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Diana M. Cooley

Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change

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THE INNER VOICE OF WOMEN'S SELF-LEADERSHIP

DIANA M. COOLEY

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership & Change Program
of Antioch University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

September, 2008

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

THE INNER VOICE OF WOMEN'S SELF-LEADERSHIP

prepared by

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is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Change.

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I never realized when I first stepped foot on a university campus how my educational journey would change my life. My world opened before my very eyes and there were many people who influenced me and challenged me along the way. I did not begin this doctoral program by myself nor did I complete this dissertation by myself. There are many individuals who have enabled me to complete this journey to which I am deeply grateful.

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ABSTRACT

My research explores an aspect of leadership that is personal, which is the inner voice of self-leadership. The inner voice affects all aspects of leadership. The inner voice is highly personal in that one's private thoughts are unique. The inner voice can increase one's self-awareness and influence one to move forward and change or to pull one back to stand still. My thesis is that we can more fully understand how women leaders lead themselves and subsequently lead in society if we advance our understanding of their stories and experiences regarding the inner voice. This research improves our understanding of women's experiences listening to their inner voices and how this listening allows them to become leaders of themselves and move beyond challenges in order to transform their lives and potentially the lives of those around them. For the purpose of this dissertation, I define the inner voice as an awareness of self that comes from the interaction with, and internalization of, the influences of others and the environment. The inner voice is a complex phenomenon that involves one's internal thought processes that ultimately influence how one sees the world, acts and reacts to events and circumstances outside of the self. My study is composed of five narratives. My participants range in age from 54 to 65 years of age. They are women who were influenced by their mothers, significant others and specific events that created challenges, tested their character and required them to listen to their inner voices in order make tough choices about the direction of their lives and subsequent leadership initiatives. Their stories, along with my autoethnography, provide a portal to understand the importance of the inner voice and its association to self-leadership. The interpretive essay in Chapter 6 takes into consideration my thesis in light of themes which emerged from the literature, the results of my interviews with participants and my autoethnography.

This study fills an important gap in the leadership literature. Because current literature focuses primarily on the characteristics and traits of a leader, it does not address the importance of leading the self and how self-leadership is affected by the inner voice. The stories of the participants bring attention to the voices of women, how they lead themselves, and how their self-leadership influences others through the decisions and actions they take. This electronic version of this dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd.

THE INNER VOICE OF WOMEN’S SELF-LEADERSHIP

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction	1
Purpose of Study and Formal Research Question	6
Literature Disparity	6
Scope, Limitations and Criteria for Evaluation	8
Contents of Dissertation	10
CHAPTER TWO	12
Introduction – Literature Review	12
The Self: Social Psychology Perspective	15
The Self: Women’s Study Perspective	19
The Self: Narrative Psychology Perspective	22
The Self: Self-Psychology Perspective	23
Inner Voice	26
Self-Leadership	32
Female Leadership	34
Table: Models of Masculine and Feminine Leadership	38
Summary	40
CHAPTER THREE	41
Introduction – Methodology	41
Narrative Inquiry Literature	41
Qualitative Methods Approach	44
Purposeful Sampling	46
Inquiry Process	47
Criteria Evaluation Process	49
Ethical Issues	52
Summary	55
CHAPTER FOUR	57
Autoethnography	57
CHAPTER FIVE	68
Introduction to Narratives	68
Martha	72

Francis	79
Josey	88
Elizabeth	96
Mary	104
Summary	113
CHAPTER SIX	115
Interpretative Essay Introduction	115
The Inner Voice	117
Influences: People and Events	123
Achievements and Obstacles	128
Self-Leadership and Women’s Leadership	130
Summary	133
CHAPTER SEVEN	136
Introduction to Discussion	136
Implications Regarding Leadership and Change	138
Implications for Leadership Practice	140
Implications for My Leadership	140
Limitations and Implications for Future Research	142
REFERENCES	144
APPENDIX	156
Appendix A: Interview Questions	157
Appendix B: Interview Consent Form	158

List of Tables

Table 2:1 Models of Masculine and Feminine Leadership

Introduction

We are what we think.
All that we are arises with our thoughts.
With our thoughts we make the world.
Buddha

Ever since I was a little girl I can remember talking to myself out loud. My dolls and I, whether they were paper dolls or Barbie dolls, carried on rich conversations regarding clothes, hair, boys and the future. Together we made up our own world of how things should be; we could do anything. We saw the world through the innocence of childhood. I was told quite often to stop talking to myself. My self-talk became silent to others' ears. Safety from "being silenced" was guaranteed if no one could hear me. Childhood innocence fades and we begin to see the world through our new eyes as maturing adults and through the eyes of society. But the process of growth does not eliminate the self-talk. Our self-talk is a constant companion which influences our actions, our behaviors and allows us make sense out of our world.

The concept of self-talk meant very little to me as a child except as something to hide. Little did I realize how one's self-talk developed and how much influence it has on how one sees one's self in the world. I also did not know that self-talk can project one forward or how the self-talk can pull one back from achieving. I was not aware that our self-talk is a large part of our thought process. It is also one's own personal voice. It wasn't until I was an undergraduate student in the Communication Department at Western Michigan University that I encountered the term "intrapersonal communication." I was intrigued by a research article written by Larry Barker and Gordon Wiseman (1966) in which they focused on what communication theorists found difficult to investigate: self-talk. They created a model of intrapersonal communication and established a set of postulates its process. Intrapersonal communication, according to

Roberts, Edwards, and Barker (1987) is “all of the physiological and psychological processing of messages that happens within individuals at conscious and non-conscious levels as they attempt to understand themselves and their environment” (p. 2).

All human have a self-communication system in which they think and reflect on events they encounter every day. This process is best understood when it is related to interpersonal communication. Barker and Wiseman (1966) believe that “intrapersonal communication is the foundation upon which interpersonal communication is based, but intrapersonal communication may also occur independently” (p. 173). I view the inner voice as an awareness of self that comes from the interaction with, and internalization of, the influences of others and the environment. The inner voice is a complex phenomenon that involves one’s internal thought processes that ultimately influence how one sees the world, acts and reacts to events and circumstances outside of the self. Even though one’s cognitive image is constantly being updated and influenced, it is the past versions that influence the present and the future (Roberts et al., 1987).

It was this research article and Barker and Wiseman’s (1966) explanation of self-talk that sent me on a journey to learn all that I could about self-talk and how it influences our thoughts, our everyday actions, our relationships, and our view of the world. Research on this subject comes not only from the field of communication but from other disciplines such as business, psychology, neurology, education, and sociology.

In all these disciplines, it is understood that our inner voice shapes our world (Barker & Wiseman, 1966; Eccles, 1973; Fodor, Bever & Garrett, 1974; Manz, 1983; Manz & Neck, 1999; Roberts et al., 1987; Wolman, 1973). Our inner voice allows us to see our world as good, bad or somewhere in-between. Researchers agree that our inner voice shapes our thoughts and feelings;

and for that reason the inner voice has a major role in self-regulation. It plays a role in problem solving and planning. The inner voice is with us from the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed at night and it is with us especially in our dreams.

As a college instructor of courses in communication, I address the concept of self-talk with my students. I take pleasure in asking my students, “How many of you talk to yourselves?” As my students squirm in their seats and look out the corners of their eyes to see if others are raising their hands, very few want to answer. It isn’t until I tell them that every single one of us talks to ourselves daily that the tension level goes down. I inform them of the importance of self-talk in our daily lives and the influence it has on what we want to do and accomplish in our lives. I explain to them that our interactions with our families or our caretakers at a very early age laid the foundation of our self-talk. I stress the importance because what these people say about us greatly determines our inner voice and how we see the world. I believe that external influences have a major impact on our personal growth; these external influences, to some extent, create our inner voice. What we say to ourselves determines what we will or will not accomplish in our lives. I emphasize what Saral (1983) believes to be a major influence regarding intrapersonal communication:

The external structures that we perceive, cognize, and communicate to others are mere reflections or manifestations of our inner structures. In order for one to bring about any change in external structures, one need not go out and attempt to influence, manipulate, or change others. All one needs to be doing is to facilitate an ongoing process of intrapersonal communication. As one begins to acknowledge and communicate with different parts and/or selves of oneself, the external structure begins to dissolve and reform into different patterns of relationship reflecting the existing status of one's internal structures. This highlights the critical need and value of one's ongoing communication with oneself (intrapersonal communication). (p. 55)

I remind my students that we all have faced situations in which we have questioned ourselves and we have looked outside ourselves for validation; we often choose to listen to the

voices of others instead of our own personal voice, to listen to our own self-talk. I share with them that at one point in my life, I realized that my own self-talk was being directed by the voices of people in authority of my past. I believed what others told me over and over again. For example, I was told that I could not achieve and that I would not achieve. It wasn't until I started learning more and reflecting about the concept of self-talk that I realized how it applied to me. I was the one who created my world and I became more determined to recreate it more positively. McMaster (1999) believes that "having more information allows us to learn from ourselves without needing others to tell us whether we are right or wrong" (p. 9). It is this type of belief in one's self that comes from our intrapersonal awareness.

It is no surprise as I sit here in the middle of writing a dissertation for my Ph.D. program in Leadership and Change at Antioch University that these concepts of self-talk and of the inner voice take center stage. This concept that has intrigued me since I ran across the research article by Barker and Wiseman beckons me again. My coursework in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch opened doors for me to begin a great journey. Each major project influenced me and allowed me to travel down a road that in the end would connect me to the topic for which I had such passion. Even though the concept of self-talk was intriguing, I was challenged with connecting that concept to the concepts of leadership and change. It wasn't until I read a book by Astin and Leland (1991) *Women of Influence, Women of Vision* that I recognized a connection.

Astin and Leland's (1991) descriptive study identified three generations of women who contributed significantly to the women's movement and to social change: the predecessors, who were 71+ years old at the time of the study, dealt with the Great Depression and World War II; the instigators, 55 to 65 years old, dealt with Civil Rights and the anti-Vietnam War era; and the inheritors are the women who were in their mid-forties, who delayed their educations and chose

to marry and raise their families. Astin and Leland's framework for their study was the women's movement, they focused on the historical and social aspect of the movement. They gave considerable attention to the commentaries of these women and what influenced them to do what they did. Their participants spoke of being influenced by family members, mentors, and events and they also spoke about being immobilized by an event or person.

As I read the remarkable accounts of these women, I questioned what they were thinking. What were their inner voices saying in order to move them forward? According to Whitman (1998) the inner voice can be compared to one's moral compass, which can give one a sense of direction and it can give one a sense of what is right or wrong. Our lives are influenced by people and events. These women used their inner voices as a tool to explore and navigate through uncharted waters. They led themselves with the desire to transform the self and to transform the condition of the society that surrounded them.

By listening to the inner voice one has options one can take during challenging times. One can reflect and move forward, or one can reflect and stand still. Through my studies in my Ph.D. program I discovered and come to understand the connection between the inner voice and self-leadership. Leadership goes beyond basic characteristics, traits and styles. Leadership in its truest form is self-leadership and this is what transforms the self in times of change. We need to lead ourselves first before we can lead others. It is the inner voice that influences us to lead ourselves in the direction we wish to go.

Having a goal, a vision, and a dream is the beginning of leading the self. Manz (1983) believes that in order to be a leader of others in life, one must be a leader of him or herself first. Self-leadership begins by listening to one's voice; it is a process of self-influence. Leadership is

not just an outward process but a process that is influenced inwardly by past events that played a major role in shaping one's life (Manz, 1983).

Purpose of this Study and Formal Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the issue of the inner voice and its influence on women's self-leadership. My thesis is that we can more fully comprehend how women leaders lead themselves and lead in society if we identify with their stories and experiences regarding their inner voices. Since challenges often create special meaning for women, I question what influences women to move forward during challenging times? What causes them to stand still or to be silent? Is it faith or motivation that keeps them moving? Is it what some call the "internal compass" or "personal navigator" that guides them through the unfamiliar waters? Or is it what some people call the "inner voice," the voice that is one's constant companion in life, a voice that can be gentle and nurturing at times but demanding and demeaning at other times.

Literature Disparity

After reviewing the literature on leadership and change, I found a plethora of information on the types, characteristics, and traits of leadership. Bennis and Nanus (1985) conclude that:

Decades of academic analysis have given us more than 350 definitions of leadership. Literally thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last 75 years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders and, perhaps more importantly, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders. (p. 4)

The definitions and the investigations of leaders and their styles offer a broad foundation for what a leader should be and what a leader should do. However, there is much disparity in the leadership literature. According to feminist critics Acker (1990, 1998), Calas and Smircich (1992) and Martin (1990, 1994) the literature implies that people in leadership positions are usually male. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) believe one of the reasons for this disparity is that "men have long held these roles; they have defined the styles to which people have

become accustomed” (p. 872). Even though society has grown accustomed to this prevailing mindset, it is imperative to remember that influence is a major concept in leadership. Gardner and Laskin (1995) believe that leaders are “individuals who significantly influence the thoughts, behaviors, and/or feelings of others” (p. 6).

The ability to influence others is a core attribute in leaders (Carli, 2001) and it is influence that shapes the inner voice. The leadership literature lacks information on the concept of inner voice and how the inner voice is a guiding force in self-leadership. This self-knowledge is a prerequisite for leadership. Ambrose (1995) states that “to transform our organizations, our communities, or our lives, we must first transform ourselves. Leadership development, then, becomes a process of self-reflection aimed at personal growth: a journey inward” (p. 25). Clearly, leadership does not start when a person takes courses in a leadership program at a university, nor does it start when a person is given the title of leader of an organization or an institution. In reality, leadership starts from within. Knowing the self and how the self is influenced is part of the feminist perspective (Ambrose, 1995; Erkut, 2001) and according to Denmark (1993) it is the competent self that has the ability to see beyond the obstacles and see possibilities.

Throughout history, many brilliant women were told they could not do something but that did not stop them. Abigail Adams, Harriet Tubman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Septima Clark, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, Sandra Day O’Conner and Sally Ride and others led themselves in the direction they wanted to go. They were all influenced by an event or a person who influenced or inspired them. In order to see the true essence of leadership, it is important to see the connection between the inner voice, a woman’s self-leadership and how her inner voice allows her to move through change and move beyond obstacles that either society or an

individual places on her. Undoubtedly, “women can empower other women” (Denmark, 1993, p. 355) and it is through influence that change takes place. Change has the potential to transform one’s life.

Scope, Limitations and Criteria for Evaluation

The purpose of this study is to gather rich narrative regarding the phenomena of the inner voice and how it influences women’s self leadership. By collecting information from a series of in-depth interviews from a group of White, middle-class women who range in age from 53 to 67, I have limited the scope of this research. My reasoning behind choosing this group of participants is an attempt to understand the women with whom I interact with on a daily basis both at work and on a personal level. My participants grew up during a time when the culture was changing drastically. They saw the challenges their mothers faced and their mothers’ actions, in some way, influenced them. My participants come from the fields of education, psychology, nursing, and private business. My goal for this study is to simply describe, not to evaluate or analyze. It is to improve our understanding about women’s experiences that allow them to lead themselves. These narratives will increase our understanding about women’s self-leadership and how listening to their inner voice allows them to move beyond challenges, in order to transform her life and potentially the lives of those around her.

I defined several limitations to this research after conducting a pilot study. In the pilot, my general research questions focused on events and did not look specifically at how the inner voice was influenced by significant individuals in the woman’s life at an early age. Consequently, I redefined the language of my questions. By doing so I hoped to gain information that would highlight the influences of significant others in a woman’s life. The pilot study uncovered the importance of defining statements or words in order to assist the participant in effectively communicating her response. Additional limitations to this research focus on evaluation and interpretation of data

collected. Evaluation, interpretation, vulnerability, risk and identity (Wilson, 2002) are all fundamental issues facing the researcher and the participants. All of these issues require careful consideration and reflection since the researcher is representing the voice and identity of others. This concern is discussed and described further in Chapter Three. These issues are challenging; however, as a researcher I am the primary instrument for these women to tell their stories and I am confident that these issues will not overshadow my research. It is through the development of the relationship between the researcher and the participants that one can learn and grow.

It is my goal to create a narrative in this dissertation that will help construct social reality regarding the inner voice and the influence it has on women's self-leadership, as well as to create a framework that draws the reader into the text. As with all constructive approaches to research, there is an assumption of multiple realities. My participants have a certain way of viewing and talking about segments of their life story and I in turn interpret their story. Therefore, in order for me to fully understand the importance of my work, it is necessary to have a reflective awareness of the language, of the areas explored, and a style to convey an understanding in writing. Atkinson (1990) believes that critical awareness will allow ethnographers to find ways in which their writings can benefit the field and benefit humans in understanding their reality.

I hope that this research would be rigorously evaluated based on those criteria specific to narrative inquiry such as width, coherence, insightfulness and parsimony (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Since I am interpreting the lived experiences of my participants, I want to be evaluated on the trustworthiness of my interpretations. According to Guba (1981), this involves confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability. Other important criteria are authority and authenticity (Schwandt, 2007).

Contents of this Dissertation

Chapter One provides information on my background as the researcher. It describes how I am position myself on the topic of the inner voice of women regarding self-leadership, and states the purpose of my study and my proposed thesis. Additionally, I identify the disparity in the literature, the value of this study, and the criteria for the evaluation of this study. I also provide a summary of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature from several disciplines regarding the inner voice. The concept of the inner voice (intrapersonal communication) not only comes from the field of communication but crosses over into many disciplines such as management, counseling psychology, sports psychology, education and business. I review the literature on the development of the self to see how the inner voice is created and nurtured. Also, in order to connect the inner voice and leadership, the literature review will focus on adaptive change, transformational leadership and self-leadership.

Chapter Three establishes the use of narrative inquiry as the selected methodology for this research. Narrative inquiry provides an understanding of human life and allows the reader to see the world through a different lens. It also allows access into the lives of others. It is through narrative inquiry that one is able to study the phenomena of life events and record those events. According to Schwandt (2007) narrative inquiry is the study of “the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences” and “includes examination of the methodology and aim of research in the form of personal narrative and autoethnography” (p. 171).

Chapter Four presents an autoethnography in order to invite the reader into my lived experience and how the inner voice affected my life. The main purpose is not to analyze or interpret but to understand the influence of the inner voice.

Chapter Five reveals the narratives from the interviews of my participants.

Chapter Six offers an interpretive essay in a literary style, which is in accord with narrative inquiry. In this section I will consider my thesis in light of themes emerging from the literature, the results from my interviews with participants and my autoethnography.

Chapter Seven provides an elaborated discussion of this work. I will consider the implications regarding leadership and change by relating it to the inner voice. Additionally, I contemplate the implications this work has on my own leadership, and I have considered the scope and limitations of this study and the possibilities for future research.

Review of the Literature

An idea that is developed and put into action is more important
than an idea that exists only as an idea.

Buddha

The phenomenon of the inner voice has captured the thoughts of philosophers like Plato, as well as literary writers, playwrights, novelists, cartoon artists, and American pop television producers. Even in our everyday language, according to Hikins (1989) we use many phrases that relate to the inner voice such as: “read silently to yourself,” “you may be right, but I’ll have to stop and think about it,” “so I stopped and said to myself,” “a penny for your thoughts” and “your conscience will tell you what is right.” It is clear that the inner voice is real, natural and powerful (Cunningham, 1985) and entails much more than talking to ourselves. Many of its major activities described by Pearson and Nelson (1985) involve the process of

...internal problem solving, resolution of internal conflict, planning for the future, emotional catharsis, evaluations of ourselves and others, and the relationships between ourselves and others. Intrapersonal communication involves only the self, and it must be clearly understood by the self because it constitutes the basis for all other communication. (p. 12)

All forms of communication including verbal, nonverbal, intercultural, business, or mass communication, not only serve the individual but also serve society (Fletcher, 1999). It is through communication that one influences and is influenced. The influence from another human being or from an external event becomes a catalyst for present and future behavior. Every event and every interaction is linked to the self. “Everything is measured, evaluated, rated, and so on, in terms of our own unique set of standards” (Roberts et al., p. 3). We all talk to ourselves, and our inner voice is capable of influencing and determining the direction and the quality of our lives. Since the inner voice is quite complex, it is important to understand the process of the inner voice and how the inner voice develops and the influence it has on the self.

This is a study of how a woman's inner voice influences her self-leadership. This research reveals how five women from various fields listened to their inner voices and led themselves beyond challenges and transformed their lives. In order to see the complexities of the inner voice and how the inner voice influences women's self-leadership, I conducted a literature review examining a myriad of concepts and theories related to the topic of the inner voice and the influence it has on women's self-leadership. The review examines four specific areas of scholarship:

1. Since the information regarding human development is interdisciplinary, this literature review presents several perspectives that focus on the different domains of human development and how the self is influenced. The literature relevant to this study will focus on:
 - a. **Social Psychology:** the body of knowledge from this field covers decades of relevant and useful information. It would be impossible to cover all the theoretical perspectives regarding the development of the self. However, for the purpose of this review I will highlight the four basic principles of human development which are accepted by many researchers regardless of their field. Additionally, I will give a theoretical review of the researchers who have explicitly focused on the development of the self and the importance that influence plays regarding the development of self. The seminal works that will be discussed are Cooley's (1902) Looking Glass Theory; Festinger (1954) Social Comparison Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1963, 2001). These theories describe and define the self in relation to others and

emphasize the influence events and people have on the development of the self.

- b. Narrative Psychology: a model for human thought and action. Story becomes a vehicle in which the self is developed both by stories told and received. The narrative perspective covers scholarship from Sarbin (1986) and Bruner (1986).
 - c. Women's psychology: since this is a study of women, it is important to look at the scholarship regarding women's development of self and understand that the self is rooted in connection and relatedness rather than separation and autonomy. The feminist perspective on the self and how it develops covers scholarship from Gilligan (1982); Miller (1976, 1984) and Surrey (1985).
 - d. Self-psychology: Kohut in 1971 focused on the needs of the individual and satisfaction. An individual's sense of self involves feelings, thoughts, sensations and one's attitudes toward oneself and the world (Kohut, 1971, 1977, 1984).
2. The review of the literature regarding the inner voice provides background information into a process that is studied across several disciplines. This literature will reveal the multi-level process which is basis of all other forms of communication. The inner voice is influenced by individuals and events, and in turn, influences one's behavior and future events (Roberts et al., 1987).
 3. The review of self-leadership literature. The theory of self-leadership developed by Manz (1983) covers the major tenets of a theory that is governed by influence, not only by others but by the self and how the inner voice influences the self.

4. The review of general female leadership theory, however brief, uncovers the differences between male and female leadership styles. Researchers in the field of female leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992; Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995; Erkut & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1990) discuss the strengths of women in leadership positions and the value of relationships in leading people.

The Self: The Social Psychology Perspective

The beginning of the 20th century was a watershed for the development of concepts and theories related to the development of the self. Knowledge of the self is essential when connecting to others. This knowledge of who we are and why we are here permits one to see the importance of one's values, beliefs, and attitudes and the influence others have on our development. Researchers have synthesized and drawn distinct conclusions as to how the self is shaped and influenced, and they agree that the self does not exist at birth (Rosenblith, 1992). The self defined by Horney (1950) is the "central inner force, common to all humans beings and yet unique in each, which is the deep source of growth" (p. 17). On the other hand, Surrey (1985) gives a working definition of the self, which is "a construct useful in describing the organization of a person's experience and construction of reality which illuminates the purpose and directionality of her/his behavior" (p.1). We come into the world without identity; it is through our interactions with our significant caretakers and others that the self is formed.

Many theorists and developmentalists agree on four basic principles regarding human development (Poole, Warren, and Nunez, 2007):

1. One's development is the joint product of nature and nurture. According to this age-old controversy, the development of self is either influenced by one's

hereditary information (nature) or by one's physical and social world (nurture). Many scholars "find it impossible to separate these influences" (Poole et al., 2007). One may come to believe that early negative experiences influence future thoughts, feelings and behaviors and the negative influence cannot be fully overcome (Bowlby, 1980; Johnson, 2000; Sroufe, Egeland & Kreutzer, 1990). On the other hand, several researchers (Greenspan & Shanker, 2004; Masten & Reed, 2002; Nelson, 2002; Werner & Smith, 2001) emphasize that change is possible if a positive experience supports it.

2. One's physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development are interrelated. It is impossible to categorize one's physical, cognitive and socioemotional development into separate stages. Each stage is interrelated; the self is a whole entity, not parts, and it is that whole which is influenced by people, events, and the environment.
3. One's developmental outcomes change over time and contexts. It is apparent that what influences one's feelings, thoughts or behaviors relates to what one will do later in life.
4. One's development is characterized by continuity and discontinuity. The development of self does not take place in a nice, neat, orderly fashion. We are connected to our caretakers and at other times we are disconnected from them. The events that take place when one is younger have a significant influence on the way one thinks, feels and behaves. We are not only influenced by our caretakers and events when we are younger, but we are also influenced by an evolving worldview and by our history and so the self continues to form and develop as

one ages. All of the interaction between significant others give rise to how the self sees the world and his or her connection to the world “in relation to individuals and groups whose opinions are valued” (Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006, p. 151).

No single theory or concept can explain every aspect of human development. Many good theories have advanced our knowledge of how the self is formed and is influenced. The research process can be regarded as an ongoing cycle, and contemporary theories and concepts are built on classic research developed decades ago. It is these theories that offer a foundation to expand the views regarding the development of the self. I would like to focus on three of those classic theories.

Charles Cooley in 1902 theorized that the self is influenced by what others think and say about us. We basically see ourselves through a figurative looking glass. According to the Looking Glass Theory, Cooley (1902) linked individuals, the world in which they live and how they respond to the world. Cooley gave considerable attention to emotions and feelings in regard to the development of the self and how they helped to determine a point of view of interaction with others. The self changes from birth to death due to how people respond to us in our everyday interactions. Additionally, Yeung, and Martin (2003) contend “that the social self is not simply an impressible self: given time, people can create trajectories for themselves that may shape how they are seen by others, which we can consider a process of externalization” (p. 846).

Cooley (1902) believed that the self is shaped by the anticipated and observed responses of others. He maintains that “in the presence of one whom we feel to be of importance there is a tendency to enter into and adopt, by sympathy, his judgment of ourself” (p. 206). Cooley emphasized the influence of others and the importance of social groups and society in the

development of the self. It is from the recognition of the self that the self-concept is shaped. The self-concept becomes the subjective description of who the person is.

Festinger (1954) recognized social comparison as the process in which one compares one's self to others who are similar – this comparison becomes a measurement of worth. An individual can see him or herself as superior or inferior, attractive or ugly, intelligent or stupid. Mettee and Smith (1977) state this theory is about “our quest to know ourselves, about the search for self-relevant information and how people gain self-knowledge and discover reality about themselves” (p. 69). Fulfillment not only comes from obtaining objective information but from comparing oneself to others (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). This theory can be very deterministic (Adler, Rosenfeld & Towne, 1995) since it can permit the self to be influenced by others as well as shaped by how one measures up to others. Over the decades, the social comparison theory has undergone revisions and extensions, but its main concepts remain intact (Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990). Festinger (1954) believed when there was an absence of impartial standard; the self would evaluate one's own ability by believing how others regard him or her.

The Social Learning Theory emerged in 1963. This theory was instrumental in describing how one is influenced and how one learns through observation. According to Bandura (1977):

...most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling; from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (p. 22)

This learning not only takes place in controlled settings like educational facilities and work arenas but also within interpersonal relationships. As the self develops, it becomes quite aware of others' responses to a specific event, feeling or behavior. One learns by watching and listening to others. One begins to engage in self-praise or self-blame, one begins to evaluate the worth of his or her actions. Bandura revised his theory in 2001; the focus of his revision lies in thinking rather

than learning. The social learning approach is now the social-cognitive approach in which the self develops personal standards for “behavior and a sense for self-efficacy – the belief that [one’s] own abilities and characteristics will help them succeed” (Berk, 2007, p. 18). Therefore, thinking will guide one’s responses in a particular situation. Humans are thinkers and their thoughts determine their behavior (Bandura, 2001). It is important to emphasize that one can “think” either positively or negatively, and one’s thinking has been influenced by people or events.

The four basic principles of human development as well as Cooley’s Looking Glass Theory, Festinger’s Social Comparison Theory and Bandura’s Social Learning Theory provide insight into how the self is developed and how the self is influenced. Our interactions with others, our observations of others and our connectedness to others determines how we see our world. The self is constantly being cultivated. It is through the process of interaction that one defines the self, and it is through this characterization that determines how one thinks, feels and interacts with others (Cross, Gore & Morris, 2003). One can view the contemporary and classic research on the self and state that the self is an independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) or one can move beyond that concept and state that one is an interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The self needs others in its life.

The Self: Women’s Studies Perspective

Many of the early theories in psychology regarding the development of self implicitly carry a male perspective. These theorists of human development believe that the stages of developing an identity (the self) come from interaction but move towards independence (Surrey, 1985). What these theories neglect are the aspects of female self-development which focus on the development related to emotional bonds and connectedness. Gilligan (1982) believes that

researchers in the field of psychology adopted the “male life as the norm, they have tried to fashion women out of a masculine cloth” (p. 6). Miller (1976) and Gilligan (1982) contend that there are major gender differences in the theories regarding the development of self. When researching the self, one finds that male development entails an emphatic individuation, whereas female development entails identity formation in a context of ongoing relationships (Gilligan, 1982). Yes, women do move towards independence, but their sense of self “becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliation and relationships” (Miller, 1976, p. 83).

The primary concept in regards to women’s development of self lies in the context of important relationships and the influence relationships have on the self. This reality moves away from the assumptions that one needs to separate from others in order to have a strong sense of self. Women’s propensity to form strong emotional bonds from infancy to adulthood is overshadowed by emphasizing separateness and independence. When the focus of the self is on separateness and independence, one becomes self-contained (Guisinger & Blatt, 1994). This form of alternative realities and multiple perspectives regarding the self have developed over the decades. The feminist perspective has given rise to a new understanding and a renewed appreciation for the development of the self. This feminist perspective has “produced some major upheavals in the field of psychology” (Worell & Etaugh, 1994, p. 443) but this new perspective gives one the opportunity to see through a lens that includes women and men.

In order to fully understand human development, it is necessary to look at the experiences of both genders. It is important to embrace these differences because women do not disconnect when the self develops, and women continue to be influenced by their connectedness to others as they grow. Gilligan (1982) believes that this leads to an enlarged concept of the self and to a

greater understanding of morality. When creating a model that fits the experiences of women and how the female self develops, Surrey (1985) summarized the basic concepts of that model as:

1) an interest in, and attention to, the other person(s) which form the base for the emotional connection and the ability to empathize with the other(s); 2) the expectation of a mutual empathic process where the sharing of experience leads to a heightened development of self and other; and 3) the expectation of interaction and relationship as a process of mutual sensitivity and mutual responsibility which provides the stimulus for the growth of empowerment and self-knowledge. (p. 8)

It is important to emphasize that the concepts in Surry's model (1985) proposes a two-way interaction with significant attention given to understanding and being understood. The ability to understand leads one to empowerment which is essential for one's growth and development. Women are influenced and taught to socialize, nurture and maintain relationships; therefore, women view themselves as connected to others (Cross et al., 2003). It is through connectedness and belonging that the self is also formed. Surrey (1985) supports the concept that connectedness is a major component in the development of the self and she states that "other aspects of self-development emerge in the context of relationship, and there is no inherent need to disconnect or to sacrifice relationship for self-development" (p. 2).

Brewer and Gardner (1996) state that "the idea of connectedness and belonging are not merely affiliations or alliances between the self and others but entail fundamental differences in the way the self is construed" (p. 93). Women in Western culture, according to Cross et al. (2003), "are more likely than men to define themselves in terms of close relationships, and that this self-construal will affect the self's function in many domains" (p. 399). The relationships women carry out with others are linked to the self. Their relationships carry significant importance to each individual and how she views the world (Andersen & Chen, 2002). The interaction and continuity of their relationships over time bring about a sense of whole; this wholeness gives meaning to the self and influences how she sees herself in the world. The

pathway to relational development fosters a strong desire for mutual growth and commitment which in turns influences the self and how the self interacts with others.

Independence and autonomy are vital in human development for men and women, but equally important to the development of the self is the linkage between self and others which is the relational self. This concept of relational self, according to Surrey (1985) is “the core self-structure in women” (p. 1). It is a woman’s way of knowing. Chen et al. (2006) state:

When a relational self is activated, a person not only conceives of and evaluates himself or herself as the self he or she is when relating to the relevant significant other(s) but also exhibits associated affective, motivational, self-regulatory, and behavioral responses. (p. 154)

The Self: Narrative Psychology Perspective

The self is a continuous entity and is formed and influenced by events, people and places. Barresi and Juckes (1997) state that “we experience ourselves and our lives as having an ongoing storylike structure, the meaning of which constantly transforms itself, often becoming more apparent to us through time” (p. 694). The stories we tell and the stories that others tell us become our subjective awareness. Intertwined throughout these stories are the influences that have created the self and it is the influence of others that can help to transform the self. Narrative not only permits one to shape and speak about what is taking place in life but at the same time narrative permits us to view oneself on multiple levels.

Many will say that narrative psychology is a subfield of psychology; however, it is a viewpoint within the psychology arena that looks at the “storied nature of human conduct” (Sarbin, 1986). Theorists believe that narrative is very useful, if not indispensable, when it comes to understanding and knowing the self (Sarbin, 1990). Since the self is not constructed individually but in collaboration with others, the narrative is the principal pathway to understanding the self. Nelson (2000) contends that one’s story has been construed since early

childhood and one's identity, attitudes and emotions become one's subjective awareness of the self. Bruner (1990) believes that humans are born to tell stories to one another and it is through stories that one gets to know the self.

Children learn to tell stories at a very early age and continue to tell stories about people and events well into adulthood (Sarbin, 1990). It is through the telling of story that "they gain a sense of continuity and discontinuity" (Nelson, 2000, p. 192). It is through the telling of stories that one learns about the self and one has the ability to change. One's concept of the self is summarized in stories—stories told to the individual and stories told by the individual allow the self to develop and provide an understanding of the influences people and events have on one's life.

The self-understanding that derives from constructing and listening to stories does not always bring a complete understanding of life's events or dilemmas. They can, however, "illuminate life as we know it by raising challenging questions and exploring them from multiple angles" (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 23).

The Self: Self Psychology Perspective

Kohut's (1971, 1977, 1984) theory regarding the development of self consists of two major components: a developmental model and a model used for clinical consultation and therapy. These comprehensive models provide an insight into the development of the self which is not a concept of the mind which can be traced to relations with others but that it is a "supraordinate" construct which is completely whole and experiences continuity in time and space (Kohut, 1974).

For the purpose of this research, I focus on the developmental model component. At the very center of this theory on self is "a mental system that organizes a person's subjective

experience in relation to a set of developmental needs” (Banai, Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005, p. 224). Kohut (1977) called those needs “selfobject” needs, since one requires them in order to sustain the self. These selfobject needs are satisfied (or not) by external figures in one’s life such as parents, significant others and friends. The satisfaction of one’s needs begins in childhood and extends throughout life. Since the self is viewed as a system that consists of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes towards one's self and others, its development is a major psychological force that can explain how one develops a healthy, well-rounded self. Kohut (1977) states that:

A person experiences himself as a cohesive, harmonious unit in space and time which is connected with its past and directed toward a creative and productive future, only if he has the experience at every stage of his life that certain representatives of his human environment react enthusiastically to him....(p. 84)

In order to mature into a healthy cohesive individual, Kohut (1977) theorized that one needs to develop along the following three axes:

1. The grandiosity axis which requires one to have the ability to have ambition and partake in meaningful tasks and includes a sense of positive regard toward self and others.
2. The idealization axis requires one to have the ability to create and maintain a strong set of goals that involves one’s values and one’s ability to communicate those goals and values with others.
3. The alter ego-connectedness axis requires one to grow and become part of a larger community, group or organization. This connectedness permits one to have a sense of belonging and the opportunity to have one’s goals and ideals understood and accepted by others.

This theory is considered one of the major psychoanalytic theories regarding the development of the self. It emphasizes the importance of connectedness, influence and the ability

to have goals that move one forward in life. The development of the self along these three axes can provide a strong sense of inner security and resilience that can help one navigate through many of life's challenges. However, Kohut (1971) believed that challenges in life can cause the self to have serious doubts and to lack the confidence to move forward. It is during challenging times that the self becomes preoccupied and becomes stagnant. It is through connectedness in one's relationships that can help maintain a strong sense of self.

To summarize, the theories of human development bring about an awareness of the self and its relation to others in the environment. By reviewing the four basic principles of human development and the seminal works regarding the Looking Glass Theory, Social Comparison Theory and the Social Learning Theory, one can understand how theorists determined that without others the self would not exist. By reviewing the feminist perspective on the development of the self, one can view that connectedness to others in relationships is vital as the self is formed and continues to emerge throughout life. By reviewing the literature on narrative psychology, one can view how stories, whether told or created, can illuminate one's life into a greater awareness that influences change. By reviewing the aspect of self-psychology, one gains awareness that the whole self is connected to space and time. That connection allows the self to realize that all events have influence which brings about a realization of one's skills and talents. The creation of these theories add to our understanding of self. One of the most important consequences of all of these theories is that is that they have communicated the value of the self and how the awareness of the self allows one the ability to communicate with others and it allows the self to communicate within. Cathcart and Gumpert (1986) maintain:

The act of communication is the necessary form of behavior that enables a person to become an object to him or herself. We learn to interpret our experience and give meaning to our encounters with our environment through our communication. With increased communication ability comes increased awareness of self. (p. 91)

The self has a dramatic effect on communication. It is through communication that one connects to others in the environment. It is not only the communication that takes place outwardly, but also it is the communication that takes place within from which we gain and assign meaning. The communication that takes place within is labeled the inner voice. In the following section I will review the literature regarding the concept and development of the inner voice and the influence it has on one's life.

The Inner Voice

The study of communication and its different forms, including intrapersonal communication, has been an interest to scholars for several thousands of years (Miller, 2002). Researchers have described intrapersonal communication in various terms such as internal dialogue, inner voice, talking to yourself, auto-communication, self-talk (Hardy, Gammage & Hall, 2001; Hatzigeorgiades, Theodorakis & Zourbanos, 2004; Houghton & Neck, 2002; Morin, 1993; Neck & Barnard, 1996;), inner voice (Heery, 1989), self-efficacy (Manz, 1998; Manz, & Godwin, 1999; Prussia, Anderson & Neck, 1998), and/or thought self-leadership (Neck & Manz, 1996). Stewart (2002) prefers to call intrapersonal communication "thinking," "pondering," or "contemplating," since communication implies an action between two or more individuals. The inner voice that is with one from the time one gets up in the morning until one goes to bed at night is one "of the most important cognitive processes involved in the acquisition of information about the self" (Hopf, Steward & Wilmot, 1979, p. 338).

Events which take place in one's environment have a major impact on one's cognitive thought process, thus influencing one's self-talk. The process of intrapersonal communication gives order to all of the events that take place in one's life. It is influenced by stimuli. It is one's intrapersonal communication that allows one to make sense out of the world. Intrapersonal

communication is influenced by the present and by past interactions with others. McMaster (1999) states that “each thought has the potential to change how we see ourselves yet our intrapersonal communication is often so ignored that we are left feeling confused because we have disconnected from the flow of our thinking, knowing and feeling” (p. 9).

Inner speech is a very important psychological activity that one uses in a variety of ways (Morin, 1993). It is important to understand that the process of talking to one’s self is not a simple process; it is a complex process (Roberts, Edwards & Barker, 1987). According to Johnson (1984), inner speech has four major interdependent characteristics:

1. Inner speech is always silent. It is apparent that one can speak out loud to one’s self; however, one’s inner speech is covert or silent.
2. Inner speech has the likelihood to create more meaning for a single word than it would if the word was used in an external level of communication.
3. Inner speech is incomplete or elliptic. One’s inner speech is plain. It is not done in complete sentences. Johnson (1984) states that “whereas external or extrapersonal speech usually involves some degree of predication, inner speech is always predicative” (p. 212).
4. Inner speech is highly egocentric. Piaget (1955) believed that inner speech is highly egocentric because one is speaking mostly of him or herself.

The degree to which this process influences human communication is emphasized by Vygotsky (1962), who states that “direct communication between minds is impossible, not only physically but psychologically. Communication can be achieved only in a roundabout way. Thought must pass first through meanings and then through words” (p. 150). Additionally, Sokolov (1972) believed that “although inner speech cannot, as such, serve as a means of direct

communication among people and is chiefly a vehicle for thought...it nevertheless carries out very important preparatory functions for human communication” (p. 66). For that reason, one can see that meaning comes from within and also comes from one’s frame of reference which aids in the process of human communication.

The value of intrapersonal communication and its relevance to all other forms of communication is quite obvious. We cannot begin to understand other complex levels of communication until we comprehend the process of the inner voice. It is the inner voice that is constantly communicating when all other forms of communication are taking place (Roberts et al., 1986). Therefore, intrapersonal communication “is the prerequisite of interpersonal communication” (Hopf, Stewart & Wilmot, 1979, p. 3). It is through one’s interpersonal relationships that one obtains information about the self. This process of interrelating helps create a coherent picture of what is taking place in a relationship and how the interaction influences the inner voice (Morin and Everett, 1990).

Since the self is the most important aspect of the intrapersonal communication process (Roberts et al., 1987), it is vital to realize that the interaction with others is important to the development of self-talk; our cognitive image according to Roberts et al. (1987) “is capable of controlling almost all of our behaviors” (p. 18). How one sees reality determines one’s behavior and Roberts et al. (1987) believe it controls one’s actions. Butler (1981) confirms the Roberts, et al. hypothesis about self-talk. She states that “what we say determines the direction and quality of our lives. Our self-talk can make the difference between happiness and despair, between self-confidence and self-doubt” (p. 1). Hikins (1989) confirms that the inner voice weaves into our social interactions and he contends that one’s self-talk makes all other forms of communication possible.

We have an internal and external reality; it is the inner voice that connects those realities. Intrapersonal communication is influenced by the events taking place in one's environment. It is influenced by past memories and the emotions of the self. The emotions drive one to deal with the situation at hand and emotions determine what is dominant in the intrapersonal communication process (Crouse and Crouse, 1988).

Neumann (1988) takes a general systems theory approach to intrapersonal communication. A system is defined as a unit of interdependent components. It takes in information (inputs) from the environment and then responds (throughputs) to that information (Rothwell, Sullivan & McLean, 1995). Once the information has been processed, it is then released back into the environment (outputs). According to Neumann (1988), by examining this process of general systems theory in relation to intrapersonal communication, one can see this perspective in two ways. One as the mind as a subsystem and two as the mind as a complete system:

1. Mind as a subsystem: "The inputs and outputs exist outside the individual; they exist in the physical environment" whereas the intrapersonal communication "exists in the throughput processes" (Neumann, 1988, p. 4). It is in the throughput process that one tries to make sense out of the stimuli in order to react from the input in order to create an output (reaction), thus relating to the external environment.
2. Mind as a complete system: "The inputs are self-generated, 'sense data', the throughputs are the cognitive processing of these data, and the outputs are self-perceptions, motivations, behaviors, interpretations" (p. 4). Essentially, it is the mind that creates its own communication (symbols); and once this process takes place the mind provides its own input (interpretation) and processes that input and retains that

input for future interactions. Neumann (1988) contends it is the individual who becomes the creator and interpreter of one's thoughts and actions. Therefore, intrapersonal communication serves "self rather than others" (Johnson, 1984, p. 211).

Roberts et al. (1987) believe that one's actions equal one's behavior, and that behavior is self-directed. It is our cognitive image that "is capable in controlling almost all of our behaviors" (Roberts et al., 1987, p. 18). Further, they believe that "while [one's] cognitive image is constantly being updated, past versions of [one's] image influence present and future versions" (p. 21). Our memories of the past can and do direct our present behavior; people interpret a new experience by using old patterns that reinforce the cultural norms (Myers, 1996). This fundamental process of intrapersonal communication is an essential element in the development of the self and of the self-concept.

For many people, voice is the sound that comes from our mouths when we want to communicate. The external voice allows us to connect with others; it is essential for survival. However, finding and listening to the inner voice is a personal journey that allows us to reflect on where one wants to go and what one wants to accomplish in life. Matusak (1997) comments that, "at some point in our lives, each of us has experienced that deep desire to make a difference, to be better than we are, to make our lives better at home or in our workplaces" (p. 3). The inner voice is ever-present. As several leading feminist researchers contend, one can either ignore the inner voice or opt to listen to the external voices that tells one who one is and what one should do.

Events that take place in life lead one to understand the importance of knowing the self. By knowing the self, it allows one to see the world through a different lens and to see how one can be a part of change in that world. A woman learns by reflecting and listening to her voice.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) believe by listening to the inner voice a woman can make a difference in her life and the lives of others.

Not listening to the inner voice endangers one's connections with others; one no longer feels the importance of the self in relationships. A woman learns, grows and views the world through a different lens; by listening to her inner voice she allows herself to achieve.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to listen to the inner voice when the external voices dominate one's life. As mentioned previously in the literature regarding the development of self, the influence of others creates a self that has no voice. Belenky et al. (1986) found that women view themselves through the eyes of others. They begin to recognize the self and their own inner voices after a pivotal event that initiates an epistemological revolution, a discovery of power, which in turn leads to a discovery of the voice. These pivotal events include, but are not limited to, the death of a significant other, the birth of a child or the beginning of an educational journey. These events give rise to a woman's way of knowing.

A woman's way of knowing is learning about the self and having the courage to ask questions about the self. It is a time of reflection. It is a time of listening to the self in order to process what is going on around the self. It is through one's intent to move forward that strengthens the inner voice. Discovery of the inner voice indicates a sense of direction and a change of behavior. When one recognizes one's behavior and has intent to change, then one has a complete understanding of one's life (Adams, 2006). However, in order for intent to be meaningful, according to Malle and Guglielmi (2006) one needs to focus on five major concepts. First, the individual needs to have the desire or purpose in changing a behavior, an event or a situation. Second, an individual needs to have a belief in his or herself and to have contemplated the results or consequences regarding the intent. Third, an individual needs to have the intention

to carry out the intent with complete comprehension of preparing and planning. Fourth, an individual needs awareness of the actual intent being performed. Lastly, an individual needs skills, knowledge, support and courage to execute the intent. Through the process of reflection one can overcome obstacles and move beyond the limitations placed on one by society or by the personal self if one intentionally wishes to do so.

The sense of self is a process that begins during the first year of life (Rosenblith, 1992). Through the interaction with significant others and events, the inner voice is created and becomes a powerful tool that helps one understand the world. “How individuals define themselves influences how they think, feel and interact with others” (Cross et al., 2002, p. 399) and it is through the interaction with others that has an influence on “many cognitive, emotional and motivational processes” of one’s life (Cross et al., 2002, p. 399). The inner voice is a major influence on the direction of one’s life. Not listening to one’s inner voice, according to McMaster (1999), one becomes disconnected from others and the world.

In summary, the inner voice is a very important psychological activity and it is very complex. The inner voice frames the world in which we live. It defines our identity and our position within our world. It also becomes a guide to our attitudes, our actions, and our behavior (Wood, 1994). By illuminating the research on the inner voice, one can begin to understand by internalizing the voices and views of others, one’s inner voice can prevent one from moving forward. However, by recognizing one’s genuine inner voice one can move forward past obstacles and lead the self.

Self-Leadership

To pursue a goal, a vision, or a dream is the process of leading the self. Manz (1983) believes in order to lead others in life, one must be a leader of him or herself first. In 1983, Manz

presented the idea of self-leadership because “our society has been especially good at fostering a sense of external control and ‘other responsibility’ in persons” (p. xii). Based on research in psychology and human management, the concept of self-leadership allows one to redesign “both our physical world and the world we carry around in our thoughts” (Manz, 1983, p. xii). The skill of self-leadership is listening to one’s voice; it is a process of influence. Since leadership, according to Manz is not just an outward process but a process that is influenced inwardly by past events that plays a major role in shaping one’s life. The events of the past, whether they were successes or failures, can be ignored or recognized. However, often the focus is on the failures and the inner voice becomes a litany of failures and may not allow one to lead the self in a productive way (Adler et al., 1995). The whole process of what one does with his or her life is totally up to them. Since self-leadership is the process of influencing one’s self, it is important to understand that the concepts of self-leadership are derived from two areas of psychology. According to Manz, those theories are the Social Learning Theory and the Intrinsic Motivation Theory. These two theories, according to Manz and Neck (1999), are the foundation of self-leadership.

The Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling which is continuous through social interaction. Bandura (1977) states:

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (p. 11)

Manz (1983) believes the Social Learning Theory recognizes that human behavior is complex and that one influences as well as being influenced by the world in which one lives. Everyone has the ability to manage or control him or herself.

Conversely, the Intrinsic Motivation Theory recognizes the importance of rewards one receives from doing tasks that are important. White (1959) insisted that individuals have a desire to be capable and skillful in areas that permit them to master the challenges of their environment. These theories are the foundation of Manz's (1983) self-leadership concept. The art of self-leadership is accomplishing what one sets out to do.

Within the theory of self-leadership lies the concept of intentionality which according to Malle and Guglielmo (2006) is making sense out of one's behavior and one's environment. The process of making decisions, setting goals and planning to achieve those goals becomes a guiding tool. One needs to realize that intentions are a sophisticated state of mind (Adams, 2006) but it is only through intentional behavior that moves one forward.

If one sees only walls or roadblocks, there is no possibility of moving forward; however, if one sees the opportunity for growth and change then that can change the individual and the world. One has a choice on how he or she can reflect on what has been or is taking place in his or her life. Ambrose (1995) believes that a journey inward begins with a process of self-reflection that is directed toward personal growth. Reflection brings one close to the inner voice in order to achieve personal effectiveness that in turn influences the future. This is the major premise of Manz's theory on self-leadership; influence is a major premise in the literature on female leadership.

Female Leadership Research

Leadership research and the theories that define leadership have been conceptualized in many ways. Leadership research identifies various methods in which one can lead; each theory/concept has its strengths and weaknesses. Much of the earlier research conducted on leadership theory is based on masculine ideas and traits (Kezar, 2000). It is stereotypical that

successful leadership is associated with a masculine approach (Chrisler, Herr & Murstin, 1998; Nidiffer, 2001; Switzer, 2004). Many of the traditional theories that laid the foundational work on leadership were created during a time when women did not hold professional positions in organizations. This is why the history on women in leadership is brief. Prior to the sixties the roles for men and women were determined by the strict cultural norms of society. A woman's place was in the home. She was the caretaker, the one who nurtured (Carlson, Karpeta, Svensson & Weaver, 1999). The man was responsible for supporting and providing for the family (Rosener, 1990).

The women's movement throughout history has undoubtedly elevated women's prominence in society. Feminists from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Betty Friedan brought attention to the rigid, proscribed gender roles in the United States and strived to change these unjust social norms. The sole purpose of this movement was to promote equality for both genders in the political, educational, and social spheres. What began as one concept, feminism, branched out and taken on many different forms: liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, cultural feminism and ecofeminism. These branches of feminism help establish a new voice for women. Even though some of these concepts are old, they bear fruit and influence a new way of thinking in many areas, including leadership.

Feminist scholars have brought attention to the gender bias in the leadership literature. The rationale for this bias comes from a variety of causes: the predominance of male researchers in the field who ignored gender-related issues in the field, methodological hindrances and a lack of interest on the part of academic researchers regarding gender (Hoyt, 2007). It wasn't until the late seventies that gender and leadership became a focus for many researchers. Today, leadership research focuses on the characteristics, traits and behaviors of male and female leaders in order

to answer important questions: Can women lead? What are the leadership styles and differences between men and women (Hoyt, 2007)?

The term leadership, according to Erkut (2001), “can carry many different meanings” (p. 2) and that “we all share an understanding of leadership” (p.17). This shared understanding, according to Erkut (2001), is the Implicit Leadership Theory. This theory which was developed by Hollander and Julian in 1969, proposes that people attribute leadership skills and characteristics to individuals who match their ideas of what a leader should be or what leaders should do. When reviewing the definitions of leadership developed by many of the leading scholars, one will find phrases such as: “engaging with others,” “influencing others,” “raising others up to their full potential,” “addressing a higher need,” and “interacting with others.” All of these descriptions represent an action on the part of an individual. All of these descriptions also represent elements of relationships.

Alexandre (2007) states “for many feminists, leadership is all about relationship” (p. 99). Building relationships and building rapport is essential in leadership; one cannot go it alone. Since women gravitate towards the building of relationships, leadership becomes people-oriented for them. It is through the building of relationships that women encourage and influence others, and this leads to empowerment which allows women to flourish (Erkut, 2001).

Since there is growth in connection (Fletcher, 1999) one cannot overlook the relational aspect of leadership that comes from social interaction. Leadership is apparent when it brings about change that improves the lives of people (Astin & Leland, 1991). It is through the development of relationships that enhances the social environment and offers change. Burns developed and defined many concepts and principles related to leadership and if one, according to Alexandre (2007), looks deeply one will see the

Tenets of a feminist construction of leadership: leadership as a collaborative effort, a relationship engaged in for purposeful intended change, in which power is not control over, but rather the ability to energize others. (p. 102)

These tenets, encapsulate the human need that revolves around relationships.

Eagly (1990, 1992, 1995) and her colleagues conducted several studies in various settings (academic, laboratory, and organizations) in order to examine the relationship between gender and leadership; Helgesen (1990) examined women who owned their own companies. Both Eagly and Helgesen concur that women are more interpersonally oriented than men, they lead with inclusion, they use collaboration, foster mutual trust and respect and according to Hoyt (2007) “the only robust gender difference found across settings was that women led in a more democratic, or participative, manner than men” (p. 266). Rosener (1990) found that women tend to describe “themselves in ways that characterize transformational leadership – getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broader goal” (p. 120). It is through the development of relationships and the fostering of concern for the group that enhances the self-worth of others and enhances the leadership styles of women (Rosener, 1990). Miller’s (1976) model of relational growth focuses on the power of relational interaction that affects change through mutual interaction and co-influence. These tenants of Miller’s model of relational growth are an important aspect not only for leadership but for the psychological growth for all humans (Fletcher, 1999).

One must remember that the characteristics, traits, and styles of leadership differ from female to male, from male to male and from female to female. They, according to Mayes (2003), “cannot be so neatly classified, nor should they be” (p. 175). One can agree with Hill (2003) that “much of leadership is learned” and “there is strong evidence between leadership and learning, especially learning from social situations – the experience by doing” (p. 147). One can view the

history of leadership and see it through a specific lens, whether that be male or female. One can look at the models of leadership and view two separate categories (Table Below) and conclude that men and women lead differently because of psychological differences. Empirical research has uncovered only small differences in leadership styles between men and women (Hoyt, 2007), and Norton (2003) believes that “leadership depends on an exceptional set of personal characteristics and contextual factors” (p. 111).

Table – *Models of Masculine and Feminine Leadership*

	Masculine Leadership Model	Feminine Leadership Model
Operating style	Competitive	Cooperative/collaborative
Organizational structure	Hierarchy	Team/nonhierarchical
Basic objective	Winning	Quality output
Problem-solving style	Rational	Intuitive/rational
Key characteristics	High control, strategic, unemotional, analytic	Low control, empathic, high performance standards

Source: Irby and Brown (1998), Klenke (1996), Helgesen (1990), Rosener (1990), Loden (1985), Gilligan (1982).

Women and men make decisions regarding leadership. Because leadership is a choice, Hill (2003) believes that “each woman must form her own definition of leadership and choose to use her influence in a way that best serves that definition” (p. 101). Many researchers (DePree, 1993; Drucker, 1999; Lewin & Regine, 2000; Vaill 1998) observe that in order to adapt to the global environment it requires a new way of leading which is to serve. This is one of the main characteristics that women have had for centuries.

When reviewing the literature on leadership, one can surmise that there is not one universally agreed-upon definition of a leader or an agreed-upon definition of leadership. Burns (1978) comments that there are over hundreds of definitions and facts on the word leader and these classifications exceed the information on the theories of leadership. Leadership has a universal appeal and the theories created by researchers help shed light not only on the nature of

leadership but also allows them one to view the influence it has on our lives. Many theorists over the decades have devoted time to the development of theories that lend an understanding of the evolution of leadership studies, which began with the Great Man Theory. Over time the categories of leadership theories have expanded to include trait, skills, style, situational, contingency, path-goal, leader-member exchange, transformational/transactional, team and psychodynamic approaches to leadership (Northouse, 2007). All of these approaches provide a typology or a historical analysis of the phases of leadership. However, feminist scholars, according to Erkut (2001)

Have argued that the requirements of ‘new’ leadership call for many of the strengths that have been associated with women’s more relational focus. Additionally, underscoring a vision of why women more easily espouse people-oriented leadership is feminist scholarship that has articulated the importance of connections in women’s lived experience, from acquiring understanding and trustworthy knowledge, to building interpersonal relationships. (p. 39)

This new form of leadership the feminist scholars speak about focuses on the concepts of collaboration, coordination, sharing information and power (Erkut, 2001). These concepts are related to the participatory, people-oriented style of leadership and are some of the same values Follett focused on in her book *Creative Experience* written in 1924. Today, many books on leadership extol these concepts as a new way of leading, such as serving rather than controlling (Block, 1993); a focus on people (Drucker, 1999); developing relational skills and emotional intelligence (Fletcher, 1999) and developing a sense of connection and spirituality (Vaill, 1998). There have been many approaches developed over the decades to understand and explain leadership. The participatory, people-oriented style of leadership is one that can be developed and utilized by women and men.

Leadership comes from leading the self first. “No one can teach us to lead; we have to teach ourselves” (Hill, 2003, p. 160). Additionally, Hill comments that “effective leaders

surround themselves with great leaders.... These leaders are an inspiration to be around because they truly and deeply believe in people. For them, leadership is about getting the very best out of people” (p. 161). Leadership involves paving a path that will allow individuals to have a vision and the ability to make that vision a reality. It also involves influence.

Summary

The common thread in all the literature reviewed is influence. The self is developed in part by influence from one’s caretakers and significant others, the inner voice is influenced in part by what is said and experienced in one’s life, the existing literature and definitions on leadership focus on influence, the studies on women in leadership show the importance of influence of relationships in the leadership process and the concept of self-leadership focuses on influencing the self in order to achieve.

This study seeks to identify how women become a leader of the self by moving beyond challenges in order to transform their lives and potentially the lives of those around them. It seeks to describe, in a woman’s own voice, the importance of listening to the inner voice in order to lead the self. Events that take place in life lead one to understand the importance of knowing the self and by knowing the self, by that it allows one to see the world through a different lens and how one can be a part of change in that world. A woman learns by reflecting and listening to her voice, and Belenky et al. (1986) believe by listening to the inner voice a woman can make a difference in her life and the lives of others.

Methodology

Your work is to discover your world and then with all your heart give yourself to it.
Buddha

My purpose in this research was to explore the inner voice of women's self-leadership and examine how significant others and events influence them to move beyond challenges in order to transform their lives and potentially the lives of those around them. I chose to explore this topic by using the discipline and methodology of narrative inquiry. This chapter explains and justifies my use of narrative inquiry as the appropriate methodology for this research. I begin by presenting an overview of the literature of narrative inquiry. The chapter will conclude with discussion on the inquiry process, ethical issues, and the research process.

Narrative Inquiry Literature

Narratives, according to Byrne (2000), "have played a role in the development of oral history" (p. 4). Oral histories are the stories that enrich the lives of others and are passed down from generation to generation. Stories allow one to understand the experiences of one's life from a historical perspective and allow one to ask questions. Narrative offers an entry point to the self, explores the subjective truth of the narrator, and allows one to see his or her personal world. In fact, Josselson and Lieblich (1995) believe that, "the ultimate aim of the narrative investigation of human life is the interpretation of experience" (p. ix).

Narrative has a long, rich tradition. Phenomenology is at the base of narrative inquiry since human reality consists of events, situations and objects and each human being perceives this reality differently. The style or form of narrative is important to the representation. It can be constructed in many different styles: the Epic, the Romanesque, the Picaresque, the Fantasy Form, or the Mythological form. All of these styles have been influenced by many disciplines such as history, anthropology, literature, and cultural psychology. The style used brings the

identity to the story and it is through that style that human expression is communicated.

Researchers from many different fields utilize narrative to create stories that aid in learning and connect the past to the present. I will highlight three specific fields that are related to this methodology: history, literature and psychology.

For centuries, historians have recorded the events of time which has allowed generations to read and see what influenced the lives of the people who came before them. Historians believe that there are many methods to study human thought and experience. However, the essence of all epistemological schemes, according to Droysen (1868) is “to know, to explain, and to understand” (p. 7). Historians give factual representation of actual past events. In order to understand these events, historians’ use of narrative allows them to organize the events of the past into plots and create a unified whole (Polkinghorne, 1988). Currently, historians use narrative not to tell a story of what happened in the past, but to also retell a story from past events from a current perspective.

Literary theorists have paid considerable attention to narrative, but they have not developed a unified theory regarding it. They believe there is a variety of theoretical approaches and Martin (1986) states:

If recent theories are judged on the premise that only one of them can be true, they are likely to prove unsatisfactory. But if judged on the basis of the insights they can provide into particular narratives, their variety is an advantage. (p. 71)

Literary theorists approach narrative from many different angles which allow the transfer of meaning from author to the reader. This form of expression has broadened the scope of literary theorists to look at the communication model in order to broaden their locus of study. By focusing on the transactional model of communication, they realize that attention cannot just

focus on the structure of the text, but must also include a focus on the process of obtaining that text (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Psychology theorists contend that narrative is a tool that allows one to investigate the lives and behaviors of individuals. Many practical studies beginning as early as 1851 had difficulty with formal science not being able to look at human individuality (Polkinghorne, 1988). The field of individual psychology between 1920 and 1945 began to explore personal identity and life span development (Polkinghorne). Psychologists believe that it is a natural trait for individuals to tell stories about their lives and telling these stories capture the events that allow individuals to make sense out of their lives. Polkinghorne (1988) contends:

Human beings exist in three realms – the material realm, the organic realm, and the realm of meaning. The realm of meaning is structured according to linguistic forms, and one of the most important forms for creating meaning in human existence is the narrative. (p. 183)

In this field, the events that take place in our lives and the lives of others can be read and interpreted differently. Every human being has a different perspective on each event.

Polkinghorne (1988) believes that it is through narrative that humans bring meaning and understanding to their lives. The history of narrative is comprised of many twists and turns, as well as debates and controversy, but this method of inquiry lends itself to discovery within human existence.

According to Pinnegar and Daynes (2007), “researchers usually embrace the assumption that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience” (p. 4).

Narrative inquiry begins with an experience. It is accepted as a method and phenomena of study (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). There are a number of approaches, strategies or methods a researcher can utilize in the process of writing narrative:

1. Use of metaphor: Involves abstraction to describe or compare an event in order to convey learning from the data collected. Hayakawa (1978) states that metaphors are not an “ornament of discourse,” but are “direct expressions of evaluation and are bound to occur whenever we have strong feelings to express” (p. 109).
2. Use of sociolinguistic analysis: Involves the process of analyzing data that comes from field notes or interviewing. This analysis generalizes the event and creates a generic narrative for the purpose of learning (Josselson, 1996; Polanyi, 1989).
3. Use of coding: Involves the process by which researchers break down large amounts of data into manageable parts; this data comes from transcripts or field notes (Schwandt, 2007).
4. Use of literary analysis: Involves the process of creating a “general sense of experience” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5) through thick description of characters and setting (plotline, theme, role, etc.).
5. Use of measurements and surveys: Involves the use of information that allows the researcher to calculate the impact the narrative has on the reader (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

Qualitative Methods Approach

The choice of a method for research, according to Creswell (2003), is determined by whether a researcher wants specific information gathered before the study or if the researcher wants to have the information emerge during the study. The qualitative approach bases knowledge on meanings from individual experiences. This approach is connected to the process of doing narrative, which permits the researcher to record and write about the phenomena of life in such a way that it extends knowledge and an understanding. Qualitative research invites one

into the experience of the history makers. Clandinin (2007) believes that “qualitative researchers are interested not in prediction and control but in understanding” (p. 4). Furthermore, Patton (2002) identified several characteristics which evolve from qualitative research: it is detailed, it is rich in description, it is an in-depth inquiry, and it captures direct quotes about people’s experiences. By utilizing qualitative research, it allowed me to illuminate the voices of my participants who listened to their inner voices to lead the self.

A qualitative approach to research correlates to my world view and the work that I do as a college instructor. I require my students to reflect on how the concepts and principles of intrapersonal communication relate to them. Their essays recount everyday human experiences. Their stories place them within a context. This process of relating and reflecting on what they are learning to everyday life correlates with three assumptions Crotty (as cited in Creswell, 2003) relates to constructivism:

Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting....

Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective – we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture....

The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community.... (p. 9)

Constructivism, according to Schwandt (2007), follows either of two stands: radical or social. The latter seeks to comprehend the social process and interaction of the participants, how they come to share an understanding of their specific life, and the circumstances which create an event. The social constructivist seeks to understand how individuals interpret the context of a situation. As a college instructor I want to understand my students in their reflective writings as they come to comprehend the circumstances in their lives related to the subject they are learning.

Narrative allows my students to shape and speak about what is taking place in their lives, and at the same time it permits them to view themselves on many levels. Their choice of relating contributes to an awareness of reality; it affords an insight of the self. This self-understanding according to Ochs and Capps (1996) does not always bring a complete awareness of life's events or dilemmas. It can, "illuminate life as we know it by raising challenging questions and exploring them from multiple angles" (p. 23). All narratives are personal. They involve reflection and expose the narrator as well as the reader to emotion. The qualitative approach to narrative examines and relates how a specific event influenced others. What is/was important to individuals touches our lives and can influence us in some way. Stories are a universal human activity; they are a part of everyone's life. This form of discourse is learned in early childhood and is used throughout life (Nelson, 1989). Stories have, and will, continue to bridge the past to the present, they will continue to stir the imagination and they allow us to question life.

Purposeful Sampling

Creswell (2003) stated that "the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants...that will best help the researcher understand the problem" (p. 185). My participants for this research are known to me either personally or professionally. They are all White, middle-class women who work in a variety of fields including education, psychology, nursing and small business. All of the women in this study are considered baby boomers. They were born and raised in the period between 1945 and 1964. Since this research involved intimate self-disclosure, my knowing and purposely selecting my participants allowed me to hear their private thoughts without violating their private space. The collection of their stories will add to the credibility of my research findings.

The Inquiry Process

Since I knew all of the participants, there was no need to develop an initial rapport before the first interview. However, my participants were informed of the steps in the research process. I conducted multiple face-to-face interviews, which were recorded. These took place in my participants' home. The interviews were semi-structured in order to generate deep reflection and rich dialogue. The initial face-to-face session began with the same prompt regarding the concept of self-leadership and my definition of the inner voice:

To have a goal, a vision, a dream is the process of leading the self and Manz (1983) believes in order to be a leader of others in life; one must be a leader of him or herself first. Self-leadership involves listening to the self—the inner voice. The inner voice is defined as an awareness of self that comes from the interaction with and internalization of the influences of others and the environment. The inner voice is a complex process that involves one's internal thought processes that ultimately influence how one sees the world act and reacts to events and circumstances outside of the self.

The questions (Appendix A) were loosely designed since narrative is emergent. These types of interview questions produced the richest sense of the participant's subjective understanding of her lived experiences during certain times. The face-to-face interviews afforded me the opportunity to hear their viewpoints on the events and people who have influenced them, and how their inner voice projects them forward or holds them back.

Throughout this process, I focused on the five levels of representation that Riessman (1993) suggested in order for a researcher to process a story:

1. Attending involved reflecting, remembering and recollecting the event. Since my rapport with my participants was established, it was my responsibility to frame the

- event for the participant for the reflection to occur. By doing so it allowed the participant to consider the events that transformed her life.
2. Telling involved the participant reporting the experience and selecting words to describe her experience. It was in the telling that that the participant brought her voice to the event. It was my responsibility to listen, to encourage, and to prompt my participant in the process of self-disclosure. Recording the sessions permitted me to capture my participant's voice, the inflection and the emotion related to the event. Recording captured the voice and it became valid documentation that permitted me to verify exact statements. Recording the sessions gave me the opportunity to recognize sign-posting, which Jefferson (1979) referred to as entrance and exit talk, which helps to define a change in direction of the conversation or a change from past to present events.
 3. Transcribing involved recording the session (audio). Riessman (1993) believes that "taping and transcribing are absolutely essential in narrative analysis" (p. 56). It is through transcribing my participants' own words that created a record of our session and allowed me to pick out themes and similarities across interviews. These transcribed notes were given to my participants for clarification in order for me to provide thick, accurate description of their experience.
 4. Analyzing involved recognizing and describing the critical moments from the telling sequence, but it "cannot be easily distinguished from transcription" (Riessman, 1993, p. 60). The challenge here was to identify the similarities, the recurring themes and the emphasis on specific information. Analyzing begins by organizing, reducing and then describing the data (Schwandt, 2001). It was my responsibility to respect and

honor the voices of my participants. However, with any type of research comes interpretation which is influenced by social, cultural and institutional aspects. My interpretation of my participants' stories allowed me to write about the phenomenon of the inner voice and how it influenced my participants to move beyond obstacles and lead themselves.

5. Reading involved the participant's story that was transcribed and placed on paper. The readings from each individual session were developed into an interpretive essay. In order to stay very close to a narrative approach this method gave me an opportunity to consider my thesis in light of the themes that emerged from the interviews, from the literature and from my own autoethnography. I presented a version of the interpretive essay to my participants in order for them to clarify facts, or to add to or delete from the transcribed story. It was my responsibility to seek clarification; I believe these stories are co-authored. I understand that the text of the narratives may have to be changed due to my interpretation of the events.

Criteria for Evaluation

There are three areas on which I wish to be evaluated. First, I want to be evaluated on the trustworthiness of my interpretations (1981) confirms that trustworthiness of findings involves credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability. Second, Schwandt (2007) identified two other concepts regarding trustworthiness and they are authority and authenticity. And third, Lieblich et al. (1998) identified four criteria specifically related to the evaluation of narrative inquiry: width, coherence, insightfulness, and parsimony.

Credibility is of the utmost importance in my research. Credibility relates to my proficiency to establish the truth between the representations of my participants' story and the

reconstruction of their story. There are several techniques I utilized to maximize the credibility of this study. With all of the participants I engaged in prolonged contact. I interacted with them after the initial interview process was complete. I communicated with them via telephone, e-mail, or face-to-face communication. In the follow-up sessions, I addressed specific themes and questions which emerged from the previous sessions. These member checks allowed me to clarify and validate their experiences. These were one of the most important functions I could utilize since they permitted me to identify any misconceptions or limitations related to my interpretations of the interview process.

Confirmability guarantees the reader that the data I collected and the conclusions I drew from the interview process were authentically from the participants and are not products of my frame of reference or my imagination. Confirmability also means that the data produced from the interviews can be tracked to the original source and that the reasoning used to reduce the data is sound and is open to inspection.

Dependability requires that I ensured that process of collecting my data was logical and traceable. I recorded all of the interviews and subsequent interactions with my participants and the field notes were transcribed. This procedure allowed for validation of the data in order to prove consistency.

Transferability primarily relates to my ability to affect the reader. In order for this to transpire, it was necessary for me to provide thick description of the phenomena being studied in order for the reader to identify with the participant's experience. In Chapter Five, I present descriptions of my participants and disclose their stories regarding the inner voice of self-leadership, as well as details regarding the interview experience.

The last two concepts related to trustworthiness are authority and authenticity. Authority is a qualitative inquiry criterion that emerged through a postmodern and post-structuralist criticism of how an author can interpret the experience of others. In ethnography, authority can be established through an autoethnographic account that places the author in the same culture as co-researchers or co-participants in the study. This allows an inquirer to maintain a degree of separation from the critique that the immediacy of experience is so singular that it cannot be captured by an inquirer because the author is a participant in the culture of the study (Schwandt, 2007). My autoethnography in Chapter Four illustrates my knowledge of the phenomena of the inner voice and provides an example of my understanding and desire to learn more about the inner voice and how it influences women's self-leadership.

In addition to authority, Guba and Lincoln (1989) developed a set of criteria for evaluating authenticity of research. This criteria has its origins in a constructivist epistemology. Those criteria that apply to this research are: fairness authenticity, educative authenticity and tactical authenticity.

In maximizing fairness, it was my intent to uphold the core principles of my participants. This structure incorporates not only the recording of their stories, but also the importance of the interview process—the sacredness of their self-disclosure of personal intimate thoughts.

Educative authenticity leads to an increased awareness of others' inner voice and how the inner voice is influenced by events and significant people in one's life. It allows others to enhance their awareness of the inner voice and how listening to their inner voices can project one forward or cause one to stand still.

Tactical authenticity deals with the participants' ability to increase their own awareness of their inner voices, thus leading the self in a direction that benefits the self and others.

The final criteria that I hope to be evaluated on are width, coherence, insightfulness and parsimony. Lieblich et al. (1998) state that width is the “comprehensiveness of evidence” (p. 173). My participants’ stories have breadth and depth. The interpretive essay allows me to provide evidence for their comprehensive beliefs. Their stories have coherence because each participant’s story creates a complete image of her. Her story is evaluated against my thesis and the themes emerging from the literature. Insightfulness results from a greater comprehension after reading the participant’s story. Parsimony according to Lieblich et al. is “the ability to provide an analysis based on a small number of concepts and elegance or aesthetic appeal” (p. 173). Although my participants revealed intimate details regarding their personal lives and their inner voices, the recording of their stories will lend an understanding of how women leaders lead themselves and subsequently lead in society.

Ethical Issues

In order to provide a means for ensuring the safety of all of my participants, this research was approved by Antioch’s Internal Review Board. Each participant signed an informed consent form identifying the expectations and potential risks of this research. I am grateful to these women, who were willing to invest their time so I could complete my research inquiry.

In Chapter One, I delineated the limitations this type of research entails. These limitations are closely tied to ethical issues of research. These limitations are interpretation, vulnerability and the risk associated with self-disclosure, identity and power (Wilson, 2002). I discuss these limitations separately:

1. Interpretation: Perceptions of lived experiences are seen through a different lens due to our life experiences and this limitation can over shadow the interpretation of the message. It is the researcher and the participant who shapes the meaning and gives

- understanding to that meaning. To increase the likelihood that the information collected indeed reflects the knowledge of others, it was necessary that I maintained communication throughout the project with all my participants since each of them has many different views of reality.
2. **Vulnerability and risk:** Self-disclosure is a vital aspect in relationships. Deep, meaningful self-disclosure is a product of a well-developed relationship. Self-disclosure with individuals who do not know each other on an intimate level may limit the information revealed. This self-disclosure may cause discomfort and may cause the participant to leave out certain information. Researching human phenomena is a privilege, and one must not ignore this privilege.
 3. **Identity:** Identity not only deals with fear of exposure of one's identity, but also related to the identity of others they speak of, but it also deals with how the participant begins to identify with him or herself. Participants can be transformed by the telling of their story; they may come to see themselves differently and view the events they are speaking about differently.
 4. **Power:** Power has many different forms and appears on many different levels. Individuals participating in research may sometimes be alarmed as to how the researcher positions him or herself in their story—giving only his or her point of view. Researchers must continually remind themselves that they represent the voice of others. In order to develop a relationship that yields sufficient information, it is important for the researcher to extend power to others who participate in order for the researcher to hear their story.

One cannot successfully research the life story of an individual without thinking seriously of the moral and ethical responsibilities associated with this procedure. Plummer (2001) believes that “telling the stories of life not only enables pathways into a culture, but also pathways into prescriptions for living the ethical life, even in these postmodern times” (p. 404).

It is essential that all of the information disclosed is kept confidential. Confidentiality protects the privacy of each participant and it provides me the opportunity to determine the risk of revealing information that may harm a participant. There is a risk involved in telling of one’s story since revealing and remembering one’s past can stir memories that are painful or revealing. The whole process entails sitting, listening, recording, transcribing and writing and it is in this writing that I am held to produce high quality work which infuses the narrative with rich dialogue.

While conducting this research I took into consideration several ethical factors that Josselson (2007) believes are essential when conducting narrative research:

We must interact with our participants humbly, trying to learn from them. We must protect their privacy. What we think might do harm we cannot publish. We cannot put our career advancement over the good of our participants. (p. 560)

Other ethical concerns involved honesty, exploitation, betrayal and harm. These human principles, if overlooked, can damage lives. Plummer (2001) states that, “life story research always means you are playing with another person’s life in a number of ways” (p. 403). It is through respect and honor for my participants that I seriously considered these ethical concerns and addressed them.

There were additional limitations to my research regarding my participants. One, I utilized a purposeful sample in that all of the women are known to me either personally or professionally. Two, my participants were all White, middle-class females between the ages of

54 and 65 and all had different levels of college education. They work in various fields including education, psychology, nursing and small business. This is a small sample of the culture and therefore cannot represent the whole population. Three, since this research relied on in-depth interviews, it may limit the participant's ability and willingness to recall specific events and the desire to self-disclose those events.

I did not enter my research with these women as a stranger. Our relationships had already been established. It is through my interactions with them that I gained self-knowledge. Examining life over time leads to a connection to the community where the individual resides. This connection becomes a part of the narrator's history, and according to Ricoeur (1988) "narrative identity is the poetic resolution of the hermeneutic circle" (p. 248). Each session became a time for listening and learning; each session was a gift of valuable time and awareness.

It was my intent to learn about the phenomena of the inner voice and how it influences women to lead themselves. It was my intent to accurately record the voices and the stories of my participants so others may learn that leadership begins within. It was my intent to write a dissertation that will honor these women who challenged themselves and who still question. My participants trusted me with their stories and I am honored that they have given me permission to sit, listen and learn.

Summary

In pursuing the concept of the inner voice and how it is related to women's self-leadership, I utilized narrative inquiry. I chose this methodology because I believe stories are so rich and such an excellent way to learn. Life stories impart wisdom, knowledge, and experience that the reader may never come to learn personally. It is through narrative that individuals can connect with people they may never know or places they may never visit. To have a story touch

your life is rewarding. It allows one to grow and learn. Eleanor Roosevelt stated that, “in the long run we shape our lives and we shape ourselves.” In the process we tell stories, whether they are naturalistic, researched or reflexive and recursive. These stories allow us to see the world and how the world has shaped others and ourselves.

Individuals tell stories and relate to others through stories. Narratives are representations of individuals and how they see their world and their place in the world. What is/was important to individuals touches our lives and can influence us in some way.

My ethical and personal commitment to this research required me to respect and honor these women, who sat with me to tell me their stories of a journey that both challenged and discouraged them from achieving their goals and dreams. The process of doing narrative inquiry goes beyond just sitting down and listening. It goes beyond recording the text and writing about it. Utilizing narrative inquiry allows one to see what John Dewey meant when he stated, “Life is education” (as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Chapter Five includes the participants’ stories. I have, to the best of my ability, captured their voices and their experience so others may read how the inner voice influences women’s self-leadership.

Autoethnography

All that we are is the result of what we have thought.

The mind is everything.

What we think we become.

Buddha

A story lies within each one of us. We come into this world not knowing. It is through our interactions with others that shape who we are and how we see the world; it is also through this interaction that our own stories are created. We all tell stories. Ochs and Capps (1996) believe that narrative and the self are inseparable—they are one's version of reality. We come to know ourselves through our stories. Furthermore, our stories inform, instruct, and entertain. Our life is comprised of numerous stories that have many chapters about who we are, who we were and who we want to become. According to Pinkola Estes (1992), stories are therapy that gives the next generation instructions that can guide and help them deal with the complexities of life.

It seems very simple to sit with people, talk about life and listen to tales of the specific events that shaped their inner voice. Weiland (1995) states that, "all lives have meaning to the people living them" (p. 59). As a researcher and an instructor, I not only contemplate the lives and inner voices of others, but I also examine my own. To tell a story is to find meaning in the human experience. What seems so simple is rather complex. From a researcher's point of view, I hope to gain understanding of the inner voice and how its layers of meaning can influence life. From a teller's point of view, it is my hope the participant gains a new understanding of her own story, its layers of meaning and how her inner voice influenced her own life. From a reader's point of view, I hope the reader will be influenced by what has been explored and find his or her own meaning regarding his or her inner voice.

The following autoethnography reveals portions of my personal life. I invite the reader to see how my acceptance of the voices of others, the individuals who had authority, the individuals

who were placed in leadership roles to guide and direct me, was damaging. I invite the reader to view how listening to my true inner voice allowed me to rise above those limitations.

I am one of the 79 million babies born between 1945 and 1964. I am a Baby Boomer. I was born on a hot sweltering day in July, and I began this life just like every new baby—not knowing. My father wasn't present when I was born. My mother always made sure I knew he was dissatisfied that I wasn't a boy. My parents came together after the war but I will never know if it was because they loved each other or they thought the idea of love would grow.

I am the third of four girls. My sisters and I experienced a very dysfunctional upbringing and a very structured Catholic education. We lived in a relatively nice house; we had dependable cars to drive and we took vacations every summer. We even sat down to dinner every evening at 6:30, although we never talked. Now decades later, I understand the silence. At that time, like most children of this era, I never questioned my parents' relationship or motives for doing what they did. They were in charge and they knew what they were doing, or at least I thought they did. I believed silence was normal and I accepted what my parents said about me. I was never encouraged by my parents. I never remember them, or anyone else, telling me "you can do it." School was an extension of everything I heard at home or perhaps it was just the opposite and my parents repeated what they heard about me from the nuns at school.

My first grade reading room at St. Philip was in the basement of the school. Small frosted windows encased with metal bars on the outside permitted diffuse light to penetrate this unwelcoming room with high ceilings and large, painted pipes. To a seven year old, these pipes appeared to be huge monster arms that jetted off in many directions, making strange noises in the winter months as they heated the old brick building. The room was filled with small brightly colored chairs. Low bookcases filled with *Dick and Jane* readers lined the wall beneath the

windows. Reading class took place every school day. I always sat in a green chair and waited with dread for Sister Jean Ann to call my name to read. I could not read because I could not see. No one knew that, not even my parents. I just assumed everyone saw the world the same way I did—blurred and out-of-focus. So I stuttered through whole passages of *Dick and Jane* only to hear the laughter of my fellow classmates and the comments of the nun saying, “Don’t laugh, we cannot help that Diana is slow.” These words were repeated over and over again through the school year. The message that I was slow was reinforced when I was held back in first grade. At the end of first grade I got glasses. My vision improved, but the degrading comments from my teacher and my fellow classmates were internalized. I saw myself through the eyes of others. I believed what others told me.

First grade was the preview of coming attractions. Year after year, the nuns’ non-supportive negative messages devalued me as a human being. My parents were involved in their own chaotic world and did not realize how awful my experience was. Throughout elementary school my grades were poor and everyone knew about it. The progress reports were read out loud to the class when the pastor of the church came to pass out the report cards. So vivid in my memory are those situations where I am standing right next to the pastor, his black cassock puddled on the floor, my small hand placed firmly on the wooden arm of the chair for support. With my new glasses I could see all of the grades before he read them. My eyes filled with tears as his raspy voice announced my grades to my classmates: “D in Arithmetic, D in English, C in Spelling, D in Reading, and D in Science.” He did not stop. Next were the areas I needed to improve on: “You need to follow directions better; you need to cooperate more with the nuns.” Every public announcement of my work lowered my self-concept. The external voices that shaped my inner voice were repeated over and over again in my mind.

Year after year, for eight straight years, I felt terrible shame to be seen as slow, to be seen as ignorant—to stand, legs trembling, while a priest read my failures to everyone. It felt as if I had a sign on my back that said, “Slow student - keep kicking her down.” The ridicule and humiliation did not happen just four times a year with the announcing of grades. It seemed the nuns believed that daily humiliation would make me try harder and become smarter. The grades never improved, but thankfully, by the time I got to high school the progress reports were sent home in the mail.

I thought high school would be different, a new beginning, but that was not the case. The nuns had their favorite students and they had the ones whose lives they made miserable. Senior year came in September 1968. I was so glad to know that I had nine months left of my Catholic education. I never thought to tell my mother about the humiliation I received from the nuns. She truly believed a Catholic education was the best education, but the education she worked hard to pay for was by far the worst. She respected the church, the nuns, the priests and their teachings and believed what happened in those hallowed halls of the Catholic school was in the best interest of the students. I wanted out and graduation gave me that opportunity.

After graduation I wanted to go to college, but after an appointment with my guidance counselor that dream faded. My future was buried at that counseling session. As I sat in that hard wooden chair gazing out the window facing the grotto, I heard the sister say, “Diana, you’ll never make it in college. You just need to get a job and get on with your life.” I left that session saddened and hopeless. The dream of college was not just gone; it was put in a box with the lid sealed shut tightly. I told myself how stupid it was of me to think that I, who had struggled hard for twelve years, could go to college. On graduation day, in June 1969, I was so glad to leave and also so scared I would not amount to much. After so many years of negative instruction,

comments and daily humiliation, my self-talk was all-negative. I believed I could do nothing. I believed everything the nuns had told me. My parents also believed them: their daughter was slow and wouldn't amount to much.

I listened to my guidance counselor. I got a job after graduation and got on with my life. My first job was brainless: filing at an insurance company. I sat for eight hours a day filing insurance cards of customers in alphabetical order which was a job that did not require too much experience or intelligence. Whenever there was an error, I assumed it was my fault. My inner voice always told me that I was incompetent.

At least in the real world I didn't have to hear the constant comment "Can't you do better than that?" I was free from the humiliation, but I continued to remind myself of what my parents and teachers previously said about me. I kept all the negative comments in my mind; my inner voice kept telling me "You can't."

My life followed a traditional norm for women my age. I got married two years after my graduation. I lived overseas for two years while my husband completed his tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force. When we returned home, we fell into the normalcy of everyday life. Our daughter was born in the fall of 1975, but during my pregnancy something was stirring inside me and it just wasn't the baby.

I began to wonder how I would talk to my child. I did not want her to be humiliated; I wanted my daughter to be encouraged to achieve, and I wanted her to enjoy her education. The birth of our daughter made me look at my life and how I was programmed to believe that I couldn't achieve. Becoming a mother awakened my inner voice. Belenky et al. (1986) believe that there are pivotal events in women's lives that initiate an epistemological revolution, a discovery of power, a discovery of the voice. This can come from the birth of a child or it can

come from education. As I discovered my inner power, my voice transformed my world. This did not happen the moment I found out I was pregnant or when my daughter came into the world. This voice, this tiny positive voice which I had ignored since I was a child, started to emerge slowly and cautiously. I began to see the world in color, moving away from what William Perry (1970) describes as basic dualism, where individuals see the world only in black or white, good or bad. I gradually stopped being dependent on people in authority telling me what to do. I started to form my own identity; I started to test the waters and I realized I could float, even swim. I was afraid. Peck (1996) believes that

When we extend ourselves, our self enters new and unfamiliar territory, so to speak. Our self becomes a new and different self. We do things we are not accustomed to do. We change. The experience of change, of unaccustomed activity, of being on unfamiliar ground, of doing things differently is frightening. It is always was and always will be. People handle their fear of change in different ways, but the fear is inescapable if they are in fact to change. (p. 131)

The birth of our daughter allowed me to change the view of my world and to change myself. I was responsible for the life of a small child and I had to learn how to raise her and how to be a good mother. I sincerely wanted my daughter to have a good self-concept. I wanted my daughter to feel smart, competent and strong and to know that she was loved. Truly, because of these goals I had for her, I realized I had to change. I could no longer continue to have negative self-talk. I could no longer live in the past and think of myself as inferior if I wanted her to be strong. Year after year more layers of negativity came off and my voice got stronger and stronger.

I challenged myself. I saw new possibilities in things I could do. In 1978, I stumbled upon Home Interiors & Gifts, an interior decorating accessory company based in Dallas, Texas. I was very interested in their products and their mission: to demonstrate that women can do anything they set their minds to. I signed on as an independent decorating consultant and learned

how to run a business out of my home. My parents, my husband, my in-laws all told me that I would not make it as a sales consultant because I was so shy. Something told me to go for it. It was great to be around positive people and it was wonderful to hear “You are good at what you’re doing.” My sales were good and I had a wonderful clientele.

I earned many great awards during the ten years I was with Home Interiors: diamond rings, fur coats, lots of travel. I finally felt good about the job I was doing. What more could I ask for? But after ten years of interior decorating, I realized I did not want to be an interior decorator for the rest of my life and so I began to consider what would come next. A friend suggested that I start college. Hearing this, I froze. It seemed as if the nuns lined up to announce, in unison, “You can’t go to college, you will never make it.” Even though those nuns were probably all dead, their voices still came through loud and clear. My friend kept persisting and I kept resisting, but in the end I picked up an application to Western Michigan University. I submitted my transcripts, signed my check and mailed it in, already knowing I would be rejected and would fulfill my guidance counselor’s statement, “Diana, you won’t make it in college.”

I remember walking to the mailbox on that cold, fall day in November. As I opened the mailbox I saw the envelope with the return address of Western Michigan University, Office of Admissions. I stood there, my heart raced and my stomach sank. My mind guessed the contents of the letter while the old tapes of the nuns played loudly in my head. I gathered the mail. I turned and walked slowly back to the house and placed the unopened envelope on the table. My inner voice that I was trying so hard to make positive felt very negative. As I prepared dinner for my husband and daughter, I caught myself glancing at the envelope, hoping that what it said inside would allow the dream I had decades ago to become reality. The familiar sound of my daughter’s backpack hitting the floor brought me back to reality. My daughter spied the envelope

and told me to open it. As I read the words, my eyes filled with tears, “We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted to Western Michigan University.” I distinctly heard the voices of all those nuns become garbled. Their voices were drowned out by the shouts of my daughter exclaiming, “Good job, mom, how exciting!” And so my educational journey began.

Anticipation, preparation, and self-reflection filled my days. As I registered and visited the campus, something stirred inside of me again as I began my educational journey. I was going to prove to the nuns and my parents they were wrong: I was smart and I was going to graduate from college. My positive inner voice argued with the negative monologue of the nuns who refused to be completely banished. The night before the first day of class, like a child, I prayed for a snowstorm so the university would close for the day, or better, for several days. Apparently, it was my fate to begin school because when I woke up that January morning, the roads were clear and dry. The drive to the university was excruciating with the nuns in the backseat of the car chanting, “You can’t do this, you can’t do this.” My hands gripped the steering wheel very tightly as I tried to think of ways I could get out of beginning my college career. I finally decided that if I could not find a metered parking space, I would have to go home because I did not have a parking sticker yet and I had to park at a meter. I felt confident I would not find a meter and the nuns continued their chants, which now sounded like a litany of my faults.

If there is such a thing as a universal force, it revealed itself. As I was driving towards the building where my first class was to take place, there it was a metered parking space with three hours of parking time remaining. I swallowed hard; my plan failed. I gathered my books, put on my gloves and hat and I headed for Sangren Hall. Those nuns did not want to be locked in the car. With every step I took, their voices got louder and louder. I approached the doors; I struggled to hold back my tears. I opened the door and came face to face with a hall lined with

young, traditional college students waiting to get into their next auditorium class. With what seemed like thousands of eyes looking at me, I turned and walked out. My cheeks burned from the salt of my tears on that bitter cold January day. The nuns' voices sang out in triumph. However, as I reached to unlock my car, I finally heard my little voice, my voice, not the voices of the nuns. I finally heard my voice. It said, "Diana, you can do this." I turned and went back into Sangren Hall, walked in and took my place in my very first English Writing class. I did it.

I thrived in the university environment. Everything was so interesting. I was challenged and not one instructor humiliated me. People were interested in what I had to say. I had a voice and I used it. I never thought education could be so exhilarating, so challenging. Finally, on April 24, 1993, I walked across the stage at Miller Auditorium to accept a Bachelor's Degree—a diploma that I would have never received if I continued to listen to the voices of others. I realized at that moment that I transformed myself. Sadly, during this educational journey, my marriage was falling apart. Three months after graduation, my world as I knew it for twenty-one years was transformed: I got divorced.

One can never begin to hope or dream when the inner voice is filled with negativity and self-doubt. We all enter the world not knowing and it is through our interactions with others that create the self and create the stories of our lives. The inner voice is part of the self that allows one to see the world and imagine how one can travel through this life. I faced my many fears and have overcome obstacles placed on me by people I looked up to. Their voices helped to deform my inner voice and shadow my self-concept. The interactions with my parents, my teachers, and the priests did not allow me to create a world that permitted me to hear my positive inner voice. Fortunately, I have had the strength and courage to learn about my world and myself and rise above the limitations placed on me.

Now twelve years after receiving my Master's Degree, I am in a position of leadership. I am a college instructor. I lead and guide students in their learning. Every day I have the ability to influence. I have the ability change peoples' lives significantly through education. I give my students the opportunity to discover their inner voice through reflective writing assignments. I give my students the opportunity to get to know me. We work together to make the classroom a safe place of sharing information, experiences and feelings. At the end of each semester I require my students to write a reflective learning essay. A student from Russia made this comment on her reflective essay, she stated that,

This course was a wake-up call. Interpersonal Communication is one of the best courses a student can take. And, you, Professor Cooley made this class interesting by involving us in what we do best and that is to talk and interact with each other using the subject we know much about and that is our life experiences. You actively encouraged us to participate; you gave us a chance to express our opinions and you challenged us to find our voice. (A. Ulbisheva, personal communication, December, 2004)

My teaching is driven by passion and emotion and most of my students see this passion in me. They see how extremely important communication is in their daily lives. I believe they see how being an educator has given me the opportunity to teach and help people to learn as much as my own education has allowed me to learn, develop and grow. In my classroom, I am a leader. Burns (1978) believed that leaders and followers are involved in the process together: leaders need followers and followers need leaders. The exchange between them is beneficial to both.

As a follower in my youth and my young adult life, I learned many lessons. Lessons that taught me valuable concepts that I utilize today in the college classroom. Today, I need my students so I can teach and lead them ever so gently down the road of understanding. I need to help them realize their voices, to strengthen their self-concepts, and I need to encourage them to dream and have goals. I will continue to watch the expressions on their faces that tell me that I have connected with them, that in some way we are traveling on the same road. We know what it

is like to be a person without a voice, to be a person with no sense of the self, to be the person who listens to the voices of others and not his or her own.

Leadership just doesn't take place in a boardroom or in the corner office. Leadership begins within an individual who discovers his or her inner voice and listens to it. Leadership is leading the self in order to lead others. Matusak (2007) states that,

One of the most difficult things for human beings to do is to release old patterns of thinking, to move beyond deeply embedded mental boundaries. Too frequently, we allow ourselves to become victims of preconceived notions or of what other people think of us. This leads us to fear change, to fear failure, and to lack the will to develop our potential for leadership. We lose sight of those factors most crucial to promoting successful leadership.... (p. 136)

It was by listening to my inner voice that I let go of old patterns of thinking. I transformed my life and it is with great hope that I in turn transform lives of my students.

Introduction to Narratives

No one saves us but ourselves.
No one can and no one may.
We ourselves must walk the path.
Buddha

Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that “the study of human behavior needs to include an exploration of the meaning systems that form human experience” (p. 1). Polkinghorne further states that narrative is the primary way that human experience is made meaningful. Studying a phenomenon such as the inner voice, according to Schwandt (2001), allows one to “identify and describe the subjective experience of respondents” (p. 192). Further, it reveals a genuine, objective nature of the phenomena through which one can gather meaning from careful description that not only involves the human senses but also includes feeling, remembering, judging and evaluating.

My purpose is to present information that will improve our understanding of how women leaders lead themselves and lead in society by fully understanding their stories and experiences regarding their inner voices. This research will increase our awareness of women’s experiences listening to her inner voice and how this listening allows her to become a leader of herself and move beyond challenges in order to transform her life and potentially the lives of those around her.

Since feminist research encourages a sense of connection between the researcher and the participants (Reinharz, 1992), purposely selected participants who let me investigate and delve deeply into the layers of the phenomena of the inner voice and how it affects self-leadership. According to Bloom (1998):

Feminist research assumes that what women tell about their lives, the nature of interactions they have with others in daily life, and the ways in which they interpret their own stories and experiences constitute valid and knowable empirical data: therefore, the research relationship depends on a deep rapport with the respondents. (p. 150)

I identified five women who are known to me either personally or professionally. Each potential participant was contacted by phone. I described my research, the rationale behind it, and the process I would utilize to obtain my data. Although no one refused to participate, two of the five women were apprehensive during the initial invitation. Some aspects of the research process were a concern for them. The first was anonymity and the second was certain personal events which were taking place in their lives at the time. I reassured all of my participants of their anonymity: each participant was assigned a pseudonym that was used consistently in the transcribed notes. In addition, I made an effort to further protect their identities by changing the names of people, places or institutions. I also noted specific reasons why I felt each participant would enhance the research on the subject of the inner voice.

All five of the women have shown a sincere desire and interest in my research topic. It is through the nurturing and maintaining of a long-term relationship that is built on trust and intimacy over time that permitted me to obtain a genuine self-disclosure regarding the inner voice and self-leadership. The five women chosen for this study are considered baby-boomers. They were born and raised between 1945 and 1964 during a time when the culture was being transformed by people, major events and the birthing of modern technology. Three of the five women followed the traditional cultural norms of the sixties and early seventies: high school graduation, job, relationship, marriage, and children. The other remaining two went off to college after graduation, choosing traditionally female areas of studies: nursing and teaching. For them marriage and children followed after they completed their degrees. It was important to me to include women of various age levels, educational levels, as well as different career fields.

Before the initial interviews were conducted, all the participants received a packet consisting of a written statement introducing my topic and the interview questions (Appendix A), my autoethnography, and a copy of the informed consent form (Appendix B). The initial interviews took place at the convenience of my participants. They were conducted in the privacy of the participant's home. The initial session was audio-taped after the informed consent form was signed. These face-to-face interviews gave me the opportunity to observe as well as hear the responses of my participants. Each interview session began with the same interview prompt and subsequent questions. I listened to their responses to the questions; I did not attempt to lead the interview questions in any particular direction. I did not interrupt my participant while she was speaking. My only verbal interaction with her during the interview was to clarify a question or statement posed by her. The initial interview process took approximately two hours.

Afterwards, I debriefed each participant by summarizing several of the main points from the session. I sought clarification regarding any questions, comments, or concerns that arose during the interview process. I informed the participants of the opportunity she would have to review the transcribed notes and the preliminary draft of her story. Each participant was asked about potential future interview sessions.

I utilized various procedures in order to preserve the integrity of each participant's voice and to summarize the interviews accurately. I tape-recorded and personally transcribed the interviews. I gave each participant a copy of her individual transcription for review and clarification. I have taken in-depth notes regarding the transcriptions and have highlighted similarities and themes threaded throughout the sessions. I have communicated personally with each participant via telephone and e-mail in order to seek additional clarification of certain comments made during the initial interview session and to obtain answers to additional

questions. Further, each participant received a final copy of her story in order to confirm that my interpretation of her story is a true representation of her identity and reality.

In this chapter, I portray the experiences/stories of my five participants. It is their stories that afford the reader the opportunity to see how the inner voice not only challenges but transforms one's life and the lives of those around her. Baddeley and Singer (2007) remind us that "life story is not simply an expression of the underlying construct of identity, but it is the fundamental way in which we know ourselves and to a large extent are known by others" (p. 178). Each participant's story is her experience that makes up her identity and her life—it is her way of knowing herself and it the reader's way of knowing them.

It is important to note that in narrative "people do not always begin at the beginning" (Riessman, 1993, p. 27) and that the narratives on the following pages are the voices of my participants through many different phases in their lives. My participants did not necessarily begin at the beginning. In order for their stories to flow, rearrangement of segments of their stories was necessary. However, I felt a huge responsibility to honor the voices of my participants and so it was very important to me to stay as close to their original comments as possible when presenting their stories. These narratives are how they view the past and the present as well as how their experiences and their inner voices have helped form meaning in their lives. The inner voice allows them to lead themselves.

Martha

Martha is the oldest of my participants. She is 65 years old. I have known Martha for just five years. She is a nurse. She worked for a short time in the medical field before transferring over to instructional nursing in 1980 at a college in Houston. She held a faculty position for twelve years and advanced into administration. During her last two years at the college she became the District's Director of Nursing. She helped create and organize a leadership program at the college. She also teaches Sunday school, and she is active in her church and has taken courses at an area religious center in order to become a spiritual advisor. She is married and the mother of two children and has six grandchildren. Martha is a member of my spirituality circle that was formed five years ago.

I have been to Martha's house many times, but today she greeted me at the front door with a "Life is Good" t-shirt and her running shorts on. She hits the jogging trails in her community every morning. Today, I was welcomed into her private sanctuary. It is her special room where she goes to write, to contemplate and to create her presentations for her spirituality workshops. It is very calm and peaceful. Religious icons grace the top of her desk and are on walls. Family pictures are mixed in with candles and lush green plants. Martha curled up on the sofa, and told me how excited she is to be a part of this research and to be able to talk about the inner voice, her inner voice. She begins:

First of all, my inner voice is not just one voice but several voices. There are three. The first voice is kind. It is kind and forgiving. I hear it say certain things such as "it is okay, Martha." Sometimes that voice is very quiet and I don't hear it that often. More often than not I hear the critical voice. The voice that comes through loud and clear and it tells me that I am being selfish, that I am being self-centered or perhaps I didn't act in the best interest of others.

That is the critical voice. And Diana, you also know that I believe in God. I try to act from my faith and I try to hear God's voice and remember that His voice is always the voice of encouragement. God's voice does not discourage me. I know on a head level when I hear the critical voice—the voice that is discouraging or diminishing or the voice that criticizes me—that is not a God voice. It is unfortunate that there is more emphasis on the critical voice.

But after all, I have come to realize that the critical voice is in place because of how I was raised. I know I have mentioned this in our circle, but that critical voice blossomed in the Catholic school environment. The critical voice I heard externally by the people in authority-I internalized it. The nuns could be so harsh and it seems as if they were harsher with the girls, and so you know it is no surprise to realize where that critical voice comes from. The critical voice was nurtured year after year in that type of setting. There was so much emphasis on a punitive God which thank goodness I have changed my view on that aspect, but I still have that critical voice in my head.

There is no question whatsoever on how my inner voice influences me, whether it be the kind, critical voice or God's voice. It influences me a lot and that is a good thing, unless it is the critical voice. My inner voice pushes me gently to be creative. There are days when I have to sit and write. I want to record what is going on in my life because how will others know what I have gone through if I don't write it down? Then there are days when I want to take pictures. I go nuts taking pictures of birds, of flowers or of the sunset. The positive voice is a feeling; the creative voice is a feeling. It is less head-involved. You know I am not a very spontaneous person, but when my inner voice or my inner intuition (whatever you want to call it) says to do something then I do it. If I sit and ruminate over it, my critical voice starts up and I won't do it. So yes, the kind voice, the God voice is very encouraging and it is a kinder and gentler way of

treating myself. But you know it has taken me sixty plus years to get to this point. No one will ever accuse me of being a quick study.

I don't have to sit and contemplate very long to answer your question about a person or persons who influenced me on the way I talk to myself. It is a huge question and there is some important background information that needs to be covered before I proceed, but that question is quite simple to answer.

My mother died seven days after I was born. I was an only child. My father decided that he could not take care of me, so my grandmother (my mother's mother) adopted me. My grandmother was fifty four at the time and widowed, and living with her were my single uncle and my two single aunts. So I was raised by these single adult relatives who never fought or never had any conflicts. It was one of my aunts who had a big influence on me. She never married. She never got out into the world. She lived with her mother and brother all of her life. You could say I had a very sheltered upbringing because no one came to the house-the only time I got to go out was to go to school.

I went to Catholic school for twelve years and that in and of itself was very sheltered. So, I am not surprised that I ended up being introverted, shy and unassertive. There was this priest who was instrumental in helping me get a scholarship to a Catholic college for the first couple of years and then I transferred to a nursing school. I became a nurse—it was that or a teacher. I really, really wanted to be an actress. That was the hidden, authentic Martha. But I came to realize that it would probably be easier to become a nurse or a teacher rather than an actress and socially acceptable too. Nursing is probably one of the big things that got me moving away from being introverted and unassertive—that probably saved my life because you must experience life when you're a nurse. You see what other people go through and you must speak for them and

you must speak up for them and be assertive. So that was good that I had those people, those events because they became my life savers. So I went off to the university and became a nurse.

In my heart I am a people pleaser and I feel that I am not assertive enough. So when I do speak up, I feel that I am being critical. The critical inner voice comes roaring to life. This is a challenge for me, but frankly one of the things that has helped is aging. I have reached a certain plateau and I say to myself if I don't give my voice on this who will ever know, who will ever know what I thought? Who would know what I wanted to do? Who will know how I felt about being a grandmother of six or how I felt on a particular day when my son was sick? Who will know if I don't give voice? My voice will be lost. And so I do a lot of inner work. I reflect and I listen and that is something I never had the opportunity of doing when I was raising my children. My main focus was getting them prepared to go out into the world. Life was so busy and hectic when they were growing up. That was an obstacle them—not being able to listen to my inner voice.

Another obstacle—well, I have longed considered that I am my own worst enemy. That is very trite to say but there it is. There is no doubt that I have been the biggest obstacle to myself. There you have it. I just see myself in what I have accomplished. Somebody has said that “we all lead small lives.” And it is true with me. I have never allowed myself to see the fullness of my dreams. That is changing but I still question my own desire. Part of that is because I have difficulty saying no to people or family members when they ask me to do things. I think about my husband and I can't think if he is an obstacle or not. That is really peculiar because in some ways he is and other ways he is not. I really have a lot of freedom in our marriage. Basically, I can do anything. I am involved in church activities, which is something that he absolutely thinks is foolish or hogwash. But yet he doesn't stop me. I don't think he is an obstacle but I know he is

not an encourager. Yes, most definitely the obstacles have been from within, whereas the achievements come from an outward perspective.

One of my biggest achievements, and one that I am very proud of, was one of my last efforts at the college to write a grant, to go after a really big grant. In order to do this, I had to call upon all of my relationships that I built up over the years at the college. I had to pull people from different disciplines, and I had to use my writing skills. It was a big, big project. It took a lot of effort, a lot of motivation, and it took a lot of self-talk to get me through the process. The whole process was an accumulation of what I had learned over the years. It allowed me to use my skills and talents. I was successful and it was the largest grant, up to that point, that the nursing program has ever received. That was one of my biggest achievements.

Next, on a very personal note, I would say for me returning to the church after being away from my faith for fifteen years would be an achievement. It was obvious that God came and got me. It has to go down as a meaningful thing. I have given you examples from the secular/material world of quote un-quote success in an environment like the college and then more on a personal note. When you talk to someone who is over sixty, there has to be more than one thing and I could go on and on, but you want to go home sometime soon.

The other thing that leaps to mind is that when my son, who was twenty-six at the time, came to me and told me he got a girl pregnant. I was appalled. It was the Catholic thing, and my Catholic upbringing kept telling me that it wasn't right. But the point is that I was able to overcome a lot and I was able to welcome the child into our family. The child was three months old at the time when I picked up the phone and called this young lady and told her I wanted to be in his life. That was a huge step for me. I still remember how difficult it was for me to put my hand on the phone and dial the number. I just kept thinking how I was raised and I thought it

wasn't right, but something inside of me told me that it would be okay. And so that is an achievement, to overcome deep-seated feelings that involved values and beliefs.

This moves into your question on leadership. There was a part of me when I looked at that question regarding leadership and if I saw myself as a leader of women. I wanted to say yes, yes, yes. I didn't have to think twice about that. But I did think about that and so the critical voice came swooping down to say "Now Martha, you're just that little Catholic school girl." There is that critical voice. Yes, yes, I do see myself as a leader of women, not all the time but more so by example. The nursing profession put me around women and so I became accustomed to leading in that area. Then I became a teacher and then I began to lead students in their learning. In the nursing field you have to lead yourself, you have to listen to your gut (your inner voice) and you have to move or act on it. That is a very interesting thing about the nursing profession—you can be one thing on the job and another person off the job.

As our interview session winds down, we sit in silence for a moment. We stare out the window into a courtyard filled with tropical plants, while the sun bathes the plants in warm rays, and Martha begins again:

I am so glad that you are doing this because, as I said earlier, I want to know how women our age think and feel. What makes them move forward, why do they stand still? We have many opportunities today, more than we had when we were growing up, more than our mothers ever had. And I am hoping that young women today find contentment earlier than what I did or you did.

There are a couple of things I want to say before we end. One is about my inner voice and the other is something that I talk about in my aging program. First, about my inner voice. I will tell you, for me, my inner voice is connected to nature. There is a jog I do just about every

morning where I go down and go across a bridge. I go over this bridge and the sun is coming up and there are pelicans and seagulls and water. I have become addicted to that and that for me is a communion with nature that I never had the whole time when I was raising my kids. I never paid attention to that. I never had the time. Now all of that connects me to my inner voice. You may not understand that, and I can't explain it. I am not sure I can articulate that but it does. At that very moment, what I see in nature brings me so close to my inner being and that brings me contentment.

Second, there is a favorite quote I use when I present my aging program and it states, "the things that are most personal are most universal." You know, I love to look at the group of people in the room and tell them something that I have angst over. I tell them I believe there is one or two of them that has done the same thing. And sure enough after the talk is over several people come up and tell me about one particular theme that resonated with them. They have done the same thing. So Diana, that is what is so great about our circle because it gives us the opportunity to hear what other women are thinking, what other women are saying to themselves.

I turned off the tape recorder, and I sat for a moment and thought of what has been said, and recorded. Wise words from a woman who has led herself for decades, but still wonders and questions. Her inner voice has been part of that process. She has reached this place and time and has found contentment in the midst of the chatter of the kind voice, the critical voice and the voice of God.

Francis

It was a job interview that brought me face-to-face with Francis in 1999. She was the interim dean of the Business Department at a local college where she has taught for the past thirty five years. After I accepted the adjunct teaching position, I got to know her on a personal level and was taken aback at how well she planned her life. However, her plans did not entail a surprise divorce. Her 35 year marriage was something she thought would last forever. She is 62 years old and the mother of two grown sons. She no longer holds an administrative position at the college, but she continues to teach full-time and has recently completed coursework in order to become a financial planner.

Francis prepared several days in advance for our interview. A large yellow legal pad filled with notes sat on the table. Her two large dogs, Bruin and Murphy, peered through the windows of the French doors, wanting to be inside the warm house. Their breath steamed up the windows on a cold February day. She chuckled and commented how both of them would love to be part of the interview process, but her attention turned to her legal pad and she began:

Well, I really had one thing in mind regarding the inner voice and I wrote down my thoughts on it, but then this morning something else came to mind. So I will give you several thoughts regarding this concept you are researching. I think my inner voice consists of feelings about situations or events. What I mean by that is that I experience uneasiness when I am talking with myself over difficult issues. This uneasiness is a process I must go through in order for me to get to the other side. This process may take hours or it may take days. I also think it is an uncomfortable feeling for me, and once I have processed through this I feel as if weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I hope you can understand that since you are the first person I have told this to. There are times I talk to myself about quitting something but I have decided I am not the

one to make such a decision-someone else is going to tell me that I am not qualified for this or qualified for that. When I have a conversation such as that with myself, there is an uneasy feeling I get inside. I don't like that feeling and I always make the decision to stop talking to myself about that issue.

Now this morning, as I was waiting for you, I was thinking some more about my inner voice and I connected visualization with it. I visualize quite often. I see myself doing things I have not accomplished yet. I actually see myself sitting, working with people in my financial career or whatever. And when I find something really difficult or I don't have time for what I am doing, I conjure up those images I've visualized and I keep marching forward.

My inner voice causes me to dwell on minute issues at times. It can slow me down. It causes me to worry. Sometimes it is a situation or event that has very little significance-I think, sometimes, it represents a lack of confidence-part of the inner voice is the lack of self-confidence. I am going to jump into my history here for just a little bit. You did such a great job with yours.

I was in parochial school from fourth to eighth grade. It was a Lutheran school. I started out in public, so I had the opportunity to develop a little bit more of self before I hit the really strict, stand up in front of everybody and tell us why you weren't in church yesterday or recite eight verses of a hymn. I also had a strict family. Strict is not bad but strict in a sense that I sometimes wanted to do something different and it was "No, we don't do it that way, we do it this way." Whether it was baking or cleaning the house or whatever it happened to be, it was always, "No, it is done this way." There is more than one way to bake or clean-to do all kinds of things. I grew up with that. And as far as college goes, it was my mom who felt from day one that I was going to go to college. I was going to be the first of her three children to get a college

education. I was the oldest. I have a younger brother and sister. My mom and dad did not go to college, and I never felt my parents enhanced my self-esteem. They never said “you can do it, you’re really great at what you do” or “you would be good at this.” There was never any of that in our household. I think me going to college was more of an esteem enhancer for my mother than anything else. She wanted to be able to say that she had a college-educated daughter. That was her drive and I think it was that more than her thinking “Oh, this is really going to make a good life for Francis.” My mom was the one who was there helping me out financially. She was great about that.

On the other hand, I don’t think my dad ever knew I was going to college. He was never involved in my life nor did he ever show interest in my life. He didn’t know what I did during the day when he left for work. He didn’t contribute financially, certainly there was no support. In fact, at one point in time, he basically said none of his children were college material. So without encouragement from my parents, my inner voice was and still can be very, very critical. My point being here is that dwelling on minuteness does represent the lack of self-confidence and that in turn causes me to have a very negative inner voice. Sometimes I have to tell my inner voice to be quiet—to shut-up. So I have this internal struggle that goes on frequently. I am always telling myself “you can do it” and then I turn it around and I tell myself “no I can’t do it.”

If I had to look at someone who influenced me and helped to bolster my inner voice, I would have to say there was never one person who intentionally did this. I can honestly say my parents unintentionally influenced me and then there was one of my high school teachers. She was just absolutely marvelous. I had a chance to work for this teacher. She let me grade papers and do all sorts of things for her. She allowed me to see what it was like to be a teacher, although she never came right out and said “you should to do this,” but I put those pieces together. So I

worked for her and it was a marvelous experience. I really think when I went to the community college that that experience helped me have direction and incentive to get all my general education out of the way and then when I went to the university I went right into Business Education, receiving a bachelors and a masters degree in that field. Once I got my degrees out of the way, I began working at one of the pharmaceutical companies in the area for a short time, and then I accepted a teaching position at the community college. I have been there ever since.

You could basically say my life was moving along quite smoothly. I was traveling down a nice neat path. I got married one month after I graduated from the university, and I started teaching two weeks after we got married. My husband and I bought this house out here in the country and we had our sons. My life was rosy. I was happy, I was content. Don't get me wrong-there were challenging times, but I worked through them. But nothing could have prepared me for the huge, absolutely huge, turning point in my life the week before Easter in 1998. On the Monday before Easter, my husband went to buy the ham for our Easter dinner and on Good Friday I came downstairs to see him and his girlfriend standing right there in our kitchen. By Sunday all of his belongings were packed and he took off down the road. In seven days I had fallen down. My world no longer existed in the manner I had become accustomed to. You asked about an obstacle in my life that I had to overcome, well, this was certainly it. My self-talk was going in so many different directions.

First of all, I realized that it is very important to me to keep my nest in order and what I mean by that is my life. I have this need to have everything in place and when things get a little out of balance in my nest it really throws me. That is not a good thing. It is something that I am always working on. For about fifty years of my life I was able to keep that nest in order, in balance. So it was very, very difficult for me when my husband left to take really good care of

myself. I couldn't sleep at night. I wasn't eating. I just lost everything, but I managed to keep my mind and my thoughts together. I told myself that I was not going to accept anything but the best from all of this. My inner voice kept saying "I will not accept this." I became comfortable with that and the interesting part was that I was comfortable for myself. I had a great teaching job and I could have walked away from that and said I would be fine but I thought of my two sons. That was part of my nest that was so out of balance. My oldest son was getting ready to go away to college and there was no college fund for him. My second son had a full time job and was struggling with how he was going to fit into the world at that time. So my nest was out of balance and that, more than anything, bothered me. So I don't know—a lot was going through my mind.

Nothing prepared me for that obstacle, but I have gotten through that and I can honestly say that my nest is back in order. But from that challenge I have come face to face with another one and that is life on my own. Probably one of the things that has been very, very different for me is that I have a strong desire to be connected and yet I want to be alone. I know that is really complex, but after ten years I still talk to myself about this connectedness versus aloneness. How do I balance this? I feel that is work for me. I have to put an effort into it. I am not sure at this point where I am going with it. It is a day to day thing. Some days it is a little harder and through visualization and talking myself through these situations it eventually lifts and goes away. It is not as if I am totally down during this time. I am still going through the motions. I am cleaning the house, I am grocery shopping and doing the things I need to do but I really don't know why I put myself through that. It would be nice if it was gone all the time. But it could possibly be my reality check, the thing that basically keeps me in balance and helps me to understand that it is okay to be alone.

I am pleased that I can recognize these obstacles and not let them overcome me. It is work to look at what has taken place and realize that through challenges and obstacles comes achievement. You asked me to talk about one or two achievements but I have four that are very important to me, so I will talk about four achievements.

First, I will start with the one that is very important to me and that is having and raising my two sons. I would have daily conversations with myself about good parenting and what that was like. I wanted to be a good mother. I wanted to be their friend. I wanted to accept their differences and I wanted to celebrate their differences. I wanted to do all those kinds of things. And sometimes that was challenging for me since I really couldn't rely on how my parents parented me. And so I had to find my own way, even though I questioned when I did those kinds of things, but I really feel that my sons have grown into two wonderful young men. They don't always do what I want, but there is a joy to see their independence and how they define themselves. And that was not always easy since their dad had no goals for them or no viewpoint as to how they should be raised. So when you have two people who are not on the same page regarding child rearing, it can be difficult to accomplish something.

Second, finishing college and receiving my degrees. There were obstacles I had to overcome. Like I said previously, I really didn't have the parent support system I needed. If I went, I went. If I didn't I didn't. My dad never helped out financially and my mom was there with a little more money. She worked really hard since money wasn't too plentiful in my family.

Third is my financial independence. Ten years ago when I walked down to this kitchen and saw my husband standing there with his girlfriend, I probably had \$200 in my savings account. Fortunately the legal system was very fair to me. But if I hadn't managed what I had well, I wouldn't be sitting here today. So I call it a financial independence in part. That has

always been a part of me to pay my bills on time and stay on top of things. I was able to think about extra work when I needed to have the extra work. I was able to plan and have a vision. Then again that vision was that I was here in this house. The vision wasn't that I would sell this [the house] I couldn't see myself anyplace else. Oh, I have hit on visualization again, so I see myself as financially independent. I realize that life happens and at any point in time life could change and take things away from me and then I am back to that chaotic state to where my nest just gets blown up again. That is what I have to deal with and I keep telling myself that I will be okay.

Fourth is my financial career. This is very new for me. I am excited about this and I am looking forward to seeing how this will play out. But the whole process of learning about financial planning was challenging. When it was time to get my securities license I did not receive any help or guidance from the individuals I was working with at the time. They said there were no books, there was no detailed way to study. It was a nightmare exam for me and I had to get 100%. The exam was four hours long. I worked for three hours and fifty six minutes before I passed it. There were so many times during that block of time that I felt like pushing my chair back and saying "I don't need this." I felt unprepared and angry because I know how to prepare, but I didn't get any guidance. But the one thing I kept saying to myself is that I was not going to walk out. I will not walk out of this room under any circumstance other than the exam being completed and done. So I guess that was my strong inner voice talking—I passed the exam. I am proud of that achievement and I look forward to helping people plan for their financial future. I want to give them as much information as they need in order to make good, sound decisions.

I guess that is exactly what I do in the classroom at the college. I want to give my students relevant information that will benefit them in their careers as well as their personal lives.

And so basically I see myself as a leader in the classroom. I think that comes from education. Education is a very kind field, that is a good thing, but I am not sure how my leadership skills would play out in certain industries at my age. I am fortunate that I see myself as a leader—a business professional. But right now I feel I do not have the leadership skills I need to be a leader in the financial field. And I don't think the leadership skills from the classroom are the same as they would be in the financial field. I am really struggling with that. I question that. Perhaps that is the critical voice I hear telling me that those leadership skills are non-transferable. I wish the inner voice would be quiet. I listen to people talk at the college and there are many who look up to me and place me in that leadership category because I speak up when I see injustice. I sit on several boards and I am the treasurer of two organizations. I have organized mission trips at my church and because of my financial common sense I can do this. So leadership entails many of the things I just spoke about but it is placing myself as a leader outside the classroom that is challenging for me.

There are some mornings I wake up and stretch and smile and I just say to myself that everything is just perfect, the world is just perfect. I know that is a terribly rosy view, but I think I had that as a child as well even though my upbringing wasn't very rosy. I've been called Pollyanna by some of my neighbors. But I think that has served me well. There is something I wrote down but I haven't shared with you yet. A lot of things make me happy and if something is going on that makes me sad—there are times too where I sit and cry over those problems. But that weight that comes on my shoulders regarding the situation that I am sad about can only last so long. Then I think about what makes me happy and I cut the losses. However, I do struggle before I cut the losses. I realize I need balance. My inner voice is a critical companion during

those sad times, but then there is another side to my inner voice and that is the voice that allows me to see just how perfect my world is.

After a long pause, Francis looks out on her snow-covered deck. The dogs with their big brown, sad eyes are begging to come into the warm house. Our interview is over, our tea cups are empty. Francis folds over her pages and pages of notes. She has shared with me her personal inner thoughts on how she moves past challenges and obstacles and how her achievements keep moving her life forward. The woman who interviewed me for a teaching position knows what direction she is going in life. She recognizes that her inner voice can be cynical or it can be encouraging. Her insight brings her understanding and she is certain that there will be more obstacles in life. But one thing is for certain right now and that she is content in her big house in the country. Even though she has faced many obstacles in her life, she says, with a sigh of relief:

I've kept my nest intact and that is what is important to me.

Josey

Josey and I became acquainted in 1990 while we were working on our undergraduate degrees. We were drawn to each other like magnets since we were the only nontraditional students in the classroom. Josey, who is 56, never thought she would sit in a college classroom.

Her life did not turn out the way she had planned. She married at the age of 17, had two children and was divorced by the time she was 33. She remarried and had another child. Her current husband encouraged her to go to the university and begin work towards a degree. Josey is now a limited-licensed psychologist.

Josey is currently the Clinical Director for a family and children's services organization in lower Michigan. She carries out the numerous administrative duties for the organization and she supervises a large clinical staff. She no longer counsels individuals but she does grief support for her church. I met with Josey at one of the local centers. She reserved a counseling room for our interview session. The room she picked was filled with a comfortable sofa, and tables and chairs. A pile of children's toys were stacked in the corner of the room. White noise filled the room. Josey waited for me to begin with the interview prompt. After a long pause, she summoned her thoughts and began to speak:

I actually consider my definition of the inner voice similar to how you have defined the inner voice. It is an internal knowing-internal noise. Sometimes it is with words, sometimes not. It is a feeling that directs my thoughts and has an impact on my thoughts, which ultimately influences my feelings or my behavior. I feel my inner voice influences what I do all the time, and I can honestly say it is constant. You asked me to think about events, people, or challenges that have influenced this inner voice, and I can honestly say there are multiple events and people that have impacted my inner voice, all at different stages of my life. We could be here for a long,

long time if I covered all of them, but for brevity's sake, I will address the ones that really have had a major impact on my life as a child and as an adult.

When I read your story, it took me back to think about the different events, people and situations that directed my path in a certain way. Yes, there have been many challenges, some big obstacles to where I struggled to make sense out of what was going on. I believe many people do this and by going backwards [reflecting] it allows me to make sense out of the present. We rely on our frame of reference, our past experiences.

I recall a particular situation to where my inner voice challenged me at every turn. It was well over fourteen years ago and my son, who was sixteen at the time, got his fifteen-year-old girlfriend pregnant. Oh, there was so much self-talk and most of it revolved around my own values, it revolved around what would be best for my son, what would be best for this young woman. There was talk about putting the child up for adoption. It was really a struggle for me. The decisions that needed to be made would not only alter my son's life, but my whole family's life. At the time I was just coming out of a women's studies program at the university and I was working on my master's program. I was very attuned as to what part I should play in supporting my son's girlfriend—another female. I felt I had this obligation to support other women. I knew the environment that this young lady came from and I wanted to nurture and protect her. So there were a lot of things going on for me at that time. My self-talk was the impact of my thoughts of what my mother was going to say about this situation and how this was going to impact the greater family. The biggest question that kept rattling through my mind was if my son and his girlfriend released the baby for adoption, would I always wonder every time I passed a child in public, would that child be my grandchild? How would I feel about that and could I live with that? That was my self-talk. So, gosh, that one was a combination of many different thoughts

and feelings. And those thoughts impacted that decision. When I told my son that we, my husband and I, would raise his child, I knew that decision would alter my life. But then again it was already altered, regardless of what decision they made or we made. There were lots of those situations in my life.

As I was reading your story, I was thinking back to school. I had a very rough start in school. In kindergarten I was sick most of the time. I hated school. In first grade I probably missed more school than I went. Although I never had the experience of low grades. In school I was an overachiever. I was, however, the obese child. I was fat as I was tall. I got teased for that. I didn't have friends for that reason. I was incredibly anxious and there were several embarrassing experiences in grade school that I will never forget and I am certain other people will long remember. But there was a major turning point for me in sixth grade. I had a teacher, a male teacher, who asked me to tutor some younger kids. It was a program where older kids helped to mentor younger kids. I loved it, and I think that was a major turning point for me and I could say that this teacher influenced me to recognize that I had something to give. I recall that event quite often when I really get down on myself. Even with that positive event, at the end of each day it seemed that I would always tell my teacher that I wouldn't be back tomorrow. Which I laugh about now because there is a piece of me that still says that in certain situations.

Yes, I won't be back tomorrow—a thought that rolls around quite often. I didn't feel good about myself as a child. I was raised to believe that the world was a scary place and the only safety was at home. That experience has been a real contributing factor to my self-talk. My mom raised me to fear the world and that I didn't have the power to keep myself safe. We were always told not to trust other people—people were not to be trusted. My family approached life in that manner. We never participated in anything outside of church. However, my mother learned after

I was sexually molested by a man at our church that the church wasn't even a safe place to go. What is unfortunate for my mother is that fear has imprisoned her to this day. As my mom has gotten older the fears have gotten worse and in some way that has directed my path. I fight against that. I tell myself I will not be imprisoned by her fears. But that didn't actually change until after my divorce.

My divorce, I think, was the beginning. I could not let those fears overtake me. Once I thought I had control over one situation, I came face to face with another challenge and my inner voice spoke up loud and clear. After I got remarried, my husband encouraged me to enroll at the university and that became a huge challenge. All of the fears that I had been indoctrinated with as a child were my constant companion. My inner voice was so negative, so critical. It was as if I constantly heard my mother telling me what I shouldn't do. I clearly remember that it took so much energy for me to register. The first day of class, I didn't think I could go. I was so sick to my stomach, I was like that little kid back in elementary school. My husband actually took time off from work to walk me to my classes. He helped me go in. That was a huge challenge.

Every moment, every class, and every exam all became a test of who I was not, what I could or could not do. The self-talk for me was the worst—I always thought about what others would think about me, what my work represented, was my work going to be enough to get me through. I fought against that and I continue to fight against that today. Why would I work the crazy amount of time that I do work? Knowing what I know now, starting every day telling myself that my life is completely unbalanced, but it is a driving force behind my self-talk and it involves my core beliefs. Sometimes the self-talk is just bad words and sometimes it is just bad feelings. I can't put words to it, but it is that drive—it drives me to do something and I don't even know why at times. That is why I say that, at times, there are no words for my inner voice. It is

as if you can't put words to your inner voice, your thoughts. It is just a knowing or a not knowing for me. It is when enough is enough and your body, your mind, knows that there is nothing more to do about it, other than just letting it go.

At times I am still that little girl who keeps asking "what in the heck have I done now?" You know, there are times when I have wanted to say yes to things, but I have said no. And then there are many times I say yes only because I am afraid to say no. I begin to wonder what other people would say about me saying no. So I am very conscious about other people and their viewpoint about me. This is one of my personal challenges. It has always been a challenge for me to be able to say no. I think it is getting easier as I get older and gain experience. Do I still say yes when I want to say no. Certainly. But I have noticed in the last few years, I would say since I have turned fifty, that saying no more often isn't so difficult. Sometimes I feel okay about it. I am not to the point where I would like to be, but I am getting there, much more than I was in the past.

There are times when I tell myself to stop ruminating on the negative side. I can get in a thought pattern where I will have to tell myself to stop it. I have to do this when I am having a panic attack. I have had panic attacks since I was a child and I still have them. I have learned that I can disengage from them with my self-talk. So I am very conscientious and I will tell myself "stop, you are safe." That is the central theme of the panic attacks when they start to come. I tell myself that I am safe, and I redirect my thoughts in order to stop them completely.

I would consider that a big achievement in my life and it is one that I have to constantly work on. As for other achievements in my life, I really didn't give that question too much attention. It is difficult for me to look at my achievements. I don't know why. However, I can speak about several. One, taking the director's position here at the clinic, but I need to back up a

bit with my story. I was offered this current position four weeks after I began a counseling position at another clinic. That position was one that I really didn't want and I had the courage to tell my boss that I was quitting. I was very skeptical when they offered me this position and I didn't know if I could accomplish what the CEO wanted me to do because it wasn't counseling, it was directing a counseling center. At the beginning there was a major project I needed to complete and that was a big challenge for me, but through the whole process, I stayed focused and told myself that I could do it. The project got completed and it was extremely successful. I believed in myself, and I told myself that I could do anything I set my mind to and I worked hard to complete it. That felt really good.

A second achievement that took place recently has to do with my former husband dying. I made a decision that involved me moving towards forgiveness. My decision would support him and support our children. So in September, when I got the call from my daughter that her dad was very ill, I decided I would go and see him. I drove to Alabama by myself and that was something that I have never done before. My decision to do this made a big difference in how the rest of the events went. I relinquished eighteen years of anger, jealousy, hurt, and confusion. I moved into a place that I am proud of. I was able to move to this place where I was supporting him as a person and all the other stuff didn't matter anymore. It was just about healing and being there for someone else at that moment. There were a lot of challenges in doing what I did. The first big challenge was driving by myself since that is usually when I have my panic attacks. I was scared to death, but I kept telling myself that it was important for my growth, it was important for our children. And second, I thought of my former husband—a person who needed others at a very difficult time. My self-talk is probably what drives me in many of my quick decisions. There is really no head thinking. I didn't allow myself the time to ruminate about

“what if.” I believed a door opened for me for a reason and I needed to take a look. And I did and I am proud I did what I did.

You know when I look back and reflect upon my story, I think it is so strange. I see this fearful little girl growing up in this fearful household and what has changed. I still have fears but I know how to handle those fears. I still have my inner voice and it can be critical at times but I can also hear an inner voice that is encouraging me. In high school I remember telling my high school guidance counselor that I wanted to be a psychiatrist when I grew up and she told me that wouldn't be possible because I wouldn't be able to be married and have children. She suggested that I be a nurse or a teacher, so I said I would be a nurse. My mom wanted me to be a nurse and of course I tried that but I hated it. I think it is so important for women to hear other women's stories. It always looks so easy to view other women and how they handle life, but when you read about what they go through on an everyday basis, on a personal level, I begin to realize how much everyone goes through. It just isn't me that has to face challenges and obstacles—everyone faces challenges and obstacles.

I look at my two daughters. One is eighteen and the other is thirty-three and I hope that it is different for them. I want it to be different for them. However, in some respects, it is still the same. My youngest is at the university and working towards her dream, but I still see so much of myself in her—her insecurities. She is constantly questioning herself, so is her inner voice the same inner voice that I hear? I have always hoped that I raised her to have strength and courage and that would get her through any major obstacles in life, but in reality we [Josey] cannot protect her from everything, just like my mother couldn't protect me from everything she feared.

The same holds true for my oldest daughter, who has done some incredible things, independent things, some crazy things. But sadly, for her she still has that inner voice of

insecurity. So I wonder if that is the whole purpose behind the inner voice: for us to question? This questioning allows us to face challenges, just as you have stated, it can cause us to stand still or it can project us forward. I find that interesting. I believe what it comes down to is a belief in oneself. I read something recently and it said that the opposite of courage is not cowardice but it is conformity. I have to believe that you have to be able to see your dreams, cast your vision and believe it to happen. It is true—it takes a lot of courage to do anything other than just conform. You have to believe enough in yourself to do whatever it is and know if you fail you can pick yourself up, and if you fail it is not about who you are. You can fail and not be a failure. It takes a whole lot of belief to move forward and I am not there yet. I am still a work in progress.

Laughter fills the room with Josey's last comment and the white noise fills the silence. Josey's dream of becoming a psychiatrist never came to fruition but she moved forward when people told her she couldn't. She continues to move forward despite challenges and obstacles in her life. She still questions and has uncertainty but she also has courage; she still has belief in herself and she keeps moving forward because she is a work in progress.

Elizabeth

I first met Elizabeth in 1993 when I took a position with a non-profit organization. I worked closely with her in planning and organizing conferences in and out of state. Elizabeth, who is 64, is a conference meeting planner. She has an Associated Degree from a local community college. Shortly after receiving her degree she worked for a brief period for a local cereal company and then for an area high school. Her professional career with her current organization began over twenty five years ago. Her entry-level position allowed her to gain valuable experience. She worked her way up the system throughout the years. She travels continually and is close to retiring from a job she loves. She would like to stay but realizes it is time to move on. She wants to plan for what she wants to do in her retirement because she does not want to just sit around. Elizabeth is the mother of four grown children and has nine grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. Her father passed away a week after this interview and so now she is the caretaker of her ailing mother.

The day I met with Elizabeth, I encountered a house filled with several of her rambunctious grandchildren. I didn't know how well the interview would go with all the noise, but to my relief we retreated to the garden level and all that could be heard were the patter of many little feet. Elizabeth sat facing a wall of glass. The view outside that window was one of a winter wonderland, a beautiful snow-covered frozen lake. She and her husband built this house on an remote lake out in the country over ten years ago. It is their retreat. As she gazes out the window, she seems mesmerized by the winter scenery and she began to talk softly and with much confidence about her inner voice:

I would define my inner voice as a subconscious voice, or it can also be feelings, that converses with me when there is a decision to be made or when I am faced with a challenge. It

can be positive or negative and my inner voice is very active when I am angry. My inner voice allows me to work through my anger and so I try to recognize both sides of my inner voice. There are times when I don't listen to it and that is unfortunate because I really think it gives me direction in the area I need to go. I sometimes get so busy and I don't have time to listen. I can't listen because I am so consumed with everyday activities. Although I feel that my inner voice has warned me on several occasions regarding my children, I went ahead and did what I wanted to do and unfortunately those situations turned out badly. There have been a couple of times it has been tragic. I will give you an example of one when I ignored my inner voice. My daughter got hurt in an automobile accident. I knew exactly what my inner voice was saying when she asked me to go with this group of friends. I felt very, very strange and my inner voice told me that she shouldn't go. It was there, but I chose not to listen and so it is this type of situation or event that makes me pay attention to my inner voice, to pay attention to that inner presence. And in order for me to pay attention to that voice or to those feelings, I realize that I need to actually be calm. I try to be very calm. I'll be honest, there are still times I ignore it. That is something I am always trying to improve on and that is being more conscientious about my inner voice and listening to it. But those previous situations have influenced me to pay attention to my inner voice – I will catch myself saying “remember, Elizabeth, what happened when I didn't listen.”

That is now, but when I was younger I can honestly say as a mother raising four small children, I seldom heard my inner voice. I was too busy raising the kids and doing all sorts of other motherly things. That is all I did, I was totally focused on being a mother and I knew that was my job and I had to do it well. I never heard my inner voice because I never had time. Quite honestly the first time that I ever remember hearing my inner voice was that day I spoke about previously and that is when my daughter wanted to go with her friends and she ended up in a

very bad accident. She was a junior in high school, so that is the first time I can actually say I heard my inner voice.

One thing I will mention about this inner voice, this inner presence, is that it causes me to think more about how I react to people and events and how I try to live each day. You may think this is strange that I say it is a funny presence. It is very hard for me to describe it to you. But it has influence on my feelings. It makes me think more on how I live my life and how I treat others. It is funny how it relates to that, it makes me think more before I act. It has that type of influence on me. Since I think more about it, I weigh more pros and cons and how my actions have an impact on my family and on other people, not just me.

You asked a very important question about a person who has had influence on me and the first person that comes to my mind is my mother. My mom is a person who has never said anything bad or negative about anyone. I grew up in a household that was extremely strict. My dad was very, very stern and he was not always a very pleasant person to be around. Matter of fact, he was very hard on all of us and especially very hard on my mother. And Diana, to this very day, my mother doesn't have one bad thing to say about my dad. On the other hand, I struggle a lot with his negativism. My mom always talked about her grandfather and she always told me that Grandpa would tell her "if you can't say anything nice about a person, then don't say anything at all." That was her philosophy and to this day she lives by that philosophy. I haven't always used her philosophy, but I have always kept it in the back of my mind. As I grow older I think more about it and I try to live by that.

When I was growing up my dad would tell me that it was silly for women to go to college and he would even questioned me as to why I would want to do such a thing. But he expected me to be perfect. I was the oldest and I was expected to be perfect. I was a very good student and

when I was in high school, something exciting happened to me in eleventh grade. I belonged to Junior Achievement and I was selected as President of the Year. It was the most wonderful thing for me because I was so introverted and when I got that award, I realized that I could do anything. I was going to go out and go to college and get into the workplace. My mom always supported me and my decision. And if I could mention a national event that influenced me at this time, it would have to be the women's movement. I am a strong proponent of women being treated equally and fairly especially in the workplace, and when I listened to what was taking place for women when I was a teenager that made my blood boil and I realized that women needed to be listened to and that they were not being treated fairly. I think that event is what causes me to really pay attention to that in the workplace today. I feel women have great strength and abilities and I believe that we need to encourage each other. Women bring so much to the table and I want to be the type of individual who influences women to do a good job. I want to be able to encourage them since I faced many challenges when I entered the workplace and many women encouraged me.

One major obstacle I had from the very beginning, since I was a child, was that I was introverted. Which now I can say I don't think I am much of an introvert anymore. I was very quiet. I didn't have a lot of friends and so I buried myself in books and focused on my schoolwork. But the award I received from Junior Achievement helped me so much in that area. I think it is funny because that award came from sales. I was a great salesperson but I was still an introvert, and I hid it pretty well most of the time. But I still have those challenges that come from being introverted. I would have to say that my husband has been a huge, huge help. He has always encouraged me to go for something beyond myself. And when I applied for my current job as a meeting planner, I was scared to death. When I applied for this job, I hardly ever

traveled. I have never flown on a plane in my entire life. I told my husband that I couldn't do it. I kept telling myself that I couldn't do it. My inner voice told me to be cautious, be careful and it was constantly going—it wouldn't shut up. My husband kept telling me to go for it. I got the job and I think that was a turning point for me. But I still question myself. I face that every single day. Some days it is easier than other days to overcome that questioning. But as I gain more confidence and walk away from some very successful conferences, my inner voice, the one that tells me to be cautious, to be careful, isn't so predominant. So it is the negative voice, the annoying voice that I try to ignore at times, but it is there, especially in car on the way to work, on the way home. It is my constant companion.

This obstacle I just spoke about is directly tied to my achievements. Becoming President of the Year for Junior Achievement set the wheels in motion for me. That was so exciting for me as a young woman. Of course, having four children and raising them and having them all become successful in their own way is a really big achievement for me. I worked very hard to raise them properly and give them direction. That was very important to me. When I was younger, I just thought that is exactly what I would do: I would grow up, get married and have children and I did a good job, although at times I questioned myself in that area, but don't all mothers do that?

I also think being successful in the business world is one of my achievements. The position I now have allows me to plan very, very large meetings and conferences. And when they turn out well and when everything goes right is a big achievement. There are some conferences that have over 600 attendees. These conferences may have over 14 different meetings going on at one time and there are many detailed pieces and I am very proud that I can manage that by myself with very little help. I am elated when people enjoy themselves and they get something out of the conference and the conference runs well. When I step outside these meetings I can

actually hear my inner voice telling me that I have done a good job. That is a wonderful feeling and that makes me want to continue to move forward and do even better. I wish that little encouraging voice would be around more often.

Diana, you brought up the question about women and leadership. There was something I did many, many years ago that I consider leadership. It was something I thought I would never be able to do and that was to volunteer to teach a class. It was second grade First Communion class. I enjoyed preparing for it and teaching it. I created little skits for the children to do for their parents and afterwards the parents came back to me and told me how wonderful it was and how much they loved it. But you know I didn't have the guts to do it again the following year. I felt as if I was in a leader-type role then and I felt good about it, but I just knew that it was something that I couldn't continue to do. Then I have trained several meeting planners; I have showed them what they need to do, and I feel very good and confident about that. In the past I wouldn't have felt like that and that comes from the achievements I have had in this area. So yes, I think I am more of a leader than I realize.

Yes, at this point in my life, in some ways, I feel as if I am a leader but not the stand out in front leader but the type of leader people look up to and depend on. It is funny because, recently at work, they mentioned self-leadership during a session and that concept seemed so foreign to me, but after reading and listening to you, I really understand what is meant by self-leadership and what it is all about. Do you have to be placed in a leadership position to be a leader? In fact, I wouldn't want to be given a leadership position or be voted in as a leader. There is something that I read about leadership and that is a good leader leads from the back. I have always remembered that and I feel strongly that way because my way of doing things is not to jump right in and tell people that this is the way it is going to be done because it is the way I

want it to be. No, I make my suggestion and I try to do it in such a way that others think it is their idea. I want everyone to be involved. It is not just my idea because that doesn't go over very well with people. I do not want to push, I am not pushy when it comes to being a leader.

Leadership takes place on so many different levels. When I first got married, I was very, very introverted, as I said previously, and I believed that my husband was clearly the leader, I just hung out in the background. He never made me feel that way, it is something I did to myself. He has always encouraged me and now it is much different. We lead together and I feel that I am a leader in our relationship. He asks for my advice and I ask him for advice. I am free to make decisions. I am the leader when it comes to dealing with my parents' affairs. My mother is ailing and my father is seriously ill. My brother and sister look up to me to make the important decisions. They expect that of me since I am the oldest. I feel I am a leader, a little bit more now, with my children. But I know I cannot judge or advise any one of them unless I have walked in their shoes. I can give them suggestions, ideas, and share my feelings, but I have to let them make their own decisions. So, yes, I am leading myself.

I have to make many decisions regarding my retirement, regarding my parents. I cannot let my husband or anyone else makes those decisions. I have to be willing and I know I am knowledgeable to do that on my own. I have to move forward. I actually believe that leaders come from the grassroots. People who basically have no clue that they are doing something for the common good of others, but watch the people around them react to what they are doing and then you begin to see what leadership is all about. I think that is where leading from the back comes in. That person standing out front is not necessarily a leader.

Elizabeth has given me insight into her personal world, how she sees herself and how she didn't recognize her inner voice until late in life. She has surpassed many obstacles in her life,

both personal and professional, and she looks at some of her obstacles as achievements. She is a woman of strength and courage and she is very successful. She views her achievements with much pride. However, as the interview entered the silent ending stage, she chuckled and told me that there is an event in her life that she isn't proud of and to this day she wishes she could change the outcome but cannot, but now, at least, she can laugh about it:

I used to be a good speller. I still am of course. But when I was younger I was really, really great in spelling. I was in this spelling bee in grade school. I used to win a lot of them. During this one contest, I was very confident and I was given the word STOPPED to spell. I knew how to spell it, but what came out of my mouth was STOPT. I couldn't believe it. I don't know why I spelled it like that. That lives with me to this day, but I can't do anything about it, but one thing is for certain and that is I never spelled that word wrong again.

Elizabeth has learned many lessons from her experiences in life. She also realizes that it is okay to talk about those lessons, even the embarrassing ones, the ones that we are not proud of. Elizabeth just wishes that she could just stop the critical inner voice when it comes to that spelling bee.

Mary

Although I have known Mary for over five decades, our lives have taken different paths. Mary is the youngest of my participants. She is 54, married and the mother of four grown children. Mary has two years of college and has been the secretary for her village's planning commission for the past nine years. Her life revolves around her family and the daily management and operation of over 500 hundred acres of fruit orchards in lower Michigan. Mary and her husband are quite aware of the plight of the small American family-run orchards that are dealing with the ever changing face of the farming industry. In order for them to succeed and survive, it is important for them to constantly search for innovative ways to keep the family run business viable for decades to come.

I met with Mary on a bitter cold February day. The wind was whipping the newly fallen snow in many directions. As I enter her house framed by countless barren fruit trees, there is warmth. I conducted our interview session at her dining room table which is often the scene of daily, noisy dinner sessions, but today there is stillness. Mary gazes off into the distance and she traces an imaginary pattern with her fingertips over the top of her table. As she begins, her eyes glisten with tears, she has opened the door into her private thoughts:

I first want to say that my inner voice is connected to my beliefs. I believe that we are all responsible for ourselves. I have thought about your definition and what you have asked me to talk about and I believe that my inner voice was influenced by the way I was raised—the environment I grew up in. But then too, I often think that it is not only nurture but nature. There are many events and situations that I have observed and I realize that it can be a mixture of both. There are some people that I have known who were raised in a loving, caring environment and received praise and compliments but then they have traveled down many horrible roads and

continue in a downward spiral. Whereas, on the other hand, I have known individuals who were raised in a horrible environment and received nothing but ridicule and they have risen above that. So my inner voice is my private thoughts that can keep me moving in a certain direction, and that direction can be either forward or backwards. My inner voice can be very, very critical or it can be very encouraging. I really wish the encouraging voice would be more prevalent but it isn't. So I have a belief I am the one that determines what direction I want to move towards, what inner voice I want to listen to.

I read your story with great interest, and I was moved by how you were treated by your teachers in school and I thought perhaps those situations, those events, made you determined to move beyond what they thought of you, what they said about you. It was your belief in yourself that made you who you are today. I can relate to some of those events you wrote about because I, too, went to a Catholic school and the way we were taught was far from educational or religiously correct. The nuns that instructed me believed in demeaning as a form of learning and we all know exactly what that can do to a person's self-image and a person's self-talk. Your story is an excellent example of that.

I was raised in a family environment that was chaotic, somewhat unstable. My mom was a strong-willed woman. Her faith in God, she was a devout Catholic, was what sustained her throughout her life. My father played a very small role in my life. He was hardly present. He was an alcoholic. I have three older sisters and my mother believed that her daughters should receive a Catholic education because it was supposed to be superior, but little did she realize what her daughters went through. However, I can honestly say I never received any encouragement from the nuns or priests, nor did I ever receive any encouragement from my parents. I was not influenced by any of them and I disagree with how I was taught—that is now. However, even at a

young age I realized that you do not degrade people and expect them to learn. I was so happy to get out of school. By the time I graduated from high school I had no idea what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I wasn't encouraged by the nuns or my parents to think about going to college. I wanted to go to interior decorating school in Wisconsin, but I knew my parents could not afford it, so I was a young woman with no direction. My mother suggested I take some computer courses since computers were becoming popular and there was a possibility that computers would become the wave of the future, but I found that thought of working with computers so boring. Yes, computers did become the wave of the future, as we all know, and perhaps I should have listened to my mom and took those courses, but I have done just fine. I have this belief that I can learn it on my own and that is exactly what I have done. I have told myself that I can do it even though it is confusing at times. I look at it as a challenge and I take pride in doing something on my own, but let me tell you I do talk to myself quite a bit when I am in front of those computers.

My thoughts influence me on what I can do and what I can't do. There are days, which I am certain everyone has, that I really have to talk to myself and put myself in a state of mind that allows me to accomplish what needs to be done. I don't want to sit around and wait for something to be done or have someone do something for me. I believe when you allow yourself to get into that type of situation then you allow others to take hold of your life and once again, I go back to my beliefs and that is I am responsible for myself. I tell myself I can do whatever I set my mind to do. Even though I was raised in a negative environment I have always thought that way. As I look back on my younger years, there was hardly anyone who influenced me. I could say my mom unintentionally influenced me. She was so determined and she persevered during so many challenging times. Even as I was growing up, I questioned [inner voice] what she was

doing and why she was staying in such an unfulfilling relationship. I would say she influenced me more through her actions than her words, but now as I am older I understand more now than ever before how her actions influenced my self-talk and it still does. I don't think, as children, we realize what our parents do for us or what our parents do to us. It isn't until later in life that we realize that growing up and raising children isn't a cakewalk and neither is life. There are no instructions. However, if I have to look at certain individuals who I could say have intentionally influenced me, there are two people who come immediately to mind. One is a good friend and the other is one of my older sisters.

My friend has been through so much. She has had many problems with her husband and her children. She is my age and she is a very smart woman, she did very well in school, but those qualities, those attributes, don't necessarily give her immunity to problems and challenges in life. Her marriage fell apart and her children challenged her during that whole process. It was during this difficult time that she had the willingness to talk about what was going on in her life. Many people, I feel, close up and they don't want anyone to know what is taking place in their lives during difficult times. We just want people to know the good things. I believe that by being open and being willing to talk about her challenges made her stronger. Currently, she is enrolled at the university and she has a good job. Her relationship with her children has improved and now she has balance in her life. I am drawn to this woman because in the face of adversity, she rose above those challenges. She is a strong woman. I believe we gravitate to people who we want to be around, people who have the same values, the same mindset. I like being around strong, positive women. It is this type of individual who influences me and what I do with my life. During challenging times, I think about my friend and I tell myself, if she can do it, so can I.

As for my sister, she is third in the birth order line and I am fourth. I can honestly say as we were growing up I had a good relationship with her. My sister and I never received any encouragement from our parents nor were we told to strive for anything beyond the norm. Her life followed the traditional route of that most young women of the sixties took: high school graduation, job, marriage, and children. I have seen her cry about and question many of the events in her life, but all in all she keeps moving forward. My sister is the only one in our family who has gotten divorced. She relinquished almost everything in order to get out of a marriage that was emotionally abusive. She had the courage to leave a marriage that was unfulfilling and so she struggled to stay on her feet financially, but in the midst of it all she stretched herself and survived. I watched her as she took entry-level jobs and went to the university to obtain a degree in order to better her life. Even when she was down, she encouraged her daughter through her college education. What influences me the most about my sister is that she is so willing to think outside the box and try new things. I really admire her for that. Most people give up when life throws them for a loop. My sister may question but she moves forward with confidence. I know that she is scared but she doesn't let that stand in her way. That is a trait that I admire in both women and men—that they are willing to try and do whatever it is that will make their life better and they do not expect other people to do it for them. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with people helping you, but you have to be willing to help yourself first. So I guess it goes back to being strong. My sister is a strong woman. I see everything that she has been through, and I realize that I have been influenced by strong women and during times in my life when I've been challenged, I feel her example and the example of my friend have allowed me to move forward. However, there have been times when I have done that with great trepidation.

I realize during challenging times that my inner voice hasn't been very encouraging or productive. During these times I really have to work to keep myself moving forward. Once I start with the negative self-talk, I feel I am in a downward spiral. My inner voice can be very, very critical and there are two events that I would consider pivotal events. They were big obstacles for me. One is on a personal level, whereas the second involved our family business.

On the personal level, it may not seem like a very big obstacle to you or to others but for me, breaking my leg and having four small children under the age of ten was definitely a challenge. I remember my self-talk and I continuously questioned myself as to how was I going to do all the mothering and all the events related to that. I never realized that I would have to let go of many habits that I became accustomed to doing. I remember sitting and watching the laundry pile up. There were toys all over the place and the beds didn't get made. People were helping but they didn't do it the way I wanted it done. I remember saying to myself "No, no, it isn't done like that." However, I never said anything because I didn't want to insult the people who were helping me. I remember the nurse at the hospital telling me not to worry about anything, and I remember saying to myself that she had to be crazy. I was the mother of four small children and there was a household that needed my attention, but her words lingered in my mind. I learned what my limitations were, both physically and mentally, during this time. Breaking my leg made me learn that things don't always have to be done the way I want them to be done. So my self-talk during that challenging time really had to change and I had to keep telling myself that everything will be okay, and of course it was. Even though that personal experience was behind me, and I learned a lot about myself and what I was capable of doing, I don't think it actually prepared me for the challenge that came several years later regarding our business.

There was a very difficult time not only for me but for our whole business. We were involved with a lawsuit with our township and everyday life was challenging. People who we thought were our friends turned against us. People in our village talked about us and all of my self-talk was negative. I began to be disenchanted with the whole legal system, I began to dislike people, and I began to wish that misfortune would come the way of those who no longer wanted to be our friends or who thought we were wrong in pursuing the lawsuit. My everyday life was consumed in negativity and then I came to realize how I was feeling and how unproductive my self-talk was. It was eating me up inside and I just couldn't do it anymore. I slowly turned my self-talk around. The lawsuit was lengthy but it all turned out okay. We made friends and we lost friends, but one thing I truly learned from that situation and that is how I see things and how I worked through things that make the difference. I intentionally decided to turn this situation around and I achieved at making my life better.

Each of these events, now that I look back on them, was consumed with a lot of self-talk. At the beginning of both events my self-talk was filled with a lot of shoulds: "I should do this," "I should do that" or "I shouldn't." But after so long, the negativity and the ill feelings that come from that type of thinking, and I feel as if I am missing out on some of the pleasures of everyday life. Those two events stay close to me and I use them as reference points when I am faced with challenges in the present.

I have achieved at many things in life and I feel that some of the challenging situations have been examples for my four children. I am very proud of my children and what they have accomplished in their lives. It is an achievement for me to watch them as they grow, but also guiding them as they grow. I know as a parent, I have questioned myself about what I do with them and for them. My self-talk questions my decisions, but when I look at all four of them now

and how they have grown into responsible adults, who are educated and care not only about themselves but their world, then I realize that my self-talk can be exasperating at times and that I really shouldn't second-guess myself and my decisions.

I never would have thought when I graduated from high school that I would be a part of a family-run business. These orchards have been in my husband's family since 1952. So many things in farming/agriculture have changed over the years and we are constantly learning new concepts on how to do things better in this business and with the unknown there comes uncertainty and so I question. But then I stop and I listen to my inner voice and what it is telling me and I realize that it will all be okay. Once again I tell myself that it will be okay. I direct myself. I don't want to get into that habit of saying "I can't do this or we can't do this." I know someone like that and I think it is so sad that she lets her life be dictated by what she tells herself and that is she can't. What makes the difference is that I move on. I have goals and dreams of what I want out of life and it is my self-talk that directs me towards those goals.

Basically, it all comes down to motivation—where I want to go, what I want to do. No, Diana, I have never considered myself a designated leader, but let me explain why I say that. In this family-run business everyone wants a say, everyone wants their decision to be the right decision, and everyone wants to lead. Everyone in the family who actively participates in this business is a leader in his or her own right. We all have certain parts and we realize that the parts connect the whole and it is the whole that sustains our family and our business. I can honestly say that I lead myself. I know I do and by doing so I influence my husband and my children and perhaps I influence other people that I may or may not know very well. This whole process of speaking with you has made me realize how important it is to recognize my self-talk and what that self-talk can do regarding me moving forward or just standing still. I have seen

and done many things in my life and I have been influenced in many different ways by events and people. I have a choice on how I respond and react and that choice determines the outcome. My inner voice plays a major role in those choices and I realize that the inner voice can be a good thing and it can also be an annoying thing. It is totally up to me on what voice I want to listen to.

I told you at the beginning of the interview that my father was an alcoholic for most of my life. Fortunately, my dad died twenty years sober through the help of AA. And I remember at his funeral when a man approached my mother and told her how much my dad influenced him and helped him in AA. I realize we come into this life with many things to offer—we all have something to offer. We may not realize it at the time that we are giving something to others because we are just being and doing what we think is best, but in reality we are motivating and elevating others. There is a quote by Erma Bombeck that states, “When I stand before God at the end of my life, I hope I could say I used everything you gave me.” I mention this because I want to use what I have been given in a way that not only motivates and elevates me but in some special way motivates and elevates others. I want to lead myself and when it comes down to it, yes, I am leading myself by what I do and what I say to myself. I realize now what you mean by self-leadership. We don’t go anywhere in life by just sitting and hoping for someone to come along and make our life better. I am the one who makes her life better.

Mary and I sit in silence for a few moments. Her personal thoughts have become embedded in my memory, her words recorded. Mary spoke about being influenced by strong women and how certain events have become a springboard for how she moves forward with her life. Her story, however brief, contains valuable insight to how this woman is leading herself

and how events and certain people in her life have given her courage and strength to meet the challenges and obstacles she faces in life.

Summary

This research permitted me to delve deeply into the layers of the phenomena of the inner voice and how it relates to self-leadership. This research encouraged a strong sense of connection between me and my participants. Their stories reveal how their inner voice plays a major role in how they lead themselves in everyday life. When I began the interview process, I kept a journal of my thoughts regarding the interviews. I look upon these journals entries as a roadmap. I had a starting point and I had an end point. During this journey my inner voice was very active. I questioned but at the same time I was enlightened. My questions related to the whole interview process. Was I asking the right questions? Was I getting the right information? Was I getting enough information that would permit me to give a strong, accurate interpretation? On the other hand, my enlightenment came from hearing bits and pieces of my participants' stories that mirrored my own autoethnography. Listening to my participants talk about their inner voice and how they lead themselves became a picturesque lookout for me. I saw differences and I saw similarities. Their journeys, as well as mine, are dotted with mile markers that signify advancements and obstacles. When we were younger we moved quite quickly on our journeys, rarely having the time to recognize our inner voice. Now that we have grown in knowledge, wisdom and experience, the journey still moves quite rapidly, but we are more attuned to our inner voice. Our inner voice is our constant companion in life. Our inner voice allows us to make sense out of our world and in the process we begin to see who we really are and how we are leading ourselves. I have come to understand through this process that we are not only leading ourselves but we are leading others through our examples. The following chapter contains my

interpretive essay which considers my thesis in light of the themes that emerged from the literature, the results of my interviews and my autoethnography.

Interpretative Essay

The greatest gift is to give people your enlightenment, to share it.
It has to be the greatest.
Buddha

The purpose of this study is to explore the issue of the inner voice and the influence it has on women's self-leadership. All of the participants, five women from various age levels, educational levels, career backgrounds, graciously accepted my invitation to discuss their inner voices and how it influences them in their lives. The collection of their stories and my personal knowledge of my participants adds to the credibility of my research findings. I pursued several lines of inquiry. Before the interviews took place, each woman received the pre-established set of questions and the interview prompt, along with my autoethnography. I did not determine any specific precedence regarding how the questions or how the interview should be conducted. The first line of inquiry dealt with my participants' definitions of the inner voice. Second, they spoke about the influences, challenges and obstacles they have encountered in their lives. Lastly they dealt with the aspect of leadership.

In this chapter, I will present an interpretive essay in a literary style, which is in accord with narrative inquiry (Ricoeur, 1988). In this text I will consider my thesis which is we can more fully understand how women leaders lead themselves and lead in society if we more fully understand their stories and experiences regarding their inner voices. This essay is my own interpretation and if seen through other eyes it may be interpreted differently. I will take into consideration the themes emerging from the literature, the results from my interviews with participants and my autoethnography. Each woman's story is unique. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) they are "both living their stories in an ongoing experiential text and telling their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others" (p. 4). Each

woman's story is a part of her life. It makes up who she is and it will allow one to see and hear where she is going and how she leads herself and the influence the inner voice has on that process.

Someone once told me that no one would ever be willing to sit and talk to me about his or her inner voice. It would be too personal and there would be a high risk of vulnerability that would make an individual uncomfortable. I contemplated that comment and I wondered if I knew the person well, would it be different? Would he or she be willing? Sitting across from these five women, all at different times, I looked at the faces and into the eyes of women whom I have known for a total of 101 years. We became friends through family, through school, through work and through education. In the past I have sat with and talked with them on many different occasions. I have heard stories about their children, their jobs, their vacations and their health issues. I have been a part of joyous occasions as well as sorrowful ones. I have always thought of my participants as strong women. Nothing could stand in their way. I only heard bits and pieces about their current lives when I met them, so it was my research that would bring me closer to many other aspects of their lives and their personal thoughts.

We have traveled down many different roads in life and experienced achievements as well as challenges. These five women allowed me to record their thoughts. They allowed me to enter a door into their private sanctuaries. Their stories became a bridge for me, and according to Atkinson (2007) it allowed me to see "an individual life in its parts to seeing it as a whole" (p. 238). I got to hear about how challenges affected them, and how achievements influenced them. Their stories are sacred and a very important part of each woman. They spoke about family and about events that shaped their lives, what influenced them and how they lead themselves. Their telling of their stories confirms how they got to this place in time and Bateson (1989) confirms

that “we grow in dialogue, not only in the rare intensity of passionate collaboration, but through a multiplicity of forms of friendship and collegiality” (p. 94). It is everyday ordinary language that helps to create vivid images of life (Dissanayake, 1995). These women have created, and continue to create, a life that is enriched because they have intentionally chosen to listen to their inner voice and move beyond obstacles and lead themselves. Their stories confirmed for me that the inner voice is a constant companion. It can be a friend as well as a foe. Elizabeth commented at the end of her interview that we can learn from others only if we talk about our experiences and share them. I share my interpretation of those experiences with my reader.

The Inner Voice

The self is formed and/or created by events, by relationships, by influence and by the language that created the stories told to us by our parents and the stories we have told about ourselves. Our life stories are comprised of those events. For my five participants and me, our relationships, whether with family, friends or colleagues, have a significant impact on our growth and personal development. Even though our inner voice was not recognized until later in our adult lives, due to a pivotal event, it has played a major role in who we are today, and how we look at life and how we accept challenges and lead ourselves.

Our inner voice is a vehicle for our thoughts. For everyone it plays a preparatory function for our external communication (Sokolov, 1972). My participants acknowledged that their inner voices are constant and it affects their feelings and behavior. From this research, I have determined that the inner voice can be placed in five different categories such as: a critical voice, a feeling voice that directs their thoughts or actions, a motivating voice, a challenging voice, and lastly, an encouraging, caring and forgiving voice. These categories identify an integral part of

inner voice which is an important psychological activity that is used daily and in a variety of ways (Morin, 1993).

My participants described the categories as follows:

1. The critical voice is the most difficult voice to deal with and the most difficult one to turn off during challenging situations. It is the voice that steps up to the plate with a constant litany of cannots or it is the voice that demands “who do you think you are?” For my participants, the critical voice drains the self of its courage and strength. For Mary stated, “Listening to the critical voice drains me of all of my energy and I have nothing more to give when I allow the critical voice to rule my day or the situation.” It is the critical voice she hears when she stands and wallows in all past failures. It is during this stage that she becomes frozen in the past. It is the critical voice that pulls all of my participants down and causes them to view their lives as bothersome or unrewarding. During this stage, they realized that they question more than usual. It is this questioning that turns into a substantial what if session. These sessions became a springboard for many different types of scenarios and they become magnified; and the decisions made during this time, more than likely, lead them down the wrong path. By constantly listening to their critical inner voice, several of my participants believed that they were not living their lives to the fullest. So this inner voice wears them down and causes them emotional stress and prevents them from moving forward. Matusak (2007) believes that “preconceived notions about what others may judge to be our ability to succeed or fail are deeply ingrained in our minds and hearts” (p. 136). It is the past failures and the past mistakes that become the obstacle. On the other hand, the critical voice can be the springboard that propels one forward, after

- wallowing so long with self-doubt, Francis explained that she has had enough and it is time to move forward. So the critical voice can propel and push one forward but then again it can strangle and hold.
2. The feeling voice correlates with two different types of sensations: uneasiness or ease. When there is a feeling of ease, the inner voice is supportive, it is knowledgeable, and it is the “gut” feeling that permits one to recognize that they are attuned to one’s inner self. When uneasiness is present, one becomes cautious and may ignore the signs and not listen. Not paying attention to that uneasy feeling is exactly what took place for Elizabeth. She ignored her feelings about a situation and focused only on what her daughter wanted. What resulted was a very serious accident for her daughter. There seems to be a struggle when dealing with feelings because the process either takes one forward or causes one to stand still. This process can consume one for hours or days. Whether the feeling voice is at ease or if it uneasy, it determines one’s behavior. Unfortunately, for most of my participants, the feeling voice can be influenced by the emotions of others. It is during this process that the relational aspect is questioned. For most of my participants the feelings of others came before their own.
 3. The motivating voice is the “can do” voice. It is an accumulation of successful past experiences. Successful experiences inspired my participants to move forward and do what needed to be accomplished. The motivating voice is filled with strength and courage. For several of my participants, it is the inner voice that can be very silent. It takes energy to rouse the motivating voice to action even when success or accomplishments are brought to the forefront. I recognized my motivating voice when

- I began my college education. It was partly shaped by my daughter's voice telling me that I could do it. Her voice, a kind, encouraging voice, gave my inner voice strength to move forward.
4. The challenging voice is the voice that teeters on two different realms. It causes one to question and it causes one to ruminate on a list of "what ifs." It is the challenging voice that creates many mental lists that become the basis for indecisiveness. It can cause one to push forward and accept challenges. All of my participants spoke of a myriad of challenges and in every situation; it appeared that they moved forward to accept those challenges only after a lengthy session of what if. For Josey, her challenging voice involves dealing with the fear of the unknown and is accompanied by panic attacks. It is the challenging voice that can keep her frozen with fear. But she has learned that in order to accomplish anything she uses the litany of "what ifs" in a positive manner. She becomes cognizant of what will take place if she doesn't do what is required.
 5. The encouraging, caring and forgiving voice brings peace and calm. It was related to me during one session, by Elizabeth, that it is the voice of God. This is the voice that is not related to head thinking, it is related to the wisdom that resides inside one and gently pushes one towards fulfillment. It allows one to see the beauty and the wisdom of her experiences and her life. The kind, encouraging and caring voice is heard in quiet reflection, meditation or in prayer and Ambrose (1995) believes that it is through reflection that there is personal growth.

Although these different types of inner voices overlap, what I found interesting about these categories is that the critical voice is the one that is most common in their lives. It was

spoken about the most and referred to often. When listening to Francis, Martha, and Mary, I recognized that the critical voice was created and cultivated by the external voices of authority which were the nuns and the priests. Their inner voices belonged to others. Francis, Martha, Mary and I were educated in the parochial school systems and encouragement was not prevalent in education during this time. Martha said, "For whatever reason it seems that the nuns were stricter with the girls and that type of discipline had a major impact on me." Additionally, as one will read in the later section of this essay, the fathers of my participants were often critical of their daughters and of the paths they should take in life. Young girls lose themselves by listening to the voices of authority. They cannot connect with themselves (Brenner, 2003) and that connection is weakened with young girls who do not receive validation from their fathers. It is apparent that as young girls we took the voices of authority and internalized them. The external voices became our own inner voices and we have nurtured them religiously throughout the years. When contemplating the aspects of the critical voice and the influence it has had on my participants, I was taken aback by something that Mary said about my educational journey in the Catholic school and how it relates back to one of the concepts of human development regarding nurture or nature. "I was moved by how you were treated by your teachers in school because I was treated the same way, and I thought perhaps those situations, those events, made you determined to move beyond what they thought of you, what they said about you. Your belief in yourself made you who you are today." I wasn't nurtured positively in my family, so it was the outside events that challenged me and caused me to move forward. Perhaps the critical voice, that voice that wins the award for consistency in most situations in our lives, actually pushes us in a harsh way to prove others wrong. It allows us to become complacent at times in order for us

to wallow for days or weeks before we finally decide, according to Mary, “that enough is enough.”

Even though the critical voice dominates the lives my participants, it has become easier for them to recognize that the other voices are equally important and they constantly strive for balance. This subjective knowing or connected knowing (Belenky et al., 1986) becomes the most trustworthy knowledge because it “...comes from personal experience rather than the pronouncement of authorities” (p.113). It is from personal experience that becomes the most trustworthy knowledge for women rather than the pronouncement from authorities (Belenky et al., 1986). This recognition comes from life experiences, from achievements, from reflection and from their relationships. Martha said, “now that I am older, I recognize how my inner voice plays a role in my decisions.” This profound process has taken time. For all of my participants, it is the caring and forgiving voice that brings them in balance. They feel they are living their lives to the fullest when the voice is kind, caring and motivating. This revelation illuminates their knowledge and wisdom, which comes from living a life that has become whole. It is part of one’s life that is no longer seen in bits and pieces. They now realize what contentment is all about. Certain events and situations that we encountered are not as important as they were when they were younger.

Whether the inner voice is critical, kind or motivating, the inner voice is constantly on. It was jokingly said during one of my interviews that the inner voice runs on Energizer batteries. The inner voice begins first thing in the morning. It is very active as one travels to and from work. It is at the gym, at the grocery store, and at the malls. It is very active when we are in our cars. All of my participants labeled their inner voice as either a trusted companion or as a doubtful opponent. Even though the inner voice is considered one of the most important

cognitive processes (Hopf et al., 1979) of all human functioning, it remains the base for all other forms of communication. Our external voice is influenced by the inner voice-our cognitive thought process. Elizabeth stressed how this “funny presence” makes her think more on how she lives her life and how she treats and speaks with people. Her external communication tells the world what she thinks and that is influenced by her inner voice. The inner voice is a single process, but it is a complex process (Roberts et al., 1987). It is the events that have taken place in my participants’ environments that have had a major impact on their thoughts and how they have developed relationships in their lives.

However, when looking at my participants in relationships, there is no doubt in their minds as to what or who influenced them. Their lives were influenced by family, by teachers or by events. Emphasizing such events shows how connectedness is a major component in the development of the female self. The link between self and other is “the core self-structure in women” (Surrey, 1985, p. 1). It is women’s way of knowing that the relational self is activated. It is through this process that a woman conceives of and evaluates herself when she is relating to others. The relational interactions my participants brought attention to is associated with their motivation and their behavioral responses (Chen et al., 2006). Each participant talked about several significant people, places or events and allowed me to see how their inner voices developed or were influenced through their relationships with others.

Influences: People and Events

My inner voice, I believe, developed through my relational experiences with others: my parents and my teachers: people in authority. What I heard and saw from those relational experiences gave rise to meaning and produced an increased awareness of the self (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1986). The meaning I assigned to those interactions affected my view of the world.

Lieblich et al. (1995) states that “we take whatever observations we have made of the external world and, making them part of ourselves, interpret them and tell a story about what we believe we know” (p. 29). My autoethnography, as well as the stories of my participants, unfolded in a predictable sequential pattern. Their observations go back in time to their childhoods, to that time when relationships help create the self, to where relationships first connected them with others and how those relationships influenced the ways they talk to themselves today.

As I interviewed each of my participants, their talk was filled with memories and emotions. It is emotions that dominate the inner voice (Crouse & Crouse, 1988). Each of these women spoke of other women, so each story became a lens for looking at other lives—the lives of people who influenced them, whether it was in a positive or negative way. It was the people who shaped them, supported them and hindered them in their development. However, for Mary, Josie and Francis they now view these individuals differently than they did decades ago—especially their views of their mothers. I agree with them, I see my mother as a person who had tremendous influence on me.

It was not surprising that Mom was spoken about in every interview. Parents, especially mothers play a vital role in their children’s development. However, for my participants, they recognized that their mothers were crucial figures in their upbringing. Their mothers taught them a great deal about strength and courage. They were instrumental in instilling values and character. Their mothers’ actions left a lasting impression on them even though only one of my participants, Elizabeth, considered their mothers as being the person who influenced them in their young lives.

Their mothers are the women who were confronted the changing cultural norms of society in the forties, fifties and sixties. Their mothers were not given the same educational

opportunities as men. None received a college education; two did not graduate from high school. Their mothers were told that the only thing they could be was a wife and mother. If they worked outside the home, it was either as a secretary, nurse or teacher. All but one of my participants' mothers were stay at home moms; Mary's mother was a factory worker. Their mothers' lives were dominated by men—their fathers. From my participants' stories one can see how their mother's lives were laced with challenges and how they had very little voice in the marital relationship. From stories previously spoken about, I heard how their mothers raised them and how cautious their mothers told them to be in their decisions regarding relationships, especially with men. However, for them, especially Mary, and Francis and me, it is through the aging process that we now see the influence of our mother's actions. We see our mother's influence on us as mature women and as mothers ourselves. It is through reflection that my participants see their mothers through a different lens. Their worldview of their mothers was acquired during a time when they couldn't relate to her. They did not understand the purpose behind her way of thinking. It is through reflection, according to Bateson (1994), that one learns a way of seeing the world differently.

When I think about parents and the role they play in the development of the self, I cannot ignore the importance of the father figure in a woman's life. As young women, my participants never related to their fathers because their fathers never related to them. The father was the one to be revered. For all, but one, of my participants they considered their mothers the silent partners in the marital relationship and their fathers as the authority figures. The fathers were the stern arbiters, who were very strict, very negative and who disciplined. For Josey, her father set the standard for her and her siblings. The standard wasn't for achievement but it was for her to never do anything that would embarrass him or her family. Not one of my participants received

any encouragement from their fathers. Their fathers never saw any value in what they did or what they wanted to do. Their fathers could never figure out why girls wanted to go to college. It was the fathers who explicitly told them that college would not benefit them. During this time, it was the social norm for women to just get married and have babies. It was perceived that a college education would be just a waste of time and money. According to Brenner (2003), receiving little or no encouragement from fathers can damage a young girl's self-image and her inner voice since fathers have powerful influence on a young girl's life. However, for Francis and Elizabeth, their fathers' unyielding demeanor regarding women and college challenged them to prove their fathers wrong as they went off to college. Their fathers never even asked them what they were doing or how they were faring in college. These women credit their determination and their wanting to better their lives as the reasons for their success in the field of higher education.

All but one of these women spoke of a person outside the family unit who influenced them. Their recollection of those people caused them to see a connection to what they have become and what they are doing today. Even though they never recognized or acknowledged their inner voices at a young age, recognition from these influential individuals gave them a feeling of self-worth. It has been stated that the inner voice is associated with a feeling. For Josey, it was her junior high school teacher who asked her to be a mentor to grade school kids who were struggling with their studies; Josey went on to be a counselor. For Francis, it was one of her high school teachers who asked her to be a teaching assistant in her senior year of high school; Francis went on to become a college instructor. For Mary, it was a close friend and also a sister who have faced challenges and obstacles in their lives who have influenced her to be a strong woman. It is strength and courage Mary needs as a private business owner in an ever-

changing agricultural market. For Martha, it was a priest who encouraged her to think about nursing and who helped her secure a scholarship her senior year; Martha went on to be a nurse and a teacher. Bateson (1989) stated that “aspiration is elusive without models to aspire to” (p. 61) and so all of the people mentioned played major roles in the lives of my participants. Francis, Josey, Martha, and Mary pulled these individuals from the past and gave them a place in the present. It was their influence in the past that reduced self-doubt and created a stronger, motivating, kind and caring voice in the present.

Listening to their stories made me realize that, as women, we place a strong emphasis on external voices. Those external voices become our own. However, at a certain point in our lives we begin to realize that we don’t want to listen to the voices of others, we want our own voices to be heard. For me it was on a very cold January morning when I set foot on the university campus for my very first college course. I heard the voices of the nuns over and over again in my head that I wouldn’t succeed in college. Their voices were the critical voice, the voice that paralyzes and doesn’t allow a dream or a goal to become reality. Belenky et al. (1986) state that for some women, the inner voice cannot give mental directions or exhortations because the awareness of the self is not present. The self is wrapped up in others, their inner voices belong to others. All of my participants recall how they didn’t recognize their inner voices until they were older, when an event became an epiphany. For Elizabeth, it was her daughter’s car accident. For Francis, it was a surprise divorce. For Mary, it was a broken leg. For Josey it was divorce. For Elizabeth, it was a grandchild. For me it was the birth of my daughter and my college education which came late in life. Upon recognizing and acknowledging their inner voice, for the first time, several of my participants commented that they hoped and prayed that by following their inner voices (by making a decision or an action) that it would be the right decision. This questioning or

this fear of one's decision comes from the possibility that her decision or action would be assessed by "some external criterion" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 69). Basically, this external criterion comes from the external voices other than one's own and it is the external voices of the past that create the obstacles in the present.

Achievements and Obstacles

Neuman (1998) writes on turning points in her book *True to Ourselves*. She regards turning points as the events in our lives, whether they are achievements or obstacles that are "intensely personal experiences that have molded the individual in the past and continue to guide her in the present" (p. xiv). Turning points are either positive or negative and they create a vision for the individual that points them in new directions. Listening to my participants speak of their achievements was easy. They glowed and their voices became full of energy when they acknowledged financial freedom, their children, awards, grants, jobs, and education. It was achievements such as these that gives the inner dialogue a boost of courage. Martha beamed with pride when she talked about the grant she wrote that earned her college the largest sum of grant money the nursing program ever received. For Elizabeth it was her award from Junior Achievement in eleventh grade that brought her such joy. As for me, graduating from the university made me realize that I wasn't that person who the nuns constantly told "Diana you will never make it in college." It is events that are surrounded by achievements that are meaningful and that remove distorted thinking. Women, including my participants, have a desire to find meaning and fulfillment, but they also realize the journey along the way may be filled with challenges. The desire to have a positive and encouraging inner voice is recognized and preferred, but the strength and courage to summon that voice during challenging times is arduous. One must remember that a path without obstacles leads to nowhere.

As all the interviews evolved and as my participants moved towards the very intimate details of their lives regarding obstacles, it became difficult to listen. Even though I have known these women for quite some time, the events they spoke about were events that I would have never imagined happening to them. I heard the positive and the negative of their obstacles. I recognized joy, sorrow and anger. Their stories were told in great detail regarding sexual assault, temporary loss of independence, lawsuits, surprise divorces, sickness, adoption, abortion, marital affairs and fears. I see these women differently now. I can understand why I considered them strong women, for in the past I only saw the public face and it was during this time I saw the private side of their lives. They allowed me to enter into a very sacred space by permitting me to hear about parts of their lives which continue to bring up strong, visceral feelings of fear and loss of control. It is this space that involves fears which can engulf and paralyze. For them it is in this space that their inner voice is very active. These events, when recalled, throw them back in time and causes them to question. It is a struggle, even now, to gently acknowledge these events and attend to them with a kind, caring and nurturing voice. For Josey, panic attacks have been part of her life for decades since her childhood was so fear based. She has gained clarity regarding these events; she realizes where they have come from and why they afflict her. It was her choice and her desire to learn all she could about them in order for them not to paralyze her, but for her to grow. Through this process she realized that her first line of defense is her inner voice. Her inner voice moves from critical to kind and caring as she repeats to herself "I am safe" when a panic attack takes place. These women acknowledge that these events, when recalled, require them to grow and move forward. They realize that these past events are part of their history and they realize their history makes them who they are today. This process of acknowledging the critical

inner voice and working through this inner dialogue is empowering and it is part of the process of effectively leading ourselves.

Self-Leadership and Women's Leadership

We basically have a shared understanding of leadership. Although there are many definitions of leadership, we attribute certain skills and characteristics of a leader that matches our own ideas of what a leader is and what a leader does (Erkut, 2001). Leadership is the process of influence and it originates from several different sources (Manz & Neck, 1999). Leadership is not just an outward process, but a process that is influenced inwardly by past events that are significant in shaping one's life (Manz, 1983). My participants have been influenced by people, by events and by the type of work they do. They are led by others and yet they also lead themselves in many ways. If they need more knowledge or skills they seek out more education. If they are in an unfulfilling job they search out other options. If they have a health condition they seek out advice from a skill practitioner. In fact, leading the self, according to Manz (1983) is a difficult job. Many things stand in the way of one moving forward. One has to influence or motivate the self in order to do so. Mary stated that "sometimes it is just easier to sit and do nothing during challenging times." And it is with that belief that Manz and Neck (1999) consider not doing anything or letting others be completely in charge of one's life leads to unhappiness and discontentment. Since leading the self not only involves changing one's behavior, it also involves influence—one's ability to learn from others is a major force.

One cannot overlook that these influences come from different types of social interactions. The relationships this group of women developed over the years brought about change and improved their lives. When looking at the events and people who have influenced my participants, I can see many of the major tenets of Manz's theory on self-leadership. To have a goal, a vision or a dream and have the ability to move oneself in the direction of those goals is self-leadership. In order to do that successfully, the intention to move forward must be sincere.

For Elizabeth, the goal is planning for her retirement. She stated that “people are giving me all these suggestions of what I should do and when I should do it. But I am in charge of this part of my life and I want to plan for that because I still want to contribute to society.” For Mary, she knows the importance of searching out innovative ways of marketing the family’s business, keeping it viable and productive for years to come. For Martha, as a spiritual advisor, she develops and creates seminars to enlighten others on their journey in life. For Francis, she realizes that she doesn’t want to stay in teaching forever, so her educating herself about the financial field will lead her on a new career path. As for Josey, she is still searching for the right career path. That is challenging for her—to move forward without knowing. However, she said that “it takes a whole lot of belief to move forward and I am not there yet. I am still a work in progress.” Her journey to find her right career path is a process and Wheatley (2007) says that “life is a process of constantly figuring out what is going to work for you. You are learning all the time” (p. 112). All of my participants are moving forward. They not only learn from others but they are learning about themselves and are leading themselves. They continue to learn and direct themselves in a way that is beneficial for them.

I am certain on their journeys in life, my participants had very little knowledge that they were leading themselves. They were just doing. They did what they thought was best for them at that moment. Each of my participants has contributed to the betterment of not only their families but of their organizations and their communities. They, in turn, are influencing others, more than likely in the same manner in which their mothers and other women influenced them. This is the foundation of leadership. Leadership doesn’t necessarily come to one when he or she accepts a position of authority. Leadership starts at the grassroots – in families, in communities (Matusak, 2007).

Leadership for most feminists is all about relationships (Alexandre, 2007). This interconnectedness is essential since the tenets of feminist leadership are directly related to relationships that involve collaboration with the desire to encourage change. The relationships that have influenced my participants, whether positively or negatively, have nurtured leadership traits and styles that prepared them to lead in a ways that are not polarizing. Pittinsky, Bacon and Welle (2007) consider those traits and styles to be collaboration, cooperation, encouragement, participation, interaction, sensitivity, and communality. They consider these traits and skills to be part of the Great Women Theory of Leadership. For Martha when she was writing her grant for the nursing program at her college she commented that she collaborated with many of the people she developed relationships with over the years at the college. It was her goal to present the best possible information in order to receive the grant for the nursing program. Elizabeth said that she does not like to be out front when it comes to leadership within her organization, she likes to lead from the rear. Her form of leadership involves collaboration, participation and interaction. For Mary, she emphasized collaboration in the family-run business. She sees all the members of the family who actively participate as leaders. For Francis, she sees herself as a leader in the classroom, guiding her students the information that will benefit their lives. Outside the classroom she considers herself a silent leader. She doesn't want a title plate on her door. She interacts with her colleagues and staff in a respectful manner. She believes in collaborating when it comes to problem-solving because it is the system that benefits when everyone comes together to have a part in the resolution. These women move forward with courage and conviction to make life better not only for themselves but for others.

Summary

Each of my participants told me a story about their lives. My personal relationship with them facilitated a “connected knowing” (Clinchy, 2003). As a researcher I was able to “attempt to enter that subjectivity, share that experience” (Clinchy, 2003, p. 35). This interpretive essay allowed me to make sense out of their stories and construct knowledge from their narratives. I can see why I considered them strong women. It was their past that created that strength. Their inner voice is part of that strength. Their inner voice was influenced by events, by people and by the stories they have told themselves. Their stories are personal experiences. As they were moving through life they barely recognized their turning points, but as they have grown older and then reflect, they see the connection from the past to the present. They see themselves as leaders of their own lives. As I sat with them, there were many quiet pauses, a nod of the head, a glimmer in the eyes that signaled, in my opinion, an epiphany. It was an “ah ha” moment where they told themselves “I understand now.” Their stories were captured by words that described how they dealt with challenges and achievements and their words were filled with meaning. Their stories described how their inner voices could be encouraging or critical. They struggle with that aspect, but in the end they see how the inner voice is closely related to self-leadership. Their life’s journey has taken them down many roads and it is by recognizing and reflecting on past experiences that allows them to lead themselves. Moseley-Braun (1998) states:

What their stories of struggle tell us, most importantly, is the progress is not linear. Instead, it takes twists and turns, detours and sidetracks. It surprises and disappoints us. Just when we thought some great evil has been conquered, another version of it crops up wearing a new guise, and we are called upon to fight it once again. (p. 103)

Truly, the inner voice is a constant companion. It is through the process of interrelating with others that helps to create a coherent picture of what is taking place in one’s relationships and the influence those relationships have on the inner voice. We come to know and listen to the

inner voice by knowing the self. From the literature previously covered, one can come to recognize that the self is developed through influence (Cooley, 1902), through observation (Bandura, 1977) and through social comparison (Festinger, 1954). Additionally, it can also be viewed through the four basic principles regarding human development which is nurture or nature, the interrelatedness of physical, cognitive and socioemotional growth, the process of growth that occurs and changes over time and contexts and the aspect that one is connected and disconnected from the individuals who have significant influence on the way one thinks, feels and behaves (Poole et al., 2007). These concepts and theories lend for an understanding that the self is constantly being cultivated and it is through one's interactions and influences from others that one can view the self as an independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) or one can view the self as an interdependent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, whatever view is taken in regards to the development of the self, in all reality the self needs others in its life. One's experiences life through story and since it is influenced by events, people and places it is a continuous entity that constantly transforms itself and becomes more apparent over time (Barresi & Juckes, 1997).

It is through our life experiences that we have come to recognize the different types of voices that confront us. We realize that the inner voice can paralyze us and prevent us from moving forward, but at the same time the inner voice can propel us forward to achieve. It influences us to lead ourselves. From these interviews as well as my talking to other women who hold leadership positions within business and education, I have come to recognize that the inner voice crosses all classes, races and age groups. Josselson and Lieblich (1995) state that, "if we listen well, we will unearth what we did not expect" (p. 30). Before I began this research had a limited viewpoint of the whole process of influence, leadership and the inner voice, but as I sat

and listened to the stories of my participants, I began to see the connection between my autoethnography, my researched literature and their stories. Women's self-leadership does not involve controlling others or being responsible for others (Manz, 1983) but what it does involve is listening to the inner voice. It is a process of influence—influencing the self to move forward. Self-leadership is intentionally setting goals and planning to achieve those goals. This process becomes a guiding tool in self-leadership as well as leadership with others. This research has improved my understanding of the inner voice and how the inner voice influences women to become a leader of herself and move beyond challenges in order to transform her life and the lives of those around her.

Implications

I never see what has been done; I only see what remains to be done.

Buddha

My journey to this dissertation began a little over ten years ago. Little did I realize that a research article I uncovered during my graduate studies about intrapersonal communication would become the basis for my dissertation. I read and re-read that article and I copied it and placed it in my reference file. I was intrigued by what Barker and Wiseman (1966) called one's self-talk. Little did I realize at the time that my self-talk, my inner voice, was created by external voices. I listened intently to the voices of others, and what they said about me is what I became. I began to search out more information regarding self-talk. I wanted to learn more because I wanted to learn more about myself. Through this whole process of discovering I kept wondering what type of self-talk other women have. Was it as critical as mine? Did they question as much as I questioned myself about events and situations? This whole process of questioning was put on hold because I was too apprehensive ask my friends or other women about what they said to themselves when no one else was around. Then someone told me that research on the inner voice would be impossible since people would not be so forthcoming about their personal thoughts. They were in the realm of intimate self-disclosure. I understood in order for that to happen, I would have to know someone very, very well. One's identity is tied to intimacy and Gilligan (1982) states that "intimacy becomes the critical experience that brings the self back into connection with others making it possible to see both sides" (p. 163). I wanted to see and hear both sides, I was learning about my inner voice but I wanted to know more about the inner voices of others. Unfortunately, the whole concept of finding out about the inner voice of others was placed on the shelf but it was not forgotten.

That was in 1995 and since that time I have acquired a lot of knowledge about the inner voice. I teach the concept of intrapersonal communication to college students. The concept and the process still intrigues me. I can say quite confidently that one's inner voice is alive and well. The inner voice is the director of events regarding relationships and regarding the direction one should go in life. This very important psychological activity takes place in everyday life. It is constantly on and is being updated by people, events and even the past. Even though I visit this concept every semester, the possibility of researching this concept never re-entered my mind until I began my doctoral studies at Antioch University.

My doctoral programs in Leadership and Change brought me face to face with new concepts and principles. My coursework focused on research regarding the skills, characteristics and traits of leaders both male and female. The literature presented information on the process of leadership and how change creates challenges to overcome. One of the major tenets of leadership is influence. Without influence, according to Northouse (2007), leadership does not exist. So during this journey, I was influenced to go back and reconnect with a concept that has intrigued me for years. This journey allowed me to reflect on the concept of the inner voice and find a connection to leadership. Many of the questions I asked myself over a decade ago came to the forefront. What influences women to move forward during challenging times? What causes them to stand still or be silent? Is it faith or motivation that keeps them moving? Is it what some call the "internal compass" or "personal navigator" that guides them through uncharted waters? Or is it what some people call the "inner voice," the voice that is one's constant companion in life, a voice that can be gently and nurturing at times but demanding and demeaning at other times? I was able to connect these questions to a concept called self-leadership. The self-leadership theory developed by Manz in 1983 is governed by influence, not only by others but

also that of the self and how the inner voice influences the self. In order to be a leader of others one must learn to lead himself or herself first. To lead the self allows one to become a master of the self and Bass (1990) states that “it is individuals who see themselves as masters of their own fate rather than luck” (p. 153) who become more effective and satisfying leaders.

Therefore, my purpose of Chapter 7 is to consider why this research on the inner voice of women’s self-leadership makes a difference. By stepping back and reflecting on this research, I will discuss the implications for leadership theory and practice. I will describe the impact this research has had on my own leadership and lastly, I will consider the limitations and implications for future research.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Change

The implications of this research which advance the studies of leadership and change are twofold: influence and interconnectedness. Since influence is a core attribute of leaders (Carli, 2001), it is important to understand what influences a leader. The inner voice (one’s self-talk) influences one’s behavior and emotions. It permits one to move forward in life or it can cause one to stand still. As I indicated in Chapter One, there is a substantial amount of research done on the skills, abilities, and characteristics of leaders. The qualitative and quantitative studies of the past provide the field with rich definitions and many possible ways in which leadership can be carried out. Previous research does not render significant information on self-leadership and the importance the inner voice plays when one is leading the self. A very important question can be posed here: how does a leader leads him or herself when no one is around? Self-awareness is an important component of self-leadership as well as leadership. Women who are attuned to their inner voices recognize their values, their goals and their dreams. This self-awareness gives them

direction in the area they need to go and through their example, they influence others to be self-aware.

Second, this research provides an intimate interconnectedness into the lives of women and how their inner voices influence their self-leadership. It is through the use of narrative that brings about an understanding of how the inner voice is a major component to not only self-leadership, but leadership itself. It allows one to learn about others. For example, Martha commented that we can learn by telling our stories to other women, so they can hear how we see the world and what we do. No one learns if we don't talk. No one learns if our stories are kept silent.

This research is unique in that it is a narrative, a compilation of women's voices. It allows one to see how women lead themselves, not just in an organization but on a very personal level. My participants were typical women involved in normal everyday events and activities, but their stories are filled with "interlocking messages of our commitments and decisions. Each one is a message of possibility" (Bateson, 1989, p. 241). Their stories reflect a desire to lead a life that requires them to reflect and determine the direction they want to go. Their stories speak of the uniqueness of the self and women are empowered by other women and their stories can become a tool that can inspire and guide others during challenging times. If you look at the unfolding lives of my participants you will become aware of the importance of the inner voice and how it can push one forward or pull one back from achieving. It allows one to see how we look at and evaluate our cognitive thought process – our silent inner voice that creates more meaning than we ever thought possible. It allows one to see just how typical we all are. This research adds new knowledge to the literature of self-leadership, the concept of the inner voice and how it influences women in their lives to lead themselves.

Implications for Leadership Practice

This research can raise the leaders' consciousness of their own inner voices and how it affects their leadership. The inner voice is a very intimate part of one's being. We do not fully consider the influence it has on our everyday life—what we tell ourselves in private conversation is what we ultimately become. Recognizing the importance that the inner voice has on self-leadership is a part of leadership development. This recognition becomes self-knowledge. Ambrose (1995) believes that a journey inward increases self-knowledge and self-knowledge can transform ourselves. Although we see leaders as confident, poised, knowledgeable and credible, we need to realize that leaders do question, leaders do face personal challenges and in order for them to lead successfully, it is vital that this aspect of leadership be recognized.

In reading this research, leaders can become fully aware of the importance of their inner voice and how it influences their actions with the people they lead. I hope by providing not only my autoethnography but the stories of five other women it would permit others to read how obstacles or challenges can be the springboard for moving forward instead of standing still. As a result of reading this work, it is my hope that leaders would reflect on the importance of their inner voices and the relationship to their self-leadership. Gerber (2002) states that, “by reflecting on those [past] experiences you can better understand what motivates you as a leader, and you can discover new ways to strengthen your leadership skills” (p. 11).

Implications for My Leadership

As I sit on committees at my college, as I teach in the classroom, and as I engage in everyday conversations with women from different backgrounds, different age groups, and different races, I realize how our inner voices play a major role in our lives. Every single woman that I interact with has challenges. We have overcome obstacles and we have been influenced by

events and people. We have achieved. I have been inspired by this research and the women I interviewed. They allowed me to see how active the inner voice is in their daily lives and they permitted me to see how they deal with their inner voices. Elizabeth said a quote at the end of her interview that she uses quite often in her spirituality seminars and it is one that reminds her how much we are alike. The quote is “it is the things that are most personal that are most universal” (unknown source). However, no matter what our status is or what level of achievement we have attained, we still question and we still ruminate on past successes and failures. We deal with the inner voice.

Ten years ago someone told me that no one would be willing to sit and talk to me about their inner voice, that the phenomenon of the inner voice was too personal. It was that statement that made me determined to pursue researching the phenomena of the inner voice and the influences it has on women’s self-leadership. Just as I was told that I would not or could not achieve in higher education, I was determined to prove people wrong. Did this research satisfy my need to know? To an extent, but I want to know more. I want to be able to hear the stories of influence, of change, of challenges, of other women from different races and age groups because stories are what Neuman (1998) calls examples that can inspire people to face challenges and to fulfill their dreams.

I am very honored that these five women let me into their personal lives. They permitted me to listen and learn about their lives. They gave me the opportunity to learn more about myself and they have allowed me the opportunity to have my questions answered.

They shared bits and pieces of their lives with me so I could craft a story and interpret that story around my own and around the literature associated with this study. Their language relating their story connected me to them and I realized in some way we have felt the same thing.

I look at these women differently now and I can see how any one of them could be placed into a positional leadership role and be very successful at leading others because they have learned how to lead themselves.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Since this study focused on six specific areas such as gender (all females), socioeconomic class (all middle class), race (all Caucasian females), age (all considered baby boomers, born between 1945 and 1964), education (all have college backgrounds) and career field (all are professionals) it limited the scope of the research.

Although the narratives of my participants gave rich description of how the inner voice influences them when facing challenges and obstacles and by comparing and contrasting their narratives and my autoethnography and the literature on self, inner voice, and self-leadership, unfortunately, this research can be deemed inclusive due to the narrow scope of my participants.

Where does research go from here? The lives and works of women can map the landscape with valuable wisdom, knowledge and understanding regarding leadership. Women's voices add insight to the leadership literature. It is through story that they can encourage, persuade and challenge others. Future research can focus on a larger segment of the population that includes males and females from different races and age groups as well as socioeconomic classes and educational backgrounds. One needs to remember that

Everyday life always takes place in and relates to the immediate environment of a person. It is a world in which we are located physically and socially. The content and structure of everyday life are not necessarily the same for all individuals in society. (Essed, 1991, p. 47)

Essed (1991) makes us realize that everyday life creates our stories and the stories we tell have an influence on our inner voice and our self-leadership. Future research would benefit the area of leadership development and it would provide an opportunity to see how the inner voice

influences self-leadership of people from other populations since all individuals experience life differently.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Interview Questions

To have a goal, a vision, a dream is the process of leading the self and Manz (1983) believes in order to be a leader of others in life; one must be a leader of him or herself first. Self-leadership involves listening to the self – the inner voice. The inner voice is defined as an awareness of self that comes from the interaction with and internalization of the influences of others and the environment. The inner voice is a complex process that involves one's internal thought processes that ultimately influence how one sees the world, acts and reacts to events and circumstances outside the self.

1. You have read my definition of the inner voice, how do you define the inner voice?
2. You have experienced major events in your life that challenged you, during these challenging times, what made you step back and reflect and listen to what your inner voice was telling you?
3. Can you expand on one or two of those events? Did your inner voice project you forward or did it cause you to stand still?
4. Can you recall a specific event where your mother or another significant person in your life influenced your inner voice? Or was it a certain event?
5. Have certain events (the media, government, educators, and religious leaders) influenced you?
6. Has your inner voice been an instrument that has projected you forward in your life or has the inner voice held you back from moving forward? Can you give me some examples?
7. And finally, how did (do) you lead yourself?

Appendix B

Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

I understand by consenting to this interview given by Diana M. Cooley, that I will not be exposed to psychological, social or physical risks, nor will I be at risk for criminal or civil liability. This interview will not damage or harm my personal life and I further understand that my name and position will remain anonymous.

The information obtained will be for the sole purpose of gathering and interpreting data for Diana M. Cooley's dissertation research on the *Inner Voice of Women's Self-Leadership* that is connected to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program at Antioch University in which Ms. Cooley is enrolled.

Name: _____

Date of Interview: _____