

2019

Centuries of Navigating Resistance and Change: Exploring the Persistence of Mongolian Women Leaders

Holly D. Diaz

Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aura.antioch.edu/etds>

 Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [Leadership Studies Commons](#), [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#), and the [Sociology of Culture Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Diaz, Holly D., "Centuries of Navigating Resistance and Change: Exploring the Persistence of Mongolian Women Leaders" (2019). *Dissertations & Theses*. 485.
<https://aura.antioch.edu/etds/485>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student & Alumni Scholarship, including Dissertations & Theses at AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations & Theses by an authorized administrator of AURA - Antioch University Repository and Archive. For more information, please contact hhale@antioch.edu, wmcgrath@antioch.edu.

Centuries of Navigating Resistance and Change:
Exploring the Persistence of Mongolian Women Leaders

Holly Diaz

ORCID Scholar ID# 0000-0001-9344-2729

A Dissertation

Submitted to the PhD in Leadership and Change Program of Antioch University

in partial fulfillment for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2019

This dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. in Leadership and Change, Graduate School of Leadership and Change, Antioch University.

Dissertation Committee

- Elizabeth Holloway, Ph.D., Committee Chair
- Tony Lingham, Ph.D., Committee Member
- Karen Stout, Ph.D., Committee Member

Copyright 2019 Holly Diaz

All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgements

They say it takes a village, and this dissertation process was no exception. If you would have told me when I began this program in 2012, that I would travel to Mongolia, twice, and deeply research the historical and contemporary experiences of Mongolian women leaders, I would not have believed it. I had deep travel anxiety left over from 9/11 and learning about other cultures was very challenging as I had little to no global context. Dr. Laurien Alexandre did say at the beginning of the program that the research path would unfold and emerge as we moved through it. This is so true. Thank you, Laurien, for helping me let go and be open for that path to emerge.

Dr. Elizabeth Holloway conducted my initial interview for the program and asked me, “When did you first know that you were a leader?” Which was a question I had never reflected on before, but the answer came quickly, when I was three and began to stand up against my family. There was so much validation in this moment of clarity. Dr. Holloway also said that I was a good writer in this interview, which I had not heard before. It was only fitting that Elizabeth would be my dissertation chair. I connected with her writing and teaching style, as well as her chosen methodologies. I know I was a pain in the ass at times, working too much, not always communicating in a timely manner, and at the end of the process, I chose not to share the deterioration of my physical and cognitive health as I knew she would make me take care of myself. But I desperately needed to finish this work. Following my defense, Elizabeth said, “you are sure stubborn.” Yes, yes I am. I am so sorry about that. I deeply appreciate you sticking it out

with me though and will forever be grateful for your kindness, validation and wisdom.

In 2014, I cold-called Dr. Karen Stout, faculty at my campus, Western Washington University. I was in desperate need of a mentor and made myself extremely vulnerable, asking if she would be willing to take me on as a mentee in whatever capacity she could. Karen has an incredibly full work and home life, I know this request was probably challenging for her to entertain, but I am so thankful that she did. Karen has provided strategies, guidance and sometimes just a kind ear. After a few years I applied to be an NTT with Karen's institute. This is the opportunity that opened the doors of Mongolia, and frankly the rest of the world. Karen has been an amazing mentor, supervisor, a great travel companion, and her awesome kids have become friends with my daughter. Karen, I am truly blessed that you took a chance on me. I look forward to what is next! Thank you from the bottom of my heart and soul.

I want to take the opportunity to share my deep appreciation for my classmates, cohort 12! Having residencies throughout the country provided a shared learning opportunity that was unique and exciting. It was on these adventures that my relationships with these amazing individuals evolved into life-long friendships. Much love and a huge thank you to Audy, Renee, Lisa and Heidi for your love and support.

I especially want to name Dr. Katie Larsen from our co-hort. We found each other prior to the first residency online and decided to share a hotel room. This could have been a disaster, but it wasn't. It was Katies love of travel that inspired me to be brave, to challenge myself to travel more and move through my anxieties and meet the world. I appreciate our continued friendship and seeing her become a mom. I love you KTL.

Western Washington University, the Karen W. Morse Institute for Leadership and the John Street Fund for Mongolia which all made this research possible. My first trip to Mongolia

was a study abroad that I co-led with Dr. Stout and the second trip was fully funded by the John Street Fund for Mongolia. I am deeply grateful for the support that allowed this research to happen. I also want to thank my Residence Life co-workers who have supported me throughout this process and picked up work when I needed to travel or take time off to write. I especially want to thank June Fraser Thistle...you know why. Thank you Res Life! In addition, I want to thank Dr. Renee Collins and Dr. Joanne DeMark for your support over the years, “A good dissertation is a done dissertation” (Collins, 2017).

Being a mom and working a lot, I always had my laptop with me to write whenever and wherever. I want to thank the following coffee shops and bars for accommodating my writing: Avellino Coffee House, The Racket, Casa Que Pasa, El Agave and the Temple Bar. Yes, I spent money to spend time in these locations, but I deeply appreciate the ambiance, the workers, the solitude, the Wi-fi, and the people watching when I was having writers block.

Strangely, I would like to thank my mom, dad and Les. I know you all tried. What I have learned through this research is that I would not be the person I am today if I had not emerged from that adversity. So, while it was heart wrenching and horrific at times, it made me want to be and do better for myself, for my family and for our future generations.

There are so many other random humans that made this possible. I am going to list them without specific recognition, not because their impact wasn't important, but because it would be a whole other work of writing to accomplish that task. Thank you so much to the following: Colleen (love you girl), Susan (thank you for telling me I already knew my decision), Renee Collins (“a good dissertation is a done dissertation”), auntie Heidi (optimism and hope), my step-mom Andie (awesome-ness, kindness and all things cool), my siblings (it's complicated, but the Klingman 5 had its day), Lisa (thank you for your unconditional love) and several other dear

friends who have supported me along the way. I also need to thank my foes who I will remain unnamed, but I do appreciate that they continued to light the fire.

I am one of those super lucky people that get awesome in-laws. My mother-in-law, Mary, has watched me grow over 20 years, through my relationship, becoming a mother, moving through college. And all of the way she has been steadfast and supportive. Thank you so much, Mary. I am so fortunate to have you as my mother-in-law and I love you. Alexandra, you drive used to drive me insane (because you were seven, I will forgive you) but you have turned out to be such an awesome young lady, friend and fantastic auntie to Ruby. Love you lady. I also get the privilege of many awesome in-law cousins...you know who you are (but special shout out to Steph!) thank you!

Last but absolutely not least, I want to thank my family, Abel and Ruby Diaz. Ruby was four when I began this program, she only knows a mom that has been in graduate school. The amount of sacrifice they both have made for me and this program, well I don't even have a way to describe it. From the several residencies, to the 44 days in Mongolia over 13 months and my additional travel for work, it has all been a significant impact on my family. I have always said that I am doing this for my family, to break the negative generational patterns, to provide a different future for us and specifically, Ruby. While all this is true, it is also a very isolating experience. Writing is insular and painstakingly long, the travel was without my family and the overall process was not inclusive of their presence. Abel and Ruby, I am sorry for this. I am forever grateful, thankful and blessed for your sacrifice and unwavering support. There are no words that capture my love for you both.

Abstract

The country of Mongolia has an ancient culture with a 28-year-old democracy that emerged out of communism. Over the course of several centuries, the Mongolian people have adapted to severe climates and brutal occupations but have managed to preserve cultural practices and the Mongolian way of life. Women leaders have made significant historical and contemporary contributions in Mongolia, from holding important leadership positions as heirs of Chinggis Khan, to ensuring the future of the country by sending their children abroad for graduate education. The impact of their leadership is evident with high percentages of women in leadership positions across several sectors of business, politics, social services and health care. This form of modern nomadism is providing Mongolia with a global perspective that is contributing to the development of their democratic infrastructure. Through individual and group interviews, this indigenous narrative study with an emergent, thematic analysis, found that Mongolian women persevered through challenging conditions, motivated by their dedication to Mongolian people, the future of their country and centuries of indigenous ways of being that promote adaptability in extreme circumstances. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/> and Ohiolink ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>

Keywords: Mongolia, Women, Leadership, Resilience, Thriving and Persistence.

My wives, daughters-in-law, and daughters are as colorful and radiant as red fire. It is my sole purpose to make their mouths as sweet as sugar by favor, to bedeck them in garments spun with gold, to mount them upon fleet-footed steeds, to have them drink sweet, clear water, to provide their animals with grassy meadows, and to have all harmful brambles and thorns cleared from the roads and paths upon which they travel, and not to allow weeds and thorns to grow in their pastures. –Weatherford, 2010, p. 39

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Figures	ix
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Mongolia: Land of the Eternal Blue Sky	2
Mongolian Culture and Women	3
Purpose of Study and Research Question	4
Researcher Positionality	7
Social Relevance of Resilience and Thriving in Leadership	11
Organization of the Dissertation	12
Chapter II: Literature Review	14
The Legacy of Chinggis Khan	15
Contemporary Experiences of Women Leaders in Mongolia and the United States	25
Closing and Chapter Conclusion	32
Chapter III: Methodology	34
Indigenous Methodology	35
The Researcher as Part of the Narrative Landscape	40
Narrative as the Method of the Study	42
Ethical Considerations	48
Chapter Conclusion	49
Chapter IV: Findings	50
The Challenges of Mongolia—Politics	53
The Challenges of Mongolia: Institutional Framework	58
The Challenges Women Face in Mongolia	63
Women in Mongolia Navigating Challenge with Values	67

Mongolia and Mongolian Women Moving Forward—Final Thoughts	75
Chapter V: Discussion.....	77
Historical to Contemporary Contradictions.....	78
Transition to Democracy: A Period of Change.....	86
Women Leading Change	89
The Space between Resilience and Thriving	96
Limitations	100
A Mongolian Woman’s Perspective on This Research.....	101
Conclusions.....	102
References	105
Appendix A: Independent Review Board Application Narrative	113
Appendix B: Photo Permission.....	120

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Statue of Chinggis Khan on the Steps of the Capitol Building.....15

Figure 2.2. Etchings of Chinggis Khan’s Image on the Mountainside Overlooking the City16

Figure 2.3. One Hundred Thirty Foot Statue of Chinggis on Horseback Just East of the City of Ulaanbaatar16

Figure 2.4. Section of a mural depicting a mother breastfeeding in the city of Ulaanbaatar31

Chapter I: Introduction

Mongolia is an ancient region with a rich culture and complicated past. Known primarily for their historical leader Chinggis Khan,¹ the realm has experienced several centuries of war, occupations and extreme climate issues since his reign. Even with this, the Mongolian culture and practices have remained intact. Which leaves the question, how? How have Mongolians endured great hardship while maintaining their cultural identity?

One of the great unknowns about Mongolia is the real legacy of Chinggis Khan. He is known for being a relentless warrior, and while this is true, it is only one aspect of this legendary leader. Chinggis Khan developed a sophisticated infrastructure and set of ethical standards that have been tested over the ages but are present in modern Mongolia. A skilled lawmaker who believed in freedom of religion and gender equity, Chinggis created and enforced the role of women in Mongolian culture. This too has been tested over several centuries; yet the modern-day Mongolian woman exhibits leadership characteristics and practices that were written about several centuries ago by the leader himself. Unfortunately, several centuries of individuals ruling Mongolia who did not share these values, followed by nearly three more centuries of Mongolia being occupied by the Manchu and Russia, resulted in the experiences of Mongolian women being ripped from history.

Mongolia still shows the centuries of oppressive rule through their physical infrastructure and politics, but the national pride is strong. The democratic shift in 1990 led to an extremely difficult period for Mongolia, and it was the women there who immediately began to organize, strategize, and enact change. They organized non-governmental agencies to address systemic

¹ Chinggis Khan has been more widely known by the name Genghis Khan. In Chapter II, I explain the preference for Chinggis as the transliteration from the Mongolian.

corruption, inequity, and the need for social infrastructure. Part of this strategy was recognizing their people needed to learn how to do these things, so the women researched scholarships in other countries and sent their children abroad, primarily the females, to be educated. It is important to note that all of this was done with an extreme lack of resources such as minimal rations of food and work due to the economic collapse. This creativity and innovation amid survival is what made me so curious about the experiences of Mongolian women.

Mongolia: Land of the Eternal Blue Sky

Located in central Asia, Mongolia is a landlocked nation bordered by two powerful countries, Russia and China. With a population of approximately three million, over half of the Mongolian people live in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar (Kohn, Kaminski, & McCrohan, 2014). In 1990, Mongolia became a democratic nation after over seventy years of communist occupation. The following 10 years were extremely difficult as the economic structure reoriented from a socialist economy to a market economy (Tsedevdamba, 2016). The high unemployment rate was so severe that a law was passed by Mongolian Parliament that allowed a credit equal to ten years of employment so those reaching retirement could still earn their full benefits. To other countries this might seem like a strategic move to motivate the workforce with new generations of workers, but, unfortunately, there was no infrastructure during the 1990s; since then Mongolia completely rebuilt their country from the ground up.

However, Mongolia is quickly catching up to global standards for infrastructure, health care systems, and human rights. They also have an untapped, rich mining industry primarily consisting of gold, copper, and coal and are working on ways to best manage these resources while maintaining the integrity of their land. Mongolians recognize the complex needs in their

country and are committed to continuous development, often through involvement in several initiatives, while simultaneously preserving the historical narrative of their nation.

Mongolian Culture and Women

For centuries, Mongolia has been known as a nomadic culture. To be nomadic is defined as “roaming about from place to place aimlessly, frequently, or without a fixed pattern of movement” (Nomadic, n.d.). Men did the fighting, conquering and herding while women were left for long periods of time to manage the home front. The women were responsible for the household which included complete care and transportation of the *ger* (a portable, round dwelling made of felt and a wooden frame), child rearing, and finances for the family (Weatherford, 2010). The *ger* was and is still considered the woman’s domain (Weatherford, 2010). While running the household is not recognized as formal leadership roles, they are examples of informal leading that has evolved over several hundreds of years.

While women in Mongolia have made significant contributions and impact in their society, the role of women in the culture is complicated. Fifty percent of the population of Mongolia is made up of women and they comprise 51.4% of the working population (Purevsuren, n.d.). Women work 80% of the administrative jobs in Mongolia (K. Stout, personal communication, June 30, 2015) and make up at least 63% of all college students since 1985 (Worden, Matles, & Savada, 1989). Compared to many Western societies, there is more gender diversity across academic disciplines, and a greater representation of women in the sciences specifically (Worden et al., 1989). In addition, Mongolia ranks second in the world for gender wage equality for equal work (Mongolian News Montsame, 2015).

These contemporary examples of women in the Mongolian economy are not new to their culture. The Rouran tribes (ancient predecessors to modern Mongolians) who occupied the

region from 402–552 CE, were the first to implement the inclusion of women royalty in decision-making processes (Meyanathan, 2013). Later, Chinggis Khan, who reigned from 1206 to 1227, secured a stronger role for women in society by putting many of his female family members in positions of great power.

Indeed, throughout history, the women of Mongolia have provided significant contributions to the cultural and economic development of this country in many different contexts and physical environments (Rossabi, 2009). Meyanathan (2013) states, “Mongolians are known for their tenacity and ability to adapt to continuously changing climate conditions, supporting the survival of their traditions and culture for thousands of years” (p. 10). It is this epic exhibition of resilience and thriving under extreme conditions that has captured my interest. The unique role that these women leaders have in their culture and the obstacles that they have confronted and yet continue to persist with great vision is both humbling and inspiring.

Purpose of Study and Research Question

To understand the resilience and thriving of Mongolians, and specifically Mongolian women, it is important to study the historical context of this country as well as learn about the contemporary experiences of these women leaders. There are many cultural practices specific to Mongolian culture that promote the success of women that include a substantial respect for the role of mothers, equal pay for both genders and greater representation of women across work sectors. During the summer of 2016, I co-led a study abroad trip to Mongolia to research Mongolian women leaders to learn more about their leadership challenges and strategies. Through this initial research, a series of characteristics emerged from the interviews that were hard to articulate but was best described by our student research team as “humble pride.” While paradoxical in nature, these women showed great humility, giving appropriate credit to

collaborative efforts and were fierce in their ownership of their own accomplishments. This was a significantly different narrative than I knew from women leaders in western culture.

It was my intention with this research to discover the nature and experience of women who lead in Mongolia. I wondered, what is it that compels them to endure and feel confident in their skills and abilities? Scholarly exploration of this culture is minimal at best with the most current research primarily related to infrastructure. Social science research is limited as more attention is directed toward primary societal needs such as economic growth, health care and education. Nonetheless, the opportunity for understanding capability and experience of women leaders is a significant part of the Mongolian historical legacy and, I would contend, the future development of the country as the prospect of learning from the stamina of this culture is significant.

This dissertation explored the following two research questions: What is the perspective and experience of Mongolian women who lead? And what is it about their experience that promotes resilience and thriving?

Exploring the Research Question Through Narrative Inquiry

To better understand Mongolian women leaders and what motivates these individuals to be resilient and thrive, this narrative research study that explores the following:

- Historical background (childhood, family values, education, career path);
- Contemporary life (current employment, current projects/volunteer work, family status and values);
- Future goals (future employment goals, future project goals, future family goals);
- Adverse situations and how they navigated these issues;
- Successes and how these opportunities unfolded;

- Values that are the driving force behind their motivation;
- Mentors and how these individuals have supported in their journey.

To better understand the experiences of these women, I chose to utilize narrative inquiry as a methodological approach. Many women leaders in Mongolia do not consider themselves to be leaders until identified as such by someone they respect. Creswell (2014) claims that the foundation of narrative research is the phenomenon, the personal experiences of the researcher, and the intended audience. Taking this into consideration, the interviews were shaped to be transparent about who identified participants as a leader and explored leadership traits and practices that they have found inspirational or helpful. In addition, I asked the women to share strategies for resilience and sustainable change. Narrative inquiry also allowed me to position myself in the research, which was important when managing understanding and bias in cross cultural research. Trahar (2009) describes narrative research as “investigating meanings of experiences” and recognizing that simultaneously “the research process itself was a series of experiences, a journey” (p. 4). I deeply value stories told from a personal perspective, and a narrative approach provided the reflective, auto ethnographic framework that enabled myself as the researcher to explore the other’s story while taking into consideration my own world view to manage bias and honor the cross-cultural perspective (Trahar, 2009).

My interest of study is exploring resilience and thriving of Mongolian women leaders. This inquiry required a deep understanding of lived experience, history, culture, and meaning. I conducted a qualitative narrative study to capture the experiences of these women leaders to gain understanding about what it is that promotes their success.

In addition to a narrative study, the research was supported with current, translated literature exploring the modern Mongolian woman—which is limited. I supplemented the

literature with historical texts as a way to support the knowledge of cultural practices and the accounts of Mongolian women's experiences over several centuries. This provided insight and understanding into the contemporary experiences of Mongolian women leaders.

Researcher Positionality

Birth, death, marriage, parenting, aging, divorce, career evolution and everything in between—this is the spectrum of the human experience. Each of these occur within environments and social constructs that support or hinder our navigation of and engagement in the experience. The foundation of our initial world views provided by our family of origin also plays a role in how we choose to move through our life path. And, in narrative inquiry the importance of early experiences in life cannot be overestimated. The researcher's worldview affects the topics studied and the interpretation of the stories gathered. For these reasons, I will share aspects of my journey that most decidedly have led me to the study of women leaders in a country that has both a rich history, a tumultuous political past, and critical challenges for women.

My life course has been non-traditional compared to many of my colleagues. I was born into a family from a very low socioeconomic background and experienced many of the issues typically encountered by impoverished families. These included being a child of alcoholic and drug addicts, several parental divorces, physical and sexual abuse, neglect, death of an immediate family member, and a significant lack of opportunities. Not long ago, my daughter asked me what, when I was her age, had I wanted to be when I grew up. I hadn't thought about it in years, but I had no aspirations as a child. My family never saw me as capable of being anything other than a homemaker, and I only saw myself as surviving. Even though I had no dreams or goals, I knew at a very young age that this was not meant to be my life and began

seeking mentors by the age of five. Interestingly, similar stories of early self-awareness showed up in the interviews as well. To this day, I am not sure where this way of knowing came from for me, but I do know that it was very deliberate.

Half way through high school I moved out of my mother's home and lived on a mentor's couch over my last two years of high school. I was unable to attend college after high school as my grades were not good enough for scholarships. I imagine this was due to a lack of stability. My mother was obviously not in a position to pay for college and she was not willing to take out loans on my behalf, so I decided to wait until the age of 22 when I would be able to apply for my own financial aid. Meanwhile, I did a series of odd and humbling jobs to make my way in the world, eventually securing a more stable position as a travel agent in my early 20s. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the travel industry took a huge financial hit, and I was laid off. Not only was I traumatized like every other American, but my livelihood was directly affected.

It was my husband who finally convinced me to go to college—and I fought him. By this point, I had lost the will and the confidence to go to college. So instead I agreed to do a two-year technical degree that seemed like a low-risk option that would allow me to return to the workforce. But after taking a couple of social justice courses I changed my mind and decided to become a transfer student. I now have a bachelor's degree in Human Services, a master's degree in psychology, a master's degree in leadership and a doctorate in leadership and change.

My professional career has consisted of seven years in higher education and eight years in non-profit work and mental health. Both have provided me the opportunity to work with people from all walks of life with varying experiences. In higher education, there has been a dramatic increase of students with mental health issues over the past five years, providing many opportunities to help support these young adults. My non-profit work focused on advocating on

behalf of family members of those who had been murdered. These professional experiences have led me to question how individuals manage difficult circumstances. What is it that they do that moves them through adverse experiences? I recognize this is a question that I am simultaneously exploring for myself as well.

The first five years of my doctorate research has focused on toxic organizations, toxic leaders, woman leaders' experiences in higher education and the resilience of women in higher education. While the process of this research did provide me with timely ideas for how to navigate issues of being a female leader and working in toxic organizations, it also became very exhausting and emotionally taxing. Professionally, it is my job to challenge students to engage in difficult situations and conversations. It was through this research that I realized I was not doing this myself. I am the sole provider for my family, it felt dangerous to challenge sexist and toxic behavior.

While I can't ignore the needs of my family, I also could no longer ignore my integrity. With the blessing of my husband, I began to respectfully challenge these toxic behaviors which was extremely difficult, but I became very skillful over time. Unfortunately, I also began to live the research, I received pushback through negative statements such as "remember I can fire you at anytime" and negative reflections on my annual evaluation which was completely different from the previous year. So, I went back to the strategies identified in the research and realized I needed a professional mentor. I spent the next month looking for someone on my campus who exhibited the qualities of the leader I wanted to be. This is when I found Dr. Karen Stout, who had no idea who I was, but agreed to meet with me and subsequently mentor me.

Dr. Stout was incredibly helpful during this time. She validated my experiences and helped me identify new strategies specific to our university culture and climate. I am forever

grateful to her, especially for her support during this period. Living the research was exhausting and I began to wonder how I was going to complete an entire dissertation process with a research question that I was coming to resent. Dr. Stout agreed that I may want to step back from exploring women's experiences in toxic contexts. This is when I began to look at the concept of resilience.

In the winter of 2016, I was offered a non-tenured track faculty position with the Morse Institute for Leadership at Western Washington University. This role was in addition to my other administrative position but provided an opportunity to make an impact on students in a way that I had not previously had. It was during this position acceptance that I was also offered the opportunity to teach and co-lead a travel abroad program to Mongolia with Dr. Karen Stout, where we began this inquiry. I had no idea how much that experience would shift my world view and future research.

Dr. Stout and I led a research team of eight students through a narrative research process, interviewing Mongolian women leaders across several sectors. In addition to this research, I utilized part of my independent learning achievement to deeply explore the historical background of Mongolia. There were several assumptions I brought into my travels to Mongolia that were challenged through this paper, helping me to understand how much I really did not know about Mongolian culture. It was this initial study with the leadership institute and my historical research that reinvigorated my interest in women, leadership, and resilience. Taking the research out of my shared experience of the topic, instead exploring the experiences of these remarkable Mongolian women leaders, has promoted resilience and thriving in me as a scholar.

Social Relevance of Resilience and Thriving in Leadership

If you endeavor, fate endeavors. – Mongolian Proverb

The status of the United States democracy is dire. The outcome of recent elections has created deep political divide in our country that is impacting the health and wellbeing of our people, primarily marginalized populations, and our economy. Denton and Voth (2017) identify our current landscape as being cynical and narcissistic, claiming that “our culture is dominated by psychological egoism where all interest is self-interest, contributing to the decline in civility and the erosion of trust and support in government politicians” (p. 1). They further describe this as having a significant impact across the political, social, and cultural spectrum.

There are many individuals trying to identify how to remain resilient and civically engaged in a country that is struggling to represent multiple perspectives. I think American leaders can learn from the Mongolian people about resilience and persistence considering their complicated and oppressive history. More specifically, the creative, relational, and transformational leadership practices of Mongolian women could be highly beneficial to countries managing times of turmoil.

Mongolia is considered a developing country with a democracy that emerged from communism. The liberation occurred in the winter months of 1989–1990 through a series of peaceful protests in Sukhbaatar Square. The 10 years following this victory are considered by Mongolians to be “the hard years” as they struggled to create an economic structure that supported their new free market economy (Tsedevdamba, 2016). This period brought an economic collapse as health care and higher education were no longer free and food was scarce. While this democratic evolution was an extremely challenging time for Mongolia with great sacrifice, it is without regret. Mongolians have been polled every quarter for the last 25 years by

Sant Maral, a Mongolian non-governmental organization (NGO), Sant Maral, and have been asked “Do you regret that Mongolia chose democracy in 1990?” (Tsedevdamba, 2016, p. 142). Each time over 90% of the Mongolian people vote “no” (Tsedevdamba, 2016, p. 142; see also Burn & Oidov, 2001; Meyanathan, 2013; Rossabi, 2005, 2011; Worden et al., 1989).

Even though Mongolia has a young democracy, the country has centuries of experiences from which to draw knowledge, whereas the United States only has 240 years. The Mongolian people know sacrifice and change in a way most contemporary Americans do not. Mongolia is a country that is historically known for political, economic, climate, and agricultural hardship (Meyanathan, 2013; Rossabi, 2005; Tsedevdamba, 2016; Weatherford, 2010). By embarking on this research, it was my hope to identify those characteristics of Mongolian women leaders that promote resilience and thriving in hopes of sharing this learning with women leaders in the United States and the Mongolian people.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter I has provided the foundation for the question I wish to explore through narrative research. This study investigates what it is that promotes resilience and thriving in Mongolian women leaders with the hopes of learning practices and principles that could be shared and applied to other countries that might be struggling with female leadership career trajectory and navigating difficult situations effectively.

Chapter II explores relevant literature supporting the intention of the study. Chapter III examines phenomenological indigenous narrative inquiry as the chosen methodology to effectively study the research question as well as the research design, study protocol and potential ethical issues. Chapter IV is an examination of the themes and stories presented from the data and Chapter V is the final synthesis and discussion of the research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Mongolian women have been exhibiting leadership for centuries yet, contemporary literature and research is scant. Recent scholars such as Rossabi (2011), Tumursukh (2001), and Weatherford (2004, 2010), have uncovered historically significant literature regarding Mongolian women leaders. Tseveddamba (2016) thoroughly explored the experience of women and their contributions to the democratic movement in the early 1990s. Recent literature is embedded in topic specific research such as domestic violence (Bille, 2013; Carlson et al., 2012; Jones, 2006; Oke, 2008), non-governmental organizations (Dalaibuyan, 2013; Jones, 2006; Oyunbileg, Sumberzul, Udval, Wang, & Janes, 2009; Tseveddamba, 2016), politics, cultural relations, and country reports (Baival & Fernandez-Gimenez, 2012; Bille, 2013; Dalaibuyan, 2013; Tseveddamba, 2016) and nomadic living and learning (Burn & Oidov, 2001; Ulambayar & Fernandez-Gimenez, 2013). Examples of the contemporary leadership practices of Mongolian women do exist in this literature. But unfortunately, there is no research specifically recognizing Mongolian women as leaders, even though many of these females are stepping into formal and informal positions of leadership.

The limited literature on the contemporary experiences of Mongolian women leaders, encouraged me to search for literature on women leaders throughout Asia. But reflection on formal and informal conversations I had had with the people of Mongolia, reminded me of the commonly held disdain towards China and made me realize that associating Mongolian women with all women of Asia would not work (Bille, 2013). Mongolians have strong national pride and do not identify with their neighboring countries, even though and, perhaps because their country was under the occupying force of the Manchu-led Qing Dynasty between 1756 and 1911 and by Russia from 1924 to 1990. (Meyanathan, 2013; Rossabi, 2005). In an effort to honor the national

identity of this marginalized country, I sought literature on Mongolian leadership in general and discovered that the focus was primarily on exploring leadership from the era of the Mongolian empire (Meyanathan, 2013; Rossabi, 2011; Weatherford, 2004, 2010) and the country's democratic transition from socialism (Ginsberg, 1995; Heaton, 1992; Noerper, 2007; Porter, 2009; Rossabi, 2005, 2009; Tsedevdamba, 2016). My expectation was for the historical exploration of leadership and transition to provide a foundation of cultural knowledge to support the interpretation of women leaders' experiences in contemporary Mongolia.

This exploration of scholarly literature on Mongolian women's leadership has resulted in four topical areas that will provide understanding and context to the significant points in time when women have been promoted, minimized, or have initiated leadership. The first section below aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the legacy of Chinggis Khan and his predecessors, the Manchu and Russian occupations, and the democratic transition. The second section focuses on the contemporary experiences of Mongolian women leaders following the democratic transition starting in 1990. The third section explores a narrow band of relevant literature on women's leadership in the United States, specifically in higher education. I will conclude the chapter by comparing the leadership experiences of women in Mongolia and the United States and highlight the potential contributions of this study to the field.

The Legacy of Chinggis Khan

The Yuan Dynasty (1189–1368) is considered to be the golden age of Mongolia (Meyanathan, 2013; Weatherford, 2010) and is the period that the Mongol Empire was ruled by Chinggis Khan and his descendants. Literature identifies this as the time of unification for Mongolia, when in fact unification only occurred under the rule of Chinggis Khan (Meyanathan, 2013; Weatherford, 2010). It was during his leadership that heads of warring clans were killed

and that surviving members became a part of his people (May, 2007; Meyanathan, 2013; Rossabi, 2011). While most of his enemies fought over resources and land, Chinggis Khan rose, motivated by his quest for justice and respect for women (Weatherford, 2010).

Chinggis Khan lived from 1162 to 1229 and is widely thought of as a merciless conqueror. In 1995, the *Washington Post* gave Khan the controversial title of “Man of the Millennium” (Achenbach, 1995); this was met with articles refuting the title with typical confusion about the history of the Mongolian Empire. This confusion extends to the pronunciation and spelling of his name, I grew up thinking it was Genghis, when it is in fact spelled and pronounced Chinggis (as confirmed by several Mongolians). It was during my preparation for travel to Mongolia that I began to understand what Chinggis Khan means to the people of this country. In contemporary Mongolia, he is revered as the “great lawmaker” and his date of birth is considered an annual holiday (Kohn et al., 2014). There is a statue of him on the steps of the capitol building in Chinggis Square, formerly Sukhbaatar Square (see Figure 3.1), etchings of his image are in the mountainside overlooking the city and there is a stainless steel (see Figure 3.2), 130’ statue of Chinggis on horseback just east of the capital city of Ulaanbaatar (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.1. Statue of Chinggis Khan on the steps of the capitol building. Photo by Holly Diaz. Copyright 2018 Holly Diaz.



Figure 2.2. Etchings of Chinggis Khan's image on the mountainside overlooking the city. Photo by Holly Diaz. Copyright 2018 Holly Diaz.



Figure 2.3. Statue of Chinggis on horseback just east of the city of Ulaanbaatar. Photo by Holly Diaz. Copyright 2018 Holly Diaz.

The childhood of Chinggis provides great insight into the leader he later became. Early Mongol tribes were forest dwellers that eventually moved into the Mount Burkhan Khaldun area in the current north-central region of Mongolia. The more established tribes of that time such as the Tatars, Naiman and the Kereyid loathed the Mongols, but would use them for their knowledge and acquisition of fur, meat, women, and warrior skills (Weatherford, 2010, p. 11).

Chinggis, originally named Temujin, was born to a mother who was captured by the Borijin tribe and made into a slave wife. By default, he belonged to his paternal clan, but at the age of nine his father was killed. Even though Temujin was deeply loved by his father (Onon, 2011), his uncles felt no responsibility to take care of their brother's slave wife and many children, so they took everything of value and discarded the family in the middle of the harsh winter climate. The next five years for Temujin (Chinggis), his mother and siblings were extremely difficult, surviving in difficult climates and enslavement (Weatherford, 2004, 2010).

Around the age of 16, Chinggis married Borte, a girl from a steppe clan associated with his mother. This arranged marriage was the last significant act that his father partook in before his death (Onon, 2011). Shortly after their marriage, Borte was abducted by an enemy tribe, the Merkid. Chinggis pursued the captors, killing many enemies and eventually saving his wife. It was his unwavering persistence and strategic alliances that he made to save Borte that put Chinggis in the political sphere of the steppe, and shaped his ideology of valuing, supporting and promoting women (Kohn et al., 2014; Weatherford, 2010).

Perhaps due to the hardships of his own upbringing, Chinggis Khan was deeply opposed to the traditional form of aristocracy in which you were born into power. Instead he valued loyalty and bravery. Weatherford (2010) states, "aristocracy of birth had been his eternal enemy, and he sought to defeat it through his assembly of heroes: the aristocracy of brave spirits, the *baatuud*" (p. 10). Chinggis Khan was a formidable leader, creating a global empire that spanned 22% of the planet at one point in time (May, 2007; Pappas, 2011; Weatherford, 2017). While he was a merciless conqueror, he also followed through on his promises to the people that joined him from conquered lands offering prosperity, low taxes, religious freedom and protection (Kohn et al., 2014).

Modern day Mongolians consider Chinggis to have been a great lawmaker, creating the first Mongol law, *Ikh Zasag* (Meyanathan, 2010). Kohn et al. (2014) describe his laws as “derived from practical considerations more than ideology or religion” (p. 238). Chinggis believed in freedom of religion as he considered “religious intolerance as being a source of violence in society” (Kohl et al., 2014, p. 238). With both his mother and wife having been victims of abductions, he outlawed this, realizing kidnapping also contributed to a non-civil society. Chinggis developed a tax system so that goods were not repeatedly taxed, making them more accessible to the common people. He also created a series of stations internationally that were for mail, as well as places that traders could stay during their travels. This corridor of hostels eventually became the first international free-trade zone (Kohl et al., 2014).

The success of the Mongolian empire required strategic foundational support throughout the lands, which was often provided through the leadership of the wives, daughters and daughters-in-law of Chinggis. The khan gave these women similar or greater authority than his sons; they ruled large areas of the empire, commanded the military, oversaw criminal cases, raced horses and partook in wrestling. His daughters were also known to ride into battle and fight for their country when needed (Biron, 2007; Kohn et al., 2014; Konagaya & Sarfi, 2013; Ulambayar & Fernandez-Gimenez, 2013; Weatherford, 2010).

The exact number of children Chinggis Khan fathered is uncertain, as his daughters were slowly written out of history (Davis-Kimball, 2003; Weatherford, 2010). He is known to have had four “self-indulgent sons who proved good at drinking, mediocre in fighting, and poor at everything else; yet their names live on despite the damage they did to their father’s empire” (Weatherford, 2010, p. xiii). Chinggis had six known daughters, although scholars believe there

were as many as seven or eight. Their positions under the khan's rule was substantial, lasting through his lifetime and was deeply embedded in Mongolian culture.

We may never find definitive accounts for all of Genghis Khan's daughters, but we can reassemble the stories of most of them. Through the generations, his female heirs sometimes ruled and sometimes contested the rule of their brothers and male cousins. "Never before or since have women exercised so much power over so many people and ruled so much territory for as long as these women did" (Weatherford, 2010, p. xiii).

The history of these women is significant, not only to Mongolia, but to the world. It is an inspirational story of a leader who trusted and respected the skills and abilities of female leaders and used his privilege to sponsor these women by placing them in positions of power. It is also a tragic story of patriarchal reaction when women are promoted and honored, as following the death of Chinggis, several of his female kin were murdered. Even though accounts of these women have been literally torn out of the history books of Mongolia, they have creatively moved through centuries of strife and domination, exhibiting the skills and abilities of their female ancestors through strategic alliances and marriages.

The Role of Women Pre-Chinggis

Prior to the Mongolia Empire, Central Asia was a land of complicated rule with Chinese dynasties existing alongside kinship groups and tribes. Over time, ethnicities and cultural practices evolved as marrying between ethnic groups was a common practice to build strategic alliances (Oskenbay, Omarbekov, Habizhanova & Galiya, 2016; Cheng, 2007). In addition, military alliances and conquests even further diversified the region (Oskenbay et al, 2016). To better understand the contemporary resilience of Mongolian women leaders, it is helpful to examine these early mixed cultures that influenced Mongolian society.

During the Iron Age of Eurasian steppe (1st millennium BCE), nomadic communities dominated the land (Davis-Kimball, Bashilov & Yablonsky, 1995). Based on archaeological research of 200 excavated burial mounds and graves from this region, Davis-Kimball (2003) claimed that “compelling evidence exists for strong female hierarchical structures that are more diverse than among the males” (p. 146). Through the categorization of these grave goods, she developed a series of roles of women from this society: the hearth women—who managed finances—spinners and weavers, priestesses, warriors and warrior priestesses. Interestingly, children when buried with an adult, were buried with the men (Hanks, 2008). These associations of gender roles and social status have been critiqued with concern of interpretations of specific roles based on the content of graves

The research of Oskenbay et al (2016) explored the origins of Chinggis Khan through existing literature and oral traditions from several distinct cultures of the region. These scholars found that *Mongol* was originally the name of an individual, not a person, and this person was a descendant of a Turk or Kazakh. The mother of this person, Alynsha, had two sons, Mongol and Tatar, both of which had offspring that identified themselves as Mongols and Tatars. To minimize conflict between people of different origins during this period of time, the khan had forbidden declaring one’s self to be a member of tribe, but instead had to state, “I am from the khan’s kinship” (p. 3185). While this tactic kept the peace, it also resulted in people eventually failing to recall their individual backgrounds and ethnicity. There are several more examples provided by Oskenbay et al. of individuals who became great leaders and their names becoming identifying kinship groups and tribal names. This is important as it provides an opportunity to look at the experiences of early Turkish or Kazakh, which are the origins of the Mongol people.

Empresses of several Chinese Dynasties emerged from politically motivated marriages with neighboring tribal or kinship groups to build peace among the region, a few examples of these being the Khitan, Mongol, Jurchen and Rouran groups (Cheng, 2007; Johnson, 2011; McMahon, 2016). With these marriages came the cultural practices of the women that created a new dynamic in Chinese leadership. The “unique pattern of preservation and adoption” of customs, practices and values these empresses brought to their role created a new dynamic in imperial rule (Johnson, 2011, p. 172). The political and administrative structures were significantly influenced by women during these dynastic periods (McMahon, 2016). In addition to political influence, these women leaders participated in horse riding, archery, hunting and warfare, all of which were disapproved of in Chinese culture (McMahon, 2016).

Post-Chinggis Mongolian Empire

Following the death of Chinggis Khan in August 1227, his empire was divided amongst his four sons, last living brother, four daughters and one of his wives. In 1229, his son Ogodei was made Great Khan because Chinggis considered him to be the most pleasant of his offspring to the rest of the royal family (Weatherford, 2010). Unfortunately, this proved not to be the case. While he did continue his father’s intense military campaigns, within 10 years of ascending to the throne, Ogodei strategically set out to take the lands of ruling females, who were his mothers, sisters, and sisters-in-law. Sometimes this happened following the death of the *Khatun*, or queen of the land; other times they were killed after false accusations (Rossabi, 2011; Weatherford, 2010).

The most horrendous example of this was following the death of Ogodei’s sister, Checheyigen, who ruled the Oirat territory of Siberia. Ogodei had ordered that the Oirat send him young females for his harem and they refused. As punishment, his military rounded up 4,000

Oirat females over the age of seven with their male relatives. The girls were taken to the front of the group, stripped and brutally, repeatedly raped by the entire army as their male kin were made to watch. By the end of that day, some were dead, the rest were sent to work as sex slaves at the string of postal stations for the traveling merchants (Weatherford, 2010).

This was not the only act of sexual terrorism conducted under Ogodei's rule and went completely against the laws that Chinggis had put into place to protect the women of his lands. Sexual terrorism was not permitted in war under Chinggis. It was Ogodei who was the great pillager and rapist, spoiling the legacy of his father and eventually leading to the demise of the great empire through continued acts of incivility and violence.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that even under these circumstances, women continued to rise into positions of power. During the 500 years following the death of Chinggis Khan, there were several Mongolian women leaders who ruled or had profound influence over the future of the empire. One such leader, Manduhai Khatun (1449–1510), continues to be revered in Mongolian culture through songs, poems, art and fireside stories. “Queen Manduhai the Wise” is known as the leader who revived the Mongolian empire through defiant persistence and strategic choices (Weatherford, 2010). She never gave her power to a man and never surrendered her army or people to foreign countries or enemies. Her legacy was the governmental restructuring and reunification of Mongolia (Rossabi, 2011; Weatherford, 2010). There are several exemplary Mongolian women leaders that I will be sharing throughout this paper, each having an important role throughout the history of Mongolia shared common values of independence, national pride and a drive for the unification of Mongolia (Ulambayar & Fernandez-Gimenez, 2013; Weatherford, 2010).

Manchu-Led Qing Dynasty Occupation

During the Qing Dynasty occupation (1756–1910), Manchu rulers brought about drastic religious change to Mongolia that left large numbers of women as single parents and the sole providers for their families (Mehanathan, 2013; Tumursukh, 2001). The impact of this shift was that the women and children were responsible for all facets of the family and economic responsibilities while one third of the entire male population took the role of Buddhist monks. It is documented that this period brought a “loosening of morals” as these Mongolian Buddhist monks “established informal sexual liaisons” with the single women without any of the responsibility (Tumursukh, 2001, p. 124). This also resulted in several children having unclear patrilineal documentation. While Mongolian women were solely responsible for the family unit during this period, they also benefitted from substantial economic and sexual freedom.

Following the Qing Dynasty era, the Soviet occupation in the 20th century brought equal pay and work status for both men and women, a legacy that is still law today in Mongolia. Finally, the peaceful protests that brought an end to the Soviet occupation and the beginning of democracy in Mongolia in 1990 were heavily supported by the organizing of the country’s women (Tsedevdamba, 2016).

The Democratic Transition

As identified previously, the democratic transition resulted in an economic collapse. But it also provided independence and opportunities that Mongolians had not experienced in centuries. One of the first acts of the new democracy was the opening of the borders allowing Mongolians to travel outside of the country and foreigners to travel inside Mongolia. An agreement was signed with Russia and the Republic of China allowing trade to occur without visa requirements, making trade between these three countries possible (Meyanathan, 2013). It is

this act that provided a freedom to the Mongolian people that they had not experienced since the 13th century (Tsedevdamba, 2016; Weatherford, 2004).

Contemporary Experiences of Women Leaders in Mongolia and the United States

Women still face barriers on the path to leadership. And just as clearly, this matters for the society we want to create. We will all be better off if women's life experiences, needs and values are fully reflected in decision-making positions. The presence of women in those positions is also essential to encourage aspirations among the next generation, and to counter reservations about women's capacity for leadership roles. In an increasingly competitive global environment, no society can afford to hobble away half of its talent pool (O' Connor, 2007).

Much of my scholarly work has been researching the experience of women leaders in the United States. In the summer of 2016, I travelled to Mongolia, co-leading a study abroad research team exploring the leadership experiences of Mongolian women. There were subtle, yet significant differences in the narrative of these women leaders from women leaders in America. To illustrate this difference, the following two sections describe briefly the experiences of contemporary women leaders in both the United States and Mongolia. In Chapter V of this dissertation a fuller comparison will be discussed as relevant to the findings of this study.

In the United States, women continue to struggle to obtain leadership positions across sectors, even though the data shows that they have surpassed men in obtaining college degrees. "For every two men who get a college degree this year, three women will do the same" (Rosin, 2010, p. 21). Women are leading in education and the workforce but continue to experience pay inequity and lack of promotions. Rosin (2010) states that this inequity is an end of an era, describing it as "the last gasp of a dying age rather than the permanent establishment" (p. 23).

Scanlon (1997) exploring the topic of women leaders in academia, concluded that the reason for low female representation was due to women lacking “knowledge of, or the opportunity to enter, the informal system of career advancement used for so long by men” (p. 39). She described how men often do not intend to exclude women, but that organizational structure and the sponsors—who are typically men—look to mentor individuals who remind them of themselves. This explanation for self-perpetuating unequal representation is further validated by Gronn and Lacey (2006) who found that organizations tend to select people who are like the leaders they are replacing. Morrison, White, and Van Velsor (1992) assert: “women probably won’t break the glass ceiling without the unusually strong advocacy of a senior manager” (p. 132). Essed (2004) refers to this as “cultural cloning” (p. 113). In her exploration of gender inequity in academia, she found that academic glass ceilings were being maintained by the institutional preference for cultural clones, “look-alikes representing more of the same images and values” (Essed, 2004, p. 114). Essed further described this as not seeking a perfect copy but rather one who was similar enough not to be considered different than the norm.

Fisher and Kinsey (2013) describe this phenomenon as “the boys club” (p. 44) and explore the concept of homosocial reproduction and desire. Similar to cultural cloning, they describe homosocial reproduction as actively preferring to “reproduce themselves in their own image when recruiting or promoting staff . . . [because it is] easier to be with, work with and talk to those of one’s kind” (p. 49). Specific to males, homosociability is the acknowledgment of the power of other males and that they “find one another stimulating, exciting, productive, attractive and important” (p. 49). Women are automatically excluded from this male homosocial world because of their lack of resources that make them “less useful and less interesting to men and (ultimately) to other women” (p. 49).

The Leadership of Mongolian Women

Mongolian women leaders come from a lineage of resourceful, strong females. With a strong commitment to national development, they are more educated and hold more administrative positions across sectors than men in Mongolia (Tsedevdamba, 2016). The women not in formal leadership roles are often the leaders of their communities, acting as liaisons shifting vital information between government and the people of Mongolia (Thomson, 2014).

Scholars and politicians have minimized women's role in the democratic transition as men were the most visible in the process (Tsedevdamba, 2016). But during the transition and throughout the 1990s, women were participating in the movement, providing for their families, becoming the first defense attorneys, and taking the lead in the creation of several important NGOs. They were "human rights activists, press freedom advocates, women's rights networkers, democracy promoting trainers, and transparency and accountability watchdogs" (Tsedevdamba, 2016, *Freelancers and watchdogs*, para. 4).

The NGO structure in Mongolia was created in 1997 and by 2002 there were over 30 human rights organizations, all directed by women (Tsedevdamba, 2016). Women led the NGO-creation movement as a response to lack of access to the male-dominated political parties and lack of opportunity in the workforce. In addition, NGOs primarily support social issues that have traditionally been the responsibility of women. Mongolian women realized that NGOs were the only opportunity that they had to make a difference in the rebuilding of their country, especially since so many women and elderly individuals lost their jobs at the beginning of the democratic transition (Dalaibuyan, 2013; Tsedevdamba, 2016). This creative infrastructure was developed despite prevailing political unrest, deep poverty, and the change to an open market economy. However, the substantial national shift came at a severe cost to the women. Mongolia

continues to be a patriarchal society with increasing rates of violations against women's rights since the change to democracy (Purevsuren, n.d.; Thomson, 2014).

Mongolians are extremely proud of their national heritage, sometimes to the detriment of human rights and growth as a country. After years of being occupied, there is a demanding movement to conserve the Mongolian ethnic identity, which often crosses into harassment, public humiliation, and violence against women (Burn & Oidov, 2001). Nationalist groups have made public statements warning they would "shave off the hair of women having sexual relations with Chinese men" (Bille, 2013, p. 3).

Women marrying foreigners and producing children with mixed identity is a great fear of the conservative nationalists. This has provoked a controlling agenda that represses the sexual and reproductive rights of Mongolian women and increases the potential for inter-breeding (Tumursuk, 2001). With this being such a significant concern of conservative nationalists, there is no current infrastructure or framework to identify who is or is not of full Mongolian heritage, only stories and assumptions. Conservative nationalism, "turns the control of women, their bodies and their sexuality into a matter of national importance by defining patriarchy as the core of the national identity" (Bille, 2013, p.12). It is this conservative fear that jeopardizes the diversification of the gene pool, upholds patriarchal conditions, and holds Mongolia back in its quest to be a global contender (Bille, 2013; Burn & Oidov, 2001; Tumursuk, 2001).

The democratic transition also resulted in an increase of women becoming single parents and the head of family, as male unemployment, divorce rates, alcoholism, and domestic violence increased (Rossabi, 2009; Tsedevdamba, 2016). The dramatic surge in divorce rates created the need to add gender to statistical data tracking who is head of family, to accurately assess whether it was the fathers or mothers who were heading families (Tsedevdamba, 2016). Issues of divorce,

domestic violence, and alcoholism are not necessarily specific to the underprivileged, but the female head of family population is among the highest living below the poverty line (Jones, 2006; Rossabi, 2009).

While Mongolian women have typically had more responsibility and a higher social status than women in many Asian cultures throughout history, Mongolia is still considered a patriarchy. Cultural proverbs such as “if a husband does not beat his wife once a month, he is not a man” and “women’s hair is long, but their minds are short” are examples of the messages still ingrained in Mongolian culture (World Trade Press, 2010). But simultaneously, legally protecting women is a Mongolian tradition from the 13th century instituted by Chinggis Khan himself. The legal code “severely punished offenders who abused women, who caused pregnant women to miscarry, or who touched personal belongings of women without permission” (Oyunbileg et al., 2009, p.1873). It is likely that these ancient conflicting ideologies have created confusion regarding gender relations in Mongolia.

The maintenance of patriarchy is by silence (Oke, 2008). The lack of opportunities for women in decision making positions, increased poverty, western influence and a conservative national agenda have all contributed to the collective silencing of women (Jones, 2006; Oke, 2008; Pureseven, n.d.). In addition to these factors, a lack of time has also been a factor, “Mongolian women have legal equality, but once in the labor force, they often were doubly burdened with both housework and child care in addition to a day’s work for wages” (Oyunbileg et al., 2009, p.1874). Women from rural areas of Mongolia struggle to find the time to take care of their health due to the rigorous work hours of a nomadic lifestyle (Burn & Oidov, 2001).

The issue of domestic violence in Mongolia is different than in Western cultures as the traditional nomadic lifestyle was very isolating for women. Family issues are the women’s

responsibility to manage and the inability to do so is perceived as a personal failure bringing great shame to the family as well as a deep fear of continued violence (Bille, 2013; Oyunbileg et al., 2009). There are several proverbs that reinforce this practice; for example, “A broken or cracked bone is better than lost honor or reputation; Always smile in front of people and do not show people your weakness; Sausage may be broken while cooked, but it is still in our pot” (Oyunbileg et al., 2009, p. 1877).

The contemporary issue of domestic violence in Mongolia is “complex, with some male resentment about Mongolian women maintaining a better educational level than men,” yet the privatization of industry supports male privilege with senior leadership being predominantly male (Oke, 2008, p. 416). In addition, western corporate influence has been challenging Mongolia’s gender equity that was left over from the socialist occupation (Jones, 2006). In socialism, everyone is equal and both women and men were equally employed. When the democratic movement brought an open market, with this came western corporations with western practices and values around gender equity. This coupled with Mongolian expectations of women has created a challenging landscape for women.

In 2004, the Mongolian Parliament passed legislation combatting domestic violence; but Mongolia lacks victim-sensitive training for law enforcement, the courts, health care and social services to appropriately address the issues (Carlson et al., 2012; Jones, 2006; Purevsuren, n.d.). Educational programs on conflict management and the impact of violence on women and children has also been suggested (Oyunbileg et al., 2009).

The common denominator of Mongolia and the United States is that both are patriarchal societies. The foundation and infrastructure of both countries have been created to uphold male privilege. Within the patriarchal framework, there are significant demographic, historical,

economic, ecological, and political differences between the two countries. The nomadic lifestyle of the Mongolian people requires that everyone works. For hundreds of years, women managed everything in the *ger*, or home, including the family finances. The entire family manages the livestock, hunting, and gathering as it is necessary for survival. Stories and practices of strength and adaptability were passed down through the generations.

The presence of American women in the workforce increased in the 20th century, which challenged the country to acknowledge women has having skills and abilities beyond childrearing (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women in both Mongolia and America struggle with the extra burden of working and family responsibilities. Many women in Mongolia actually have a triple burden with work, family responsibilities and volunteer work as several women utilize NGOs as a means for societal change (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Jones, 2016).

When it comes to family, and specifically motherhood, Mongolia is far more advanced than America. It is law in Mongolia that women receive 120 days of paid maternity leave, whereas, in the United States up to 12 weeks of unpaid maternity leave may be granted to some individuals (Bartel, Rossin-Slater, Ruhm, Stearns, & Waldfogel, 2018; Mishra & Raveendran, 2011). In addition to this paid benefit, Mongolian women and children benefit from a culture that embraces breastfeeding. During my travels, I witnessed several women openly breastfeeding in public and saw several depictions of breastfeeding in public art. In the United States, women are often shamed when attempting to openly breastfeed their infants, often choosing a public toilet as an alternative feeding place (Johnston & Esposito, 2007; Menard, 2016).

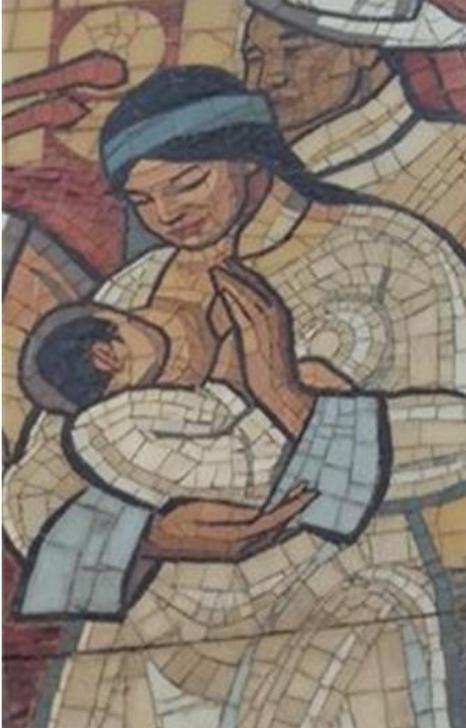


Figure 2.4. Section of a mural depicting a mother breastfeeding in the city of Ulaanbaatar. Photo by Karen Stout and used with her permission.

I spoke with a political figure during my first trip to Mongolia who shared that Mongolian democracy does not look like the American democratic system that emerged from over 200 hundred years of oppressive rule (Anonymous, personal communication, July 10, 2016). She reminded me that Mongolians have been working on building this nation for only 27 years. Mongolians recognize there is work to do, but they are also extremely proud of how far they have come in such a brief period of time.

Closing and Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the literature on significant periods of history when Mongolian women have been promoted, minimized, or have taken initiative. This included the legacy of Chinggis Khan and his predecessors and the Manchu and Russian occupations and contemporary experiences of Mongolian women as the country struggled through democratic transition and ancient ways of life were being challenged. In the previous and final section, I

provided an overview of the limited literature on the contemporary experiences of Mongolian women leaders and shared a narrow perspective of the experiences of women leaders in the United States, closing with comparing and contrasting of these experiences. As in other qualitative studies, the experiences of the women leaders as discovered in this study will guide the inclusion of relevant literature in Chapter V.

Mongolia is fascinating as it has centuries of deeply entrenched cultural ideologies while simultaneously traversing a completely new way of life as a democratic nation. There are several contradictions as a result of this context. This dissertation focuses on how women leaders in this country are moving through such challenging, confusing times and are not just surviving, but thriving in many ways. The ensuing chapters will show that there is much we in the West can learn from this country and the experiences of its women leaders.

Chapter III: Methodology

Narrative inquiry can be broadly defined as “the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experience” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 203). The use of narrative inquiry in social science research was introduced in the 20th century, but the practice of telling stories is part of the human experience through time and across all cultures. “These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist on another’s assistance in building lives and communities” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2012, p. 36).

Daiute (2014) describes the act of narrating as a sense making process that provides opportunity for “creating identity” (p. 5) as well as a shared experience to support understanding the environment and strategies for solving problems. Trahar (2009) further states that the purpose of narrative inquirers is to “strive to attend to the ways in which a story is constructed, for whom and why, as well as the cultural discourses that it draws upon” (p. 1). “Stories communicate with a variety of features that narrators use not only to share specific messages but also to hint at why they are telling *this* story in *this* way at *this* time” (Daiute, 2014, p. 5).

Narrative inquiry provides an opportunity to understand the complexity of the human experience, through the assembling of written, oral, and visual stories (Andrews, Squire, & Tambokou, 2008; Josselson, 2006):

Thinking narratively—beginning with people’s experiences and their lives rather than with theory, immersing oneself and living in the midst of participant’s lives rather than conducting short-term, drop-in (and -out) studies, and developing understanding in relationship with those having the experiences—are essential qualities/methods of a narrative inquiry. (Phillion, 2002, p. 553)

Clandinin and Rosiek (2012) further describe narrative inquiry as:

beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individuals' experience but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted—but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. (p. 43)

Through the exploration of the individual lived experience, narrative inquiry collectively and respectively examines these both at the micro and macro levels for a spectrum of understanding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Indigenous Methodology

There is not one single global definition for what constitutes an indigenous population, but several that are brought forth by government and non-government organizations in the realm of international law and politics (Kingsbury, 1998). There is great debate in the social sciences and international law about what characteristics must be present for a population to be considered indigenous, but many of these definitions are narrow and risk excluding populations who may, in fact, identify as indigenous (Corntassel, 2003). The World Health Organization defines indigenous populations as:

Communities that live within, or are attached to, geographically distinct traditional habitats or ancestral territories, and who identify themselves as being part of a distinct cultural group, descended from groups present in the area before modern states were created and current borders defined. (World Health Organization, n.d., para. 1)

Kingsbury (1998) explored the topic and definition of indigenous populations, specifically with the question of how to define the term to be inclusive to Asia and other regions

that were not impacted by European settlement. He indicates that indigenous populations have four essential requirements:

- (1) Self-identification as a distinct ethnic group;
- (2) Historical experience of, or contingent vulnerability to, severe disruption, dislocation, or exploitation;
- (3) Long connection with the region;
- (4) The wish to retain distinct identity.

Although he identifies these as “essential requirements” (p. 420) he also states that these should have “maximum flexibility” to be open to regions not impacted by European settlement (Kingsbury, 1998, p. 420).

I have not been able to identify specific reference to Mongolians being considered an indigenous population, but several of the definitions, including the four characteristics above as identified by Kingsbury (1998), seem to pertain to the Mongolian people. In my research, I came across the concept of indigenous narrative and made an immediate connection to the Mongolian people. The values and practices of this methodology are congruent with my experiences thus far with Mongolians, and appropriate given the Manchu and Russian occupations.

Indigenous Narrative

Mongolian culture is often shared through oral and written story telling traditions. For centuries, the Mongolian people have treasured their stories, hiding away their historical texts in secured places, similar to how some might secure gold or other highly valuable treasures (Weatherford, 2010). Unfortunately, as power and ideologies shifted, history pertaining to Mongolian women leaders was removed from the pages and rewritten, but somehow stories of these women leaders have survived centuries, only recently being pieced together by the

Mongolian scholar, Jack Weatherford. Weatherford's research explored the seminal Mongolian history text, *The Secret History of the Mongols*, which has a few references left to Mongolian women and their role. In addition, he examined Chinese court documents, chronicles from Armenia, Persia, Muslim texts, writings of Marco Polo, Vatican correspondence, texts carved into Taoist stones and references from literature such as Chaucer, each providing important elements of the missing narrative of these women leaders (Weatherford, 2005).

Sium and Ritskes (2007) argue: "In Indigenous traditions around the world, storytellers are sacred knowledge keepers, they are the elders and medicine people, and they shape communities through the spoken and written word" (p. 5). Simpson (2013) suggests: "spiritual and social practices such as storytelling, the oral tradition, ceremonies, feasting, and gift-giving are designed to bond people together toward a common understanding" (p. 3). Both of these descriptions accurately describe what I observed in Mongolia. I did not anticipate the interviews to feel like a spiritual practice, but most did have this intensity.

Western culture is often assumed to be as only producer of legitimate research, prompting critical analysis of indigenous ways of knowing and questioning the validity and rigor of Indigenous research methods as valid and truthful (Sium & Ritskes, 2007; Wilson, 2001). Indigenous scholars are challenging this notion, stating "claims to Indigenous epistemologies and truths rest on Indigenous peoples and lands as carriers and sustainers of knowledge production" (Sium & Ritskes, 2007, p. 1). Benham (2007) asserts: "Indigenous narrative is important because it has the capacity to tell the truth about history—that is, the sociopolitical and cultural nuances and nature of a community and its relationships across time through the eyes and voices of the indigenous community members" (p. 528). Benham further reminds scholars that "in indigenous story, theory is embedded in metaphor and story" (p. 521).

Indigenous narrative honors the chosen forms of sharing information that an indigenous population has chosen to capture their experience. This can take many shapes but often are oral stories, ceremony, music, dance and food (Benham, 2007). It is these cultural practices that hold the heart of the experiences of indigenous peoples. Ford-Smith (1987) asserts: “The tale-telling tradition contains what is most poetically true about our struggles. The tales are one place where the most subversive elements of our history can be safely lodged” (p. 3).

Benham (2007) differentiates between indigenous ways of knowing and Western academic knowledge, identifying the communal nature of Indigenous narrative. He states: “Most indigenous ways of knowing define power to bring about change not as individual power but as a sacred power that is passed on through story and ceremony” (p. 520), recovering a “collective memory that raises social consciousness” (p. 529). Understanding the context that lends meaning to the lives of the individuals in a society is “the first step to being able to access the wider framework of meaning that is the binding agent of a culture” (Andrews, 2007, p. 491).

I have no doubt that exploring the narrative of Mongolian women leaders through an indigenous narrative lens was the culturally appropriate and ethically responsible research methodology to use, but I have wondered if it was appropriate for me, a White, western-based researcher, to conduct the study. If I had not already travelled to Mongolia, I would have struggled even more with this question. What I know from my first trip to Mongolia is that the women we interviewed were very forthcoming and seemed eager to share their personal stories, cultural challenges, and national pride. They want the rest of the world to learn about Mongolia.

Wilson (2001) shares a valuable reminder for non-indigenous researchers, which is the “need to reflect on, and be critical of, one’s own culture, values, assumptions and beliefs” (p. 217) and to recognize these are not the norm, as well as the “need to be aware of, and open to,

different worldviews and ways of knowing” (p. 217). By nature, I am an observant and curious person who is very conscientious about the space I take and how I show up in situations which supports this research well. For instance, I learned quickly that Mongolians are not loud people and see this behavior as disrespectful (which was difficult for many of my students to manage).

In addition to this personal reflection and awareness, it is also important to understand the environment of the research:

The analytical work of the scholar/researcher, then, is to explore ecological features (i.e., the physical and organic place), sociocultural features (i.e., family, culture, politics, economics, education, and spirituality), institutional features (i.e., school system, communication systems, political and judicial systems), and the relationships across all three. (Benham, 2007, p. 526)

I did not understand the importance of this during my first trip to Mongolia and feel as if I lost many opportunities for deeper understanding. Since then, I have delved into the history of Mongolia, both ancient and contemporary, and found immediate connections to what I had learned throughout my time in Mongolia. I was extremely grateful for the privilege to return to Mongolia for a second research opportunity.

Archival Research and Narrative Inquiry

As discussed in the previous section, in narrative inquiry and specifically, in indigenous narrative, “it is imperative to obtain a sense of what the larger narratives are that guide the self-understanding, and therefore the self-presentation, of that group . . . [especially if] one is conducting research outside of one’s own community” (Andrews, 2007, p. 506). Trahar (2009) confirms this in her research, stating: “this becomes even more important in intercultural research, acknowledging the importance of accessing and understanding participants' different

social constructions of reality, examining issues in depth through exploratory, open-ended conversations, prioritizing holistic understanding situated in lived experience” (p. 3).

While the truths sought by narrative researchers are narrative truths, not historical truths (Spence, 1982), it is still important to understand the environment of the research. To gain contextual understanding, I have relied on many historical pieces of literature as much of the contemporary research is not translated into English. The few pieces of contemporary literature I have identified with the help of some participants and the American Center of Mongolian Studies (ACMS) that have been extremely helpful. I also identified a non-participant woman leader who currently resides in the United States, who was kind enough to review my work and provide thoughts and feedback.

The Researcher as Part of the Narrative Landscape

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) claim that narrative inquiry requires that both people and stories be present throughout the study, including the researcher. They observe: “We become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular context” (p. 5).

As the researcher, understanding the “autobiographically oriented narrative associated with the research” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 40). helps manage personal bias and promotes true understanding of the phenomenon. Wilson (2001) identifies this as “the need for researchers to critique their own ‘gaze’” (p. 215).

The researcher must be certain that the motives for doing the research will result in benefits to the indigenous community. Checking your heart is a critical element in the

research process. It is not done only once during the project, but many times and according to different reasons. (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 32)

Researching Mongolian Women Leaders—My Story

I began my scholarly journey researching American women leaders in various environments and paradigms and became exhausted by these inquiries. Even though adjustments were made to the questions and the contexts, the research consistently showed a hopeless, uphill battle for women leaders in the United States. I then expanded my research to explore women leaders in higher education but primarily kept my focus on women in Western countries. This research showed similar challenges for women leaders, and I became disheartened.

In their exploration of mindful inquiry, Bentz and Shapiro (1998) note the importance of understanding how your research should be “intimately linked to your awareness of yourself and your world” (p. 5). Initially, I did not understand how connected I was with the research, but over time this realization emerged, and I began to struggle both personally and professionally as the data I was analyzing was similar to my own lived experience.

While this research was frustrating, it did provide strategies for women leaders to improve their career trajectory, health, and happiness. I began to employ some of these tactics, and, soon after, new paths began to emerge. I began to feel more confident in my skills and abilities which led to me taking more risks as opportunities arose. It was this process that opened the door to study Mongolia women leaders. I had not even vaguely anticipated that I would be traveling to and studying Mongolia but have found great inspiration in the stories and experiences of Mongolian women and this unique period of history. I am aware that I have a deep personal investment in understanding and representing, as best as I can with my own worldview, the meaning women of Mongolia bring to their leadership experiences.

Narrative as the Method of the Study

As researchers, we are influenced by our culture not only in our expectations of the conditions under which people might feel most inclined to give an account of their lives but also in ways in which we are taught to go about gathering this information.

–Andrews, 2007, p. 498

I had originally planned to collect data for my dissertation during a second study abroad trip I was going to teach in Mongolia during the summer of 2017. The class proved to be not viable and was cancelled which caused me to rethink my original plan for data collection and possibly methodology. I was open to making these adjustments and had some concerns with not being on the ground, in the culture, for data collection.

My institution, Western Washington University (WWU), has close connections with Mongolia, with the largest collection of Mongolian literature outside of Mongolia, second to only the U.S. Library of Congress. They have a vested interest and funding to support Mongolian research. With the advocacy of my mentor, Dr. Karen Stout, I was offered a research trip back to Mongolia to complete our original research. In addition, I was granted a student research assistant and chose to take a student who partook in the research process in the summer of 2016.

With the guidance of my dissertation chair, Dr. Holloway, I realized I would not have time to complete my entire dissertation proposal in order to then submit a request to research to the Antioch Institutional Review Board. Dr. Holloway suggested collecting the data through the existing WWU Human Subject Review approval with a modification stating the intent to use the collected data for my dissertation as well. This would be considered “archival data” when used for my dissertation. Dr. Holloway facilitated the approval of this process through Antioch University; and Dr. Stout, facilitated the request and approval of this process through WWU. I completed the Human Subject Review modification form and updated consent forms. These were all approved by WWU in late June 2017 by the Human Subject Review board chair. I am

extremely grateful and humbled for the creative strategizing and advocacy of so many individuals.

Participants

The participants for this research were women leaders from across several sectors in Mongolia. These individuals were considered collaborators in the research process as this is their personal narrative and “deserving of all the power and agency that such role affords” (Yardley, 2008, p. 12). The participants were primarily identified from my last trip to Mongolia, which allowed me the opportunity to validate the data set from their initial interviews with the assistance of a translator. I also utilized the ACMS to identify participants, particularly for the expanded rural area interviews. WWU paid a fee to the ACMS to set up our trip on the ground, including accommodations, a translator, transportation, and the scheduling of interviews. WWU has used their services several times before; they are a trusted organization.

As part of the invitation process, I created and sent an email with three attachments for our ACMS representative to use in the official invites. This included a short biography about myself and the purpose of the research, the original narrative statement of the research from the original Human Subject Review process in 2016, as well as the modified narrative statement from the 2017 Human Subject Review process that indicates the research will be used both for a study at WWU and for my personal dissertation. I have included a brief statement about my dissertation intent as well.

Interview Process

The interviews were semi structured, as these,

“can make better use of the knowledge producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the

interviewee; as well, the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a preset interview guide.” (Brinkman, 2014, p. 18)

I conducted all of the interviews in Mongolia. ACMS provided a room for interviewing which I did utilize for five of the interviews, but I thought it was important to allow the participant to dictate where they were most comfortable being interviewed. Some occurred in the participants place of work, some in coffee shops. My research assistant and the translator were both present during the interviews. I had conducted interviews in Mongolia with this student research assistant in the past and he was aware of culturally appropriate behavior and the research process. Dr. Stout and I conducted the formal interviews which were observed by our research team of eight students (two of whom were male, one of these being the student researcher I brought on the second trip). I did not have concern that my assistant was a male primarily because of his status as a student and designation as an assistant. During the first trip we found that the participants seemed even more open about their stories in the presence of our students. We also found that they were extremely curious about the travel and cultural experiences of our students during their time in Mongolia. We expected the second trip to offer the same experience in this regard.

The female translator that we used during the first research journey was unavailable for the second year. The ACMS was able to identify another female translator, a multi-lingual scientist who was in between projects. It was very important that the translator continue to be a female as this created a level of comfort and connection with the female participants that a Mongolian male would not be able to provide. I am unsure of the translation testing strategies for

accuracy utilized by the ACMS, but this organization is a reputable, research-oriented non-profit utilized by several scholars on our campus, as well as internationally.

Research intent and consent forms were available in both English and Mongolian to make sure participants were completely informed of the research process. The translator assisted me to answer any questions the participants had, although, most of the participants spoke, read, and understood English very well (other than those from rural areas). All forms were signed prior to beginning the interviews and the interviews were captured with a digital voice recorder.

When planning interviews, Brinkman (2014) suggests that it is “possible to provide a structure that is flexible enough for interviewees to be able to raise questions and concerns in their own words and from their own perspectives” (p. 116) but adds that the interview process “allows research participants to be interested, active, disobedient, fully involved in what is said about themselves by others” (p. 116). The semi structured nature of the interview with open-ended questions provided space for the stories of the participants to emerge in the way they were most comfortable.

Potential Interview Interpretive Process

The recording device for the interviews has been locked away when not being used for transcription. I chose to do the transcriptions myself to minimize mistakes in the data as sometimes the accents of the participants were challenging to understand. The data was analyzed through a paradigmatic process in which “descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies in types of stories, characters, or settings” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). I appreciate having a hands-on, visual learning experience. To achieve this, I managed the data analyses through four phases: (1) highlighting and coding of the interviews; (2) extraction of themes and

relevant quotes; (3) a large visual mapping of themes and data; and, finally, (4) the synthesis of the themes and data into an organized excel document.

Managing Bias Through Reflexive Journaling and Debriefs

Throughout the journey I kept a journal of my experiences in Mongolia, to capture both the broad cultural learning and experiences as well as the private, more sensitive information for my personal processing. I had several debriefing conversations with my translator, research assistant and Dr. Stout to further conceptualize my experiences and cultural understanding.

Assuring Accuracy and Rigor of the Study

Polkinghorne (2007) challenges what had been conventionally seen as valid research practices, by stating that social science needs to “explore and develop knowledge about areas of the human realm” through “people’s experienced meanings of their life events and activities” (p. 484). He cautioned: “But for the reader to make an informed judgment about claims resting on the textual evidence, narrative researchers need to spell out their understandings of the nature of their collected evidence” (p. 479). This requires the development of rapport and trust. Indigenous narrative highlights the importance of being honest (Benham, 2007; Chilisa, 2012). This should go without saying, but it is this transparency of self, research process and analyses that builds trust and honors the participants and the culture.

Holloway and Schwartz (2018) state that “qualitative research criteria for rigor rests on the principle of trustworthiness, that is, the ways in which the researcher inspires confidence in the findings for other researchers and study participants and their communities” (p. 28). This phenomenon of trustworthiness is explored further by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who have identified four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility specifies an assurance that the research is an honest representation on the participants’ truth.

Transferability indicates that there are other situations where the findings might be applicable. Consistency in employment of methodology is how dependability is demonstrated, and confirmability is attained through management of researcher bias and data accuracy through participant involvement.

To assure accuracy and rigor, I have been transparent about my overall research process with participants. During my second trip to Mongolia, I also had the opportunity to review research collected from the first round of interviews, with those first round participants, to fact check and make sure I captured their story accurately. With the help of ACMS and my translator, I was also able to identify an additional seven participants, four of which were rural women leaders from the countryside, also known as “the steppe.” This provided a more comprehensive set of experiences to analyze.

Cultural Data Reviews

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe four different ways of knowing in narrative inquiry: asking questions, collecting field notes, deriving interpretations, writing a research text “that addresses both personal and social issues by looking inward and outward and addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future” (p. 50). With this in mind, I examined data from interviews, debriefs, my journals, cultural experiences, museums, historical texts, contemporary literature, and whatever other experiences Mongolia offers me.

As stated earlier in this chapter, I think there is a lot we, as Westerners, can learn from Mongolian culture and Mongolian women leaders. In addition, research that has been conducted about Mongolia has been primarily historical, about their democratic movement, mining, agriculture, and nomadism. Exploring the subject of women leaders in Mongolia is untapped,

valuable knowledge that the world could benefit from. In addition, it is my hope that telling their stories will provide these women leaders with a positive, resilience building experience.

Ethical Considerations

“If we wish to access the frameworks of meaning for others, we must be willing and able to imagine a world other than the one we know” (Andrews, 2007, p. 37). Narrative inquiry provides “an opportunity for voices that have been silenced, providing a missing perspective to the life experiences of a culture” (Harding, 1988, p. 23). This is one of the many reasons for being clear about ethical considerations in narrative research. Ethical considerations have already arisen frequently in the present chapter, most of which are outlined in the indigenous narrative section, as I am keenly aware that I am an outsider coming into a culture and asking personal questions about their lifeworld. Continuously examining the intention and impact of the research is not only important for the validity of the research, it is just the right thing to do.

In the spirit of transparency, the main ethical considerations noted in the chapter have been:

- Awareness of personal worldview, biases, and presence in another culture;
- Historical and contemporary understandings of the culture and its systems;
- Honesty throughout the entire research process;
- Viewing participants as collaborators and trusting their way of knowing to be true.

Andrews (2007) states that “to understand ‘the other,’ we must accept that what we learn, and what we ‘uncover’ about their experiences, as mediated through our own interpretive lens, will always and can only be a partial knowledge” (p. 509).

Chapter Conclusion

“Narrative has the potential to represent the nuances of joy, sorrow and hope in lives lived in a multicultural world, and to provide rich, multifaceted, historical, personal, social and in-place accounts of multicultural life” (Phillion, 2002, p. 553). The selfish side of my research is the deep want for inspiration that I cannot find in my own culture, or cultures like mine. I recognize this is a need that is driving some of my inquiry. The rest of my intention lies in a place of deep curiosity and a want to do right by these remarkable women leaders and the often-misrepresented culture of Mongolia. There is much that the world can learn from these individuals and Mongolian culture.

Chapter IV: Findings

Between June 2016 and July 2017, I spent a total of 44 days in Mongolia. In the first trip, I was co-leading a study abroad group with the purpose of conducting research to learn more about the experiences of Mongolian women leaders. It was during this trip that I became curious about how these women did it all, and remained optimistic and hopeful, which led to my research question: what promotes resilience and thriving in Mongolian women leaders? During the July of 2017 I returned to Mongolia to conduct a second round of interviews, and this time, I added questions to explore the topic of resilience. In this second trip, I was not with a group of students. I had one student assistant and a translator. These trips allowed me to learn and understand the context of Mongolia through interactions, conversations, interviews, food, museums, and spending time on the steppe and in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar.

Over half of the population of Mongolia live in the capital of Ulaanbaatar. With a city of 1.3 million residents, it is surprising that so many people know or know of each other. These connections were not as unexpected in the countryside as the communities are small and rely on each other for survival. Even as Americans, we found ourselves saying hello to people while walking through the city that we had met in our short stay there. In addition, several participants referenced other participants in their interviews as sources of inspiration or as collaborators. Several times I had a participant ask me if I was going to be interviewing a person and I would politely have to explain the confidentiality terms of the study again.

Ulaanbaatar is home to over half of the population of Mongolia. With this being said, I was often surprised by how many people knew each other in a capital city of a country. The data collected shows how much Mongolians value relationships, which I will talk more about later in this chapter; but this was apparent throughout the research. The importance of protecting the

identity of our participants was heightened from what I have experienced of research processes in the United States. I recognized the ethical dilemma of doing research in such a relational country. It was important that the data collection, organization and analyses be handled with additional care, especially since some of the participants are visible to others in everyday life. I worked with the translators to make sure they understood the issues of confidentiality; I left the decision of location of interviews up to the participants and I was able to follow up with several participants on my second trip to confirm research accuracy. Seven of these participants agreed to meet with me in person to go back over our findings from the first interview the previous summer and provide feedback of the analysis. During transcription, organization and analyses I removed all identifying factors, only classifying information by work sector. Organization and analyses of the findings were constructed thematically, with care to retain the expressions and stories of the women.

A foundational component of the chosen methodology is Indigenous Narrative, which honors the stories and experiences of indigenous people (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). A significant aspect of Indigenous narrative is including people of that culture in the overall research process. I was able to accomplish this in the data collection through utilizing Mongolian women translators, who are leaders in their own right. Their participation, interpretations and overall support while abroad were important to the interviewing process. For data organization and analyses, I have asked a Mongolian women leader who was not a participant and who currently lives in the United States for five years, to review the research. She likely knows some of the participants, but I do not think the themes and individual quotes were recognizable due to her physical distance.

This chapter will be an opportunity to explore the findings from the research, with excerpts of stories from the participants. It will be organized thematically and include my own reflections and positioning as the researcher, another component of Indigenous Narrative methodology. I will close this chapter with thoughts and insights from the Mongolian female reviewer who lives and works in the US, but continues her role promoting Mongolian culture and raising awareness of Mongolian issues from abroad.

With Mongolia being a democratic country for less than 30 years, the political landscape and infrastructure were significant topics that emerged. In addition, Mongolia has an epic historical background that has a direct impact on contemporary Mongolia with many ancient proverbs being used to describe cultural practices and physical representations of Chinggis Khan in statues, hillsides and advertising.

The interviews were centered on the women's experience of Mongolia, exploring career trajectory, challenges, and inspirations. They were also asked about the greater issues of the country and the role of women in addressing these issues. Finally, the participants were asked to reflect strategies that they have used to move through difficult experiences, to explore what it is that promotes resilience and thriving in Mongolian women leaders. The questions were kept broad to allow the participants stories to emerge naturally, honoring their cultural context.

There are many places that the findings intersect, which made organization of information complicated at times. These redundancies were important to capture as they are sometimes specific to multiple themes, as shared by the participants. I decided it was important to allow the repetition, because it is honoring the voices of the women and it further exemplifies the significance of the findings.

The Challenges of Mongolia—Politics

Politics in Mongolia are extremely complicated and continue to unfold. This was a consistent theme that kept coming up in the interviews, because everything is dependent on the political climate. In this section, I will share the topical areas of this theme which include: transition to democracy, governmental structure and ethics, economic impact, and gender equity. I will close this section with the proposed systemic changes that are needed in politics, as suggested by the participants.

The Transition to Democracy

The impact of the transition to democracy is still evident today and was referenced in each of the interviews. Seven decades (1921–1990) of a socialist political environment disappeared in March 1990, leaving no infrastructure, no industry, no jobs and no choices—only survival. As explored in chapter two, there were several rounds of layoffs that occurred after the fall of socialism, the first of which was women and the elderly. One participant identified that there was great psychological impact on women and that they were not ready for this change. Another indicated an important distinction in their democratic movement: Mongolian democracy emerged from socialism where gender equity was valued. For women, being the first to be removed from the workforce was a huge shift from what Mongolian culture had lived with for seven decades.

Women continued to lead informally through the transition, both at home and in the community. They came together in civil service groups; they established trade with Russia and China and they partnered with their rural families and friends to sell meat, dairy, fruit and cashmere in the city. In addition, many women utilized the open borders to travel abroad for education that allowed women to bring a global perspective to Mongolian culture that was not

previously present. During the transition to democracy, a rural participant graduated with her master's degree in agriculture—and there were no jobs available. She and her husband chose to join his nomadic family to herd and live off of the land for six years. At the point when their first child was to attend school, they chose to move closer to a rural city to avoid separating the family. They had no form of income, so she developed a business that involved her husband delivering and selling cashmere in Ulaanbaatar, then purchasing goods in the city and bringing this back to the countryside. The participant would then sell the goods out of an old crate container that was turned into a storefront. This story is one of many that demonstrates the creative problem solving and survival of families during the democratic transition.

This survival instinct had negative consequences as well. Many of the children of the 1990s participated in the informal trading with their parents and are now in the workforce. A restaurant manager related how Mongolians are “hustlers,” always trying to get a deal and often doing trades while at work. “If you give them an inch, they will take a mile.” She speculated that this was due to their experience during the democratic transition when survival of self and family was foremost, and that the “the governing morality of that time [of transition] was different—there was no right or wrong.” She also spoke about how this impacts the overall working team as they are very individualistic, not recognizing how their work affects others or the greater mission of the company or organization. This is also prevalent in Mongolian corporate culture: a manager shared that younger employees are often entitled, wanting positions with decision making power without the necessary experience. Because the participant works for a company that is not owned by Mongolians, this is not accepted; however, it is the norm in the political sector. Young, inexperienced individuals without skills or experience are given positions of power where they are risking the money and rights of the people.

Government Structure and Ethics

The structure of Mongolian government was referenced by all participants as being unstable. Every four years the entire government structure changes from the top political leaders “down to the custodial staff.” In addition to this, policies and initiatives change, inhibiting long term progress. This lack of consistency in the government impacts every area of infrastructure as well as foreign investments and global presence.

Participants discussed the exclusive nature of politics in Mongolia. Wealthy candidates literally buy votes and media coverage, making it challenging for other individuals running on values to compete. A former politician said that “some people make choices with their brain, some with their empty stomach”—which demonstrates the civic motivations of some citizens. In the 2016 Mongolian documentary, *Leveling the Playing Field*, the former prime minister shared that governmental bodies are becoming an exclusive club, and that the “state is not controlled by the people, it is controlled by an oligarchy of rich men” (International Republican Institute, 2016).

Many participants discussed the need for civic education, teaching the people of Mongolia about democracy, economics, sustainability, social issues and responsible civic engagement. Several have taken the initiative, offering this education in formal and informal trainings. One even decided to develop a weekly television segment addressing these topics. She shared the importance of speaking to the people in a way in which they could relate, using transferable references to help the general public understand and care about their government, to promote critical, independent thinking.

Economic Impact.

The economic issues of Mongolia are substantial, with 9.1% unemployment rate and, typically, a 14-month duration to find work as of the time my interviews in July 2017. Several of the women interviewed believed there to be a direct connection between the unemployment of men and their violent behavior in the home. Another participant felt that the “country will improve when the public can take care of themselves,” meaning that when everyone is working and able to tend to their own needs, they will then be more invested in the future of Mongolia. But this is unlikely to occur unless the larger strategic planning and initiatives are implemented.

Participants claim that decision makers need to understand the rules of the game, both in the country of Mongolia and the region. Management of husbandry, agriculture and mining is needed as is diversification of the economy. Even though Mongolia is rich in natural resources, it is challenging to move forward in these areas. “We don't manufacture anything and we don't have the knowledge of how to manage our natural resources.” One participant claimed that until Mongolia saw its people rather than mining as its greatest resource, this would not change.

Gender Equity

Even though women make up more than half of the population of Mongolia, are more educated than men, and play a significant role in the development of their country, Mongolia is still a patriarchy. This was best described by a participant, who stated that there is an “entrenched misperception in [Mongolian] society that women must work while men make decisions and become ambitious leaders.” Culturally, there is doubt and a lack of confidence in Mongolian women, yet women shoulder a heavy burden of the political party management and yet have to entreat their male colleagues for nominations.

As of 2017, there were 17 seats filled by women in the Mongolian parliament, a decrease from 25 in 1995 (World Bank, 2018). Several of the women interviewed discussed how important it was for more women to be in decision making positions. The former prime minister stated: “When you have more women in parliament, state policies become more humane and oriented towards constituents’ lives” (International Republican Institute, 2016). Participants claimed that women do not change like men do when they move into positions of power, that they “keep their promises.” Unfortunately, political parties have been known not to support women candidates because they don’t think that they will be successful in an election. This leaves many female leaders with limited options, forcing them to run independently and go into debt to fund their often unsuccessful campaigns. The four politicians interviewed in my study discussed how they strategically chose to run for districts that are known for the least amount of corruption as there is no way they can or will compete with these dishonest practices. One even stated, “I run for values.”

In addition to the financial strain that women have from the election process, there is great emotional and psychological impact to them as well. Women are publicly criticized for their physical image and their private life scrutinized through both social media and unethical journalism that is purchased by competing campaigns. In addition to psychological and emotional attacks, there have been physical attacks against women running, one having a rock thrown through the window of her headquarters and her posters torn down. Yet when she reflected on these practices, she stated: “I will never use these tactics on others, I will reach and achieve my goals in a just way.” It is important to note that while these female politicians are campaigning, they are also balancing family, work, and other civic obligations, as they often

fund their own campaigns and have ongoing commitments to the non-governmental agencies that rely on their knowledge and support.

Systemic Changes Needed in Politics

Many participants discussed the need for long term, systemic and meaningful change in Mongolia. Specific to politics, the ideas of gender quotas for parliament seats, regulation of campaign donations, and the need for ethical media practices were shared in the interviews. Some of the women commented that there were not many opportunities for young females to practice leadership, so identifying formal and informal ways to foster leadership development is needed.

The women we interviewed felt that the current structure of political segregation was not sustainable. The inability for political parties to identify collaborative, strategic, long-term vision has negative consequences for the future of Mongolia. The women indicated how critical it was to understand consequences, environment and social norms so that it makes sense for the specific needs of Mongolia, while simultaneously managing risk. Mongolia needs sustainable, productive change.

The Challenges of Mongolia: Institutional Framework

Following the democratic transition, the infrastructure of Mongolian institutions was compromised. The world that Mongolians knew and depended on had forever changed. In this section I will explore the following institutional areas: health, education, economy and management. These were the most frequently referenced by participants as the most in need of reform.

Health

For centuries, Mongolians have survived off meat, dairy and the few other edible indigenous plants of the region such as the seabuckthorn berry. Over the last century during the occupation, Mongolians have had access to Soviet foods such as bread and capital salad (similar to a potato salad with minced ham, carrots and eggs). It is only in the last 15 years that Mongolians have had access to the variety of foods that Americans are accustomed to. The health and wellness movement is very new in Mongolia, with the “acceptance of fruit and vegetables in Mongolian culture requiring a mentality shift” according to participant who is an entrepreneur of health and wellness. One restaurateur who had returned to Mongolia after living abroad for several years, saw an opportunity to educate the Mongolia restaurant community, so she developed a consulting agency to provide training on service etiquette, management and appropriate food handling practices, as no policies around food handling existed.

All the women that I interviewed believe that it is the females of Mongolia who will create a healthy society. Frequently, women are developing creative strategies to address needs for the greater good of Mongolia, such as a pop culture magazine for young females that provides public education on sexual health and development. There were several examples of NGOs holding educational events and programs to address social issues around health and development. While the healthcare industry was referenced as being very poor and in great need of government investment, many women and organizations are doing what they can to address health issues through these alternative, non-governmental initiatives.

Several of the participants have taken formal and informal roles in health promotion and education, often targeting mothers as they see them as the most invested in the future of Mongolia through their children. These women recognize the need for government investment

and do not think this will happen without the commitment from the people of Mongolia. There was a consistent belief that there should be public health curriculum in the schools and the schools should practice the principles taught in the curriculum. I asked what they meant by practicing the health curriculum and was told, as an example, that many schools give students tap water when the government has advised that tap water should not be consumed. One doctor said that she has worked for several years countering discriminatory practices in the health industry. She stated, “this is an area that Mongolia needs to improve, being open to other cultures and ethnicities.” When I asked for further clarification, the doctor said that Mongolians are often not open to people or ideas that are not Mongolian, further stating that “health care is a human right, there is no place for discrimination.”

Education

Because Mongolia is such a vast country, there are differences in educational structure and needs depending on location. According to a participant, in rural areas, herder families send their children to boarding schools starting at the age of five. This is extremely hard on families; the children are so young that they are traumatized by the separation. Often, older children are responsible for taking care of siblings at school while some families have transitioned to having the mothers move closer to the schools while the father maintains the nomadic responsibilities. The participant, a government researcher, claimed that this practice is resulting in more family trauma and increasing divorce rates.

In urban areas, it is easier for families to access education for their children without breaking up the family unit. But again, the early age of five to attend school has posed challenges for some families. When I further inquired into this, one participant commented that children have only recently been attending school at five and that this was an attempt to more closely

align educational traditions with practices in other countries. For decades, the age of beginning school has been seven. This participant felt strongly that the Ministry of Education needed to assess if the earlier start date was a practice that made sense for Mongolia, as the early age of five was having such a negative impact on children and families.

The absence of boys beyond seventh grade, especially in the rural areas, is common and an issue that a participant suggested be further explored. In rural areas, families depend on the males for support with herding, but it has also been suggested that this absence is due to educational structure. Mongolian education is still primarily influenced by Russian and Asian pedagogy which has minimal classroom engagement; the professors teach, and students are expected to listen and not ask questions. One participant suggested that the physiological needs of gender should also be considered in education, and that many young males become hyper and struggle to pay attention between seventh grade and high school. Current research is being conducted to assess this issue, but this could be an indicator of the low number of males with high school diplomas and college degrees.

Ability access has also been an issue in Mongolian education. There is no formal instruction for the deaf and blind communities. One participant shared that there was an expectation that deaf children learn the same way as hearing children. The minority ethnic groups that speak dialects or languages other than Mongolian are also not accommodated and are expected to pass the same tests to graduate and qualify for college entrance.

The women I interviewed all believed in the future of Mongolia and were engaged in initiatives that supported the growth and development of their country. Several of the women interviewed believed the rigor of education was not up to global standards and that this shortcoming is now showing up in the workforce. Two participants have developed creative

strategies to meet this need such as tutoring in their spare time and utilizing NGOs to encourage education, for example, a chess tournament for kids. But unfortunately, the formal education system does not set students up for success. For instance, the exams that all students must take to graduate are not well coordinated with the curriculum, so most students need to be tutored to pass the test as they did not learn the content in school.

Another issue raised in the interviews was how Mongolia has far too many small universities, one participant referencing over 200 in the capital Ulaanbaatar. They claimed this saturation of universities contributed to the lack of rigor and low quality of knowledge. Higher education, interviewees felt, is unregulated and becoming diluted. A governmental researcher stated that there needs to be a comprehensive assessment conducted by the Ministry of Education for government investment and strategic change. But again, the change in political administrations every four years makes it challenging to implement intentional, long-term change thus disadvantaging the students of Mongolia.

Economy and Management

The many issues brought forth by the participants had pervasive economic implications. This section will explore cultural impact of the economy on infrastructure. One entrepreneur talked about how “Mongolians need the perception of management.” Managers discussed how the new generation does not know how to be a part of a team and correlated this with survival skills that were needed in the democratic transition. They felt that Mongolians struggle to listen and often act like they know everything, providing answers when they do not have the knowledge. Without a strong management structure, Mongolians find it difficult to be a part of a team and collaboratively work together. The participants claimed that individually, the

population struggles to promote their individual skill sets in a group context, working towards shared goals.

The women stress the impact of widespread attitudes of self-interest and survival on the economy and the challenge of reconciling centuries of nomadic life and decades of socialism with the new, democratic age and free market. According to participants, Mongolians need to be open to many new economic frontiers, one being the service industry. The restaurateur claimed that there are plenty of jobs, but they are service jobs and Mongolians perceive these to be beneath them. The service industry needs to be developed to accommodate increased tourism and global presence of Mongolia. Participants discussed the need for Mongolians to be able to work with different cultural nuances. And like the need for collaboration and teamwork, Mongolians, participants felt, need to learn management. They claimed that developing skills to effectively supervise as well as understanding the framework and how to communicate with managers, or the ability to “manage up” was essential for Mongolians. The management participants shared that Mongolians often cannot see where they fit into the overall structure and believe this has to do with their lack of understanding of the values of the company or organization.

The Challenges Women Face in Mongolia

Women in Mongolia are extremely dedicated to the future of their country, with one participant claiming, “women spend most of their time working for the good of their country.” They are the breadwinners (Tsedevdamba, 2016) and the implementers, but often not the managers or decision makers in organizations, companies and politics. Participants believed that for big and much-needed change to happen in Mongolia, gender equity in leadership will be required. Unfortunately, there are cultural perceptions and barriers that continue to suppress

opportunities for women. Even though Mongolian women are more educated than men, Mongolia is still a patriarchy.

The steppe, or “countryside,” has infrastructure issues specific to the landscape. Some of these I have identified in the discussion of education and health, but there is also the need for development of culture, agriculture and local economy. Access to technology is only recent: a rural doctor discussed how challenging it has been to stay current with the rest of the world without the Internet. But now most homes have internet service. During my travels I remember seeing several *gers* with satellite dishes which confirmed that access. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations spoke about how even though rural areas may not have the same information, they still have relevant experiences. When urban researchers share information in a way that makes sense to rural populations, they can create transferable knowledge.

Work–Life Balance

As mentioned earlier, women in Mongolia often have several responsibilities and roles, many working at least one full-time job, taking care of family, doing volunteer work and mentoring. All of the participants who are mothers told of how their children have complained that they want their moms to only do one thing outside of the home, which is challenging for a mother to hear. One said that she can’t even sit and rest for one day as she must create a better life for her children. Another reason some have multiple jobs is because they are responsible to pay for their high interest student loans.

The increasing rate of domestic violence and divorces have caused additional strain on women, especially those who have become single parents as a result. Financial strain is only the beginning of the resulting stress; women also suffer from emotional scars, lack of support, and

resentment and distrust of men. In 2016, a domestic violence law was passed and then later was ratified to add that neighbors are also responsible to report domestic violence (Griffiths, 2017). Each of the participants shared similar sentiments about this milestone, stating that this was a huge step for Mongolia, but that there was still a lot of work to do. Hospitals, law enforcement and the justice system need education on domestic violence as few perpetrators have been held responsible and the process is not trauma-informed or victim-centered. A participant I spoke with shared her own experience of law enforcement response. She was visibly emotional and was asked by the responding officer “why are you making such a fuss” and then he continued to blame her for her partner’s behavior.

The pressure on women in Mongolia goes beyond single parents; there are many social perceptions that create unreasonable expectations for all women to achieve and reinforces the gender imbalance. Mongolia deeply values motherhood and this is seen through the social acceptance of breastfeeding and laws that are in place to protect women who are pregnant so that they have jobs following maternity leave. Every year prior to the national holiday, *Naadam*, the government gives “renowned mother” awards to those who have given birth to three sons (having males is more honored) or four children or more. One participant said that only a few weeks prior to the interview, there were several women on social media calling for an end to this, saying it was unfair and stupid as one cannot choose the sex of a child and not everyone can have children, or want to have children. Women’s merit, they argued, should not be based on procreation or something that cannot be controlled.

Women at Work

Even though women surpass men in education, very few are in decision making positions. One female told a rare story of surpassing a male colleague for an elevated position,

one in which she would be supervising him. As a result, she spent the next several months dealing with his complaints through human resources because he resented her promotion and oversight. Another participant described the process of women moving into manual labor positions in the mining industry and the backlash that had occurred as a result. Men refused to supervise women and did not think they were capable of doing “men’s work.” The company found that not only could the women do the work, they did it more carefully, saving the company a large amount of money from having to constantly replace large parts of equipment. This manager stated: “our guys need to realize that no matter the job, women can do it just as good as men.” I was told by several participants that women must justify themselves in business by putting in more hours, doing more research, and performing better than male colleagues. This was a consistent message throughout the different sectors represented in this study.

Mongolians value relationships: therefore, a lot of work is done in informal networking settings. One person talked about how her husband took up smoking so that he could join the other men during cigarette breaks where they conducted a lot of business. Women indicated that it is not culturally acceptable for them to join these informal networking sessions with men, but many have navigated this by identifying male friends or colleagues to join them so that they can participate in these networking opportunities. Another issue that arose was that meetings and other work events happen in the evenings or the weekends. Unlike the United States, it is not culturally acceptable to bring family members. This puts a large burden on women who are the primary caregivers in their families but are also expected to attend evening events for work.

Perceptions of women in the workplace are also challenging to navigate. In interviews, women shared that they have been told they are too cold and aloof and others said that they were told they are too emotional. Women are criticized for behaviors that are acceptable for men such

as boasting of accomplishments, having too many “Western” ideas, being educated and being confident. One participant said that women’s ideas are taken more seriously if praised by a man and several others had examples of men with equal or less education and professional experience advancing faster than women. The journalist participant shared that this is all perpetuated by the public perception of women as untrustworthy.

Women in Mongolia Navigating Challenge with Values

Women in Mongolia face similar issues to those of women in the United States and other areas of the world; however, Mongolian women choose strategies to move through these challenges creatively and in synchrony with the culture. The participants identified leadership characteristics that were closely aligned with their values. They were able to demonstrate how these supported the development of themselves, others and the country. It is the combination of these elements that promote resilience and thriving in Mongolian women leaders. Again, there are several overlapping themes: skillset, communication, being strategic, integrity, values, being a life-long learner, and optimism and hope. I have identified the stories that best illustrate each of these areas of leadership.

Skillset. As identified earlier, several of the participants told of how it was expected that women must work twice as hard as men, do more research and always be more prepared. There is more expected of them with little in return. Specific skills emerged from the interviews because of the heightened level of expectations of women. My hunch is that the skills identified by these women would probably be much different than their male colleagues.

Several of the women discussed the importance of being detail-oriented, taking pride in your work, and showing that you are capable: “whatever you do, do it well.” They also discussed

the importance of time management, goal setting and prioritizing, as these skills demonstrate responsibility, reliability and trust. “Act on what you promise,” is an important precept.

Several discussed the importance of teamwork and utilizing “critical soft-skills” to minimize judgement, and cultivate curiosity, tolerance and empathy. They spoke of the importance of being patient, fair and seeking to understand. One participant explained how uncomfortable she was with the soft-skill curriculum from her business degree but that she has recognized over her many years of employment that this is the most important skill set she utilizes in management.

Communication

Several participants identified communication as being key to everything that they do, one stating: “an animal moves with the help of their legs; humans do this with language, this is how we will move forward.” Many women valued communicating on a personal level and saw this successfully demonstrated through mentors. They emphasized the importance of being direct and transparent, being clear about process and expectations for the benefit of all, and “share anything that you do that is meaningful.”

Participants recognized the value of charisma and being approachable. One even spoke of the importance of having a nice smile; many identified how common niceties, such as smiling, are often not considered important by Mongolians. Our first translator even stated that Mongolians do not smile just to smile, they need to have a reason and become suspicious of those that smile without one.

Listening was also a significant characteristic identified by participants. And not just passively listening, but “listening so that others feel heard, seen and valued.” This is especially important when working with different cultures and cultural nuances—cultural competency

being an area also determined as a need for development by the participants. Respect was also very important to these women, many recognizing the importance of cultivating respect through meaningful connections. I heard from participants and in informal conversations that women are more understanding of situations and other people than men.

When discussing challenges in communication, some participants shared that they needed to continue working on developing their confidence and “getting a backbone.” Others commented that they need to be more grounded and less emotional as this is perceived as negative in Mongolian culture, perpetuating the stigma that women cannot be trusted to have a “cool head.” Some participants also stated the need for intentional responses to challenges, one providing the example of sharing feminism in a “soft way” to avoid people shutting down.

Another woman from a human rights NGO shared the importance of intentionality when responding to pushback regarding the organization’s social initiatives. She expressed that there is a way to do this that will help educate the public and minimize further negative backlash. One woman in management explained how intentional she is with making appropriate responses, saying that she has to analyze each situation to determine if she should be outspoken or keep her head low. Participants spoke of the importance of being civil through conflict, “providing peaceful strategies without compromising integrity.”

Strategic Initiatives

With so many significant changes needed in Mongolia, many women expressed the need for strategic, meaningful change. Women are dedicated to the development of Mongolia, and several involved working with service organizations. Participants emphasized the importance of understanding the global, regional and countries’ formal and informal rules and structures. In addition, they said, each situation needs to be assessed for risk management and potential

outcomes. Nearly all of the participants told of how they had gone abroad and studied hard not just for themselves, but also for the future of Mongolia. They recognized how important it was to apply knowledge to practice, taking into consideration that not all best practices from other countries will make sense for Mongolian culture.

Several women stressed the importance of learning how to navigate bureaucracy, even though they dislike it. They spoke about how money and knowing the right connections gets work done much faster and recognize that this is a privilege that not everyone can access. Participants also stated the importance of Mongolians needing to be adaptable to new environments, changing values, needs, expectations and standards, as well as the ability to change tactics when necessary. Unfortunately, many participants feel that Mongolia has been stuck in a cycle of temporary solutions versus long-term change. One claimed that “Mongolians are short-sighted.” This lack of vision, she and others felt, has created negative impact throughout Mongolian culture. Many participants believed that making money from mining has become too much the focal point in Mongolian culture rather than the development of social infrastructure such as education, health care and the environment.

Every participant spoke about system-wide change needed and several believed that this will take an entire generation to accomplish. One woman noted how challenging life can be for Mongolians but that this does not excuse complacency. Another said that just the week prior to our discussion, there had been several wild fires and the Mongolian government did not have the appropriate equipment to respond. Mongolians (both men and women) took to social media, raising money to buy the equipment and organizing groups of people to volunteer to put out fires. This may sound very inspiring, but what the participant pointed out was that no one was

questioning why the government did not have the equipment to do this, nor if it was a good idea to let completely untrained people attempt to put out fires.

Instead, individuals on social media turned the blame towards private corporations, stating that it was their responsibility to give money and equipment to this cause. The woman I was interviewing completely disagreed, stating that these companies had already made an investment in Mongolia, hiring thousands of workers and contributing to their economy and that fire protection was the responsibility of the government and the people. Inappropriate waste management ended up being the cause of the fire. She said that while Mongolians are nomadic in nature, they are not aware of typical prevention strategies. Their culture has shifted from rural life to urban life with periods in the countryside to spend time either with family or by camping. It is customary for garbage to be left on the side of the road. The wild fires were started from glass and paper in un-bagged garbage that was heated by sun, triggering a flame. As pointed out in another interview, it is the behavior of the people that needs to change.

Integrity

Each woman I interviewed had stories that I found inspiring which exemplified integrity and a demand for change. In one, a female manager was being verbally attacked by a male subordinate because he did not want a female supervisor. He ended up being fired from her company, but continued to work in the industry where he continued to speak badly of her, spreading rumors that he had been fired because she was a bad manager, when, in fact he had been documented for poor work for months prior to her taking on his supervision. She could have countered these rumors but recognized that this could have an impact on him finding work elsewhere and not being able to provide for his family. In a second example, a rural businesswoman told of how most of her competitors are now younger and often are making

mistakes. She has taken it upon herself to spend her own time and energy to teach them how to run a business, gain customers and be competitive, even though this is in direct competition to her own business. She stated simply: “It is the right thing to do.”

In both of these scenarios, women made decisions to great personal sacrifice for the betterment of others and the community. One participant spoke of the nomadic value which is that everyone is equal and has something to contribute for the survival of all. This Mongolian collectivism needs to be nurtured and incorporated into the long-term vision for the society and nation. This runs contradictory to the widespread self-centeredness that emerged following the democratic transition as a means of survival. During the socialist occupation, Mongolians were not allowed to practice or acknowledge their culture, so much of their “way of being” was stifled and lost. One participant shared that Mongolia needed to remember their values as a nation but then assess what no longer will serve the future of their people.

Values. In the interviews with Mongolian women, there was a consistent theme of values with emphasis on human rights, family, and development of self and others. I appreciated hearing participants say that human rights include both men and women, that it was “not just a women's issue” and that “gender equality is good for all.” Several indicated that men and women have different issues and needs regarding equal opportunity in Mongolia. When I asked one woman how she came to value and dedicate her life to human rights, she believed it was because her parents were equal in their household. She was not the only participant to share the importance of growing up with gender equity being represented in the home.

Another common theme was how much these women valued human capital. From what I heard, they are very dedicated to their families, colleagues and the people of Mongolia and strive to understand the heart and needs of others. The interviewees spoke of how much they appreciate

relationships, personal connections and cultivating spaces where people can be themselves. Many felt that these values were fostered through mentoring and being mentored. They told stories highlighting leadership capacities from their mentors and recognized the importance of passing along this practice. One politician even brought her young adult daughter and friend to the interview, clearly stating that it was for mentoring purposes. Women leaders in Mongolia use mentorship to increase confidence and promote health in their mentees; one individual asserted: “If self-confidence is increased in women, they will take leadership.” This ability to think inclusively, to empower others by promoting their potential were consistently described as the practice of every participant.

Families were also important to these women, each having stories of balancing work life and home. They said it was a challenge to spend quality time at home and, yet, to also be committed to work and social service obligations. A woman in the countryside decided to create an environment that promoted quality family time, so she planted trees and a garden outside of their home (which is unusual in this particular area) and her family loved it, increasing the time and quality of time they spent together.

It was evident in every interview that Mongolian women value people and the future of Mongolia. They strive to be moral, ethical citizens and make good decisions for themselves and the people of their country. One participant said it best: “Women are doing good things that otherwise would not happen.”

Lifelong learners. In each interview participants emphasized and provided examples of their love of learning, both formal and informal, and seeking opportunities to better themselves. Recognition of mistakes and how we fix them is a significant part of this development. Women stated that it is important to, “learn from your mistakes to develop and grow—In order to do this,

we have to be willing to explore the issue and our own actions, ask: ‘what went wrong, why didn’t I see it before?’” An interviewee claimed that exploring her mistakes helps her to be a good leader.

One participant stated that she “recognizes that challenges are usually not new, they repeat themselves—I just chose not to deal with them before.” Another said that sometimes she did not see them as challenges at first, while another said challenges can sometimes “shake the core of who you are.” Ultimately, the participants were not scared to take on new challenges, and talked about them making them more persistent leaders, that when they face a challenge and make a mistake, they get up and try again.

As for strategies to move through challenges, one participant explained that she verbally processes by intentionally looking at problems different angles while another talked about asking more questions earlier in the process. A rural participant stated that she “chooses to receive challenges with a peaceful mind” and that it is good to keep calm. A teacher who was depressed after an injury and the loss of a job made a conscious decision to move through the challenge by telling herself, “I will fight this.” The husband of a participant had told her that he had observed that when she feels down, she engages in community organizing to feel better. Some of the words used to describe moving through challenges were “being resilient,” “tenacious,” “strong-willed,” “hard-working,” “hopeful,” “brave,” and “seeing challenges as opportunities.” While many shared the importance of mentoring the younger generation, some also spoke of being open to learning from the younger generation.

Optimism and hope. A significant part of the participants’ narratives had to do with hope and optimism for the future of Mongolia. Every interview showed dedication and investment in their respective sectors. It was also common that the women were able to connect

this work to the strategic needs of the country. Several spoke of believing in the overall goodness in people and that every Mongolian has something to contribute the betterment of their country. Many felt that the younger generation is making good progress and that it was important to make opportunities for these individuals to lead.

Mongolia and Mongolian Women Moving Forward—Summary

The people of Mongolia have work to do and the government needs to provide the infrastructure to support that work. Individuals need to be dependent on themselves and take pride in their accomplishments versus waiting for mining subsidies to support their needs. Some shared that there have been issues of Mongolians being jealous of those making a positive impact on society. Women mentioned behavior and mentality shifts frequently in the interviews and how this could support Mongolians seeing themselves as part of the solution. A woman talked about how Mongolia needs to re-embrace the nomadic values of “everyone is equal and has something to contribute for the survival of all.”

The negative and/or controlling public perception of women in Mongolia needs to be countered. The core value of women in Mongolia is their ability to bear children, and as we know, women are more than their ability to have children. Many participants talked about the inability to access contraceptives, and how this minimizes women’s rights. Contraception is perceived by Mongolian society as lost population. These controlling expectations perpetuate relationship violence. One participant shared that violence in Mongolia is not specific to class, that this is not necessarily just an issue of those in poverty. She shared the Mongolian proverb “there is no wedding without a fight” and rolled her eyes as she said it, her western husband laughing from the other room. A deep-rooted value of Mongolians is respect and honoring the family name, so hearing that violent behavior was common during weddings caught me by

surprise. In addition, many participants shared that policies need to be created that combat sexual harassment in schools and the workplace as this behavior is not taken seriously and often interpreted as a compliment.

The values of Mongolia are in the process of being reshaped. They are struggling with cultural identity, what to keep and what no longer will serve the people. Several participants shared that communication will be the key to continued political and cultural development in Mongolia. It was a common theme that women bring good social change for society, which is evident in the research. Many participants talked about human rights being everyone's responsibility, not just the responsibility of women.

Chapter V: Discussion

Mongolian women leaders have played a prominent role throughout the history of Mongolia. Contemporary women leaders are no different; they are the caretakers of family, and manage households, often as single parents. Women were the driving force that created the NGO structure in Mongolia after the democratic transition. Against all odds, they are entrepreneurs, leaders in their sectors and elected officials.

The origin of this study began during my first trip to Mongolia, co-leading a study abroad research group. Time and again, our group was moved by the stories of these women, the thoughtful strategies that they had utilized in their fields, the intersections they had made with other fields, the work they did outside of their paid work for the future of Mongolia, and the level of vulnerability they showed. I know I was forever changed, and imagine it was an experience our students also cherish. It was this experience abroad that generated a curiosity about Mongolian women leaders—they were all so dedicated and doing such inspirational work, I began to wonder, “how?” How do they have the energy? The will? The persistence?

In reflection, I recognize why these questions became so important to me; it is because resilience and thriving is something I struggle with in my own life. As someone from a low-socioeconomic background, with a challenging upbringing and consistent struggle through adulthood, I have been desperately seeking inspiration and support. I attempted to find this in the research regarding resilience of women in higher education and it provided strategies that I have utilized. The findings from this study revealed that Mongolian women face many similar issues as Western women, in addition to those unique to Mongolia. It was the way in which these women navigated issues that was profound. They were persistent and courageous in their pursuit

of positive change and they brought a thoughtfulness and wisdom that led to effective strategies in addressing the myriad of challenges in Mongolia's cultural transition.

Recently, the chair of my dissertation committee travelled to Cuba and when I asked her about the experience, she claimed Cuba was a "land of contradictions" (E. Holloway, personal communication, June 2018). This resonated with my experience in Mongolia. Many times, the strength of conviction these women expressed were in contrast to their endurance in the face of gender inequity, human rights, and political corruption. And, yes, there was also the congruency of their leadership resilience and wisdom with the historical role of women in Mongolian culture. To explore further this "land of contradictions" and women's leadership presence in contemporary Mongolian culture, I will revisit the topics discussed in the literature review in light of the primary findings of this study as well introduce other areas of inquiry from a historical, women's leadership, and cultural change perspective. I will close the chapter with limitations, conclusions, and final reflections.

Historical to Contemporary Contradictions

When I began the literature review process, I was disappointed with the lack of scholarly research available regarding women leaders in Mongolia, but also recognized it provided an opportunity. I considered the possibility of looking more broadly at the experiences of women leaders in Asia, but because of the historical oppressive occupations by the Manchu and by Russia, as well as significant cultural differences, it seemed culturally insensitive and potentially misleading to suggest that the occupying countries were similar to Mongolia. In spite of the paucity of literature, the historical role of women as leaders in the Mongolian culture laid the foundation for my understanding the stories my participants shared with me.

As one participant stated: “Mongolians are guided by their history,” which is demonstrated through their continued use of Mongolian proverbs, deep respect for historical figures such as Chinggis Khan and Manduhai the Queen, frequent references to the historical document *The Secret History of the Mongols*, and reverence for the land of Mongolia. Yet in an informal conversation I had with a young male Mongolian, he stated that though most Mongolians reference the historical text *The Secret History of the Mongols*, many have never read it. While this is a contradiction, it is also not surprising after seven decades of communist rule during which all history and culture of Mongolia was prohibited. In this new era of openness to Mongolian culture, connection to their valiant leaders of history and, the stories and proverbs that emanate from this period, are an important reminder of their legacy. Jack Weatherford, whose works I have referred to frequently in this dissertation, lives part time in Mongolia and is deeply respected by Mongolians for his historical research of the country. This contemporary work has provided many individuals with insight into their country that they had not formerly had, and probably has provided context to stories and sayings that have been passed down for centuries.

Another contradiction arises from how much they value their land, with several natural sites considered sacred while, yet, it is common to leave trash on the side of the road, or in the middle of the steppe. As an American and specifically someone from the Pacific Northwest where sustainability practices are not just encouraged, but expected, I had almost a visceral response when seeing this practice. And yet I realize: what are they supposed to do with the garbage? The infrastructure in the city is challenged, I don’t know that waste management exists in the steppe outside of the developed areas. So other than packing it up and taking it with them, I don’t know that there are other options. I heard from several women participants and informal

conversations with other women that contemporary Mongolians take their beautiful countryside for granted and that this was extremely frustrating. Many of the participants were actively involved in sustainability initiatives as a result. There is so much open space that it may be difficult to see the impact of a bag of garbage here or there. But these individuals reframed inappropriate garbage disposal on the steppe as disrespecting the land. One participant claimed that Mongolians, while nomadic in nature, do not know how to properly “camp,” which is why there have been rural wild fires during the summer months, from garbage becoming ignited by the hot sun. Like so many other things in Mongolia, this practice is not sustainable, and whatever solution they come up with will need to make sense for the country.

Another significant contradiction is the perception, treatment and support of women in Mongolia. This contradiction goes back centuries, since the death of Chinggis Khan. Women of Mongolia have been living in a land of double standards since this time. Women are expected to be pure and sacred, only serving the future of Mongolia. Yet, in several sacred spaces of the country, women are not allowed on the land or water. We saw this first hand during our first trip on the steppe with a group of students. At our third *ger* camp, the cultural guide explained that the lake we were at was considered sacred and women were not allowed. One of our male students ended up going in the lake, we of course advised our female students to follow the traditions of the country, even though the students were very angry about their exclusion. Although the practice of preventing women from bathing in sacred lakes had been brought up during the first round of interviews, our group was not expecting to experience the phenomenon. A participant explained that the practice did not make sense; if women were as revered as Mongolians claimed, why would their presence taint sacred spaces? She noted that there was a movement of women questioning this cultural contradiction.

Women are expected to serve their country through giving birth to many “pure” children, meaning ones sired by Mongolian men. Women who are seen with men of other nationalities have been known to be publicly shamed; one nationalist group cut off one woman’s hair for having such a relationship. A politician we interviewed told of how she had been publicly and lewdly shamed in the papers during her campaigning because she had married a man who was not Mongolian.

Contemporary women leaders in Mongolia live in a country that is catching up with the rest of the world while trying to rediscover and preserve their own cultural. These women are using skills and strategies that are centuries old, that have been passed down through the ages in songs and stories. The next section explores the experiences of their foremothers, who exemplify the same persistence and love for Mongolia.

The Mongolian Queens

It has only been in recent years that the stories of Mongolian Khatuns, or queens, have been unearthed. Following the death of Chinggis Khan, his male heirs immediately began invading the areas of Mongolia that women governed, a practice that continued for several centuries. When a woman came into power, they were immediately at risk of being overthrown or killed by their own people. Mongolians were known for their written documentation, but these women leaders were erased from Mongolian history, literally ripped pages from cherished manuscripts.

Until Weatherford’s (2010) *The Secret History of the Mongol Queens*, Mongolians only had songs and tales depicting the stories of a few of the women. This is significant as many women in Mongolia are only recently learning of the heritage of their foremothers. There were only a few times in the interviews when participants specifically mentioned Manduhai Khatun or

Borte, the wife of Chinggis. But there were several other times when participants made statements like, “women have been supporting the development of Mongolia for a long time and I expect this will continue.” Because of the lack of research exploring the contemporary experiences of Mongolian women leaders, I chose to explore the history of Mongolian women. The following paragraphs provide examples of these historical leaders that I will later connect to contemporary women leaders.

Chinggis was more than a supporter of women: he was a sponsor and used his privilege to create infrastructure that illustrated this. He gave women equal, and many times more power than his sons, a practice that persisted after his death even though it came with great turmoil. Post-Chinggis, most women came into power when a husband was killed, or when the marriage was to a young man, and he needed to come of age to be a formal husband and leader. There were other women that navigated their way into power for the betterment of Mongolia. These women contributed significantly to Mongolia.

Borte, the first wife of Chinggis, was from the Khongirad tribe that was known as being less reliant on violence and more concerned with diplomacy and their people. They also honored their women, utilizing their “beauty and cleverness of their daughters to protect” the tribe through marriages to powerful men, where they would intercede and negotiate on behalf of the well-being of their people (Weatherford, 2010, p. 50). Borte’s father stated: “From ancient time, the Khongirad people have queens as our shields” (Weatherford, 2010, p. 50). These values were passed down from Borte to the daughters of her and Chinggis.

When a daughter of Chinggis was strategically married, he would not allow the husband to have any other wives, to remove competition for his daughters. While the husband would have to divorce all of his other wives and remove them from any power, the children were not deemed

illegitimate. Under the rule of Chinggis there was no such thing as a legitimate or illegitimate child, all were equal (Weatherford, 2010). In addition to removing all other wives, the title of the husband would also be removed. In 1211, one of Chinggis's daughters married Arslan Khan of the Karluk Turks. Following their marriage, Chinggis took away his title saying, "how can he be called *Arslan Khan*?" (Weatherford 2010, p.22). The concern was that the new husband would be perceived as outranking his new wife, and the daughter of Chinggis Khan, and he would not allow that. Chinggis would remove the title of khan and replace it with a more general term so that the daughters would outrank their new husbands (Weatherford, 2010).

The wives and daughters of Chinggis were strategically placed around Mongolia, providing protection to the Mongolian people and opportunity for Chinggis to conduct further invasions. Four daughters in particular were placed at four significant points of the country to develop the Silk Road, "the network of trade connections between the three main civilizations of China, India, and the Mediterranean, with the Muslim countries dominating the center of the intercontinental triangle" (Weatherford, 2010, p. 48). Checheyigan married into the Oirat tribe of the northern forest; Al-Altun married into the Uighur people; Tolai married the Karluk of the area that is now the modern Kazakhstan; and Alaqaï Beki married into the Onggud tribe at the entryway to China. These areas became interconnected kingdoms along the Silk Road, each with its own currency of local goods from the region that was traded throughout the route. The daughters created the government systems of the road, increasing "faster flow of goods and information than had been previously practical" making it a benefit for everyone in the region (Weatherford, 2010, p. 79).

The wives, daughters and daughters-in-law of women continued to rule until 1252 when Mongke Khan declared that no women could be declared a *khatun* or queen, only married into

the position, following several years of unrest and vicious wars between daughters-in-law of Chinggis. Yet, even though the formal title was harder to attain, generations of women continued to move into positions of power and authority the following centuries of Mongolian rule, usually motivated by the restoration of the Borijin monarchy (the originated clan of Chinggis Khan). Even though most of the historical documentation of these women was destroyed, there are a few whose stories that managed to survive the ages.

Khutulun, the great, great granddaughter of Chinggis Khan and granddaughter of Ogedai, was born around 1260 and was primarily documented through the travels and observations of Marco Polo. She was known for her military campaigns next to her father as well as her archery skills and being an award-winning wrestler overcoming some of the strongest men of the time. Khutulun did not want to be married, and only finally chose to marry when rumors of an incestuous relationship with her father began. The military campaigns of her and her father were the continued work of Chinggis, protecting and expanding Mongolia (Weatherford, 2010).

Samur, born in the 1380s, was another prominent female figure in Mongolian history. Following the expulsion of Mongols from China, the country was fractured. Samur made it her life's work of 50 years to reunite Mongolia under the rule of the Borijin clan. Unfortunately, the lineage had nearly completely disappeared. In addition to this, her beloved grandson turned against her and made it his life's mission to exterminate the remaining Borijin people, until there was one infant left, named Bayan Mongke that Samur hid and raised. Even though she died before she saw a united Mongolia, Samur played a significant role in protecting the Borijin lineage (Weatherford, 2010).

One of the most documented and revered historical female figures is Manduhai. She was born in 1448 in the midst of considerable political chaos. At the age of 15, she was married to the

Manduul Khan, who served as the leader of the Mongol empire at that time. Her husband was grooming Bayan Mongke, the child that Samur had saved, for future leadership as he was the last of the Borijin lineage. At a young age, Bayan Mongke fathered a child with a commoner, neither caring for the child. When he fell out of good graces with the Manduul Khan, Bayan Mongke was killed and shortly after, Manduul Khan died as well. At the young age of 23, Manduhai was the last of the royal family alive. Shortly after, she learned of the baby fathered by Bayan Mongke who had been abandoned and was barely being cared for by an elderly woman. This young child named Batu Mongke was the last of the Borijin lineage again. When Manduhai found him, he was nearly dead from not being cared for, malnourished with a hunched back. She hid Batu with a foster family in his toddler years while she formulated a plan.

Manduhai realized that she would need to marry someone soon before she was taken by force. The ensuing story is long and very detailed, but, most significantly, she decided to orchestrate a public ritual asking for the blessing of the ancestors for her to marry the young Batu Mongke. During the boy's childhood, Manduhai continued to reign as khatun (queen), caring and raising the young boy, taking him on military campaigns with her. When of age, he took a formal, shared leadership role with Manduhai and she gave birth to 8 of his children, expanding Borijin lineage. Even when pregnant, Manduhai continued to participate in war and ruling. In addition, it was under her leadership individually, then later with Batu Mongke that Mongolia became reunited and a strong government structure and law was instituted (Weatherford, 2010).

While not a story of just one queen, the Manchu occupation was another period in which women moved into leadership roles. A majority of Mongolian men during this time were forced to become Buddhist monks but they did not necessarily embrace the practice of being a monk. Instead, they would sneak away from the monasteries, have sex with Mongolian women, then

return to the monasteries. This left women as single parents and heads of household, tending to childrearing, finances, herding—essentially everything. But they also had freedom in this role to raise families as they like, and they did not have to commit to one man (Tumursukh, 2001).

It is these historical stories of dedication, pride and strategy that I also see resonate in the experiences of contemporary Mongolian women. Like those women of long past centuries, they are committed to something much larger than themselves, even knowing that some of the needed changes may take generations. Mongolian women leaders may not be alive to see the change, but they know what is needed now to begin the process.

Transition to Democracy: A Period of Change

Mongolia is commonly thought of and historically known for vigilant warfare and violence; but the movement that led up to the democratic transition after 1990 was peaceful and persistent. During that period, individuals participated in demonstrations, sit-ins and hunger strikes that took place just over the period of a year. The transition garnered little media attention due to the remoteness of the country, the frigid temperatures and the absence of violence. Resistance to this transition was minimal as Mongolians wanted their country and culture back. The seven decades of affiliation with the Soviet Union may have been characterized as a familial relationship by the Russians but is probably better described in terms of colonization and occupation (Myadar, 2017; Sneath, 2003). As stated in chapter 1, the independent polling NGO Sant Maral Foundation has conducted research every five years asking Mongolians if they regret the change to democracy; over 90% of Mongolians consistently vote no (Tsedevdamba, 2016).

All of the participants had some reference or story to share about the impact of democratic change on all aspects of society, culture, and economics. Mongolians refer to the decade of the 1990s as “the hard years,” as the economy collapsed, there was no infrastructure,

and people were desperate to survive. However, the opportunities were unlike anything Mongolians had experienced in recent history: the ability to leave the country, to trade, to practice cultural traditions and to participate in the free market. Mongolians were finally able to honor their ancestral ideologies and traditions that had been forbidden for centuries (Ginsberg, 1995; Heaton, 1992; Noerper, 2007; Porter, 2009; Rossabi, 2005, 2009; Tsedevdamba, 2016; Swift, 2014).

In the 1980s and 1990s, there were numerous other countries that also transitioned from communism to democracy. As an American, I remember watching news coverage of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dialogue about communism being negative. It was not until my interviews with Mongolian women that I began to understand what was lost in the fall of communism. Gender equity was a given under communist rule, as everyone was considered equal. When communism collapsed, so did gender equity and representation, to be replaced with conservative gender roles (Tsedevdamba, 2016; Tumursukh, 2001). Other countries that transitioned from communism to democracy suffered the same fate—women were laid off; there was no longer high numbers of females representing the government; the wage gap increased; and women were more vulnerable to violence (Nikolić-Ristanović, 2004; Pollert, 2003).

During the Mongolian transition to democracy, it was initially assumed that, as a central tenet of the Communist era, gender equity would continue. Democracy provided Mongolia with freedom that the country had not experienced in centuries, but with this freedom and opportunity came great sacrifice of the Mongolian people, and it appeared that women and the elderly experienced the greatest impact. As reported in the interviews here, and the literature, they were the first round of individuals laid off after the transition, often ending up in poverty

(Tsedevdamba, 2016). Many women also claimed that since the transition, divorce rates and violence against women have risen dramatically.

The impact of this swift societal change brought large implications that no one in Mongolia was prepared for, especially those who became vulnerable and marginalized. This process of change is categorized as Dramatic Social Change (DSC) theory (de la Sablonnière, Bourgeois & Najih, 2013), which explores rapidly changing cultural and political transitions, examining the macro processes of change: the pace of social change, rupture to the social structure, rupture to the normative structure, and the level of threat to one's cultural identity (de la Sablonnière, 2013; de la Sablonnière et al., 2013; Weinstein, 2010).

This dramatic social change brought a significant political and cultural shift for Mongolia. Women welcomed democracy but were not psychologically prepared for the disenfranchisement they experienced, many feeling “betrayed by the loss of former social rights” (Pollert, 2003, p. 332). In reference to similar political transitions in Europe, Nikolić-Ristanović (2004) claims:

The creation of market economies in Eastern Europe fundamentally entails the construction of a ‘man's world’ and the simultaneous propagation of masculinity in the public sphere, with domestication and the marketing of women . . . [a] degradation of feminine identity. (p. 2)

Through my interviews, I learned that an additional negative result of women being laid off in Mongolia was their lack of ability to participate in society. This is in direct correlation to that propagation of masculinity in the public sphere Nikolić-Ristanović (2004) wrote about.

In post-communist Mongolia, women were outcast from the workforce and politics, but it was not long before they began communing with other females. It was during this era of the

“dark years” that women came together and created non-governmental opportunities. Concurrently, some became the first defense attorneys, and others obtained scholarships from other countries and went abroad to study. Unfortunately, as women became more educated and powerful following the transition, rates of domestic violence increased, divorces ensued, and many women became single parents and heads of household. And yet, they persisted and, in many cases, thrived. The next section will explore the contemporary experiences of Mongolian women as change makers.

Women Leading Change

Greed, corruption and a lack of understanding of how to manage natural resources have created a challenging landscape in Mongolia. In addition, increasing rates of domestic violence and divorce have changed the traditional family structure, creating additional hardship as women recover from abuse and trauma as well as tend to their families as singular care givers and providers.

Throughout the conversations, Mongolian interviewees were quick to remind me that they have only been a democracy since 1990, that they came from nothing and now have so much. The 1990’s served as a time of complete rebuilding of infrastructure, economy and politics. The women of Mongolia have been marginalized throughout the democratic transition, yet this has not deterred their continued progress.

This dissertation has been exploring the process of women leading change during a time of historical significance. The following sections will examine theories of leadership, and leadership skills and strategies that promote resilience and thriving as related to Mongolian women leaders.

Leadership Theory, Strategies, and Skills

In my literature review of leadership traits in Chapter II, I added the word “helpful,” as in the sense of helping others, recognizing that there are several other leadership traits and practices, other than being altruistic. My research demonstrated repeatedly how the women of Mongolia engage in leadership for the benefit of others; it is rarely self-serving. Many individuals claimed that it is the women of Mongolia that care for the people and future of Mongolia. Women leaders are known for ethical, honest practices that are not self-serving, even when male competitors often try to discredit their reputation. There were several examples of this, the most notable being in politics. Even though women leaders were personally and publicly criticized, they demonstrated integrity, continuing their campaigns without corrupt or immoral practices with the intent of serving Mongolia.

These capacities directly correlate to the theory of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders are described as “empowering and developing people; showing humility, being authentic, accepting people for who they are, providing direction, and being stewards who work for the good of the whole” (van Dierendonck, 2004, p. 1232). Mongolian women leaders demonstrate servant leadership through their commitment to developing others, their humility and through ethical, honest practices.

Mentoring emerged at several points of the interviews, from participants asking questions of our students and offering internships, to bringing their own mentees to the interviews to observe and learn. Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, and DuBois (2008) define mentoring as “when a more experienced or senior individual (the mentor) takes an interest in and encourages a less experienced or disadvantaged individual (the protégé), the protégé will benefit” (p. 254). Several of the women related stories of those who mentored them on their career trajectory as well as

through life's milestones, signaling that the support of these individuals was an important part of their success. One participant talked about the lack of opportunities for young women to practice leadership and that she was working with local universities and NGOs to develop these opportunities. The nature of mentoring of individuals and organizations and its benefits such as improved employee performance, retention, and skills enhancement, have been described elsewhere (e.g., Leavitt, 2011; Mundia & Iravo, 2014; Scandura, & Pellegrini, 2007). Mongolian women leaders recognize the importance of mentorship and developing others, and it is important to name the extra impact of this work on the women leaders. Many already are doing "double" and "triple" duty with a full-time job, volunteering and family responsibilities. Their commitment to developing others through mentorship is a testament to their own resilience and strength.

Highlighted skills identified in the research included minimizing judgment, displaying empathy and being approachable. The women valued seeking to understand, being curious, asking questions and listening to the experiences of others. Being knowledgeable and reliable was also considered significant, one participant expressing the importance of keeping promises. These traits are all essential parts of developing trust, which is imperative in leading change (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). A business leader in this study referred to these as "soft skills," and that she remembered minimizing the importance of these earlier in her career but has recognized that these are the most important skills in leading, managing and developing teams.

The theory of relational leadership (Murrell, 1997) is also pertinent to the practices of Mongolian women leaders and connects with the use of soft skills needed to build trust. Murrell (1997) describes relational leadership as being able to "see relationships other than those built from hierarchy . . . and to envision transformational phenomenon where the social change

process occurs well outside the normal assumptions of command and control” (p. 39). This theoretical framework values social influence throughout the system and sees this shared construct of social dynamics and norms as the outcome (Uhl-Bien, 2006). An economist and politician participant interviewed during this study, told me that part of her work has been to educate Mongolians on social issues, democracy and how to be responsible voters. She does this through trainings, meetings and a weekly spot on a local television station where she discusses current issues and trends in a way that Mongolians can relate. She believes that every citizen should have the right to have social influence throughout the country and has dedicated her career to supporting this cause.

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) claim that relational leaders “see communication not as an expression of something pre-conceived, but as emerging and open, as a way of working out what is meaningful and possible” (p. 1434). These authors also explored the concept of *relational integrity*, which is the idea that “leaders need to be sensitive, attuned and responsive to moments of difference, and feel responsible for working with those differences” (p. 1438), and that this extends beyond the personal values of a leader, also including “their judgement in moments of uncertainty and/or questionable actions” (p. 1438). In an earlier example, I told of how a female politician had been targeted by her competition with negative news coverage and that a rock had been thrown at her campaign headquarters. She claimed she would never respond in a similar manner, that her campaign is managed with values, regardless of how she is treated. This politician continued to work amicably alongside her competitors because she knew it was the right thing to do, even though she disagreed with their actions. This is important as it demonstrates that Mongolian women leaders operate ethically, even when they know their competitors have the advantage through cheating, stealing and lying.

Strategies for Sustainable Change

A prominent topic in the interviews was the new Mongolian government structure. Participants claimed that sustainable change cannot happen with the turnover of administration and initiatives every four years. This political structure inhibits long-term vision from the leadership of the country. Several individuals both formally and informally shared that women in Mongolia are bridge builders, and that they have the ability to make connections to create shared understanding. They stress that more women in decision making positions will provide collaborative and visionary opportunities for the future of Mongolia.

Several participants stated that when women come into power, they do not change the way that politicians notoriously do. They keep their promises and operate with integrity. The theory of *authentic leadership* (Northouse, 2016) is pertinent as it emerged following challenging times that included terrorism, corporate scandal and health epidemics. Avolio and Gardner (2005) suggest:

Such challenges have precipitated a renewed focus on restoring confidence, hope and optimism; being able to rapidly bounce back from catastrophic events and display resiliency; helping people in their search for meaning and connection by fostering a new self-awareness; and genuinely relating to all stakeholders. (p. 316)

Authentic leadership theory developed as a response to these issues, as a way reconnect to the people and inspire hope.

Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May (2004) defined authentic leaders as:

Those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and

strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character. (p. 801)

Like their female ancestors, Mongolian women understand strategy, the importance of context and being intentionally responsive. In each interview, the women had identified ways that their respective sectors and individual skills could contribute to the development and sustainability of positive change in Mongolia.

The construct of authentic leadership is also defined as “a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243). This seemed very apt as a description of the approach among Mongolian women leaders. In each interview for my study, the women shared honest reflections that demonstrated self-awareness. There were also several examples of positive, self-regulated behaviors, even when they may have not wanted to behave this way. They recognized the potential long-term impact of their behavior.

Mongolian Women are Relational, Authentic, Servant Leaders

Mongolians value relationships, this came up several times during the interviews. Mongolian culture relies on community and has for several centuries. The climate and agricultural challenges of the country have required adaptability and movement. This in turn has created cultural norms of accommodation and support for the survival of all. For instance, it is customary for Mongolians to welcome visitors into their *ger*, offering whatever food and drink they have to their guests, whether they know them or not. This way of being was challenged during the democratic transition. Many became self-oriented just to survive, versus community-oriented; this was quite a change from the traditional Mongolian way. My assumption is that

there had been a disconnect from their culture for several centuries due to the Manchu and Russian occupations, some may have lost sight of Mongolian values.

As discussed earlier, developing relationships can be challenging for Mongolian women as informal networking and relationship building is often a male practice that females are often not allowed to participate in without male presence. The women I interviewed that spoke of this challenge and had navigated this primarily by obtaining male sponsorship; but this may not always be an option. This behavior undermines the character of the women, assuming that women cannot be trusted around men. In addition, it assumes that male power needs to be protected from the influence of women.

The concept of relational integrity aligned well with the experiences shared by my participants. In the face of adversity, Mongolian women leaders often make choices beyond their own needs and wants, recognizing the greater impact, which directly correlates with servant leadership. Stories shared of male leadership often lacked morals and integrity, with men in leadership positions making decisions without consideration of the needs of Mongolia and often for self-advancement.

The capacities associated with authentic leadership were common themes throughout the interviews. Mongolian women leaders are highly reflective, aware of their thoughts and behaviors as well as how others perceive them. They recognize the values of themselves and others and the importance of being competent and knowledgeable in this work. They knew their strengths and areas needed for improvement and consider themselves to be hopeful, optimistic and resilient. The participants were very aware of context and systems, utilizing these to effectively navigate change. Through their stories, they consistently displayed high moral character, with their decisions and actions aligning with their values.

Women leaders value the people of their country, time and again referring to human capital as the most valuable resource of Mongolia. All of the women shared their commitment to mentoring and developing others and that they believe in the overall goodness of people. The participants claimed that building relationships is important, as well as learning how to work with different cultures. They understand that communication is key to fostering collaborations and understanding structure. A common issue that participants were working on was emotional management as “having a cool head” is a value in Mongolia. They also spoke of the importance of self-care so that they can continue to serve their country. Several of the interviewees referenced how participants see challenges as opportunities, ones that allowed for creative problem solving. Each individual expressed great optimism and hope for the future of Mongolia. They recognize that there is a lot of work to do but they love their country and culture; for all, Mongolia is worth it.

The Space between Resilience and Thriving

This dissertation has been a journey exploring the resilience and thriving of Mongolian women leaders. With contemporary research at a minimum, I examined the history of Mongolia, from pre-Chinggis Khan through the democratic transition of 1990. In this pursuit, I began to better understand the historical implications and cultural complexities of Mongolia. For centuries, it has been the women of Mongolia who have shown resilience in the face of dramatic social change, developing creative strategies to navigate challenging times.

I have always been curious about the human experience and specifically, how people get through really difficult situations. Through the course of my research, I encountered the concept of *resilience*, a “class of phenomenon characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (Masten, 2001, p. 228). Rutter (1990) argues that resilience is not

a trait to be developed, but a process that is engaged when three factors are considered: “building a positive self-image, reducing the effect of the risk factors and breaking a negative cycle so as to open up new opportunities for the individual” (p. 118). I find that the experiences of Mongolian women leaders fit into both of these definitions. Masten (2001) explores the idea of adaptation and development in a threatening environment. Mongolian women navigate environmental and cultural threats on a daily basis from bad air quality and extreme temperatures to workplace discrimination, domestic violence and sexual harassment. Despite these conditions, women continue to build a positive self-image, work toward reducing the effect of risk factors and actively engage in breaking negative cycles for themselves and their country (Rutter, 1990).

Scholars struggle with the concept of resilience due to the ambiguity of the definition. There are several fields that utilize the concept of resilience specific to that knowledge base. Rutter (1990) considers the common definition of resilience to be “appropriately broad” (p. 119), as context is infinite. The broad definition also serves this study, as it makes space for cultural variations of resilience.

During this research I came across Carver’s 1998 medically based model of resilience illustrating the potential responses to adverse life effects. He refers to resilience as a form of recovery from an adverse situation and his research thoroughly explores the “better-off-afterward experience,” (p. 247) which he defines as thriving. Carver claims that researchers and practitioners need to recognize thriving as an extension of resilience because “sometimes the experience of adversity promotes the emergence of a quality that makes the person better off afterward than beforehand” (p. 247). In this model of understanding, resilience is identified as, “a homeostatic return to a prior condition” (p. 247)—which I consider as a “Band-Aid” effect as it does not consider long term change. But in the context of leadership and success, mere resilience

does not seem enough to promote personal and professional success. Mongolian women leaders are resilient, but it was this model that helped me to conceptualize what I had been missing, the idea of thriving. Mongolian women leaders are extremely positive and hopeful; and recognize the qualities and skills they have developed as a result of adversity.

Thriving

Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, and Garnett (2011) define thriving individuals as those who “experience growth and momentum marked by both a sense of feeling energized and alive (vitality) and a sense that they are continually improving and getting better at what they do (learning)” (p. 250). O’Leary and Ickovics (1995) explore the concept of thriving as an adaptation process that is influenced by individual and social variables changing throughout one’s life. They state:

The foundation of this concept comes from the literature on resilience, but it goes beyond the common view of resilience as homeostasis . . . [and that] it suggests, instead, a value-added construct whereby challenge provides an opportunity for change and growth.

(p. 121)

Su, Tay and Diener (2014) stated that “to thrive in life is not only marked by feeling of happiness, or a sense of accomplishment, or having supportive and rewarding relationships, but is a collection of all these aspects” (p. 272). Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) identify thriving as “growing and prospering in new and challenging environments” (p. 295) and claim that resilience, strength and renewal are needed to thrive. They further suggested:

Renewal is the active process of removing the plaque of tough experiences and scars from the journey and returning to the core of your values and being . . . it demands a transformation of the heart and guts as well as the head. (p. 295)

While all these definitions connect to the experiences of Mongolian women leaders, this last explanation stands out. It emphasizes chipping away at the residue following a challenging experience to return to your values while embracing holistic transformation. A common description of Mongolian women leaders kept coming up following the interviews, “humble pride.” The transformation of heart, guts and head as described by Heifetz et al (2009) requires humility and the ability to reflect cognitively, emotionally and spiritually. This in combination with pride is what sets these women apart, they are deeply invested in the future of their country.

Cultural Resilience and Thriving

Similar to resilience, the concept of thriving has a background as a metaphor in other contexts. Specifically, it emerged from evolutionary biology literature. The idea of successful biological adaptation occurs when essential DNA is preserved; DNA that no longer serves a need is discarded, rearranged or reregulated, and the organism develops new capacities to thrive in different and difficult environments. “A successful adaptation enables a living system to take the best from its history into the future” (Couto, 2007, p. 34).

A further refinement of relevance to Mongolian women’s leadership is concept of *cultural resilience*, defined as “the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness” (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008, p. 10). Both biological thriving and cultural resilience are quite similar, both concepts preserve important aspects of identity while simultaneously reorganizing and adapting to change. The addition of thriving to this definition moves beyond adaptation to innovation, to develop new tools succeed in challenging environments. Mongolian women demonstrated this in the 1990s following the democratic transition. They became informal traders, the first defense attorneys, and developed the non-

governmental organization structure of the country. Mongolian women creatively fill the gaps of needed support and structure amid chaos, with little to no resources.

Mindful Engagement

To effectively develop leaders to thrive in complex work environments, DeRue, Spreitzer, Flanagan, and Allen (2013) offer the approach of Mindful Engagement. This is grounded in the research of the Michigan Model of Leadership which describes how individuals promote positive change in themselves, others and society. The core of the model is to “make a positive difference in the world . . . [through] impact and legacy— leaving your team, organization, or even the world a better place than you found it” (DeRue et al., 2013, p. 58). The Mindful Engagement approach has three basic principles: readying for growth, taking action to learn, and reflecting to retain.

Readying for growth requires understanding context and developing strengths and goals specific to that context, which also requires an openness to learning. Taking action to learn is a personal commitment to trying new things and see these as opportunities to lead. Reflecting to retain is a comprehensive process developed to foster learning that includes:

- (a) describe the experience; (b) explain their reactions to the experience; (c) discuss ‘what if’ scenarios that test alternative explanations for their performance; (d) identify insights about new behaviours that would improve performance; and (e) commit to at least two behaviour changes and specific milestones for making those behaviour changes. (DeRue et al., 2013, p. 6)

Mongolian women leaders demonstrate the process of Mindful Engagement well. They are aware of the context in their industries, their country and world. Several of the participants are engaged in assessment and research specific to their field and the country. Many have

travelled to other countries for education, which has allowed them the opportunity to understand how Mongolia might continue to work towards global partnerships. Participants talked often of being lifelong learners, having a dedication to ongoing learning, application and reflection.

The idea of leaving the world better than you found it came up several times in the interviews. The participants knew that the change that they were implementing would take generations, it is likely they would not be alive to see the result. This personal commitment to change is one more demonstration of their Mindful Engagement.

Final Thoughts on Resilience and Thriving

I have been moving between these two concepts for some time now, trying to identify which seemed more fitting for the research question I had developed. What I have discovered is that they are part of a spectrum that has to be considered as a whole. To understand what makes individuals thrive, one must also understand what variables motivate their resilience. And I imagine the opposite is true, to understand what makes individuals resilient, one must understand what would make them thrive, what are their values?

Mongolians honor the whole being. I had several conversations individuals in Mongolia regarding livestock and how they use every single part of an animal, nothing is wasted. This is partly for survival, but it is also a deeply entrenched value, do not waste. I think Mongolian women leaders have taken this a step further, using the analogy as a way to see and experience life and the world. All of the experiences are important, good and bad, waste nothing, learn from it, grow, teach and repeat.

Limitations

The most notable limitation of this work is that I am not Mongolian. I come to this research with my own Western world view, which is quite different from the Mongolian way of

life. I was diligent in making sure we had a translator for all of the interviews (sometimes not needed but just in case) and made sure to ask clarifying questions of the translator if I was confused by a saying or a concept. I spent 44 days in Mongolia over the course of a year, which was trying for my family and, yet, I recognize that is not a long length of time to really understand a culture. This is why I spent so much time researching historical context and any contemporary, translated literature that I could find.

Another limitation for this research is that everyone knows everyone in Ulaanbaatar, which made it challenging to tell the stories of the women as fully as I would have wanted. I imagine some of the participants would have permitted me to share their names as they were delighted that the research was being conducted. But there have also been reports of marginalized groups in Mongolia being hurt and sometimes killed over political and cultural differences. I did not take this lightly.

A Mongolian Woman's Perspective on This Research

To check my knowledge and assumptions, and to honor the Indigenous Narrative methodology, I asked a Mongolian women leader to review my work. This individual, who I will refer to as A.T., was not a participant and is currently working in the United States. Like many of the participants, she is working on several projects, all of which connect back to Mongolia. I am so fortunate that A.T. was willing to review my work and provide a Mongolian perspective on my reporting of stories and themes.

A.T. shared her own experiences about the democratic transition as being challenging and claims this is because Mongolia had forgotten their own values and also did not have the knowledge and experience to govern a free market system. A.T. felt that Mongolia's democracy is struggling because it is trying to copy Western democracy, which is itself riddled with issues

and patriarchy. A.T. talked about her parents being uncomfortable when she points out issues in Mongolia, but that things will not change without awareness. She also concurred that Mongolia does have an issue of controlling women and their bodies that this has become an issue of national importance and security. Regarding high divorce rates, A.T. claimed that women were leaving men because the latter are weak, not properly raised, disciplined or responsible enough.

The descriptions A.T. shared with me were all consistent with the stories that the participants shared. She did not question my interpretations, only provided additional reasoning behind concepts and findings seen from her own experience. I am extremely grateful for the time A.T. took to review this research, provide clarifications and additional validating personal stories.

Conclusions

Through this experience, I have learned that Mongolian women leaders are incredibly skilled at implementing change. They strategically and unapologetically continue to move Mongolia forward. Mongolian women leaders are remarkably resilient and often are thriving in their new world of work and democratic government. This resilience is palpable in their extraordinary optimism, a realistic world view, and great hope for their developing democracy.

Through formal and informal conversations, it became apparent that the women in Mongolia are aware of the country's shortcomings, from the lack of niceties in interactions to the systemic issues of the country. Women in Mongolia are taking it upon themselves to make change, from small gestures to large systemic actions. During my first trip, I witnessed our female cultural guide teaching the male driver how he should thank me for giving him a parting gift, which she claimed was a smile and a hug as we had travelled together for five days. It is these micro moments that add up to a movement. Women in Mongolia see the double standards,

the lack of opportunities, the amount of time and effort they are faced with and yet, they do not blame the men in their country, they blame the system. They do not refer to women's rights when talking about social issues; they refer to these as human rights.

Women in Mongolia are taking initiative, making change both in their families and their communities for the betterment of the country. It is through mindful engagement, authenticity, and relationships that these women leaders not only survive, but they thrive. Mongolian women are proud of how far their country has come in such a short amount of time yet are not daunted by the gravity and immensity of the work still needed to bring sustainable change to a fledgling democracy. Their hope and optimism for the future of Mongolia is unwavering, even knowing the many challenges that they face.

The women I interviewed are visionaries. Each one extremely intelligent, dedicated, kind, compassionate and self-reflective. I learned so much from these women leaders: the importance of humility, understanding systems and context, strategies for navigating challenging environments, the importance of relationships and a personal commitment to ones' values and so much more. There is so much the world can learn from this country, culture and more specifically, Mongolian women leaders. I will forever be in debt to these individuals for sharing their stories with me, and I hope I have done justice and honor to their insight and wisdom, their sacrifice and commitment, and to their love of Mongolia.

References

- Achenbach, J. (1995, December 31). The era of his ways. *Washington Post*.
- Andrews, M. (2007). Exploring cross-cultural boundaries. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 489–511). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Doing narrative research*. London, England: Sage.
- Avolio, B.J., Gardner, W.L. (2005) Authentic Leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of Leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16, p. 315–338.
- Avolio, B.J., Gardner, W.L., Walumbwa, F.O., Luthans, F., & May, D.R. (2004). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15, p. 801–823.
- Baival, B., & Fernandez-Gimenez, M. E. (2012). Meaningful learning for resilience-building among Mongolian pastoralists. *Nomadic Peoples*, 16(2), 53–77.
<https://doi.org/10.3167/np.2012.160205>
- Bartel, A. P., Rossin-Slater, M., Ruhm, C. J., Stearns, J., & Waldfogel, J. (2018). Paid family leave, fathers' leave-taking, and leave-sharing in dual-earner households. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 37, 10–37. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w21747>
- Benham, M. (2007). Mo'ōlelo: On culturally relevant story making from an indigenous perspective. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 3–34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bentz, V. M., & Shapiro, J. (1998). *Mindful inquiry in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bille, F. (2013). Indirect interpellations: Hate speech and “bad subjects” in Mongolia. *Asian Anthropology*, 12(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1683478x.2013.773118>
- Biron, M. (2007). *Chinggis Khan*. London, England: One World.
- Brinkman, S. (2014). Unstructured and semi-structured interviewing. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 277–299). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Burn, N., & Oidov, O. (2001). *Women in Mongolia: Mapping progress under transition*. New York, NY: United Nations Development Fund for Women. Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/46cadabb0.pdf>
- Carver, C.S. (1998). Resilience and thriving: Issues, models and linkages. *Journal of Social*

- Issues*, 54(2), 245–266. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1998.tb01217.x>
- Carlson, C., Chen, J., Chang, M., Batsukh, A., Toivgoo, A., Riedel, M., & Witte, S. (2012). Reducing intimate and paying partner violence against women who exchange sex in Mongolia: Results from a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 27(10). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511431439>
- Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, J., & Rosiek, J. (2012). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: Borderland spaces and tensions. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 35–77). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Corntassel, J. (2003). Who is indigenous? ‘Peoplehood’ and ethnonationalist approaches to rearticulating indigenous identity. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, (9)1, 75–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110412331301365>
- Couto, R. (2007). *Reflections on leadership*. Lanham, MA: University Press of America.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cunliffe, A., & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, 64(11), 1425–1449. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726711418388>
- Daiute, C. (2014). *Narrative inquiry: A dynamic approach*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Dalaibuyan, B. (2013). A network approach to NGO development: Women’s NGOs in Mongolia. *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, 15(1). Retrieved from http://www.icnl.org/research/journal/vol15iss1/art_4.htm
- Davis-Kimball, J. (2003). Katuns: The Mongolian queens of Genghis Khanite. In S. M. Nelson (Ed.), *Ancient queens: Archaeological explorations* (pp. 149–172). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Davis-Kimball, J., Bashilov, V.A., & Yablonsky, L.T. (1995). Nomads of the Eurasian steppes in the early iron age. *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 9, 270.
- de la Sablonnière, R. (2013). Toward a psychology of social change: A typology of social change. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00397>. Retrieved from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00397/full>

- de la Sablonnière, R., Bourgeois, L. F., & Najih, M. (2013). Dramatic social change: A social psychological perspective. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 1*(1), 253–272, <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v1i1.14>
- Denton, R., & Voth, J. B. (2017). *Social fragmentation and the decline of American democracy: The end of the social contract*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.
- DeRue, D.S., Spreitzer, G., Flanagan, B., & Allen, B. (2013). Developing adaptive leaders for turbulent times: The Michigan model of leadership. *The European Business Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/>.
- Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Eby, L.T, Allen, T.D., Evans, S.C., Ng, T., & DuBois, D. (2008). Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals. *Journal of Vocational Behavior 72*(2), 254–267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.04.005>
- Essed, P. (2004). Cloning amongst professors: Normativities and imagined homogeneities. *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 12*(2), 113–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740410004588>
- Fleming, J. & Ledogar, R. (2008). Resilience, an evolving concept: A review of literature relevant to aboriginal research. *Pimatisiwin, 6*(2), 7–23.
- Fisher, V., & Kinsey, S. (2014). Behind closed doors! Homosocial desire and the academic boys club. *Gender in Management: An International Journal, 29*(1), 44–64. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-10-2012-0080>
- Ford-Smith, H. (1987). *Lionheart gal: Life stories of Jamaican women*. Toronto, Canada: Sister Vision.
- Ginsberg, T. (1995). Political reform in Mongolia: Between Russia and China. *Asian Survey, 35*(5), 459–471. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645748>
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Griffiths, A. (2017, February 8). Mongolia’s amended law makes domestic violence a criminal offence. *InAsia*. Retrieved from <https://asiafoundation.org/2017/02/08/mongolias-amended-law-makes-domestic-violence-criminal-offence/>
- Gronn, P., & Lacey, K. (2006). Cloning their own: Aspirant principals and the school-based selection game. *Australian Journal of Education, 50*(2), 102–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000494410605000202>
- Harding, S. (1988). *Feminism and methodology: Social science issues*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Heaton, W. (1992). Mongolia in 1991: The uneasy transition. *Asian Survey*, 32(1), 50–55. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645198>
- Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.
- Holloway, E. L. & Schwartz, H. L. (2018). Drawing from the margins: Grounded theory and EDI Studies. In *Handbook of research methods on diversity management, equality and inclusion at work* by R. Bendl, L. A. Booyesen, J. Pringle (Eds).
- Indigenous populations [Def. 1]. (n.d). In *World Health Organization online*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/topics/health_services_indigenous/en/
- International Republican Institute. (2016, September 20). *Leveling the playing field*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bMFK7Zgp60>
- Johnston, M., & Esposito, N. (2007). Barriers and facilitators for breastfeeding among working women in the United States. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic and Neonatal Nursing*, 36(1), 9–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1552-6909.2006.00109.x>
- Jones, H. (2006). Working together: Local and global imperatives for women in Mongolia. *Asia Europe Journal*, 4(3), 417–430. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-006-0068-0>
- Josselson, R. (2006). Narrative research and the challenge of accumulating knowledge. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16(1), 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.16.1.03jos>
- Kingsbury, B. (1998). “Indigenous Peoples” in international law: A constructivist approach to the Asian controversy. *American Journal of International Law*, 92(3), 414–457. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2997916>
- Kohn, M., Kaminski, A., & McCrohan, D. (2014). *Mongolia*. Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet
- Konagaya, Y., & Sarfi, M. (2013). *Development trajectories for Mongolian women in and after transition*. Osaka, Japan: national Museum of Ethnography.
- Leavitt, C. (2011). *Developing leaders through mentoring: A brief literature review*. Capella University. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED517965>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Luthans, F., & Avolio, B.J. (2003). *Authentic leadership: A positive developmental approach*. In K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, & R.E.

- Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
- May, T. (2007). *The Mongol art of war*. South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Books.
- Mayer, R., Davis, J., & Schoorman, D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709–734. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080335>
- Menard, A. (2016). Breastfeeding across the world: Celebrating mother's milk in Mongolia. *American Center for Mongolian Studies*. Retrieved from <https://www.mongoliacenter.org/breastfeeding-across-the-world-celebrating-mothers-milk-in-mongolia-aubrey-menarndt/>
- Meyanathan, S. D. (2013). *Portraits of change: Exploring the changing people, nature and economics of Mongolia*. (n.p.): Author.
- Mishra, R. K., & Raveendran, J. (2011). *Millennium development goals: The Indian journey*. New Dehli, India: Allied Publishers.
- Mongolian News Montsame. (2015, July 23). *A gap of wages between men and women is lowest in Mongolia* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEi8djMsizg>
- Morrison, A. M., White, R. P., & Van Velsor, E. (1992). *Breaking the glass ceiling: Can women reach the top of America's largest corporations?* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Mundia, C.N. & Iravo, M. (2014). Role of mentoring programs on the employee performance in organizations: A survey of public universities in Nyeri County, Kenya. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 4(8), 393–412. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v4-i8/1110>
- Murrell, K.L. (1997). Emergent theories of leadership for the next century: Towards relational concepts. *Organization Development Journal* 15(3), 35–42.
- Myadar, O. (2017). In the Soviet shadow. *Inner Asia*, 19(1), 5–28. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105018-12340077>
- Nikolić-Ristanović, V. (2004). Post-communism: Women's lives in transition. *Feminist Review* 76(1), 2–4. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400151>
- Noerper, S. (2007). Mongolia in 2006: Land of the rising khan. *Asian Survey*, 47(1), 74–79. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2007.47.1.74>
- Nomadic. (n.d). In *Merriam Webster Online*, Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nomadic>

- Northouse, P. G. (2013). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Oke, M. (2008). Remaking self after domestic violence: Mongolian and Australian women's narratives of recovery. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 29(3), 148–155. <https://doi.org/10.1375/anft.29.3.148>
- O'Leary, V.E. & Ickovics, J.R. (1995). Resilience and thriving in response to challenge: An opportunity for a paradigm shift in women's health. *Women's Health*, 1(2), 121–142.
- Oskenbay, M., Omarbekov, T., Habizhanova, G., & Galiya, I. (2016). Turkic genealogical traditions: New insights on the origins of Chinggis-qan. *Man in India*, 96(9), 3179–3199.
- Onon, U. (2011). *The secret history of the Mongols*. Mongolia: Publishing House “Bolor Sudar.”
- Oyunbileg, S., Sumberzul, N., Udval, N., Wang, J., & Janes, C. (2009). Prevalence and risk factors of domestic violence among Mongolian women. *Journal of Women's Health*, 18(11), 1873–1880. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2008.1226>
- Pappas, S. (2011, February 8). Mongol invasion of 1200 altered carbon dioxide levels. *Live Science*. Retrieved from <http://www.livescience.com/11739-wars-plagues-carbon-climate.html>
- Phillion, J. (2002). Becoming a narrative inquirer in a multicultural landscape. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 34(5), 535–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270110108204>
- Pinnegar, S., & Danes, J. G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 3–34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analyses. In A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5–23). Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 471–486. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800406297670>
- Pollert, A. (2003). Women, work and equal opportunities in post-Communist transition. *Work, Employment and Society* 17(2), 331–357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017003017002006>
- Porath, C., Spreitzer, G., Gibson, C., & Garnett, F. (2012). Thriving at work: Toward its measurement, construct validation, and theoretical refinement. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(2), 250–275. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.756>
- Porter, R. (2009). Realpolitik in Mongolia-US relations. *Ritsumeikan Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, 26(1), 49–63.

- Purevsuren, B. (n.d.). *Women's rights in Mongolia*. Retrieved from http://www.kfaw.or.jp/correspondents/docs/15-3_Mongolia_E.pdf
- Rosin, H. (2010, July/August). The end of men. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/the-end-of-men/308135/>
- Rossabi, M. (2005). *Modern Mongolia*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Rossabi, M. (2009). Mongolia: Transmogrification of a communist party. *Pacific Affairs*, 82(2), 231–250. <https://doi.org/10.5509/2009822231>
- Rossabi, M. (2011). *The Mongols and global history*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Rutter, M. (1990). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. In J. Rolf, A. S. Masten, D. Cicchetti, K. H. Nüchterlein, & S. Weintraub (Eds.), *Risk and protective factors in the development of psychopathology* (pp. 181–215). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Scandura, T. A., & Pellegrini, E. K. (2007). Workplace mentoring: Theoretical approaches and methodological issues. In T. D. Allen & L. T. Eby (Eds.), *The Blackwell handbook of mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach* (pp. 71–91). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Scanlon, K. (1997). Mentoring women administrators: Breaking through the glass ceiling. *Initiatives*, 58(2), 39–59.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The Sage dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Simpson, L. (2013, May/June). Politics based on justice, diplomacy based on love: What indigenous diplomatic traditions can teach us. *Briarpatch Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/politics-based-on-justice-diplomacy-based-on-love>
- Sium, A., & Ritskes, E. (2013). Speaking truth to power: Indigenous storytelling as an act of living resistance. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, 2(1), i–x. Retrieved from <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/download/19626/16256>
- Sneath, D. (2003). Lost in the post: Technologies of imagination, and the Soviet legacy in post-socialist Mongolia. *Inner Asia*, 5(1), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.1163/146481703793647352>
- Spence, D. P. (1982). *Narrative truth and historical truth*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Su, R., Tay, L. & Diener, E. (2014). The development and validation of the comprehensive inventory of thriving (CIT) and the brief inventory of thriving (BIT). *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 6, 251–279. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12027>

- Swift, J. (2014). Review of the book *Change in democratic Mongolia: Social relations, health, mobile pastoralism, and mining*, by J. Dierkes. *Nomadic Peoples*, 18(1), 152–155. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43124167>
- Thomson, A. (2014, August 19). Mongolia: A land of strong women. *Huffpost*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/augusta-thomson/mongolia-a-land-of-strong_b_5691799.html
- Trahar, S. (2009). Behind the story itself: Narrative inquiry and autoethnography in intercultural research in higher education. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-10.1.1218>
- Tsedevdamba, O. (2016). The secret driving force behind Mongolia's successful democracy. *Prism: A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations*, 6(1), 140–152.
- Tumursukh, U. (2001). Fighting over the reinterpretation of the Mongolian woman in Mongolia's post-socialist identity construction discourse. *East Asia*, 19(3), 119–146. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-001-0012-2>
- Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 654–676. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.007>
- Ulambayar, T., & Fernandez-Gimenez, M. (2013). Following the footsteps of the Mongol queens: Why Mongolian pastoral women should be empowered. *Society for Range Management*, 35(6), 29–35. <https://doi.org/10.2111/rangelands-d-13-00035.1>
- van Dierendonck, D. (2011). Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1228–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310380462>
- Weatherford, J. (2004). *Genghis Khan and the making of the modern world*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Weatherford, J. (2005, June 20). The women who ruled the Mongol empire. *The Globalist*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobalist.com/the-women-who-ruled-the-mongol-empire/>
- Weatherford, J. (2010). *The secret history of the Mongol queens: How the daughters of Genghis Khan rescued his empire*. New York, NY: Broadway.
- Weatherford, J. (2017). *Genghis Khan and the quest for God: How the world's greatest conqueror gave us religious freedom*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Weber-Pillwax, C. (1999). Indigenous research methodology: Exploratory discussion of an elusive subject. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 33(1), 31–45.
- Weinstein, J. A. (2010). *Social Change* (3rd ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Wilson, C. (2001). Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, (17), 31–45. Retrieved from https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj17/17_pages214_217.pdf
- Worden, R. L., Matles, A., & Savada, A. (Eds.). (1989). *Mongolia: A country study*. Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.
- World Bank. (2018). *Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)*. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Health topics: Indigenous populations*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/topics/health_services_indigenous/en/
- Yardley, A. (2008). Living stories: The role of the researcher in the narration of life. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 9(3), Art. 3. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs080337>

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Application Narrative

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Application Narrative

Project Purpose(s): (Up to 500 words) Describe: 1) the question or phenomenon you are investigating, 2) the project purpose, and 3) how the research will be disseminated or used.

The project purpose is to explore the experiences of Mongolian women leaders and learn what it is that promotes resilience and thriving in these individuals. Mongolia is a 28-year-old democracy, coming out of 300 years of Russian and Chinese occupations. Prior to this, they ruled a vast empire, an epic that began with their founder, Chinggis Khan. Women have played an integral role in the resilience of this country, a story that is just now being discovered by scholars. On behalf of my institution, Western Washington University (WWU), I had the opportunity to interview several women leaders across sectors over two summers. It is through this research, I became interested in how these women remain resilient through such difficult conditions. I would like to use this research from WWU as archival data to look for attributes and traits that have promoted resilience and thriving for these women leaders. The research will be used as a means for women in other countries, including the United States, to learn strategies to navigate difficult environments, people and systems.

Describe the proposed participants—age, number, sex, race, or other special characteristics. Describe criteria for inclusion and exclusion of participants. Please provide brief justification for these criteria. (Up to 500 words)

The participants were all Mongolian females, the youngest 21 years of age and the oldest was in their 60's. We interviewed 14 participants during the second trip, which is the group of archival data that I would like to explore for this study. It is the specific group I received permission to look at resilience and thriving from both universities, and I specifically identified and received permission from these participants to use the research as archival data for my

doctorate work as well. They were each identified by individuals in their communities as leaders in their fields. Men were excluded from the research, although we did meet with men in the country to learn more about Mongolia as the social context. Men were not interviewed for the research. The only women that wanted to be interviewed but were not interviewed was because of availability (they were travelling internationally, or unavailable during our time in Mongolia).

Describe how the participants are to be selected and recruited. (Up to 500 words)

We began the identification process through the American Center of Mongolian Studies, the organization on the ground that was supporting our logistics and scheduling. They began asking women they were connected with in their work, who they considered leaders in respective fields. This "snowball" inquiry continued until we had no more room in our calendar for interviews. Because we were seeking women across sectors, we were able to gain diversity of experience and age.

Describe the process you will follow to attain informed consent.

The study was narrative, so we used a set of questions in an interview setting with a translator present. Even though most of the women leaders we interviewed spoke English, we wanted to make sure there was nothing lost in translation (as much as we could control). The advantage of utilizing the second group of participants, is that we had the opportunity to make minor changes to the questions to make them more easily understood and culturally relevant. The second summer, I was able to meet with six of the women from the prior summer to validate the data from the 1st interview and ask additional questions exploring resilience and thriving.

Participants in research may be exposed to the possibility of harm physiological, psychological, and/or social please provide the following information: (Up to 500 words)

- a. *Identify and describe potential risks of harm to participants (including physical, emotional, financial, or social harm). NOTE: for international research or vulnerable populations, please provide information about local culture that will assist the review committee in evaluating potential risks to participants, particularly when the project raises issues related to power differentials. For international research provide information about the regulatory environment (for reference see the International Compilation of Human Research Standards <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/international/compilation-human-research-standards/index.html>).*

Because Mongolia is a fairly new democracy, their infrastructure, specifically in regard to politics and journalism is in its formative stages. Women have been known to be publicly slandered in the press and publicly harassed when they have spoken out about controversial issues. We were very aware of this going into the research process and took as many precautions as we could such as: having a private interview space (although some women chose other interviewing spaces), we had our translator also sign a confidentiality agreement, we were careful to never publicly discuss the interviews and never said the participants names, only referenced them by sector. In the data we have taken out identifying characteristics both specific to the individual and their affiliations.

- b. *Identify and describe the anticipated benefits of this research (including direct benefits to participants and to society-at-large or others)*

The women we interviewed were so open and willing to share their stories. They spoke time and time again about how they have centuries of learning to pull from, that is ingrained in their culture through stories, folk tales and songs. They were also really

happy that researchers from the United States were open to learning about their experiences and their country, these women leaders want their country to be seen and heard by the rest of the world. I believe there is so much we can learn from these women. While there seem to be many similarities, there are other significant differences between the experiences of Mongolian women leaders and women leaders in America. My hunch is that there is something different in the strategies Mongolian women leaders use to navigate turmoil.

- c. *Explain why you believe the risks are so outweighed by the benefits described above as to warrant asking participants to accept these risks. Include a discussion of why the research method you propose is superior to alternative methods that may entail less risk.*

Many of the women have talked about how they have already experienced backlash because of being outspoken. And while we definitely want to mitigate our contribution to this, the women we spoke to have strong support systems to counter backlash and ensure safety. The participants spoke at length about their communities and how much they rely on these people. When determining methodology, we chose narrative as it was more closely aligned with the Mongolian cultural experience. We recognize that it does increase risk as they are in person, sharing potentially sensitive information, and it is a form of communication they appreciate as storytelling is so ingrained in their culture. We asked the translator from the first summer if she thought we should have done a survey versus these interviews and she said absolutely not. Spending the time and energy to learn the stories of these women in person shows a level of respect that Mongolians deeply appreciate.

- d. *Explain fully how the rights and welfare of participants at risk will be protected (e.g., screening out particularly vulnerable participants, follow-up contact with participants, list of referrals, etc.) and what provisions will be made for the case of an adverse incident occurring during the study.*

We have been careful to be transparent that if at any point in time the participants do not want to be a part of the study, we will pull and destroy their data from the research. They appreciated hearing this and were adamant that they wanted their stories told. Physical evidence of their data is locked in a non-identifiable lock box. Everything written about the participants is not identifiable. The only adverse incident I can possibly think of occurring is if something specific to a participant was made public knowledge, and I think we have followed particular procedures to ensure identifying information does not leave the research team, including the translator.

Explain how participants' privacy is addressed by your proposed research. Specify any steps taken to safeguard the anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of their responses. Indicate what personal identifying information will be kept, and procedures for storage and ultimate disposal of personal information. Describe how you will de-identify the data or attach the signed confidentiality agreement on the attachments tab (scan, if necessary). (Up to 500 words)

In all written notes, there is no identifying information—only sector related information to differentiate from other participants. Anything that has personal information indicated has been locked away in the Karen W. Morse Leadership office at Western Washington University and will be disposed of by procedures and timeline indicated by the Institutional Research office at WWU. Once transcribed, all recordings will be deleted as well. We have taken great lengths to

de-identify information through the process, by even referring to the participants by sector in debriefs versus using their names.

Expedited Review is being requested as the research has already been reviewed and accepted through the IRB process at Western Washington University.

IRB Reviewer Comments: This application is approved with WSU as the IRB of record. Please notify Dr. Lisa Kreeger (Capella IRB Chair) should any additional approval letters from the WSU IRB as these become available.

Appendix B: Photo Permission

Appendix B: Photo Permission

May 8, 2019

To whom it may concern:

I give permission for Holly Diaz to use my photo(s) from Mongolia for inclusion in her dissertation. Any questions may be directed to me at the contact information listed above or below.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Stout, Ph.D.
Director, Karen W. Morse Institute for Leadership
Bowman Distinguished Professor of Leadership