-stereotypical behaviors to drive her assessment of Emily's demonstration of authority.

Having a woman labeled as an alpha male begs the question: why would a female ever be called an alpha *male*? Cannot a woman or man exhibit alpha qualities of authority and be labeled based on biological sex? That is, if the alpha behavior is done by a woman, that person is an alpha female; if the alpha behavior is done by a man, that person is an alpha male.

I suspect that women (and possibly men) are still so embedded in the social construction of gender that many women cannot associate a woman who violates gender appropriate behaviors as a female. Instead, when authority and leadership are involved, the woman that assumes and exhibits a male style or identified male traits, becomes the alpha male. This incident in the TA class suggests a very critical need for more work to be done to unpack the powerful influence that gender expectations have on women and men's demonstration of authority. Aspects of this influence include how the behaviors of women are constrained or limited by the social expectations for appropriate behavior and what the consequences are for violating that behavior.

The dynamic that surfaced around social status became a topic that the two lead instructors tried to help the TAs confront and discuss. As a part of their transition, the women attempted to work with the issue of alpha male and alpha female by reflecting on it, and discussing it over the course of the semester. While they never quite reconciled the

conflict among them, the women became more aware of the impact of social status on their authority.

It seems clear that this type of dynamic would be present in all organizations since all organizations consist of people who each have a social status. The experience of the women in this study suggest that working with authority roles around social status would be important for aiding in interpersonal relations and resolving conflict—both which are often tasks of those with authority.

Differentiated Authority: Research Question #2

The second research question asked how female teaching assistants experience, understand, and think about themselves in a role that has a great deal of formal authority. The women in this study experienced and understood themselves in a way that allowed a differentiation of their authority within different contexts of the system and within the structure of the system. These two aspects of differentiated authority: contextual differentiated authority and structural differentiated authority helped the women make sense of themselves and others in the system. It also became a driving force for the ways in which the women attempted to demonstrate authority using their voice.

Contextual differentiated authority.

In contrast to the notion of a hierarchical model of authority, the women experienced the multilayered authority in the leadership class as differentiated authority. The term, *differentiated authority*, signified two aspects of the women's experience with authority. First, they experienced *contextual differentiated authority* in the way that they demonstrated authority differently in different contexts within the leadership class. Teresa, for example, described how she felt she took up the role "differently in different

levels of the class.” Teresa felt very comfortable with the students and comfortable giving feedback because she felt she was “good at it.” However, Teresa did not feel as competent in the large group or in the TA group. In this case, Teresa was able to differentiate her authority and demonstrate authority with ease in the situations with the students, but did not demonstrate it as readily in the large group of with the TA group.

Similarly, Jen suggested that women sometimes take on the role of alpha female and other times they do not. Jen felt that actively differentiating one’s authority on a contextual basis was an important skill for a TA. Jen’s assertion complimented the idea that exercising authority does not always mean speaking out or being the one to make a decision. Often, a conscious choice to leave space for others is as much an example of demonstrating authority as is speaking out to make a decision. The ability to maintain one’s authority while silent is an effective tool that may create a safe space for others to become a part of the system (McCallum, 2007). Additionally, silence may not reflect subservience to other’s authority, rather a way to fully reflect on and understand what might be going on (Schweickart, 1996). The differentiation of voice and silence, of being the alpha female and not being the alpha female, seemed to reflect an increased capacity for exercising authority. Recognizing the importance and the value of differentiated authority occurred for the TA’s over the course of the semester, and each of them felt they improved on that aspect as a result of their focused efforts to develop their ability to demonstrate authority effectively.

Structural differentiated authority.

Katie described differentiated authority in a related, but slightly different way. In this way, *structural differentiated authority* came to mean the different levels of

authority, such as the lead instructors, the Teaching Associates, and Teaching Assistants, each, which were distinct in their role. In contrast to the notion of a hierarchy, which assigns one position a higher value than the others, the notion of differentiated authority recognizes that the positions have a clear difference, yet they also have many shared responsibilities and many shared purposes, thus one level of authority is no more valuable than another.

Teresa describes how she would use the authority roles of the teaching associates and lead instructors differently based on what she needed. She said,

As far as my relationship I feel like there are many levels of support, depending on what I need to discuss. I guess I compartmentalize who I go to for what. I mean for example, technical, WebCT, turning in assignments, due dates, you know, all those little, itty bitty details, those things I don't need to go to Gina for those kinds of things. I don't need to go to Teresa for those kinds of things.

I guess you would say the cognitive, theoretical work, I think I would go directly, I tend to go directly to Gina or Michelle or read their comments to me; because I think they hold that piece. They're a little bit more knowledgeable, not to say that Jen and Matthew and Matt are not, because I definitely pay attention to what they think. But I think in that sense the theoretical, I think I go directly to Gina.

Emily echoed this saying, "You know it's different though, I think I would look to Gina for different information than I would for Michelle."

Differentiated authority surfaced in many ways in the leadership class, one of those being through the authority "style" of the lead instructors and the Teaching Associates. All of TAs viewed the Teaching Associates as contributing to the class in slightly different ways. Of the two men in the Teaching Associate group, the TAs experienced Matthew P as having more "technical knowledge" and presenting himself as the "one in charge," while Matt Lynch was received as being more open and capable of listening. Both men were viewed to have authority, but it was clear that it was

differentiated authority, and in some instances, one clearly demonstrated more authority and in other instances the other one did.

The critical element of differentiated authority is the fact that one level of authority or one type of authority is not more valuable than another. And this became a way that the women began to view situations—not as one being better than the other, or one being right and one being wrong, but as different. The women began to examine how making space for difference-without-judgment allowed more voices to be heard, more answers to be considered, and more demonstrations of authority to be present in the leadership class.

Embedded in the concept of differentiated authority and the idea of authority style is the notion that authority can be both formal and informal (Heifetz, 1994). Formal authority is power conferred by virtue of a position within a group or organization—as teaching assistants, the women had formal authority—while informal authority is power earned through the respect and trust of others. Heifetz claims both types of authority come with the expectation of a service. In this study, the women seemed to differentiate authority in a way slightly different than how Heifetz describes it. They experienced their authority as being assigned or earned.

Earned Authority and Assigned Authority

The TAs in this study seemed to describe and think about authority differentiated in two ways: first as assigned authority—as reflected through their assigned position as a TA, and second as earned authority—of as the power they gained through the trust and respect of their peers and the students in the leadership class. These two terms seemed to better convey the meaning of the two types of authority than formal and informal

authority, the terms used by Heifetz (1994). Assigned and earned authority reflects the concept of authority with more clarity, and seemed to reflect the experience of the women in this project. All of the women had assigned authority based on being assigned the role of TA by the lead instructor, yet they attempted to earn additional authority through the alliances they formed and the interventions they made. For example, as the TAs continued to struggle around the issues of femininity that related to Emily, Emily had a hard time earning authority from the female teaching assistant group. She kept her assigned authority in the TA role, but gained little earned authority from the other women.

Since the TA group each had essentially the same level of assigned authority, it was the gain and loss of their earned authority that they managed throughout the semester. Distinguishing assigned from earned authority is another way to further the distinction between authority and leadership. Heifetz (2007) and his colleagues define leadership as “the activity mobilizing progress” with progress defined as “the work of mobilizing people’s adaptive capacity to tackle tough problems and thrive (pp. 316-317). Based on the evidence that women are still absent from many assigned authority roles (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007), Heifetz suggests that women often exercise leadership without any assigned authority. This would mean that women are *earning* authority, or gaining power, through gaining the respect and trust of others. From this perspective, being able to understand how authority if different from leadership is important for women who still hope to mobilize progress even without an assigned authority role. This distinction is helpful so that women do not feel like their leadership capacity is determined by their assigned authority role or lack of assigned role. Instead, if women

learn that authority can be earned through knowledge and respect and trust, they can attempt to navigate those elements in order to gain the power that enhances the opportunity for leadership. Understanding the tensions that accompany authority—both assigned and earned—and how to reconcile them, can be helpful for women in role of authority.

The women were given assigned authority by virtue of their position as a teaching assistant in the class and in that role they attempted to demonstrate authority in ways that would effectively work toward their purpose as TAs. Additionally, the women experienced earned authority, both in the way they attempted to earn it themselves, and the way they assigned it to others in the system. For example, the women came to view Dr. Chapman as being thoughtful and knowledgeable, and while both Dr. Thomas and Dr. Chapman had assigned authority as the lead instructors, Dr. Chapman earned a significant amount of authority with the TAs as they came to rely on her support for their own learning and expect feedback and guidance from her about their work as a TA.

In the literature, most studies make the mistake of equating leadership and authority. When people refer to the leadership of a school system they are referring to those in formal positions of authority. Since women do not occupy assigned authority roles as commonly as men, equating leadership to authority has created the perception that women do not exercise leadership as effectively as men (Heifetz, 2007). This study attempts to distinguish leadership and authority in the hope to engage those in leadership and organizational studies to realize the importance of improving people's capacity for authority as a separate skill from increasing people's capacity for leadership.

Authority for Leadership: Research Question #3

The final research question asked about the participants' perceptions on how their authority was used in the service of leadership. Each of the women accepted the role of TA in their efforts to improve their capacity to exercise leadership through improving their capacity to effectively take up an authority role. The women held the assumption that authority roles, either assigned or earned, provide opportunities for leadership.

Working toward Purpose

In their efforts to exercise leadership, the TAs attempted to keep purpose in mind and let purpose guide and drive their actions. Teresa viewed exercising leadership as “moving people along and getting people to act.” She continued, saying that you cannot “have one without the other,” meaning that most often, leadership is accompanied by authority. The women acknowledged that earned authority, even without an assigned position, could be a tool for enhancing the exercise of leadership based on the trust and respect that generates the earned authority.

At the core of leadership was “purposeful” action. Three of the women discussed the leadership of the two lead instructors as being especially effective in getting the TAs to “act and change something” about themselves. In contrast, they recognized the difference between the assigned authority that includes decision-making power, such as what rooms the students should be in and when to give back exams or assignments, and claimed that while this did exemplify authority, those decisions are not examples of leadership. The TAs used the two lead instructors as examples of how to demonstrate authority in the service of leadership. When dealing with the students, the TAs hoped to get them to move, act, and change, as they completed the class.

Working with the students was the principal way the TAs felt they could use their authority for leadership. When their work with the students was compromised or did not end in a positive way, some of the TAs felt it was a “leadership failure.” Vanessa experienced a situation with a student that she felt she “could not reach” despite numerous efforts at connecting with the student and trying to support the student in her learning. Vanessa viewed the interaction with the student as an opportunity to take up her role of authority and assist the student in understanding the course material and methodology, but she claimed she received too much resistance from the student. Similarly, Emily ended the semester frustrated that she did not have more opportunities to work with the students and felt that more interaction with her small student group would have provided more opportunity to support them in their educational experience.

In their efforts to improve their own leadership capacity, the TAs spent the semester attempting to be reflective and thoughtful about how their actions impacted the people and purpose in the system. They worked with their authority role, gradually improving their ability to manage the tensions that they experienced and becoming better able to incorporate various strategies as they demonstrated authority. They viewed leadership opportunity as moving themselves and others in the system to address adaptive challenges. Throughout the semester those challenges varied. At times the challenge included working with the staff group over issues of identity and authorization, and other times it included interactions with students who were struggling in the class. In each instance, the women felt they acted in the service of leadership with they acted on behalf of purpose.

Implications of the Study

Authority Development for GTA's

Many aspects of the teaching assistant experience helped the women increase their awareness about authority dynamics and how those dynamics impacted their own demonstration of authority. This leadership class was unique in the explicit focus on authority and the underlying purpose to improve one's authority in the TA role. However, most Graduate Teaching Assistant experiences do not include this aspect, and many teaching assistants enter the role unprepared and undertrained (Lowman & Mathie, 1993; Roach, 1991).

For the TAs in this study, many elements enhanced their capacity to exercise authority. Each of the TAs received feedback throughout the semester and had the chance to review the comments and changes from the lead instructors on the comments the TAs had written on the students' papers. At the beginning of the semester, many of the TAs struggled with the feedback, especially if the feedback suggested changing some of the comments. Katie, Peggy, and Vanessa felt this act by the lead instructor's was a direct usurp of the TA's authority. The three of them felt they really did not have the authority to grade student papers if the lead instructors were simply going to change their comments. As the staff group worked through this issue, the TAs began to view the feedback as extremely helpful to their capacity to interact with the students. Being able to receive feedback as constructive and helpful occurred as the TAs transitioned into their role and became more comfortable with their authentic self in the leadership class. It seems that focused feedback on TA's authority role and how they are demonstrating that

role from experienced and qualified instructors is a helpful element to a successful transition.

The demonstration of authority by the lead instructors was also very helpful to the women. They watched both Gina and Michelle interact with students and with fellow TAs and reflected about the compassion, openness, and thoughtfulness that Gina and Michelle seemed to employ when exercising authority. Having the lead instructors available for feedback and modeling were critical elements that enhanced the TAs transition into their role. The women looked to the lead instructor's, not only for support, but as examples for how to take up authority with the students. While all TAs might not have a lead instructor throughout the semester, it appears that the support and modeling of an experienced instructor or professor is helpful for TAs as they explore their own authority as the instructor in the classroom. Instead of having to struggle through uncharted waters, as many beginning TAs do, having modeled behavior provides a sense of guidance.

Elements of authority such as power, control, and competition are often difficult for women, who are socialized to be caring and nurturing and who are accustomed to fostering relations, not competing among them. One component of women's authority development would be to train women to allow healthy competition to surface among them without excluding the opportunity for connection with each other. Similarly, working with dissention should be a skill of those in authority and should be included in the development of women in their role of authority. The women in this study struggled with the underlying competition that appeared to exist among them. They experienced much tension over the issue of femininity and the appropriate ways for women to

demonstrate authority, and as a result there was significant interpersonal conflict among them. This conflict prevented them from connecting with each other and working together as a TA staff to support the students and further learning. The question that arises from the women's experience in this study is: can women admit and own their competitive self without eliminating the chance to join with other women? In this study, the answer would be no. Because of the tension and conflict that arose among the women, the data from this study suggests that a balance between owning competition, allowing for dissention, and fostering connection toward purpose, is an important part of authority, but one that might need to be learned through explicit authority development.

Identity was also a considerable element of the women's experience; so much so that the data suggests that authority development must include training on the impact and influence of identity on the self and on the system and how to manage the tensions that result in a way that fosters and allows for the effective demonstration of authority

The most significant element that aided in the women's transition was the explicit focus and awareness of authority that the TAs maintained over the semester. They discussed their authority through the semester and continually reflected upon the factors that impacted their authority, both their assigned authority, and the earned authority they attempted to demonstrate throughout the semester. This explicit focus was so significant for the women's experience it suggests that TAs in different disciplines might benefit from an explicit focus on authority as a component of their role training for the teaching assistant position. This data certainly suggests that other universities and other disciplines may want to implement authority development for the Graduate Teaching Assistants.

One component of this study was the delineation between leadership and authority that informed both the research perspective and the women's perspective. Based largely on the philosophy that undergirded the leadership course, the women in this study viewed leadership and authority as separate concepts. In doing this, they were able to work with their capacity for authority distinctly from their capacity for leadership. In many ways, improving their authority capacity became a way for the women to improve their leadership capacity, since roles of authority are often accompanied by the opportunity for exercising leadership. In the leadership class, the women could use their role of authority as a way to exercise leadership with the students. However, while there were certainly opportunities for leadership with the students, often the women found themselves using their authority for the technical aspects of the class and with decisions that lay in the hands of those with the TA power. For example, helping a student recognize that he was resisting reflection or anything that had to do with inner dialogue is an example of using their authority to exercise leadership. On the other hand, determining when to return graded papers or when to send an email to a student about missing a class is an example of using authority to address more technical concerns.

Organizational systems have both technical concerns and larger leadership concerns, often occurring simultaneously. However, in many cases, the people with assigned authority—the professors, managers, executives, mothers—have many tasks that do not involve an adaptive challenge. In some cases, the power that accompanies authority provides the resources and ability to make decisions about routine, technical aspects of the system; elements of the system that are still very important and require purpose and authenticity. In other cases, the power that accompanies authority provides

opportunities that help people address an adaptive challenge and mobilize themselves for change. Both are critically important aspects of authority and understanding the difference, as the TAs did in this study, proved helpful for the women to gain a clear sense of their role and determine the time for the more difficult adaptive work. The findings from this study suggest that understanding authority, as something separate from, but directly related to leadership, is important for those in assigned authority roles. As women attempt to develop their capacity for authority, they must understand the difference between authority and leadership and how the power inherent in authority can be used to facilitate the leadership process.

Uncovering the Process of Finding Voice

Discovering the complex process involved for women finding their voice may be the most significant contribution of this study. Instead of the notion that finding one's voice means speaking out and speaking loud, the data here suggests that the process of finding voice is much more complex and involved. The women in this study began to see that having authority in their role was more about feeling confident to speak when they had something to say and feeling confident to reflect and hear their internal voices and the voices of others to better understand the system.

A significant part of this process was reconstructing authority to fit the women's experience. For example, the women found that their emotional responses were useful, and they found power in saying "I don't know" when they were unsure of an answer or approach to a problem. In doing those two things, the women relied on reflection and remained in tune with their inner thoughts and assumptions. Additionally, the women relied on allies and joining with others as a way to find strength and confidence to voice

an issue or concern. This idea of collaborating with others and asking for help contradicts the traditional idea of authority as being held by one particular powerful person. In the women's experience their authority and the authority of others was differentiated: meaning that some women demonstrated more authority in certain instances and some in other instances. Authority was not viewed as hierarchical, where one woman would consistently have and express more authority than other women, but differentiated in the way that some women expressed their authority at times but not at others.

The implication of this finding is that reconstructing authority based on women's experience is critical to helping women find their power and effectively demonstrate authority in an assigned role. Breaking down perceptions of authority as masculine or aggressive and allowing for authority that recognizes the strength of emotion and an authentic self more accurately reflects the women's experience in finding, managing, and using their voice to exercise authority. One suggestion for women's authority development would be to focus on the process of finding, managing, and using one's voice as the way to exerting authority. This includes bringing one's authentic self to the role and speaking and listening to the voice of personal experience.

Future Research

This study provided a tremendous amount of data on the topic of women and authority, suggesting that several aspects to women's experience with authority are critical to women effectively taking up their role of assigned authority and earning authority within their organization. More research is necessary to determine if authority development, i.e., an explicit awareness and attention to authority dynamics while attempting to exercise authority toward an organizational purpose, actually increases

women's capacity to be effective in their authority role. Conducting research in a setting where the theoretical focus is not on the authority dynamics, as it was in the leadership class used for this study, would be an important step to further our understanding of authority development. For example, in a different academic discipline, such as English or Science, how do female TAs experience their role and attempt to demonstrate authority? Are the TAs in those disciplines aware of the authority dynamics in the classroom and, if so, how do they feel those dynamics impact their role as TA?

This research study focused exclusively on the Teaching Assistants. The experience of authority is complex and there is much influence from systemic forces. In order to understand the depth of the teaching assistant's authority a study should utilize a research design that also interviews the students and the lead instructors. The complexities of the self-in-role, social status, and interpersonal relations across the authority lines would provide more insight into how the authority of the TA is received and experienced at the different levels.

In order to study the impact and influence of authority development, a research design might include two groups of women TAs, one that receives an intervention, or "training" program, and the other group that experiences their TA role without any guidance or training.

Using a grounded theory approach in this study, I was able to generate a theory of women and authority from the data. This study was conducted in a very particular context: with Teaching Assistants in a graduate level leadership class, that has a philosophical focus on the dynamics of authority. More research is needed in other contexts, such as in the business or non-profit sector, to determine if the model of

authority presented in this dissertation applies to women in authority in other situations. One way to approach this topic would be to examine if the demonstration of authority as authentic, reflective, and compassionate reflects the behavior of women's authority in other organizational contexts.

Heifetz (2007) suggests that men and women have a lot to teach each other about authority. While this study attempted to unpack women's experience with authority it did not address any aspects of the male TA's experience with their role of authority. In fact, there were six male TAs and two male Teaching Associates. These men impacted the female TAs, interacted with the female TAs, and connected with the female TAs around purpose and around their shared role as first-time TAs. I am grateful for their presence in the class and I believe that to improve women's capacity to demonstrate authority, women's authority must be situated and understood with relation to the men that women work with. This is not a suggestion to study the difference between men's and women's experiences with authority, rather the impact and influence have on each other. How do men and women support each other or hinder each other in their attempts to demonstrate authority? How are women's behaviors for exercising authority different when in a group of all females compared to a mixed group of men and women? These are a few questions that could guide further research to understand the relationship of women and men when exercising authority.

Embedded in the assumptions of this study are methods of feminist research. One criticism of feminist research is the tendency for the mainstream population of white middle-class women to reflect the experiences of all women. The participants in my study had very limited ethnic and racial diversity. One area for future research might be to

study the experience of authority in the context of cultural organizations and groups, for example with different women of color, with women of different social economic status, and women of different educational level.

Much of the literature suggests that women struggle in achieving high-level roles of authority, specifically due to the role incongruence that exists with social standards for women and social standards for leadership and authority (Eagly, 2004; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). This finding supports the need for more research on women's experience with authority, specifically on authority development programs that might influence women to feel more competent in their role and be received as more effective in their organizational system. Heifetz (2007) suggested a need for future research on the topic of women and authority that focuses on exploring kinds of development and training that would help "girls and women negotiate and claim more formal and informal authority in environments where boys and men traditionally fill these roles" (Heifetz, 2007, p. 315). Certainly the results from this study suggest that development and training might have a positive impact on girls and women's ability to effectively exercise authority.

Conclusion

The grounded theory approach to this research project on women and authority resulted in a theory of authority that attempted to take a step in the direction of generating "an adequate theory of authority to replace or improve the [theory grounded in the] traditional practices of men" (Heifetz, 2007, p. 325). By thoroughly examining the transition into a role of authority as a TA I was able to get a better understanding of the women's complex experience as they balanced aspects of the self and the system, and

managed tensions that resulted from issues around competence, identity, and relations. In doing this, the women were able to find their authority through finding, managing, and using their voice. The women achieved this through a commitment to authenticity and systemic purpose.

Beginning to uncover the process of finding voice for women is a significant contribution to the many fields that suggest women finding power and authority occurs through women finding their voice. The women in this study showed that finding and using voice did not only include speaking out or speaking loud, but included a much more complex process such as managing the internal and external voices of an authentic self with the larger systemic purpose. Also, the women discovered that the demonstration of effective authority involved many ideas not typically associated with authority and power, such as using emotion, allowing for uncertainty, reflection, and femininity. These findings can be used to inform curriculum and training programs aiming at helping women find their power and demonstrate authority through finding and using their voice.

This study also continues the academic conversation that attempts to develop a “refined set of understandings that distinguishes the social phenomena of formal authority, informal authority, and leadership” (Heifetz, 2007, p. 314). In making clear this distinction, we enable ourselves to engage in “recovering our capacity for authority,” (Monroe, as cited by Heifetz, 2007, p. #). Certainly, the data presented in this project suggests that the capacity for demonstrating authority is a critical component in working toward organizational purpose.

Specifically to the experience of the Teaching Assistant role, authority dynamics influence and impact the transition into the role in many significant ways, and there are

many factors around the authority dynamics that present challenges for women attempting to exercise authority as a TA. Awareness of authority dynamics and a commitment to reflective inquiry was a helpful component when transitioning into the role of TA. Also helpful was feedback from mentors or advisors, and a continued quest for authenticity. It is my hope that this study is the beginning of more work that focuses on women's experience with authority, specifically with the intent to improve the capacity for women to demonstrate authority and be effective in their role.

CHAPTER 6

Post Research Reflections

This research project began over a year and a half ago with the desire to better understand women's experience with authority, specifically within the context case-in-point pedagogy. Early in my doctoral studies, I connected with the idea of leadership and authority being distinct ideas—related to each other, yet each having their own definition and application to individual and organizational life. While leadership includes mobilizing a group of people to address a challenge in a way that facilitates change, authority is power granted with the expectation or right to perform a service. I felt that the process a person would use to exercise leadership might not be the same process that a person would use to demonstrate authority. Additionally, I felt as if the concept of authority, as something different from leadership, might provide important insights for understanding women's experience with leadership and power, and perhaps provide a new perspective to the conversation on women and leadership. With this lens, I began my research.

A significant piece of my research project was the leadership class and the philosophical methodology that informed the class—and informed my perspective on leadership, authority, and group dynamics. The theory behind group relations asserts that the whole group is greater than the sum of its parts and that group members act and behave on behalf of the entire group. All events and situations—even those that occur unconsciously—are relevant for understanding the entire system—the group as a whole. Understanding the group as a whole, and the individual behaviors of members within that group is important for those in positions of assigned authority wanting to exercise

leadership. From this perspective, I was a member of the system and my presence was capable of influencing the system, just as the system was capable of influencing me. Based on the methodological perspective that provided the research environment, the research I conducted was filled with layers of complexity not often found in doctoral dissertations, or in general scientific research. One element of this complexity was the level of awareness that existed among the teaching assistant participants and me. We were aware of our own processes and relational dynamics, and both the TAs and I strived to better understand those processes throughout the semester. I did this in my role as researcher and the participants did this in their role as teaching assistant.

Many feminist researchers discuss the connection to their participants that occur in interviews and the research process (Guerrero, 1999a; Hisse-Biber, 2007; Lather, 1990) and my experience as a researcher has certainly been one of connection. In many ways, I believe that the depth and richness of the women's experience was captured largely because of the connection that we established and the trust that was built over the semester. From a researcher perspective, I believe that a more connected participant-researcher relationship yields richer, deeper data. The challenge then becomes how to bracket that connection in a way that prevents bias and subjectivity from clouding the findings. It was my hope that closely monitoring my own process, thought, and feelings through detailed reflection notes would work toward that end. I began to see my reflection entries and researcher observation notes as data consistent with the categories and themes that defined the women's experience, and I noticed how my own complex process mimicked the complexity of the women's experience with authority in many ways.

A review of my written reflections showed the emergence of a pattern for a parallel process that occurred between the participants and me. While the empirical data—the data from the observations, interviews, and document reviews—were used to analyze and make sense of the data, I noticed that my personal reflections emerged as important data that seemed to be consistent with the categories and themes that became apparent in the analysis of the TA's experience. This parallel process was most evident in our similarities around transitioning into a role of authority, (me as a researcher and them as teaching assistants), and this will be the focus of this chapter

It is my hope that this chapter will convey the relatedness of the researcher to the research project and make the data come to life in a way that allows the reader to feel a more intimate connection to the participants and the researcher in order to more fully understand the data (Lather, 1997; Tanaka, 2003). While I certainly had the assigned authority as the principle researcher to give voice to the stories of the participants and their experience with authority, this project was about women transitioning into a role of authority. In many ways, my own transition into authority as researcher became as much a part of the data as the women's own experience. In essence, it was our shared experience—the conversations, the relationships, the tensions, and the strategies we all employed—that defined the transition into authority. In many ways, the analysis reflects me, as the researcher “getting out of the way and getting in the way” (Lather, 1997, p. xiv) of the teaching assistants, and the impact of each, similar to how the teaching assistants balanced their relationships with the students, getting in or out of the way of their learning, just as the lead instructors—my committee members—balanced getting in or out of the way of my work as a student researcher. In many ways, the parallel

processes we all shared throughout the semester reinforced the categories that emerged from the actual data that I collected over the semester. It is my hope that the dual presentation of the second and third person data along with first person data will highlight the unique challenges presented in this research and describe more fully the parallel processes that occurred and serve to strengthen the resulting categories and themes.

When I set out to complete this research project I had no idea how much data I would eventually collect, how connected I would become to the women and their experience, and how much we would influence each other's shared experiences over the course of the semester. The fact that many of my experiences seemed similar to the TA's experience really emphasized the systemic occurrence of the parallel processes. While the women appeared to struggle with issues of dual role identity, determining how to use their voice for authority, and owning a desire for a connection with the primary instructor, I seemed to be doing the same. My own *data*, as reflected through my researcher journal entries, grounded theory memos, and observation reflections, seemed a worthy contribution to the project—a way to solidify many of the findings due to the fact that the themes and categories that emerged from my experience matched those that emerged from the participants.

Throughout the semester of data collection and into my analysis process, I kept detailed reflection notes. Sometimes I scribbled these notes in the margins during my observations of the participants during the actual class time. Other times I sat down at the end of the day and tried to capture my own *felt* sense of what I had observed or heard. I also would record voice reflections after certain critical incidents that impacted me, such as after one of the interviews where I was indirectly challenged by one of the participants

about my relationship with the two lead instructors of the class. I kept my reflections separate from my grounded theory memos—, which were more focused on analysis and critical comments, beginning to form categories, and connecting the data to the literature.

Determining how to best present my reflections has been a struggle. In many ways I have felt the need to “report” all the little subtleties that define good qualitative research—the relationship with the participants, the researcher connection to the data, etc. However, I am very aware of the standard for scientific research to remain objective and distanced from the participants, and I worked tirelessly to ensure that my work met the rigorous academic standards of a dissertation. At the same time, I cannot let go of my own presence in the research project, my own connection to the work and to the people involved. My process in writing the final chapters of my dissertation is evidence of the continued struggle researchers' face trying to balance the connection with participants that occurs in most social science research where the deep meaning and rich experience of people's lives are at the heart of the research question. I attempted to include my reflections in a variety of ways: the first time I wrote up my reflections, parallel processes, and connection to the participants as text boxes interwoven throughout Chapter Four. In another draft, I presented those pieces, as footnotes in Chapter Four—neither seemed to work. Finally, I decided to dedicate a separate chapter to my reflections, providing a separate venue from the academic analysis for my reflections and the alternative part of the research process. This chapter is the result.

As I present my data, I will focus on three main aspects of my experience. First, I will describe my experience with the feminist and feminine aspects of the research—both, which are intimately connected but distinctly different. Second, I will discuss my

own relationship with voice and how I learned what it meant to find, manage, and use my own voice in order to use my authority and work toward my own purpose. And finally, I will discuss my relationship with authority, and how it presented challenges for me as an emerging researcher.

Feminist Research and Feminine Authority

Owning Feminist Thought

At the time I was proposing this research, Hillary Clinton was in a competitive race for the democratic presidential nomination. During the time I was collecting my data, Sarah Palin had been placed on the Republican ticket as Vice President in the 2008 campaign. Throughout my research process, I witnessed two women almost reach the highest political position of authority within the United States. This was inspiring and motivating for many women across the country, and while I was encouraged by the progress women seemed to have made, I was still struck by the *almost* factor—the reality that women are almost there, but not there yet. The 2008 presidential elections exemplified the complexity of women and authority—the two women were expected to be intelligent and assertive, yet soft and feminine—and each felt the consequence of not living up to social expectations. I had a sense that both Clinton and Palin represented the tension that exists for women and authority—the struggle to balance social femininity with demonstrated leadership skill, the challenge to manage personal appearance and offer the expected emotional stability while demonstrating intellectual command of political policy. I felt like my work could address the *almost* factor and expose the

challenges of women's experience with authority. In a journal entry from July 2008, I wrote:

Clinton did not quite make it through the campaign pipeline, but she got awfully close. I think her authority and the public's reaction to her authority is the key to her overall experience. I don't think the campaign was about leadership at all, but about power and authority and how women have to take that up in the public eye. It's amazing to me to watch how people pick apart her outfits and her tone of voice and claim that she is too cold, however, when she shows emotion she gets labeled as faking—sort of damned if you do and damned if you don't scenario. In many ways this seems to speak to the feminist argument of the double-standard women face in the public sectors of life.

As my proposal was accepted, I began considering the difference between feminine and feminist—as if *feminine* was acceptable but *feminist* was not—the former reflecting appropriate female behavior while the other reflects striving for women's equal power. As I defended my dissertation proposal in August 2008, I felt like I wanted a significant piece of my research to include feminist theory and a feminist perspective, specifically feminist research theory. I knew from reading the literature that feminist theory aims to understand gender inequity through understanding women's social roles and lived experience. I felt that women's lived experience of authority had not yet been unpacked, and that was what I hoped to do with my research, so it seemed very appropriate that a feminist frame would be useful. At the onset of my research proposal, I labeled my work as feminist research, citing my assumptions and methodology as consistent with feminist theory and methods toward research and meaning making. However, I received significant pushback from my committee chair who did not want the feminist research label explicitly named in my research.

For several months, my chair and I discussed what constituted feminist research, how it was defined, and the implications and application it held for the methodology and

data. I was not willing to let that piece of my research completely go, however in a compromise with my committee, I significantly reduced the discussion around feminist research theory, however this further enforced my thought that there is something about feminist—about women's equality and power—that people are unwilling to own. I wrote in January 2009:

On one hand, I want to continue to push for the feminist theoretical frame for my work, but I'm deciding that this is not a battle I want to fight in this process. I'm really interested in what's underneath the resistance to the idea of feminist theory because I think it connects to the overall issue of women and power and the social response to women and power. It's funny that I just read an article by Hart (2006) where she identified feminist scholarship as challenging gender oppression and including implications for social change. That seems like what I'm doing, there is also an activist assumption in that definition and I think people are resistant to that. Also, in her article she described how only 1% of the articles in the three big higher ed. Journals included the language of feminism. And here I am also toning down my feminist language... what is it about this?

I struggled with the feminist issue, specifically finding a way to include it and trying to understand its relevance for most of the dissertation process. Interestingly, months later, my participants sat in their staff group meeting and discussed what constituted feminine authority—how it was defined and the implications and application it held for taking up one's role of authority and exercising leadership. There was nothing explicitly said about feminist authority, however the issues that the participants were speaking of were embedded in feminist thought. Many of the issues the participants dealt with, such as the idea of a woman being the alpha male and one woman “not doing it right” and “making the other women look bad,” felt completely in line with a feminist perspective, but that was not named. Just as in the three main higher education journals, feminism is not named. I wrote in November 2008:

No one has brought up feminism. Even with all the talk about a woman being an alpha male, or the double-standard for women that is so obviously present among

these women TA's, no one has spoken of anything feminist. And yet I'm doing it too. I've allowed myself to omit the feminist piece out of my dissertation. I think it would be too easy to just blame Gina—there's got to be something more to this. Something more deeply embedded in the issue of women and authority. Perhaps it's something about people's resistance to acknowledging that gender oppression still exists. I can admit that fronting the desire for social change has an activist implication—one that may not be well received in the academy. I think I'll have to sit with this more and try to discover why I allowed myself to let that piece go. Why is it so hard to say, "Yes, I think there is still gender oppression and it is obvious in women's absence from assigned authority roles? Yes, I would like to work toward social change."

Hmmm...that wasn't too hard was it? At least it wasn't too hard to write it in my journal.

My journal entry above reflects my own challenge with owning the feminist pieces of myself. As if I somehow let those pieces go after my undergraduate activist phase. Feminist research theory almost became a major aspect of my dissertation. Instead it received several months of attention, but was reduced to a much smaller role within the larger project, included in the reflection chapter—the abstract part that exposes the researchers thoughts and feelings. I cannot help but think that this dynamic—splitting off the feminist piece from myself—is reflective of a larger issue that also impacted my dissertation chair and the participants.

This feminist situation reveals the still tender and fragile existence of feminist thought within the mainstream population. It seems clear that the feminist conversation is one most people are not willing to have. But what implication does that have for women and authority? Certainly women and authority, which is rooted in issues of power and voice, include feminist topics and feminist theories, however, I am still unsure if society is prepared to discuss this topic and unpack it fully. How much of my research, which could have significant impact on women who might now be able to better understand the process involved in finding their voice, will become reduced to a smaller role within the

larger conversation of leadership and authority? I suppose that remains to be seen, however, the data from both the women's experience and from my own, suggests that feminism within the authority role is a significant aspect, one that challenges women's authenticity and creates anxiety during conversation. Perhaps this research can contribute to igniting more conversation on the topic.

Authentic Femininity

One issue that really impacted me was the TA's discussion and conflict around the alpha male / alpha female, and their conception about what it meant to be feminine and demonstrate authority. I was shocked when Emily was labeled as the alpha male, especially because another female assigned that label to her. My first reaction to the suggestion of Emily being the alpha male was anger. I wrote in my journal, "Why would a woman be labeled an alpha male? It's like they can't comprehend femininity outside of long hair and skirts—aren't we past that point?" I watched the women navigate through their understanding of gender roles and appropriate behaviors. I could see that cognitively, they believed that alpha is the power role and could be held by a male or female, but psychologically, they struggled to get beyond their social conceptions of gender. At first I was frustrated with what I perceived was the TA's lack of depth in understanding and applying the complexity of gendered behavior, but, then I realized how seeped we all are in our own social construction of gender and how at some level, we all conform our behavior to meet social standards. In a journal entry a few days after the incident I wrote,

I suppose this whole gender thing is more complicated and difficult than I realize. I'm thinking about how I will not cut my hair short because of some notion that longer hair, even just shoulder length, represents femininity more than short hair. Funny how I think about how easy it would be to have short hair, yet I will not

allow myself to cut it. I suppose social conceptions of gender impact us all. I guess I'm not really past that point either. Kudos to the TA's for putting it out there and admitting it. Now at least they can work with it.

Social norms very much impact gender appropriate behavior, and it might be that there is nothing we will ever do to change that. What the TA's did, however, was acknowledge their thoughts—they admitted that they felt Emily “was making us look bad, as women” and then allowed themselves to work with those judgments. Owning those authentic pieces of ourselves is one way to carry our power and engage our authority. I was challenged on own my authenticity as I connected with the different TA's around the issue of femininity and alpha female. I wrote:

This incident (of alpha female) has remained in the forefront of my mind. Not only am I very connected to the theme of alpha female as it related to women's authority, I am very connected to the TA's and my “place” in this incident. While I have more personal history with Peggy and Katie, and while I am much close in age to the younger group of women TA's, I really feel connected to Emily for other reasons, i.e., we both have deeper voices, we have a tendency to dress more casually and not as feminine, and we both have a tendency to detach from emotions and not express them.

I guess I could be the gray area between the two groups. I really feel like I am the feminine split between Katie, Peggy, Vanessa, and Teresa, on one hand, and Emily on the other—based purely on physical characteristics, behaviors, and mannerisms.

During the time of the alpha female incident, I reflected on my role within the group of women TAs. I considered the possibility that, as the feminine split between the two camps, I could give voice to the issue in a way that integrated each of their perspectives. Essentially, as the researcher, that was my purpose—to listen to and observe these women and bring their stories to life. As I connected myself back to my purpose in my researcher role, I felt like I was able to remain authentically connected to both groups, even though I reflected in my journal about “being torn between the two groups” and I acknowledged being “very aware that sides had developed among the

women TAs,” I found that remaining true to my purpose as a researcher and also true to the varied authentic pieces of my feminine and masculine self allowed me to connect with all of the TAs throughout the semester.

Finding One’s Voice

Voice emerged as the central theme for the women in this study—particularly, what it meant for the women to find, manage, and use their voices. The women discovered that using their voice did not always mean speaking. In many instances, they found their authority in their silence—in listening, both to their internal voice and to the voices of others in the group. They discovered that speaking authentically and staying true to purpose helped them manage their voice and demonstrate authority. Illustrating another parallel process, I also encountered several issues and themes around voice, which resulted in me finding my authority in my silence—in listening to my internal voice and allowing myself to focus on the voices of others.

In the beginning of Fall 2008, when data collection had started, I physically lost my voice and didn’t get it back to normal for six months. After a medical evaluation, it was concluded that I had nodules on my vocal cords and would require speech therapy to train myself to speak softer with less strain on my vocal cords. Over the course of the six weeks that I had speech therapy, I remained much quieter than was otherwise typical. I attempted to rest my voice. The result of less external speaking was more space for my internal thoughts and more space for me to hear the voices of friends and family. This became a significant event for me, and I wrote:

I firmly believe in the saying, “There are no accidents.” I’ve coached basketball for over 10 years, and in my one year off of coaching, I actually lose my voice to the point of needing voice therapy to train me to “speak gentler and softer?” The therapist actually told me to stop talking. I guess I’m just seeped in the irony of

the simultaneous dissertation work about finding voice and what that means, while I actually lose my voice. Perhaps someone is trying to tell me that in order to find my voice and use it effectively I need to lose it, and make some space for others....?

By the time I did get my voice back I was well into data collection and observations where my role was as a silent observer. In this role, I was prohibited to speak, and once again, I found myself purposefully forced into silence. In that silence, I struggled with finding my place in the group. While I felt like I was a part of the staff group, I was unlike any other member, in that I could never speak. The role of silent observer was a struggle. In several instances, I felt like my voice was a missing voice in the group. As I observed the class, especially in the staff group meetings, I often felt the desire to speak and contribute to the conversation. In my research journal, there are several pages with highlighted sentences that I wrote while observing: "I wish I could speak!" I also held on to the thought that the TAs considered me a part of their group and that they noticed me, despite my silent role. I wrote:

I also have to admit that I have this fantasy that I'm a part of the group—the Wednesday night TA group. I somehow believe that I'll be missed tomorrow night and that I'll come up in their conversation or somehow be present. And I think about being there as a silent observer and how often I wanted to intervene by saying something—especially in the large group... but I didn't... I can't. My role doesn't allow it. But that is interesting to me too, because I am honoring my role as a silent observer by not speaking. I wonder what would happen if I just spoke out? Would someone correct me? Would I get lectured or talked to by Gina? Would I totally ruin my study by compromising my role as researcher? I know mine isn't a role for experimenting with authority and exercising leadership (that is for the students of 550/600/580)....

My challenge in my role as a researcher was to remain focused on my purpose, which was not to exercise leadership or help the group with an adaptive challenge. That was the purpose of the TAs. My purpose was to silently observe and uphold the standards of rigorous academic research. The need of my own authority as the researcher was to

hold onto my role, and thus use my voice only where appropriate and listen to the voices of others over the semester. The opportunity for my voice to finally surface would be in the write-up of the results and the presentation of the findings and discussion. In this process, I experienced my own transition—very much a parallel process to the TAs—in recognizing the power in holding onto my voice and staying very true to my purpose.

There were a few instances where my voice did penetrate the system. Around my struggle to get comfortable with my role of silent observer, I experienced my own tension around the structural and organizational elements of my role as researcher and my role in the class. There were times I wanted to challenge the system and violate my own researcher rules speaking. On one instance, I had an interaction with a member of the class while I was an observer. She shared some information about the class with me and at a later time, I shared it with one of the male Teaching Associates. This exchange came up in an interview with Jen, and we talked about the possibility of my actions having violated the researcher role, which Jen felt I did. She shared how she felt that instead of sharing the information, I should have just kept it to myself. While this situation was something I wrested with throughout the semester, it was never quite reconciled. I had many thoughts about the incident, and this is what I wrote in my journal at the time:

I have thought a lot about the incident with the student and how I shared her comments with Matthew. I have tried to reflect on my motivation for sharing the information with Matthew. Was I truly acting with purpose in mind? If so, whose purpose? Yes, I felt like the information was important for the system and something the staff group could work with, however the student told it to me—the one person in the system who has no voice. But I do have a voice, and I used it. I believe that there are no accidents, so what is the meaning of her partnering up with me and then sharing the information with me?

In many ways, the above journal entry reflects my struggle to maintain my role of silent observer and the complexity of my role within the system. The TAs also felt much

complexity in their roles as TAs and tried to find ways to purposefully use their voice to demonstrate authority. As I reflect on the incident, I can acknowledge that me sharing the comment with Matthew did nothing to further my purpose as a researcher—the role I was assigned to within the system. Instead, I believe my choice to talk with Matthew reflected my desire to be a part of the system—a part of the group. One reason for this was the desire for a connection with authority that everyone seemed to share. I was well aware of my boundary with the two lead instructors (the members of my committee) as I entered into the research phase of this project. One way I could get around that boundary was through sharing my information with Matthew. I knew he would report it back to the teaching associate group and Dr. Thomas was a part of that group, so telling him my information was my only method of “speaking” with Dr. Thomas. As evident by the TA’s experience as well as my own, there was a definite desire to connect with the main authority in the leadership class.

Connecting With Authority

In addition to my struggle over my role of silent observer, another structural challenge I faced in the system was through my relationships with the two lead instructors of the leadership class who served as members of my dissertation committee, one of them my committee chair. The dual role of committee member and class instructor added an additional layer of complexity that impacted both the participants and me. Often, I felt like my committee chair was unavailable to offer support during my data collection process, as she attempted to remain objective in her role as instructor to the teaching assistants in order to support the teaching assistants in their work while not biasing my research during the data collection process. I brought this up to her on several

occasions and I always received the same response from Dr. Chapman: “Be sure to journal about it.”

In a journal entry from 10/6/08, I wrote:

So, I’ll start with some reflection on my phone meeting with Gina on 10/6. She brought up her own positionality—with the TA’s and with Me, not wanting to give me too much feedback and trying to check herself on her motivation for sharing information with me. Certainly, I recognize the complication of the authority hierarchy—my dissertation chair is the instructor of the class where I am collecting my research. I suppose one could see a bit of conflict of interest. However, I think (or at least I hope) that the way we practice reflection in action, the way we all are trying to be aware of the complex dynamics, will help bracket the bias that might seep into the project. Or, for Gina, seep in to her role as instructor for the course.

In a journal entry from 10/23/08 I wrote:

It is getting a bit hard for me to not be able to share my data with her. I have gotten some great data, and I feel like there is a lot to talk about, and Gina certainly understands the concepts that inform the study... It feels like a bit of a void to not be sharing the work with Gina. Since she’s been such an integral part of the process, and my own evolving process to find a topic, now that I’m totally absorbed into it I can’t really share the project with her because of her involvement with the TA’s...

In a journal entry from 11/13/08 I wrote:

This sure is a lonelier process than I originally thought. I keep thinking of Teresa’s comment that the exercise of leadership is lonely. I’m not even sure if I’m exercising leadership. In many ways, I feel sort of unsure of what I’m doing because I don’t really have the guidance I thought I would have. But as I reread this entry I feel like I’m being melodramatic. Either that, or there really is something to the relational, collaborative process that women gravitate toward...

Each of the above entries exemplifies the multiple roles that existed in the systemic structure as well as the complexity of the relationships of the people involved. I struggled with the lonely feeling, the isolated feeling, and the feeling that I did not know what I was doing. At the same time, I did not want to be “melodramatic,” which reflects my own tendency to suppress emotional responses. Additionally, the entries reflect my

sentiment that my dissertation process was negatively impacted due to my committee chair also being an instructor in the leadership class. My struggle to deal with the boundary of my two committee members, specifically my chair, reflects the intense desire to connect with authority and the tendency people have toward a dependence on authority.

Throughout the semester, a parallel process occurred between my experience with my dissertation chair and the TA's experience of the lead instructor of the leadership class. While I felt disconnected from my dissertation chair, all of the TAs at some point in the semester felt disconnected from the lead instructor of the leadership class where they were TAs. This exemplifies the powerful processes of the system and how certain dynamics are present for the collective membership of a system. In this case, it was the desire for connection and support from the lead authority member that the teaching assistants and I felt were lacking.

One way to reconcile this tension was to form a connection or alliance with others. I reconciled this tension by joining with Dr. Handley, the third member of my committee who spent the Fall 2008 semester meeting with me to go over my data and assist me in the beginning stages of analysis. Just as the TAs worked to find and form alliances with others in the void of Dr. Thomas, the lead instructor of the leadership course they were TAs for, I was able to form an alliance in the void of Dr. Chapman, my dissertation chair.

I also found myself connecting with the TAs and recognizing at the same time, an underlying issue about a competition and jealousy around actual connection and perceived connection with the lead instructors. It felt as if connection with the two lead

instructors was a type of *authority capital*—a commodity or value achieved through networks and relationships with those in the highest authority roles—much like social capital. For example, early on in the semester, after a class session that I had observed, Emily told me how she saw Dr. Thomas, Dr. Chapman, and I give each other “a look” when she raised the issue of being an old lady. When I heard this report from Emily during our second interview, I immediately wanted to deny it, to say, “That never happened.” However, I did not respond to the comment outside of journaling about it after the interview.

And on top of not having access to Gina, then there is the participant that I'm struggling with right now, and I can't quite place the struggle--get a finger on it. I'm not sure if she feels some sort of envy over her perception of my relationship with Michelle and Gina... perhaps I feel envious of the space she takes up in the group? I'm still sort of put off at her suggestion that the three of us (me, Gina, and Michelle) all "gave each other a look" when she reported on the "old lady" part. I know there is an issue with authority embedded in this. It could be her indirectly challenging Gina, who is my committee chair, or her trying to get at me and make data collection more difficult because she thinks I have this connective relationship with Gina and Michelle. The funny thing is, she has WAY more access to both of them than I do right now.

I felt there was some subtle tension between Emily and I around our perceived connection with Dr. Chapman. From the beginning of my data collection, Emily did not allow me to read her reflection papers or journal entries. I found myself wanting to connect with Emily, and become her female ally, especially at the time, I perceived she was isolated from the other women due to her masculine characteristics, yet at the same time, I was frustrated that she would not allow her reflections to become a part of the data. While I respected and honored her right to not include them (she felt she could not be authentic if she knew I was reading them), I felt it reflected a direct challenge to both myself and Dr. Chapman based on Emily's perception of our relationship. Emily

explicitly told me that she believed Dr. Chapman expected her to participate in my study, and that not participating would have had a negative consequence for her as a TA. I believed that while Emily did agree to participate, she did so with cautious limitation, exercising her right to withhold her reflection papers from the data.

It was interesting that Peggy and Katie were the other two women who had dual relationships with Dr. Chapman, and each of them also had tension and conflict with Emily over the semester. I journaled about the parallel:

But, I'm not the only one that has dual relationships with Gina and Michelle... Peggy and Katie do too... And Peggy and Katie are the two people Emily is in conflict with right now. Perhaps this is also part of the parallel process?

While I still do not completely understand the implications of the conflict with Emily, clearly, access to authority and perceptions about who connected with authority impacted both the TA's and me. In some ways, I believe that the connection with authority helps validate our own sense of authority and confidence in our capacity to demonstrate authority. I can certainly say that I had a period of uncertainty when I felt like I was without two committee members, one of those being my committee chair.

Conclusion

The experience of the participants was characterized by an exploration about what it means to find voice in an effort to demonstrate authority amidst a complicated and dynamic system. The themes around voice, feminism, and connection to authority surfaced for the participants but also surfaced for me in my experience as a researcher. The many processes experienced by the TAs that I mirrored in my experience serves to complement, and even validate, the findings presented in Chapter Four.

Finally, the awareness of my own process as a researcher, and to the mutual impact and influence that existed between the leadership system and myself, contributed

to the challenges of this research process. My constant attention, awareness, and monitoring of my own thoughts, emotions and reactions, much like the women did for class, seemed to enhance the experience and provide opportunities for an increased capacity to perform in our roles—for me as a researcher and for the women as TAs. The opportunity for connection to the participants and recognition of our shared processes strengthened the research by generating richer and deeper data. The richness was enhanced by all of our commitment to purpose, even if purpose was lost at times, as it was when I spoke with Matthew about information I learned from a student. Keeping the purpose in mind assisted the TAs in getting at the core of their experience, and it assisted me in understanding my role and making sense of my tasks. The depth gained from this research project is the result of striving for authenticity—both on the part of the women TA's and on my part as a researcher. We all had to allow for our authentic self to surface as we managed our voice, either our external voice or our internal voice. Our authentic voices gave us clues to the depth of gender's complexity—how it is still embedded within our understanding of our social and personal life. Our authentic voices also helped us all recognize the desire to connect with authority and how that desire impacted behaviors.

More than anything else, my dissertation process, from start to finish has been characterized by my own journey to find my voice, especially my internal voice, as I have worked to discover what that might mean for other women. I believe that I can say that I have lived the process of finding my authority through finding my voice—accomplishing this with a willingness to bring my authentic self to the role of researcher and remain true and committed to my overall purpose, as a doctoral student and as a woman hoping to effectively demonstrate authority. It is my hope that the participants'

process and my process, both characterized by a commitment to purpose and authenticity, can be used to support and develop other women striving to demonstrate authority and exercise leadership in their various roles.

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Appendix A
Syllabus for EDLD 550/600

Course Description

Course Purpose: To engage in a process of inquiry designed to cultivate the conditions, knowledge, and capacity for exercising effective leadership – on personal, community, organizational and planetary levels – in order to energize organizations, liberate people’s capacities in service of purpose, promote healing, and affirm life.

Course Design: This course design and classroom experience is more intelligible if you set aside expectations based on previous experiences of traditional classrooms and conceptualize this course more in terms of a settings such as a sport field, science lab or design studio – spaces where instruction, coaching, experimentation, feedback and practice intersect and overlap . In this instance, the course seeks to create a space in which participants can build on their natural skills and previous experience, become familiar with theoretical frameworks critical for understanding the nuances of leadership, develop more adequate ways of understanding, perceiving and sensing, formulate and test hypotheses, surface unexamined assumptions, become more aware of habitual patterns of action/reaction, take risks, discern imaginative responses to current realities, experiment with different behaviors, assess what actions serve the deep purpose in various situations, and provide effective leadership in real time.

While the pedagogical design includes some familiar classroom activities such as lectures, discussions, readings, and regular written assignments, it also involves a more interactive experience-based pedagogy often referred to as the “case-in-point” method where members of the group study their own and others’ behavior (including that of the instructor and teaching assistants) as it actually unfolds in real time. The resulting mix offers a more realistic, complex and multi-faceted picture of the various dimensions involved in the practice of leadership. The course structure includes six key components:

The Large Group

The central lab or “practice field” is the “large group” or the “big classroom.” The entire class gathers here for the first hour of every class session. It serves as a dynamic nexus of relationships and interactions taking place in the “here-and-now” that reproduces the kind of dynamics encountered in other organizations and social systems. Participants are thereby able to perceive and study familiar patterns and to use this setting as a kind of “practice field” for exploring new kinds of interventions and behaviors. Each week a particular theme or set of concepts

augmented by the assigned readings serves as a launching pad for the conversation. The instructor usually stands in the front of the room, but may or may not be the explicit focal point for the conversation at any given moment. Most often there is interplay among the students, instructors, and teaching staff, occasionally punctuated by brief periods of lecture-presentation by the instructor. Over time, as stronger bonds develop in the group, most participants will discover that they are able to take up a number of different roles with each other and thereby expand their understanding and repertoire of leadership behavior. Some may find that they end up playing the same roles they always play in any social or work setting (e.g. the “good student,” the “devil’s advocate,” or the “peacemaker”). Others may be startled to find that roles or identities that have traditionally drawn greater authority (e.g. the “take-charge older white male,” the “nurturing mother/peacemaker” or the “can-do/fix-it” point person) are often less important for leadership than whether or not one has the skills and capacities to build authentic relationships with others.

The Consultation Groups

The second major component of the class consists of small groups of six to ten students who meet once a week to serve each other as analysts/consultants on a case presented by one of the members of the group who is assigned the role of *Case Presenter (CP)* for that session. Each person in the group will have an opportunity to take the role of Case Presenter at least once during the semester and present a case drawn from his or her own experience. Students are expected to prepare their case prior to the class session and present it in light of the study questions that have been provided. A teaching assistant works closely with each group. While the teaching assistant is available to meet with individual students or a group of them, he or she is *generally not present at the weekly meeting*, unless specifically invited to attend a particular session by the group.** Rather, each week one student in the group is assigned to serve as the *Designated Authority (DA)*. Over the course of the term, each student will be assigned each role at least once. Therefore, every member of the group will have the opportunity to experience taking up each of the roles and to observe multiple ways in which those roles are filled by others.

This exercise provides opportunities for participants to learn in a way that simulates actual working conditions as closely as possible. That is, it requires them to confront an open-ended and frequently ill-defined problem, make a preliminary analysis, gather information or data, propose possible

** *Groups wishing to invite their Teaching Assistant to a particular session should negotiate this ahead of time directly with their TA, and indicate—at least in a general way -- the kind of assistance they are seeking or their understanding of the purpose for wanting the TA to be present.*

interpretations and then assess the quality of their interpretations.

Integral Systemic Case Analysis

The third portion of the class consists of a debriefing of the Case/Role Analysis experience of the Small Groups. Each week after the small group consultations, the entire class returns to the large classroom. One student who served in the role of Case Presenter that week may be invited to present his or her case to the entire group, or the conversation may focus on some other aspect of the small group experience such as the experiences of those who held the role of Designated Authority/Clarifier. Cases presented serve as an important point of departure for a process of an integral-systemic analysis led by the instructor which is designed to break open the husks of the habits of mind that have been protective but which are also a barrier to the germination of more adequate and systemic ways of seeing, acting and knowing. Eventually, students (and thus the consultation groups) are expected to develop the capacity to think and work at a more integral and systemic level.

Questionnaires, Readings and other Reflective Work.

Each week every student will complete and submit a set of written responses in the form of a questionnaire designed to prompt critical reflection on the readings and the case consultation that took place in his or her group. These responses are read and commented on by the TAs and one of the instructors/senior teaching fellows. Occasionally there are other short written reflective assignments as well. There is a brief in-class midterm exam (questions will be drawn from a set of questions distributed to students in advance) and a final 10-15 page paper.

Films

Students may be asked to view one or more films and complete a writing project that integrates one's own response to the film with key theoretical concepts of the course. This assignment requires students to review and reflect on the core components of leadership and authority as presented in class and the readings.

Presence, Voice and Musical Listening

The final two sessions of the course generally focus on enhancing and managing the power of one's own presence and voice. These sessions are designed to offer participants hands-on experience with what is involved in the process of intervening powerfully and meaningfully while simultaneously holding the group's attention and managing one's own and others' anxiety.

Learning Objectives

- Employ key frameworks for understanding the internal and external forces and factors that influence the ability of individuals and organizations to achieve their purpose(s) in an effective manner;
- Generate personal insights into one's own habitual patterns of response to social forces;
- Sharpen the ability to identify, analyze, reflect upon, and work creatively with *purpose, systems, contexts, boundaries, and roles*;
- Enhance the capacity to exercise authority and leadership in the "here-and-now" with a sense of purpose, freedom, authenticity, and courage;
- Expand opportunities for finding, creating, and taking up roles effectively in ways that spawn imaginative responses and solutions.

Course Requirements/Activities

1. **Attendance.** Because the course is heavily dependent on in-class experience, complete on-time attendance is mandatory. The attendance policy is strict: **students who are absent for any reason other than documented emergencies or compelling reasons will have their grades lowered.** Teaching Assistants have been instructed to check each week on the attendance of their small group members.

In the rare case of a true emergency or compelling reason, students MUST contact the Course Instructor, one of the Course Coordinators, AND notify their Teaching Assistant, as well as their group DA to avoid having their grade lowered. Students who miss class must complete the missed class questionnaire and listen to the class recording from the date missed. This make-up assignment is due before midnight on the Friday following the missed class unless other arrangements are previously agreed to with your TA.

2. **Weekly written analysis of the consultation group sessions.** These assignments are designed to provide students with regular, understandable, and consistent feedback in order to enhance their ongoing learning from the course. Thus each assignment will receive

both a grade and extensive comments.

3. **Presentation of a case study to the small group.** A written guide to assist you with this case presentation will be distributed in class.

4. **Several short written assignments** (1-3 pages). Specific guidelines for each of these papers will be provided in advance of the due date for the assignment.

5. **Final paper analyzing aspects of leadership.** This 10-15 page paper provides an opportunity for students to integrate the experiential and theoretical components of the course (this includes a research component for doctoral students) and to demonstrate their proficiency at applying course readings and learning to problem-solving in other contexts. **The due date for the final paper is Sunday, December 6, 2009.**

Grading:

Large Classroom work:	20%
Weekly questionnaires:	20%
Short written assignments/ Engagement with WebCT:	10%
Mid-term:	15%
Final assignment:	35%

Grading Criteria/Rubric

Grades for oral classroom work will be based upon one's effort as well as the quality of one's leadership in the class -- *not on the quantity or volume of his/her comments*. **The key concern here is: to what extent did you exercise leadership in the classroom by mobilizing learning for others by means of asking helpful questions, making reflective comments and/or taking effective action?**

Classroom work will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

Did s/he demonstrate genuine curiosity about what takes place in classroom discussions and an understanding of the purpose as the study of the dynamics of leadership and authority?

Did s/he demonstrate a capacity to listen effectively? (Often when we

think we are listening to the other person, we're really listening to ourselves; we're rehearsing the argument we're going to use to refute them, or jumping to a premature conclusion based on the first point they made).

Did s/he demonstrate the capacity to risk making mistakes in the service of his or her own learning and the learning of the group?

Did s/he demonstrate a capacity to listen to what *isn't* being said, but is nonetheless being communicated? (A person's words may tell one story, but another part of the story is communicated through body language, eye contact, expression and tone of voice).

Did s/he demonstrate the ability to translate major theoretical perspectives from the lectures and readings to leadership theory being studied into concrete interventions?

Did s/he demonstrate an ability to make connections between classroom processes and larger social dynamics or patterns?

Did s/he demonstrate an understanding of how elements of his or her identity and history affected his/her perspective on what happened in the group as well as his/her capacity to contribute effectively?

Papers will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Analysis: How well did the you integrate theory and data to create a coherent and logical argument in the paper.
2. Data: How well did you utilize descriptive data and citations to support your argument?
3. Theory: How well can you apply the conceptual material offered in readings and lectures?
4. Organization: How clear and well organized is the paper?
5. Writing: Does the paper reflect professional quality in grammar and writing style?

Course Outline

Week	Date	Readings EDLD 550 (Fall 2009)
1	9/02	<p>Purpose and Intention: An Integral Approach</p> <p>Readings should be completed by the time class meets on the date for which they are assigned.</p> <p>Plato. <i>The Republic</i>. Book VII, "The Allegory of the Cave."</p> <p>McTaggart, L. "Mental Blueprints," in <i>The Intention Experiment</i>, New York: Free Press, pp. 127-144.</p> <p>Klein, E. "Is Real Change Possible," 1-6.</p> <p>Klein, E. (2008) "What is Resistance-Free Change," in Resistance-Free Change Newsletter, 1-18.</p> <p>Family of Origin written assignment is due in class on September 9th in a hard. This assignment is credit/no credit.</p>
2	9/09	<p>Leadership, Authority and Adaptive Change</p> <p>Course Syllabus (Fall 2009). It is expected that students will carefully read and review the syllabus. Please note especially the attendance requirement, procedures to be followed in the case of a compelling reason for missing a class, deadlines for submitting papers, and methods for downloading readings, and turning in papers.</p> <p>Heifetz, R.A & Linsky, M. (2002). <i>Leadership on the Line</i>. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1-74.</p> <p>Monroe, T. (1996, Winter). Leadership in Tough Times. <i>Touchstone</i>, 14-15.</p> <p>Lipman-Blumen, J. (2005). "Within ourselves: Psychological needs that make us seek leaders," in <i>The allure of toxic leaders</i>, Oxford University Press, 31-48.</p>

**** Bringing Yourself to the Small Group written assignment due by midnight on Friday, September 11th. This assignment is credit/no credit.**

**** This is the first assignment that should be submitted via WebCT. If you have first time difficulty uploading this to WebCt you may e-mail this to your Teaching Assistant.**

3 9/16 Authority Dynamics and Social Systems

Heifetz & Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 75-160.

Milgram, S. (1975). *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*. NY: Harper & Row, 1-12.

Monroe, T. (2004). "Boundaries and Authority." In James McGregor Burns, George R. Goethals, and Georgia J. Sorenson (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 112-117.

Joreen (1972). "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," In Koedt, Levine, Rapone (Eds.), *Radical Feminism*. New York: Quadrangle Books, 285-299.

Optional:

Milgram "you tube" video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6GxIuljT3w>

4 9/23 Mental Models

Heifetz, R.A & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the Line*, 163-236.

Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday, 175-204.

Ornstein, R. & Ehrlich, P. (2000) *New World: New Mind*. Cambridge: ISHK, 94-118.

Bingham, H. (1999). "Juries as psychological groups," In Y.

Gabriel, *Organizations in Depth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 120-123.

5 9/30

Group Dynamics, Roles and Social Systems

Stapley, L. (2006). "Group-as-a-whole," *Individuals, Groups and Organizations Beneath the Surface*, 152-183.

Harvey, J. (1980). *Abilene paradox and other meditations on management*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 13-36.

McCullom-Hampton, M. "Work groups." In Y. Gabriel, *Organizations in Depth*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 112-138

Monroe, T. "Theoretical Underpinnings of Group Relations Work." Working Paper published by USD Leadership Institute. [published on SOLES Leadership Institute website].

6 10/7

Assassination: Purpose, Task and Work Avoidance

Stapley, L. (2006). "Displacement and scapegoating," *Individuals, Groups and Organizations Beneath the Surface*, 67 - 71.

Mindell, A. (1995). *Sitting in the fire*. Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press, 49-60.

Tannen, D. (September-October, 1995). "The power of talk: Who gets heard and why," In *Harvard Business Review*, 138-148.

Orwell, G. (1949). *Shooting an elephant*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 267-273.

**** Study questions for the mid-term exam will be passed out in class and/or posted on the course website. All questions for the mid-term exam which will be administered in class on October 21, 2009 will be taken from this list of study questions. So, there will be no surprises, but you will not be permitted to consult notes, books or electronic devices during the in-class exam itself.**

**** Note: If you have a compelling reason for missing class on October 21st, you must notify the instructor and your Teaching Assistant well in advance and make arrangements with your TA to take the exam after class on October 14th.**

7 10/14 **Understanding and Managing Perceptions of Social Identity**

Roedinger, D. McIntosh, P, Meigs, A. (2007). "Membership Has Its Privileges," In M.E. Dyson, *Debating Race*. New York: Basic Books, 115-128.

Steele, S. (1991). *The content of our character: A New Vision of Race in America*. New York: HarperCollins, 57-75.

Reed, G. and Noumair, D. (2000). "The tiller of authority in a sea of diversity: Empowerment, Disempowerment, and the Politics of Identity," In E. Klein, F. Gabelnick and P. Herr (Eds.) *Dynamic Consultation in a Changing Workplace*. Madison, CT: Psychosocial Press, 51-79.

Real, Terrence. (2002). *Why Can't I get Through to You?* New York: Scribner, 73-84.

Kram, K. E., & McCollom-Hampton, M. (1998). "When women lead: The visibility-vulnerability spiral," In E. B. Klein, F. Gabelnick, & P. Herr (Eds.), *The Psychodynamics of Leadership*. Madison, CT: The Psychological Press, 193-218.

Cromie, W.J. (July 17, 2003) Brain shows unconscious prejudices: Fear center is activated. *Harvard University Gazette*.

www.tolerance.org. "Hidden Bias: A Primer: What You Can Do About Unconscious Stereotypes and Prejudices" Taken from website on August 20, 2003.

**** Assignment:** Take two or more Implicit Association tests on this website: <https://implicit.harvard.edu>. Write a paragraph reflecting on the results you receive. [Explain why you chose to take and /or write about the particular test(s) you picked].

**** Written paragraph is due along with the weekly questionnaire.**

8 10/21 **Midterm and Movie**

View film shown in class after the mid-term examination.

**** Written assignment related to film is due in class on October 28th in a hard copy. No questionnaire work this week.**

9 10/28 Taking Up Your Authority: Finding One's Voice in a Group

Bridges, W. (1991). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 34-49.

Williams, D. (2005). *Real Leadership: Helping people and organizations face their toughest challenges*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 3-55.

McIntosh, P. (2000). *Feeling Like a Fraud: Part III: Finding Authentic Ways of Coming into Conflict*. The Stone Center: Wellesley College, 1-16.

10 11/04 Staying Alive: Effective Interventions

Hammond, S.A. & Mayfield, A.B. (2004) *Naming Elephants: How to Surface Undiscussables for Greater Organizational Effectiveness*, Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing, pp. 3-51.

Heen, S. (September 2000). What I wish I'd said. *O Magazine*. 96-98.

Heifetz, R. & Linsky, M. (2004). When leadership spells danger. *Educational Leadership* 61:7 (April 2004) 33-37.

Ruffing, J. "Resisting the demon of busyness," 79-89.

Simpson, P., French, R., & Harvey, C.E. (2002) Leadership and Negative Capability. *Human Relations* 55(10): 1209-1226.

**** Final Paper Assignment Available via WebCT.**

11 11/11 Conscious Leadership

Kofman, F. *Conscious Business* (2006). Bolder, CO: Sounds True, 1-27.

Argyris, C. (2000). "Teaching Smart People How to Learn." Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 46-57.

Obholzer, A. (1999). "Managing the unconscious at work," In R. French and R. Vince (Eds.), *Group Relations, Management and Organization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 87-97.

Moylan, D. (1994). "The dangers of contagion: Projective identification processes in institutions," In A. Obholzer & V.Z. Roberts (Eds.). *The Unconscious at Work: Individual and Organizational Stress in the Human Services*. London: Routledge, 51-59.

Starr, A. & Torbert, B. (2005). "Timely and Transforming Leadership Inquiry and Action: Toward triple-loop awareness," *Integral review*, vol I, 85-97.

12 11/18 Leadership and Presence: Authenticity, Courage and Grace Under Fire

Kahn, W.A. (1992). "To be fully there: Psychological presence at work." *Human Relations*, 45 (4), 321-349.

Otto Scharmer, "Addressing the blind spot of our time," (2007) An executive summary of his new book, *Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges*.

Grudin, R. (1990). *The Grace of Great Things*. NY: Ticknor and Fields, 86-95.

May, R. (1975). *The Courage to Create*. New York: WW Norton, 1-76.

11/25 Thanksgiving break. No class session.

Suggested reading in preparation for Thanksgiving:

Terry Pearce, "Authentic Appreciation." Published on gratefulness.org website.

Jordan, M. (2006) "Twenty-Seven Things" Published on gratefulness.org website.

**** Note: Remember to bring a poem or short piece of prose with you to the class session on December 2nd, 2009.**

**** Note: Final Paper Due by 5:00 p.m. Sunday, December 6th, 2009.**

13 12/2 Sensing the Environment, Seeing and Listening Well

Mathieu, W.A. (1991). *The listening book: Discovering Your Own Music*. Boston: Shambala Press, 24-25, 34-37, 43-45, 55-57, 69-70, 73-77, 117-119, 128-133.

Fairfield, K. & London, M., "Tuning Into the Music of Groups: A Metaphor for Team-Based Learning in Management Education," *Journal of Management Education* 27:6, 654-671.

**** Come to class with a poem or short piece of prose with you**

14 12/9 Saying Goodbye, Letting Go: The Past and the Future

Lafarge, V. (1995). "Termination in groups." In J. Gillette, & M. McColloms (Eds.). *Groups in context*. New York: University Press of America, 171-185.

Important notes to students

The instructor reserves the right to make changes / additions to the syllabus during the semester in response to student needs.

Grade of Incomplete:

The grade of Incomplete ("I") may be recorded to indicate (1) that the requirements of a course have been substantially completed but, for a legitimate reason, a small fraction of the work remains to be completed, and, (2) that the record of the student in the course justifies the expectation that he or she will complete the work and obtain the passing grade by the deadline. It is the student's responsibility to explain to the instructor the reasons for non-completion of work and to request an incomplete grade prior to the posting of final grades. Students who receive a grade of incomplete must submit all missing work no later than the end of the tenth week of the next regular semester, otherwise the "I" grade will become a permanent "F."

Requests for Accommodation:

Reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act will be made for course participants with disabilities who require specific instructional and testing modifications. Students with such requirements must identify themselves to the University of San Diego Disability Services Office (619.260.4655) before the beginning of the course. Every effort will be made to accommodate students' needs; however, performance standards for the course will not be modified in considering specific accommodations.

Appendix B
Case Presenter Handout

**Case Consultation Experience:
Small Group Activity
Leadership Theory and Practice
EDLD 550/600**

Handout Overview:

Activity Timeline	1
Small Group's Purpose, Tasks and Key Concepts	2
Guidelines for Designated Authority/Clarifier	5
Guidelines for Case Presenter	6
Guidelines for Consultation Analysts	7

Case Consultation Experience:

Activity Timeline

(45 minutes)

I. Case Presenter tells story of a leadership dilemma to the Clarifier.

Clarifier asks initial, facilitating questions to the Case Presenter.

~15 minutes

II. Consultation Analysts offer their thoughts to the Clarifier.

~5 minutes

III. Case Presenter considers input from Consultation Analysts.

Consultation Analysts invited to respond.

~10 minutes

IV. Review and debriefing of the small group's process.

~15 minutes

1

Case Consultation Experience:

Small Group's Purpose, Tasks, and Key Concepts

I. PURPOSE

Small Group's *Purpose*: To learn about leadership, authority, social system dynamics, and strategy in a way that improves one's personal effectiveness in organizations and other aspects of life.

II. DOUBLE-TASK

Small Group's *Content Task*: To consult to the case presented in the group -- that is, to analyze the leadership dilemmas presented, applying the course ideas about leadership, authority, and social systems.

Small Group's *Process Task*: To practice the skill of concurrently "getting on the balcony," by observing and interpreting the leadership, authority, and social system dynamics at play within the small group as it works on its tasks.

III. KEY CONCEPTS

1) The Social Functions of Authority

Mobilizing group resources to create and maintain an effective *holding environment* that protects the group's purpose and task, fosters productivity, and maintains equilibrium.

- a. **Protection.** Protecting the group from harmful distractions and intrusions from the external environment by managing boundaries such as time, space, and resources (e.g. insure that members have break time, begin on time, etc).
- b. **Direction.** Focusing attention on the work, for example, by managing the agenda.
- c. **Orientation.** Clarifying the task and role of members. Maintaining lines of authority and organizational structures of accountability.
- d. **Conflict Management.** Keeping disequilibrium within a productive (not necessarily always "comfortable") range.
- e. **Resource Management.** Insure that group members have the necessary resources to do their job (e.g. a secure space, whiteboard/flipchart if necessary).
- f. **Norms and policies.** Manage group/organizational norms and policies -- which should be reviewed periodically and changed if necessary (e.g. group decides it wants to end session 10 minutes before beginning of third period of large class, or it wants to spend first 5 minutes of each session "checking in" with one another).

2) The Tasks of Leadership

Mobilizing group resources to do adaptive work. In other words, "getting the group to address tough problems."

- a. **Identify the Adaptive Challenge** -- the genuinely problematic aspects of a situation. First and foremost, this requires diagnosing the gap between a group's orienting values and its present situation. Solutions will no doubt require questioning fundamental operating assumptions and mental models.
- b. **Regulate Disequilibrium** -- keeping the level of stress and tension within a *productive* (not necessarily comfortable) range. Requires, for example, orchestrating conflict between competing factions, pacing the rate at which traditional assumptions and norms are challenged.

c. **Focus Attention on Ripening Issues** -- not on stress-reducing (but nodoubt attractive) distractions. That is, allowing anxiety and tensions to surface and directing them toward the work of thinking critically and creatively about problems.

d. **Place Responsibility on the People with the Problem** -- giving the work back to the members of the group -- putting pressure on the relevant parties -- at a rate they can tolerate (though it may not be *comfortable* for them).

e. **Protect Voices of Leadership Without Authority** -- eliciting and protecting the individuals and factions that present deviant ideas, passionate statements and disturbing questions.

f. **Infuse the Work With Meaning** -- for example, by identifying the way in which each individual's participation matters, and by finding the connections between specific tasks and shared values.

3) Modes of Operating

a. **Listening both Analytically and Musically** -- e.g. highlighting and interpreting what people say; leaving room for silences.

b. **Listening for *Work Avoidance Mechanisms*** as clues to underlying issues, e.g. the group attacks the case presenter or the chairperson or someone who represents *difference* in the group. Often such a diversion occurs immediately after something creative but deviant has been said.

c. **Being Ready for Storms** -- e.g. the group attacks you (or uses an outside disturbance) as an avoidance mechanism or diversion from facing a stress-provoking issue.

d. **Listen to What the Social System Indicates is the Adaptive Challenge** -- e.g. testing the waters with various interventions to probe possible underlying issues.

e. **Listen for Openings Provided by the Group for Intervention** -- e.g. although you may be convinced that you have identified the underlying issue, waiting to bring it up until the group itself touches upon the issue.

f. **Improvising with the Social System while Keeping the Group on Track** -- e.g. departing from the plan or agenda, as you discover through engagement with the social system, what the underlying issues are. (Be careful, be strategic. This is a moment when many "authorities" who attempt to exercise leadership get assassinated).

4) Role

Role can be seen as a dynamic process through which we draw on and organize our experience. Finding, making and taking up a Role can enable us to take action which will take forward and serve the purpose of the organization. It is about how, in the unfolding realities of our work, we decide what to do – how to act professionally, how to act authentically, how to act in a way that serves the purpose of the group and our deeper values. By making conscious decisions regarding how we find, make and take up roles in a group situation, we can transform experience into authentic action (2007, Grubb Institute).

Case Consultation Experience:

Guidelines for Designated Authority/Clarifier (DA/C)

I. Review the “**Purpose, Tasks, and Key Concepts**” and the “**Timeline**” handouts to guide your work as both Designated Authority and Clarifier.

II. Familiarize yourself with the working space, and with those who will be in your group, particularly if you are the first DA/C. How will you arrange the space? Are there enough chairs for everyone? Do you have a better idea for a working space?

III. Beginnings, or “initial events,” are important. Undoubtedly you will be looked to for direction on how to begin the first meeting. Think ahead of time about how you want to start. Some hints:

- (1) Don't get paralyzed by your choices;
- (2) Consider experimenting with a mode of authority that perhaps doesn't come naturally to you; and,
- (3) Keep your focus on the purpose and task of the group.

Arrangements for a consultation from a Teaching Assistant should be made in advance by the DA before the designated small group meeting.

IV. Invite the Case Presenter to tell the story of his/her leadership dilemma. Then ask some initial Questions (to open up issues which have not already emerged).

- Can you tell me more about the leadership dilemma you want to explore?
- What are you feeling about what is happening?
- Who else is involved in the situation and being affected by what is happening?
- Can you tell us more about the community/constituencies that your organization is serving?
- What issues is this raising for you about your leadership?
- Where in this situation are your deepest values and those of your organization?
- Is there anything else about the situation which you feel is important for us to know?

V. Invite the Case Presenter to turn his/her back to group and listen to input from the Consultation Analysts.

What are the systems and subsystems in which the leadership dilemma is taking place?

VI. Invite the Case Presenter to face the group and discuss the following:

- What action are you now considering to benefit the system, in light of the forces and factors that have been identified? (Make sure the Case Presenter keeps to proposed action and does not begin to comment on the process.)

VII. Ask the Consultation Analysts:

- What is the likely **response** to any proposed action/inaction?
- What are the **risks** in any proposed action/inaction?

VIII. Lead the group in a review and debriefing of its own process that hour.

Case Consultation Experience:

Guidelines for Case Presenters (CP)

I. Choose a leadership dilemma you wish to explore. Consider a current dilemma from work, school, community participation, or some other arena. This should be *your* leadership dilemma – one in which you are central to the situation. In choosing your leadership dilemma, pick a situation that you are interested in better understanding and have a desire to take action to resolve the dilemma.

II. Prepare to present your case and answer questions.

In thinking through your leadership dilemma, it may help to review the following Case Presenter questions, as well as the information in the Case Consultation handouts.

- What is the purpose of your organization/social system?
- In light of this purpose, what overall problem (adaptive challenge) was it facing?
- What specific problem was your sub-unit in the system facing?
- Who were the relevant parties to the specific problem, and what were their points of view?
- Where were you in this system? What was your point of view on the problem?
- What resources did you have to manage this system?
- What options did you see at the time? What did you do?

III. During the small group Case Consultation, tell the story of your leadership dilemma to the Clarifier. Your initial telling of the story should be approximately 5 minutes.

1. How the situation developed;
2. The current dilemma; and,
3. Why you feel you need to act.

IV. Respond to the questions and direction of the Clarifier.

V. Participate in the review and debriefing of the small group's process.

Case Consultation Experience:

Guidelines for Consultation Analysts (CA)

I. Review the “**Purpose, Tasks, and Key Concepts**” handout.

In serving the small group's overall learning purpose, your role is to function as an Analyst, rather than Advisor. So, instead of providing solutions, your aim is to get progressively closer to understanding what is going on in the system, with a particular focus on leadership and authority.

II. Listen as the Case Presenter and Clarifier first discuss the case.

Consider the following questions to help you in your analysis:

- **What is the purpose of this organization? What is the adaptive challenge here?**
- **What is going on in each of the 4 quadrants?** (The integral approach of I/we/it/its;
- individual/collective/interior/exterior)
- What feelings are being triggered in the Case Presenter by what is happening?
- What is the Case Presenter finding difficult about this situation? Why?
- What pressures is the Case Presenter experiencing in this situation?
- How has this pressure affected what has happened already?
- What seems to be motivating the Presenter/other people in this situation?
- What relationships seem most important to the Presenter?
- What are their conflicting perspectives on the adaptive challenge? How does it look to each of them?
- Who are the key parties or stakeholders?
- Which "unit of analysis" (i.e. the particular work team, department, division, organization, industry, etc.) seems most useful for this exploration?
- Where is/are the authority figure(s) on the issue?
- Where is the Case Presenter on the issue? What are his/her real stakes and interests?
- Who, including the Case Presenter needs to do what in order for progress to be made
- there? In other words, where does the work need to be done?
- Are there any images, associations, words, or past experiences that come to mind as I listen to the case? And what are these new "insights" alerting me to about the case?

III. Discuss with the Clarifier your hypotheses about the case.

Consider using a circle diagram, placing the leadership dilemma somewhere in the circle.

IV. Discuss with the Case Presenter your hypotheses and evidence.

- What is the likely response to any proposed action(/inaction)?
- What are the risks in any proposed action(/inaction)?

V. Participate in the review and debriefing of your small group's consultation experience.

Appendix C
Designated Authority Handout

EDLD – 550/600: Leadership Theory and Practice

BRIEFING FOR DESIGNATED AUTHORITIES

I. Purpose, Task and Subtasks

Group's Purpose: To learn about leadership, authority, social system dynamics and strategy.

Group's Task: To consult to the case presenters in the group, that is, to identify, analyze, and recommend solutions to the problems in the personal case studies.

Group's Primary Subtasks:

- To test and apply theories, ideas and insights about leadership from the course and from the readings to real problems of practice.
- To develop the skill of “getting to the balcony,” by observing and interpreting the social system dynamics that develop within the small group as it works on its primary task.

II. The Social Functions of Authority

Mobilizing group resources to create and maintain an effective *holding environment* that protects the group's purpose and task, fosters productivity, and maintains equilibrium.

- A) **Protection.** Protecting the group from harmful distractions and intrusions from the external environment by managing boundaries such as time, space, and resources.
- B) **Direction.** Focusing attention on the work, for example, by managing the agenda.
- C) **Orientation.** Clarifying the task and role of members. Maintaining lines of authority and organizational structures of accountability.
- D) **Conflict Management.** Keeping disequilibrium within a comfortable range.
- E) **Resources.** Insure that group members have the resources necessary to do their job

- F) **Norms and policies.** Establish and manage group/organizational norms and policies (which should be reviewed periodically and changed if necessary).

III. The Tasks of Leadership

Mobilizing group resources to do adaptive work. In other words, "getting the group to address tough problems."

- A) **Identify the Adaptive Challenge** -- the genuinely problematic aspects of a situation. First and foremost, this requires diagnosing the gap between a group's orienting values and its present situation. Solutions will no doubt require questioning fundamental operating assumptions and mental models.
- B) **Regulate Disequilibrium** -- that is, keeping the level of stress and tension within a *productive* (not necessarily comfortable) range. Requires, for example, orchestrating conflict between competing factions, pacing the rate at which traditional assumptions and norms are challenged.
- C) **Focus Attention on Ripening Issues** -- not on stress-reducing (but no-doubt attractive) distractions. That is, allowing anxiety and tensions to surface and directing them toward the work of thinking critically and creatively about problems.
- D) **Place Responsibility on the people with the Problem**, that is, giving the work back to the members of the group -- putting pressure on the relevant parties -- at a rate they can tolerate (though it may not be *comfortable* for them).
- E) **Protect Voices of Leadership Without Authority**, that is, eliciting and protecting the individuals and factions that present deviant ideas, passionate statements and disturbing questions.
- F) **Infuse the Work With Meaning**, for example, by identifying the way in which each individual's participation matters, and by finding the connections between specific tasks and shared values.

IV. Modes of Operating

- A) Listening both analytically and *musically*, e.g., highlighting and interpreting what people say; leaving room for silences.
- B) Listening for *Work Avoidance Mechanisms* as clues to underlying issues, e.g. the group attacks the case presenter or the chairperson or someone who represents *difference* in the group in an inappropriate

fashion. Often such a diversion occurs immediately after something creative but deviant has been said.

- C) Being Ready for Storms, e.g. the group attacks you (or uses an outside disturbance) as an avoidance mechanism or diversion from facing a stress-provoking issue.
- D) Listen to What the Social System Indicates is the Adaptive Challenge, e.g. testing the waters with various interventions to probe possible underlying issues.
- E) Listen for Openings Provided by the Group for Intervention, e.g. although you may be convinced that you have identified the underlying issue, waiting to bring it up until the group itself touches upon the issue.
- F) Improvising with the Social System (yet keeping the group on track), e.g. departing from the plan or agenda, as you discover through engagement with the social system, what the underlying issues are. (Be careful, be strategic. This is a moment when many “authorities” who attempt to exercise leadership get assassinated).

V. Specific Instructions for Designated Authorities

- A) Familiarize yourself with the working space, and with those who will be in your group -- particularly if you are the first DA/C. How do you want to arrange the space? Are there enough chairs for everyone? Do you have a better idea for a working space?
- B) Beginnings (or “initial events”) are important. Undoubtedly you will be looked to for direction on how to begin the first meeting. Think ahead of time about how you want to start. For example, do you need to spend time on introductions or do you think it would be best to launch right into the discussion topic? Are you going to exercise authority “lightly” and serve mainly as a facilitator, or are you going to manage the discussion more “tightly?” Some hints: (1) Don’t get paralyzed by these choices; (2) Consider experimenting with a mode of authority that perhaps doesn’t come naturally to you. For example, if you tend to be the kind of person who seeks consensus before you act, or perhaps even tends to abdicate the authority connected with your role, consider experimenting with being more directive. Conversely, if you are the organized, controlling type, think about what it would mean to “loosen the reins.” (3) Keep your focus on the purpose and task of the group (stated at the beginning of this handout), and be comforted by two things: (a) people tend to learn most from their failures; and (b) you will not be graded on your performance in this role, nor even observed by the professor on your performance unless the group specifically requests a consultation

from the professor or their Teaching Assistant. Arrangements for a consultation from the course professor or teaching assistants should be made in advance before the designated group meeting by the DA.

NAME _____ TA _____ DATE OF MEETING _____

UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO
School of Leadership and Education Sciences

EDLD 550/600: Leadership Theory and Practice

Consultation Group Study Questionnaire (Form I)

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help you analyze the work process of the consultation group sessions and to help you apply theoretical knowledge and insights from the lectures and readings to actual problems of practice. It is suggested that you fill this out within one day of the session and that you spend no more than 2 hours completing it. The MAXIMUM acceptable length for a questionnaire is 5 pages in length (12' font). *Submit the completed questionnaire to your TA via email by noon on the Saturday following your small group meeting.*

1. **What was the overall purpose and what was the specific task of the consultation group session?** (Hint: You might want to re-read the *Briefing for Designated Authorities* handout).

2. **What was the initial event of the group session? (i.e. What did you notice happening or what was being discussed informally by the group in the period immediately prior to the group being called to order or within the first few minutes of the meeting itself that may have influenced later discussion?**

Most often the "initial event" does not coincide with the actual formal opening of the meeting. Therefore, avoid answering this question with a statement like: "*The initial event took place when the Designated Authority called the meeting to order*". **Note:** There is no one "correct" answer to this question. Different members may perceive different "initial events." Below are three examples from past questionnaires.

(a) "*There is a TV in the corner of our small group meeting room and X (only half-joking) said 'Let's turn it on without sound and watch the game (Yankees/Red Sox American League pennant playoff game) while we do our case study. . . or better yet, let's listen to it and forget about the case study for tonight'.*"

(b) *"Just before the meeting began, the Case Presenter passed out brownies that she had baked and quipped, 'If you like them, maybe you'll go easier on me tonight'."*

(c) *"I noticed that all the females in the group were sitting on one side of the table and all the males on the other – almost as if we were facing off with one another".*

3. Did the initial event provide any clue for identifying any of the dynamics of the case? What possible connection(s) can you make?

Here are some acceptable examples.

a. *"The Case Presenter talked about how she didn't feel respected by her boss and co-workers because she was so much younger than most of them. I know that X was nervous about presenting her case and had done a lot of work to prepare her presentation. The suggestion that we watch television instead of consulting to her case (even if it was a joke) mirrored this disrespect."*

b. *"The Case Presenter talked about how there was a lot of conflict in her organization, and how others come to her to complain about their fellow workers. It seems as if she's somehow (unconsciously) taken up the role of 'mother' or 'nurturer' in her organization which then shields her from having to deal with the conflicts directly?"*

c) *"The similarities are amazing! The Case Presenter was promoted when his boss had to resign because of an accusation of sexual harassment by a female employee. His boss was well-liked by many of the employees, however, and a lot of them feel that some of the accusations made were false. Now, a number of them (all male) have said that they won't work on an important team project because it is being chaired by the woman who brought the charges. Interestingly, the Designated Authority in our group this week was supposed to be a woman but she called one of the men in the group right before class and asked him to switch weeks with her because she was too ill to come to class this week."*

4. Give some specific examples of how authority (formal and/or informal) and leadership were exercised during your group meeting. Note: In this class, the terms *authority* and *leadership* are not used interchangeably.

5. **Briefly summarize in a few sentences the main ideas contained in *each* of this week's readings?**
6. **Formulate two questions that arose for you as a result of the readings.**
7. **Formulate two questions that arose for you as a result of last week's class.**

Appendix D
Syllabus for EDLD 580

EDLD 580: Consulting to Groups

Course Description

In this course students will take on the role of teaching assistant (TA) for *EDLD 550/600: Leadership Theory and Practice*. Teaching the theory and application of leadership requires a solid knowledge base and a highly developed capacity to engage with students in class in ways that challenge and also support them in their learning. Teaching assistants in this course will gain an appreciation of the dynamic processes that are present in the course as a result of the case-in-point pedagogy utilized. This teaching method requires *reflection* and *inquiry* on one's own and the group's actions and behaviors as they occur. Thus TA's will learn about and improve their ability to think and work at a systemic level while working within their role as teaching assistant. TA's will provide weekly feedback to students in the course verbally and in writing; and the TA's will receive ongoing guidance from teaching associates and instructors in this process. Readings and other assignments are designed to help TA's integrate theoretical components with the practical applications of teaching leadership using case-in-point pedagogy.

Prerequisite: EDLD 550 or 600

Course Objectives

In this course teaching assistants will:

- Understand the theory and application of some of the basic elements of group relations and case-in-point pedagogy such as: self and role; group consciousness; holding steady; holding environment; parallel process; and the use of anxiety (to name a few).
- Improve capacity to understand and express internal experiences and use this knowledge in the service of their own and others learning.
- Develop and maintain a respectful and curious stance toward their own and others learning.
- Enhance their ability to use their authority as teaching assistant in the service of leadership.

- Improve their ability to engage with students in the class and to provide useful and appropriate feedback to them.
- Develop the ability to consider intra-personal, interpersonal, group, and systems perspectives in order to understand what is happening in the group as a whole.

Required readings

TEXT BOOK:

Daloz-Parks, S. (2005). *Leadership can be taught*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

READINGS AVAILABLE ON COURSE WEBSITE

Ford, Kathryn (1997). The importance of intra-personal abilities for competency in group relations work. *Proceedings from the twelfth scientific meeting of AKRI*. pp. 253-262. London: AK Rice Institute.

French, R.B. (1997). The teacher as container of anxiety: Psychoanalysis and the role of the teacher. *Journal of Management Education*. 21, 483-495.

Smith, Kenwyn (1995). On using the self as instrument: Lessons from a facilitators experience. In J. Gillette & M. McCollom (Eds). *Groups in context*. pp. 277-294. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Wells, Leroy, Jr. (1995). The group as a whole: A systemic socioanalytic perspective on interpersonal and group relations. In J. Gillette & M. McCollom (Eds). *Groups in context*. pp. 49-85. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Additional readings

Additional readings may be assigned throughout the course. They will be handed out in class, or posted on the course website. (A USD email account is required). As teaching assistants, you will be guiding students in many ways through the journey of this course. Thus, it is expected that you are aware of the readings that have been assigned to the students. Since you have all taken either EDLD 550 or 600, you have probably already read many of the readings assigned to the students. If there is a reading in a particular week that you have not read, or one you feel you need to review, I recommend that you take the time to access that reading and read it prior to the class when the reading is assigned.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Student work will be evaluated on the basis of effort, consistency, timeliness and progress made on developing individual competencies. It is therefore very important that TA's: come prepared having done the reading, consistently show up on time, participate fully, and be responsive (in your role as TA) to the students in your assigned small group.

Participation and attendance:

20%

It is expected that TA's come to each weekly class meetings on time and stay until the end of class. It is understood that there may be one or two occasions when emergencies arise, or when you may have to miss a class for personal or professional reasons. When possible, please try to plan ahead and let the instructors, teaching associates, your peers and the students in your small group know in advance. In the spirit of collegiality, we should all try to step in when someone needs to be away for any reason. Attendance also includes two 2-3 hour grading sessions on November 22 and December 18, where you will discuss the students in your small groups and make grade recommendations to Terri.

Your participation in pre and post class meetings, as well as during the course is an essential element in providing a holding environment for the students in this course. Keep in mind that we are all a part of the larger system, and your work as TA's will be to continuously explore what you and the TA group represent for the system-as-a-whole. As such each TA will be have the opportunity to integrate your learning and report the work of the TA's back to the instructor of the course (Terri) during TA meetings.

You will not be evaluated on the number of times you speak, or the ways in which your comments are or are not taken in by others. What will be taken into consideration is your ability to reflect on your work and to respond and develop as a result of your reflections and also feedback from instructors, teaching associates and other TA's.

Responding, reviewing and grading student work

30%

Weekly grading of student papers

As you might recall from your own experience as a student in 550 or 600, the teaching assistants are an integral component of the students' experience. A major aspect of your work as a TA is to provide weekly feedback to students in your small group. How well you take up this role to serve in this capacity is up to you. This is not as simple as grading traditional assignments such as course

papers or exams. You need to think deeply about the types of comments you consider based on what you perceive as each student's learning edge each week. You can learn to connect with each student by reading with intention, and listening carefully to what emerges in you as you review your groups work; this will often provide you with clues that will help you better understand your small group individually and collectively.

Oftentimes when we are unsure ourselves of what is going on, afraid to make mistakes, or fear being judged by others, we have a tendency to hide our confusion, keep it to ourselves, and thus we might make comments that are disconnected and/or obscure. It's important to be in touch with these feelings and use them to better understand how to do your work; ask for feedback from other TA's, teaching associates or course instructors. In addition, the thoughts and feelings that emerge within you are just as likely to be present in the students' experience. Recognizing this emergent *parallel process* between you and the students is important and can help you move your work to the systems level.

Given the large number of students in this course, we are all aware of the challenges in getting feedback to students and to instructors in a timely manner. Thus, the timing of students turning in papers, TA's providing feedback, and instructors providing feedback to TA's is as follows:

Saturday by Noon

Students turn in weekly questionnaires to TA's via WebCT.

Monday by 9:00 pm

TA's provide feedback/comments on the questionnaires and post via WebCT to instructors and teaching associates.

Wednesday by Noon

Instructors and teaching associates review and provide feedback to TA's where appropriate; then forward feedback/comments on to the students via WebCT.

In addition, there will be two to three written assignments that will not be graded that students will turn in for your review. The schedule for this process will be determined later in the course.

You will be evaluated on the timeliness, consistency, and the extent to which you utilize the feedback received by others to develop in this area.

Weekly progress reports

It is important that you get to know the students in your small groups, and pay attention to their progress throughout the course. As such each TA will be responsible for keeping on-going progress worksheets for each small group member that tracks large group attendance, large group participation, weekly

questionnaire grades, and completion of any other written assignments.

Other grading

As the course progresses you will know the students in your small group probably better than anyone else. Eventually, you will get a sense of their strengths, and the areas that they might need to improve upon. By giving consistent feedback, you may help them see their blind spots or provide insights to them to help them understand a particular concept or situation. Or they might provide you with insights! (It's always important to keep your mind open to this, as we are all learners in this course). One way to get a better sense of students' progress (in addition to what you will learn about them via the weekly assignments) is by reading and then providing grade recommendations for midterms and final papers for each member of your small group. This is an important responsibility; one that should be taken very seriously.

In addition, and as previously noted, there are two grading sessions (Nov and Dec) where you will be asked to reflect on your students' progress, and make final grade recommendations to the instructor for each member of your small group.

Reflection papers (4)

50%

It is always good practice to reflect on your learning, thus I would encourage you to keep an ongoing personal journal and find ways (however difficult) to make the time and create the space for inquiry and reflection. As those with an interest in the study and practice of leadership, ongoing inquiry into your own actions and behaviors can greatly enhance your leadership effectiveness, not to mention the many ways that inquiry can positively impact your personal and professional life.

In an effort to support you in your learning, I'm interested in hearing from you four times throughout the course. I will provide *prompts* for your initial and final reflections, but the other two (which will be turned in during the semester) you are free to write about any aspects of the course and/or your learning that make sense to you, and contribute to your overall learning (and mine as I reflect on your work).

(Reflections 1-3 should be 3-5 pages; reflection 4 should be 5-7 pages. Late papers will be accepted, but points will be deducted for each day the paper is late)

Paper #1 (Due September 10)

(10%)

Intention: what is your intention for your own learning in this course?

Your first assignment for the course is to reflect on what you hope to gain from working as a teaching assistant in this course. This is your opportunity to take responsibility for your own learning. My hope is that I will be able to support

you in whatever way(s) make sense to you as you develop your skills in using case-in-point methodology. You may be taking this course because you would like to use the method in your own teaching; or perhaps you have no interest in teaching, but you want to learn more about analyzing groups and situations from a systems perspective. Whatever your intention it is important that you clarify this from the start, and seek to understand the areas where you feel most competent, and those areas you feel you want to strengthen.

Paper #2 (Due October 15) (10%)

Paper #3 (Due November 12) (10%)

Paper #4 (Due December 10) (20%)

Integration: How do you make sense of your learning?

Now that the course is over, and as you reflect on your initial stated intention, what have you learned from your TA experience? Try to integrate the feedback you received, any readings you found helpful and your personal reflections from the semester. In this reflection students are also asked to reflect on their work during the semester, and to briefly discuss the grade they feel they deserve for the course.

Final course grade breakdown:

94 - 100	A
90 - 93	A-
86 - 89	B+
82 - 85	B
78 - 81	B-
74 - 77	C+
70 - 73	C
66 - 69	C-
65 below	D

Important notes to students

The instructor reserves the right to make changes / additions to the syllabus during the semester in response to student needs.

Grade of Incomplete:

The grade of Incomplete ("I") may be recorded to indicate (1) that the requirements of a course have been substantially completed but, for a legitimate reason, a small fraction of the work remains to be completed, and, (2) that the record of the student in the course justifies the expectation that he or she will complete the work and obtain the passing grade by the deadline. It is the student's responsibility to explain to the instructor the reasons for non-completion of work and to request an incomplete grade prior to the

posting of final grades. Students who receive a grade of incomplete must submit all missing work no later than the end of the tenth week of the next regular semester, otherwise the "I" grade will become a permanent "F."

Requests for Accommodation:

Reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act will be made for course participants with disabilities who require specific instructional and testing modifications. Students with such requirements must identify themselves to the University of San Diego Disability Services Office (619.260.4655) before the beginning of the course. Every effort will be made to accommodate students' needs, however, performance standards for the course will not be modified in considering specific accommodations.

Appendix E
Initial Email to Participants

Appendix C

Email to Recruit Participants

Dear (NAME),

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am conducting for my dissertation. The study will examine the ways in which women experience and understand authority and transition from the role of student into a formal authority position of teaching assistant. I am the principle researcher, and am a doctoral student in Leadership Studies.

The purpose of this study is to examine the way women experience and understand their positions of formal authority. Specifically, I am interested in the way you experience the transition into your position of teaching assistant in EDLD 550/600 and attempt to demonstrate authority in the service of leadership.

You are being invited for this study based on your previous class participation in the EDLD 550/600 leadership class as a student and your current position as teaching assistant. I will include four female participants from the teaching assistant group to participate. Data collection will include four semi-structured 60-minute interviews. In addition, I will be observing you as a teaching assistant five times over the course of the semester and will be asking for your permission to read the journal you are keeping for the course.

I believe the risks will be minimal, but your participation during the tenure of the study is completely voluntary. Due to the often-emotional nature of self-reflection, you may experience emotional reactions to your reflections about your own authority as a teaching assistant. You are free to stop participation at anytime during the study. Your participation and/or withdraw from this study will not in any way negatively impact your status as a TA, or your work in EDLD 580, if you are a student in that course.

I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to contribute to the learning of women and authority through your participation in the study. I think this study might provide useful findings, and have positive implications for the development and support of women transitioning into formal positions of authority.

I am open and available for any questions or comments you might have. Please contact me and let me know if you are interested in participating. If you agree to participate, I will arrange a time for us to meet, discuss dates and times for our interviews, and review and ask you to sign the consent form. I appreciate your consideration to this project.

Thanks,

Lorri Sulpizio
Sulpizio-09@sandiego.edu
619-922-1712

Appendix F
Initial Interview guide

Initial Interview Guide

Thank you for participating in this study. My research interest is on women who are transitioning into a role of formal authority. You fit this description based on your previous role as a student in this Leadership class and your current role of teaching assistant for the Leadership class. I am interested in understanding both your experience with authority—such as how you think about and demonstrate authority—as well as your experience specific to the transition from the role of student to the role of Teaching Assistant (TA). Again, thank you for your time. Do you have any questions about this interview process before we begin?

1. How do you define authority?
2. I'd like you to think about three people that come to mind when you think about authority.... Who are those three people?
3. What is it about those people that brings the concept of authority to your mind?
4. Can you talk about what you do to demonstrate authority? What specific behaviors do you do?
5. Take a moment to think about people in your life who hold formal roles of authority. What do those people do to demonstrate their authority? Are there any specific behaviors that you find most effective in demonstrating authority?
6. Please describe why you decided to take on the role of Teaching Assistant for this course.
7. As you begin the semester, how do you view yourself in your role of Teaching Assistant? What do you feel is your purpose in taking on the role of TA?
8. In thinking about your role as a teaching assistant, how do you plan to demonstrate and take up your authority in the Leadership class?
9. Can you think about why and when you might demonstrate authority as a Teaching Assistant? How about in other authority roles you've held—why and when did you take up your role?
10. You've experienced this class as a student. How do you see the student role impacting your teaching assistant role?
11. What do you perceive will be the main difference between your role as a student and your role as a TA?
12. Is there anything that you feel might present difficulties or challenges to you in your role as teaching assistant?
13. The course is titled: Leadership. Please describe the relationship you feel exists between leadership and authority?
14. What year were you a student in EDLD 600?
15. Did you take the course as a Master's student or a doctoral student?
16. Are you currently a student? If so, where are you in your program?
17. Please describe your experience with work on leadership and authority. This may include Group Relations conferences you've attended, meetings, classes, or research you've done in a Group Relations setting, or a setting that uses case-in-point methodology.