

RUNNING HEAD: QUIET LEADER – A WOMAN’S STUDY

Quiet Leader: A Woman’s Autoethnographic Leadership Study

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Quiet Leader: A Woman's Self-Reflective Study

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to Pat, Michelle, Derek, Dad, and my many dear friends.
Your support, encouragement, and love inspire me to continue challenging my current beliefs, by expanding my knowledge further through the diversity of our relationships, as well as through scholarship.

Thank you.

I also express my loving memory of
Rhoda and Sherry

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is widely researched and discussed across many disciplines. Most research indicates that good leaders are often thought to exhibit traits such as extraversion, or have certain abilities, like excellent communication skills, that make them effective. In viewing leaders from this and other similar perspectives, another group of people are often overlooked: Quiet and shy people may not be viewed as leaders, especially since they often do not vocalize to the extent that extraverts do. This may be true of some women leaders, particularly if their activities are limited or distinct due to the cultural expectations shaping them. The autoethnography I offer here shares the cultural experiences of a fledgling leader, through a shy and quiet woman's lens.

Key words: leadership, quiet, shy, introvert, gender, women, autoethnography

PROLOGUE

I Observe

In sixth grade bodies are changing and new things are taught

As girls and boys listen and watch.

Early on they practice and learn with orange vests and flags brand new

An inner confidence they earn as hues of blues paint our view.

With aromas of fresh cut grass and fallen leaves baking in the sun

The sweetness of bubble gum fresh on our tongues when on their corner they examine.

Girls in bright skirts and boys running with abandon

Deep fog or drizzle or snowballs that fly then see the kids cross on by.

My classmates were crossing guards but I was a girl and wasn't allowed to try.

So I watched.

Here, today, now, who is that quiet one?

Both of contradictions and resolve, an introvert living in an extravert's days.

With sweaty palms and smiles galore she shares in

Her speaking, teaching, and writing that she's leading in her shy way.

Experiencing within culture's complexities and contradictions is this woman's quest

As she shows you she's withstood many tests.

Fellow researchers' words open my mind and allow me to confidently write here

What I observe and find.

Chapter One – Quiet Self-Reflective Leadership

Quiet and Shy

It is at times difficult for me to express myself around others, because I am sometimes—and in some situations often—shy and introverted, especially when I am with strangers and extraverts (people who seek out other people). Introverts, Jennifer Kahnweiler (2009) writes, “experience deep discomfort and inhibition in interpersonal situations” (p. 1). She also suggests quiet, introverted people tend to prefer to keep to themselves, whereas extraverts must share exuberantly with others. Essentially, introverts avoid the social situations extraverts seek. Additionally, she distinguishes between introversion and shyness, saying, “shyness is driven by fear and social anxiety” (p. 2). When I am around unfamiliar, boisterous people, I sometimes experience anxiety and become quiet.

U.S. culture often assigns negative connotations to introversion and introverts. As Susan Cain (2012) writes, introversion “is now a second-class personality trait, somewhere between a disappointment and a pathology” (p. 4). This assessment is widely reflected in my relationships and affects how I view and attempt to overcome my own performance of introversion. The stigma I associate with introversion inspires me to borrow from Cain's book title, *Quiet....* Therefore I will mostly refer to introversion as “quiet” throughout this project.

Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama (2010) note American culture embraces individualism or self-reliance. On the other hand, quietness is not usually acceptable in American social settings. Cain (2012) writes, “*introverts prefer to work independently*” (p. 74, italics in original), which creates a dilemma for those who may be quieter and

slower to speak or act. They are likely to be ignored and bypassed by those who are louder and more assertive.

Contrast this to extraverts who tend to work quickly, take risks (Cain, 2012), and often speak before they think (Kahnweiler, 2009), making it appear that extraverts are more capable leaders than quiet individuals because they are more vocal (Cain, 2012), and usually getting their ideas out first. According to Mark Van Vugt (2006), "Quantity of communication is a better predictor of leadership emergence" (p. 361). "Leadership emergence" comes about when a group, through some agreed upon process, rules out any other contenders for a leader role. According to Van Vugt and Cain, this person is oftentimes the most vocal of the group.

Leader emergence does not necessarily reflect leader effectiveness. Ineffective leaders emerge, Cain (2012) writes, "when the opinion of the most dynamic or talkative person prevailed to the detriment of all" (p. 50). Cain's perspective stems from her interview of a quiet individual at a prestigious business leadership school. The group was assigned the task of ranking, in order of importance, a variety of supplies for a mock survival exercise. One member had extensive experience in survival training, but was ignored in favor of ideas generated by the most vocal group member. The items the vocal individual chose were not ideal to group survival, which would put everyone at risk, had it been a real life scenario. In similar circumstances it is quite possible many quiet women may be unheard and their good, sound ideas bypassed.

Lynne Bond, Tabitha Holmes, Ciara Byrne, Lynne Babchuck, and Sheila Kirton-Robbins (2008) write, "Women are routinely underrepresented in formal civic leadership positions around the world" (p. 48). Though women fulfill many roles and duties at

home and as volunteers, their efforts may be unrecognized as leadership, perhaps because they are “informal local leadership roles” (p. 48) they fulfill for varying reasons. Women in informal leader roles are often instrumental in teaching or training others, especially children. These roles are often fulfilled in households when children are readied for formal schooling, for example. Also, women fulfill leader roles while volunteering in schools or religious education programs. Bond et al. (2008) research of seventeen women indicates growing up in an environment of “caring for others” (p. 59) was a main reason they assumed leader roles.

Some research literature allows that most quiet women lead occasionally. For instance, Linda Lambert (2003) says, “. . . the insistence here is that everyone is born to lead in the same way that everyone is born to learn” (p. 422). And Warren Blank (1995) writes, “I believe that every person has the capacity to lead” (p. xii). In his study of the origins of leaders and followers, Van Vugt (2006) notes “there are clear individual differences in the propensity to lead . . . everyone is capable of leading to some degree” (p. 355), e.g., if an emergency or need suddenly arises. In other words, most people potentially can lead, depending on the situation.

Cain (2012) and Kahnweiler's (2009) books, and several journal articles I discuss in the research literature section below, as well as observations drawn from my experience, inform my thesis that some shy women can lead. Nonetheless, reasons for and the level of success may vary, by individual and situation. For example, I was successfully a leader in my household when my spouse was out of country several times for extended periods, even though at the time it was hard to know how successful I was. Alice Eagly and Linda Carli (2007) comment about women's modesty writing, “Women

often underestimate how well they actually perform” (p. 169). This can apply to quiet women, too. No matter the reason or duration, many unrecognized women do lead, in their quiet way.

**

From this standpoint, I autoethnographically explore times in which I am in brief leader roles; times in my experience as a quiet woman in social circumstances that often have felt uncomfortable. I hope the reader grasps the determination and dedication required of an introverted leader. I do not aspire through this research to overcome shyness, or learn “effective” leadership per se; however, as I shall describe, a residual result of my process is that I feel less anxiety as I talk more frequently with strangers.

I autoethnographically explore certain events that serve to provide a context for understanding why I now speak with strangers, and what it is like. Oftentimes, quiet, shy people refrain from sharing their experiences, so I offer a brief glimpse as well. I share how I feel and what I am thinking when I talk with others in those sometimes difficult social settings I find myself.

I use this chapter to explain what autoethnography is, its potential purposes, and the importance of adhering to strict ethics throughout a research project. I use the remainder of the chapter to introduce the research literature. Thoughts of what constitutes good leadership are changing, as are its definitions. These changes have given rise to a new awareness of different types of leadership as well. As women continue to choose careers that allow them to aspire to leader positions, leadership roles are available to them. However, obstacles do exist. These obstacles often occur due to cultural practices of gender stereotyping based on the sex of individuals. Cultural beliefs

and expectations that assign negative labels to the behavioral characteristics of introversion and shyness are also introduced. Many issues arose as I researched this topic of quiet, shy, women in leader roles which brought to my attention contradictions I need to navigate through, both in this research, and in leadership overall.

Autoethnography

According to Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor (2002), ethnographic research studies people in everyday social settings. This research usually includes participant observation (extended time “in the field” of experience), and may draw on different methods to represent researchers’ findings or understandings. They write that successful ethnography “involves describing and interpreting observed relationships between social practices and the systems of meaning in a particular cultural milieu” (p. 16).

Ethnography offers in-depth descriptions that shed light on the significance of particular social/cultural experiences or issues.

Autoethnography allows us to see everyday relationship events as experienced through the researcher’s subjective and creative lenses. According to Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, (2002), autoethnographers examine these personal events, write about the meanings these experiences provide, and then allow others to share the experience (also see Ellis, 2004; Pelias, 2004).

Autoethnography is a reflexive mode of research that often relies on and is inspired by literature. The literary qualities of autoethnographic writing—which often aim to describe and emphasize emotion, reflection, dialogue, scenes, and other characteristics of fiction—are designed to appeal to multiple audiences, both in and out of scholarly settings. Therefore, this qualitative inquiry stresses story as a way to convey

cultural insights. In doing so, it also provides research findings that can provide therapeutic and cathartic outcomes for ethnographers (Ellis, 2004). For example, as I write this thesis, I begin to better understand some of the ways my relationships affect my effectiveness as a quiet leader and communicator. Therefore, my hope is that the reader may also better understand quiet people, and especially my ways as a quiet person, within leadership contexts.

Lao Tzu long ago advised, "Allow regular time for silent reflection. Turn inward and digest what happened" (as cited in Heider, 1985, p. 23). Reflection allows us as researchers to ask ourselves what we are thinking and feeling. And as we ponder, Linda Lambert and Mary Gardner (2009) suggest we can look at ourselves to see who we are and who we are becoming. While the primary goal of autoethnography is not necessarily for its researchers to write about their personal changes, changes are a potential result, since researchers are in the research. These changes, when written about qualitatively, represent "reflexive ethnographies" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010) and reflect the changes researchers can undergo through our processes. In this sense, I reflexively explore some of my experiences and change. The events I share here are pivotal, as I further examine and understand the world and myself through these experiences.

In essence, autoethnography calls autoethnographers to creatively *show*, rather than analytically *tell* about the experiences comprising cultural lives. Reflection and reflexivity prompts storytellers to dig deep within ourselves, so we can share with our outer audience this process for creating and conveying cultural meaning. In this sentence, Mary Bateson's position, "We are not what we know, but what we are willing to learn" (as cited in Lambert & Gardner, 2009, p. 57), spirits this project.

Ethics

Autoethnographic research is not exempt from ethical considerations. This research must always strive to do no harm (Ellis, 2007; Ellis, et al, 2010). In fact, because real people and real lived events are shown, autoethnography comes with a special and heightened set of issues that must be engaged, and for which researchers must account, in terms of ethics. This type of research is commonly written and/or performed creatively. It prioritizes intimate aspects of people's lives and casts all participants in a vulnerable spot, because their innermost feelings are often revealed in the written documents. Many researchers, lay people, and study participants will possibly read the documents. Every individual involved has a different threshold of pain or trauma that can result from a personally revealing document, especially when they understand that anybody may have access to it via the Internet, universities, and libraries. Open access to such written publications means that participants, researchers, and the audience are all involved in the research study experience and its ensuing writings.

"Relational ethics" refers to the care and respect I must adhere to for every participant in this research (Ellis, 2007; Ellis, et al, 2010), whether or not they are likely to read these words about our experience. As I write, I ask, among many questions, if I would want that written about me (Alcoff, 1992). When I honestly ask, and answer questions like that, I am mindfully working to maintain my ethics for others.

Researchers may be subject to criticisms of ethical conduct no matter how many precautions are taken. Even though I sometimes speak generally of others involved in my research, ethics are a top priority for me. For that reason, I changed the names of individuals, or only use their professional title. The names of groups and locations have

also been changed in order to help protect those people I use in writing my stories.

Relationships require two or more people, so honesty is required of me when depicting myself with others. I must constantly ask what is the purpose and intent of any given moment, what is to be written, and how might people be affected (Ellis, 2007).

Throughout research and writing phases I ask myself, "Will my words here hurt others?"

Concerns about credibility and ethics have prompted many scholars to develop criteria to help establish and maintain fresh, evocative, and ethical scholarship of progressive societal issues (see, for example, Richardson, 2000; Ellis, 2004; Ellis, 2007). Similarly, Lisa Tillmann-Healy (2002) suggests, "criteria by which we judge narrative ethnographies are different from those used to evaluate traditional social science" (p. 340), because ethnographies include emotions, feelings, and describe outcomes directly related to study participants. Certainly, as Sarah Tracy (2010) suggests, scholars must heed ethics at every juncture. There has rarely been a moment throughout this reflection and writing process in which I have not given serious thought to the potential impact of my project on others.

Research Literature

Leadership

Articles and books about shy leaders are scarce, whereas research about leaders', traits (Van Vugt, 2006), and the keys to successful leadership are more common. For instance, Colin Powell and Tony Koltz (2012) co-wrote a book about Powell, the well-known former United States Army general and former Secretary of State, who is widely seen by many as a successful leader. They discuss thirteen rules for leadership that Powell has incorporated over his many years in leader roles. Powell also includes stories

of his leader experiences. He stresses, “Troops—followers—will only go up the hill for leaders who have character, integrity, and moral and physical courage” (p. 247).

Elsewhere Oren Harari (2002) lists and discusses Colin Powell's eighteen lessons of leadership success, each comprising its own chapter, focusing on his (Powell's) effective leader characteristics. Harari says, “My intent in writing this book is to shed light on Powell's leadership style . . .” (p. 19). Powell's leadership characteristics, as well as his name and face recognition, make him a popular subject of leadership books.

Van Vugt (2006) also notes his search of the literature turns up documents that “reliably distinguish leaders from nonleaders (sic), like power, ambition, extraversion, and intelligence” (Van Vugt, 2006, p. 354). In fact, a plethora of information exists covering the many ways these qualities can be measured and used to determine leader success. Overall, leader and leadership books discussing well-known individuals, or the bold and assertive traits that comprise successful leaders, are readily available. Contrariwise, far fewer books are available discussing quiet leaders and the valuable characteristics and abilities they offer.

Research on transformational leaders (see Krzyzewski & Phillips, 2000/2004; Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Lambert & Gardner, 2009; Rosenberg, 2010; Chandler, 2011) contends these leaders nurture, encourage participation, and empower others to aspire to great accomplishments. Marlos van Engen, Rien van der Leeden, and Tineke Willemsen (2001) associate managers and their employees in a transformational leadership style that is considered feminine because “it utilizes intellectual stimulation of, and the individual consideration given to” others (Gender stereotypes and leadership styles section, para. 3). And yet, the authors suggest there is no strong evidence in the

literature or their study stating women lead differently than men. This finding does appear to contradict the very notion of a feminine style of leadership that is gender based.

Transactional leadership is considered a masculine style because the main focus is on completing tasks. This style differs from transformational leadership, which focuses on building relationships in leadership using communication. "Transactional leadership behaviors," according to Alan Belasen and Nancy Frank (2012), "are aimed at monitoring and controlling employees through rational or economic means" (p. 194). This concept is an early foundational principle found in the leadership research. Here, leaders give directives for task completion that usually include a rewards system (Eagly & Carli, 2007), e.g., rank or payment. Payment or rank provides followers their incentives and reward without necessarily building a bonding relationship.

Research includes an extensive look at the ways gender may or may not affect women leaders. Michelle Violanti and Linda Jurczak (2011) link a shortage of women in corporate leader positions to communication styles that fall prey to gender stereotyping. Until recently, a masculine communication style that focuses on task completion rather than relationship building was considered the more practical leader style. Their study reveals that leader expectations are changing, where a feminine communication style, which focuses on individual needs, is emerging as more desirable than a task-oriented communication style. More importantly, they conclude that ability and communication styles do not prevent women from achieving leader roles, but traditions and often unseen and unspoken restrictions do have that influence. Likewise, Barbara Ritter and Janice Yoder (2004) examine dominant female leaders and "role congruity theory," noting that women's emergence in leadership is hindered by gender and role expectations. In other

words, they suggest dominant women leaders often allow men (even if they are not dominant) to assume leader roles, especially if the group task is considered masculine, e.g., designing an airplane hangar. Jennifer Young's (2011) research seeks to determine "whether there was a higher level of gender role internalization among female transformational leaders than in female transactional leaders" (p. 103). She seeks to examine whether or not these internalizations affect their leadership behaviors. Young suggests that women who receive on the job training in organizations do lean toward internalized messages and use a more transformational style compared to women in the study whose organization was mainly male. Young's study then suggests that women in masculine-based organizations generally chose a transactional style of leadership. And, the research of Rose Ward, Halle Popson, and Donald DiPaolo (2010) seeks to develop a method to inventory "alpha female" leadership personalities. Women with alpha leader personalities are often assertive, intelligent, have high emotional intelligence and self-esteem, and are risk-takers. Ward et al. inventory measurement tool helps identify women with alpha leader capabilities and can help in understanding women in leadership roles.

The research discussed here indicates gender affects things such as communication, how a female leader's behavior may be affected by expectations placed on her by society. These internalized expectations may determine whether women will adopt transformational styles or not. Ward et al. (2010) research indicates that as ideas of gender continue to change, the alpha female measure may prove beneficial to helping women gain higher leadership roles, because leader training for women can be based off this measure. In essence, gender issues permeate leadership and its leaders.

Existing research also explores different perspectives of servant leadership. Deborah Eicher-Catt (2005) is first to use a feminist perspective to study United Arab Emirate (UAE) women's childhood development, as well as influences that inspired their rise to leadership. And Jane Waddell (2006) posits that servant leaders have "a preference for introversion" (p. 1), offering a valuable perspective to the study of quiet people as leaders. Because introverts tend not to require the stimulating attention of others, they often are servant leaders (i.e., their concern is for others rather than for themselves). Waddell suggests quiet people tend to listen to, and often take time to think about others' needs.

Envisioning dreams and goals and then pursuing them is what Cooley (2008) refers to as "self-leadership." Listening to an inner voice helps us engage thoughts and intentions toward pursuing self-leadership goals. Cooley writes that a person's inner voice is "...as an awareness of self that comes from the interaction with, and internalization of, the influences of others and the environment" (p. iii). This inner voice guides us in what we could or should do (or not), and ultimately in what we actually do. Diane Chandler (2008) similarly suggests how self-leadership involves determining what needs to be done, setting goals, and putting forth the initiative necessary to accomplish the goals. Jeffrey Houghton, David Dawley, and Trudy DeLiello (2012) write self-leadership is, "the process of influencing oneself to perform more effectively" (p. 217). Such leadership is a tool that is available to those who are willing to listen to their inner voice to perform the steps necessary for goal completion.

The literature described above barely captures what we know about the dynamics of leadership. Leadership is varied, as are its definitions. Definitions of leader and

leadership reflect changes in how these intriguing and powerful concepts and practices are viewed. For instance, Martin Dupuis, Gordon Bloom, and Todd Loughhead's (2006) research defines leadership as the persuasive ability of one person over others, whereas Van Vugt (2006) describes leadership as "a process of influence" (p. 355) in pursuit of a common goal. Karin Klenke (1996) prioritizes through her work the ways definitions of leadership change, because situations and people change. She illustrates this by describing how hierarchical top-down structures of communication are replaced by "flat, networked organizations" (p. 26). She contends definitions of leadership "...are often ambiguous and even contradictory" (p. 25), and recommends we consider leadership as combining the "critical features" of:

... Integrity, veracity, trust, commitment, morality, shared experiences, and dynamic networks as opposed to static, patterned interactions between leaders and followers. They exalt values like teamwork, collaboration, and the interdependence and unity of leadership and followership. Leaders embracing these values exhibit self-determination and risk-taking, courage, decisiveness, and a strong sense of ethics. (p. 25)

Sally Helgesen (1990) also notes that change helps to reduce the "pyramid" (p. xxxix) structure of leadership by incorporating collaboration and inclusion into follower and leader relationships. Meanwhile, Todd Loughhead, James Hardy, and Mark Eys (2006) define leadership to include everyone on a team with the potential to influence others in goal attainment.

Interestingly, too much focus on the perceived components and characteristics of leaders and their surrounding theories, Lao Tzu warns, "distracts the group from what is

happening, from the process itself,” (as cited in Heider, 1985, p. 63). Likewise, Mark Aoyagi, Richard Cox and Richard McGuire (2008) write, “Taking the analytical approach of breaking down leadership and component parts may not be the most valid way of measuring leadership” (p. 38). Their position suggests that analyzing and quantifying specific parts does not necessarily account for the creative facets of effective leaders. As it relates to this project, working in such a way certainly might not make available the same cultural and evocative insights that autoethnography tends to provide. Similarly, Blank (1995) argues it is a mistake to break leadership down into fragments based on individual “attributes or behaviors” (p. 29). Instead, he reasons, leadership entails negotiating interpersonal experiences in an interconnected field. Follower and leader interactions create this field. Without these interactions, leadership does not occur. Therefore, relationship dynamics are perhaps more important than previously acknowledged, since they account for what leaders do with their followers, while in their leader roles, thus providing a more complete picture of why these interactions work.

Every person experiences and creates change that is often a result of self-reflection (Rosenberg, 2010). Introspection that results in deep personal change is transformational. Many leaders undergo transformation that enhances their leadership. Rosenberg writes, “leaders are people who change the world” (p. 11) and “we have the capacity to change the world by changing ourselves” (p. 11). Everyone has the potential to change her or himself and to be transformed.

The research also varies about which styles of leadership are best or more widely accepted. For example, according to Eagly and Carli (2007), women are typically expected by most people to exhibit nurturing traits such as gentleness, consideration and

affection. In this way, men are seen as being naturally self-assured, change-makers, and forceful in leadership. About female leaders they write, "...a typically participative style might display the collaborative behaviors of consulting, discussing, agreeing, cooperating, or negotiating depending on the circumstances" (p. 808). Eagly and Carli further state, "It is reasonable to think that stereotypically feminine qualities of cooperation, mentoring, and collaboration are important to leadership, certainly in some contexts and perhaps increasingly in contemporary organizations" (p. 808). As people change, so does leadership, meaning leaders adjust their style to fit the needs of the situation.

Lao Tzu's keen observation points out, "The feminine allows; but the masculine causes" (as cited in Heider, 1985, p. 71). The feminine allows by teaching, coaching or with mentoring (Eagly & Carli, 2003), whereas the masculine style is more vocal (Violanti & Jurczak, 2011) and gives directives or orders for task achievement without concern for relationships. Tzu's ancient observation also ties closely to what others point out about leadership. Violanti and Jurczak's (2010) research, for instance, suggests, "the leadership expectation of leaders is changing with a feminine communication style preferred across the board, regardless of situation or sex of the leader" (p. 45). A feminine communication style incorporates "interpersonal skills" (Chandler, 2011, p. 3). Active participation and encouragement, as well as information sharing, are some of the approaches used in relationship building that comprise a feminine style. In this way, a feminine style differs from a masculine style that is task focused (Chandler, 2011), and incorporates authoritative directives toward goal completion (Helgesen, 1990/1995; Fine, 2009).

Blank's (1995) "leadership field" (p. 29) parallels aspects of transformational leadership with its communal and collaborative components of interactions. Within the leadership field are "quantum leaders" (p. 31), who he claims cultivate networking and bonding with their followers. Blank stresses how this type of leadership is about relationships, and "leaders cannot perceive themselves as separate from others" (p. 33). Another aspect of his framework recognizes the changing nature of leadership: When need for a leader arises, people form a group, assign a leader, and work toward goal completion. When the goal is reached, need for the leader dissipates, thus demonstrating the discontinuous nature of leadership. It is within this framework he feels anybody can lead. And because leadership is created in the consciousness of leaders and followers, he contends, leadership is subjective, which makes us simultaneously observers and participants within these relationships.

Research indicates the ways in which people experience leadership are changing. Groups are nurtured and teambuilding (Blank, 1995; Helgesen, 1990/1995; Krzyzewski & Phillips, 2000/2004) is encouraged. This differs from traditional hierarchical structures that encouraged individual performance. Therefore, the development of communal and collaborative structuring of leadership, and increased awareness of self-leadership, will lead to increased opportunities for shy and quiet women to lead. Lambert and Gardner (2009) write, "It is our conviction that all women can lead once they convince themselves that it is possible" (p. 32). While certainly multiple—and sometimes very difficult—factors shape what makes possible leadership, there are times when a cause or issue presents itself and creates within, a desire to step up and assume responsibility for its completion by organizing others toward that same end.

Quiet, Shy

I state above that I am both shy and quiet. However, introverts are not necessarily shy (Kahnweiler, 2009; Cain, 2012). Cain (2012) writes, “The shy person is afraid to speak, while the introvert is simply over stimulated” (p. 12). And since shy individuals often fear social situations, fears can exacerbate if they are also quiet, since quiet people are usually “thinkers” (p. 7). Therefore, fears can escalate if their thoughts dwell on social situations. As I will convey in Chapter Two, I sometimes have developed severe headaches because my shy thoughts allowed my fears to grow and create anxiety.

Susie Scott's (2004) online study surveys self-proclaimed shy individuals to determine how they feel about their shyness. Scott contends shy people are not necessarily anti-social, but instead feel “their relative incompetence makes them different from most others” (p. 93). In other words, shy people, at times, feel others have more knowledge and ability. She reflects, “Their experience of academia had made them appreciate the importance of furthering knowledge through social research” (p. 94). The research has helped enable her participants “to reflect upon the direction their lives were taking and to question their own behavior” (p. 94). Scott describes the way in which many participants, as they have found their voices, have maintained steady communication with one another, even after the project terminated.

I also should note that some authors associate positive ideas to quiet leaders. Lao-Tzu said, “Silence is a great source of strength” (as cited in Heider, 1985, p. 9). Since quiet people often do not naturally share information about themselves, Blank (1995) recommends they create an “interaction space” (p. 197) near their office or workspace that encourages conversation with others. He offers a respectful example of a quiet

leader who has a popcorn machine near his office, to draw others into his space. This insight, to me, feels positive and attainable. And Cain's (2012) research indicates that oftentimes, quiet people are capable of effectively leading others, particularly people who are resourceful. Quiet people are often effective in these leader situations because they do not seek to be domineering or to compete for attention.

Kahnweiler (2009) finds introverts tend to live in their reflexive thoughts, but they are expected to adapt to extraverts' ways of outward expression in social interactions. She contends, "Shyness is driven by fear and social anxiety" (p. 2). To help overcome, she advises adapting perceived weaknesses into working solutions. For example, if your preferred communication style goes against the norm, personalize it so others see it as positive and team-like. Some ways to appear to be a "team player" are to share humorous thoughts, or set aside time for "chatting." Chatting is deemed by many in American culture to be a feminine trait. I discuss gender stereotyping in the next section.

In summary, the extant research literature has focused on leadership through a variety of distinct and shared ways. It commonly emphasizes a wide range of important variables that constitute this topic, such as gender and women's leadership. The literature also prioritizes discussions about leadership styles, such as servant leadership, transformational and transactional leadership, as well as self-leadership. In their different ways, these resources emphasize extraversion, and downplay introversion. And as stated above, research on quiet leaders is far less available, if available at all.

Culture and Gender

Human beings are influenced by the geographic location of their birth, where they live and have lived, their education, beliefs, traditions, symbols, and the values and meanings these have (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Just as individuals live in a larger social construct called "community," they also exist within family cultures. Family culture shapes children from birth, and is often when gender differentiating begins. My family groomed me to live within certain masculine ideals of cooperation. As I note below, females in my family have duties and roles we cooperatively fulfill due to our being women.

Eagly and Carli (2007) discuss how descriptive and prescriptive beliefs become the stereotypes we use to shape our expectations of "what members of a group are *actually* like . . . and what they *should* be like" (p. 84, italics in original). For example, I am expected to fulfill household chores because I am female. The men usually do most outside chores. However, since I am home alone a lot, I have to do outside work, such as split wood and move snow. The expectation is I should not split wood, or move snow, but the reality is, I do. Therefore, I tend to go against the prescriptive beliefs others have about what I should do.

Gender plays a role in how women are expected to behave. Labels are assigned to help us keep to our roles (Indvik, 2004). She distinguishes the difference between gender and sex. Sex refers to the biological body. "Gender refers to the way in which meaning and evaluations are assigned with sex by members of a culture" (p. 266). Cultures assign characteristics to male, female, masculinity and femininity. These then are learned beliefs that are misleading when we consider that labels such as "male" or "female" oversimplify, since many often use them to try to make everyone fit into one or the other

of the categories. She further argues how one category is often seen as better than the other, and that numerous studies have shown that values of maleness are considered better than those values that are seen as female. This leads many cultures into becoming “gendered” (p. 266), a process that can and often has affected vital decisions concerning compensation, resources and power distribution.

Klenke (1996) conceptualizes “gender is a significant cultural, rather than an individual difference or demographic variable” (p. 9). Cultural awareness of gender stereotyping is benefitting recent generations of girls and boys. For instance, three decades ago, girls were not allowed to play in many sports like soccer and hockey. This has changed for girls and women in the United States. More sports teams and opportunities are available because cultural awareness that girls and women can play sports successfully, has changed expectations of what they can do, overall.

Gender labeling based on sex is a cultural practice that helps give us a sense of who we are and the duties we are expected to fulfill. These expectations change when prescriptive beliefs change, like when girls and women are allowed to play a wider variety of sports, like hockey. Because thoughts shifted from what women *should be* like to what they *actually are* like, this opened the door for female athletes. The same cultural labels, in effect, shape how we interact as leaders. This is especially so since communication styles are subject to gender labeling and affect how we interact. Our cultural beliefs change as we open ourselves to new experiences, such as joining groups. And as we are more aware of how we experience our relationships, we become more aware of contradictions.

Contradictions

Some of the literature attempts to break from the traditional ways of thinking about leadership. Eagly (2007) argues that women are expected to exhibit communal behavior, which is nurturing and builds on relationships, even though agentic (masculine) leadership behaviors—because they are direct and focus on accomplishing the task—are often considered more effective. This can create contradictory realities for women in leadership, because “finding an appropriate and effective leadership style is challenging” (p. 4). Yet, the advice for women is conflicting. It would seem women must either ratchet up their assertiveness if they are shy, or present themselves in a friendlier manner, if they are assertive. In advising quiet women, Eagly and Carli (2007) write, “It is wise to avoid seeming shy and tentative” (p. 165). Instead, they then encourage direct, assertive women to exhibit warmth by smiling. Smiling will make assertive women seem less “harsh and self-centered” (p. 165). These passages create a conundrum for me, and perhaps for others. As a quiet woman I acknowledge the need to speak up and assert my views more often. It is difficult to know where the line is between being assertive enough and, yet, not appearing too aggressive. The authors also contend that as more women have gained entry into the workforce and management, they learn “to adopt leadership styles that work in a wide range of contemporary settings” (p. 187). The only way to find what works, they suggest, is to speak up, and adapt according to situation.

Some introverts, such as Microsoft's Bill Gates, are successful leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). True, extraversion is not a requirement for leadership; however, as Eagly & Carli write, “extraversion eases the route to leadership because it fosters a desire to work with other people” (p. 42). Nonetheless many quiet people are quite capable of building

and nurturing engaging and productive relationships. We are oftentimes quieter about our meaningful relationships.

Purpose

One purpose for this study is to open conversation to how quiet people become empowered when their voices are heard. Cain (2012) writes about “soft power” (p. 202), whereby quiet people know they are not extraverts, but are able to work within their range of comfort and succeed along side extraverts. By engaging the strength of the quiet ways in which we perform and the traits we possess, such as listening and quiet contemplation, we can “embrace the power of quiet” (p. 202).

Another purpose for this research is the cultural richness I hope to convey, since it is a study about an everyday woman, living an ordinary life in a dynamic time in history. The events I share are significant to me, because I do begin to change as a result of them. I believe we all change, but I feel I can only speak for myself about change. With this research I hope to continue a dialogue started by others such as Kahnweiler (2009), Waddell, (2010), Cain (2012), on this sometimes undervalued, but dynamic topic of quiet leaders. Because quiet people often do not speak out, it may be assumed by some that we are disengaged or uncaring about others, or about leading. Since, in my case this is not so, I offer here my experiences in communication, change, and leading.

This project is also important for personal reasons. I autoethnographically delve within the deep reflections of my relationships. As I do this it opens the floodgates of personal insights. First, I have tended to fear groups and public speaking. Because I choose to examine female leadership from a quiet perspective, I need to find opportunities to observe myself participating in this event. Joining groups has helped me

to accomplish this goal. As a result, I establish meaningful relationships with several new people. Second, as I struggled for the direction in which to take this project, I experience times of severe doubt. Will I find enough pertinent literature? How can I write about something, which I know only a little about? Is my thesis topic valid and worthwhile? Will I ever start and complete this project? How will I, and the ones I love, be read? Indeed, the physical act of writing this paragraph is light in the tunnel of doubt and uncertainty. Thirdly, I move forward confidently and with purpose, far better equipped to communicate effectively both in speaking and writing. As a result of this project, I push myself past comfort zones, by co-creating new experiences with strangers and acquaintances. And I observe my relationships through a critical, yet empathic, lens. Because of this, I believe I co-create ever more meaningful relationships.

Preview

Shy and quiet people may often handle relational obstacles and conflict differently than individuals who are more extraverted. This is especially true in leadership. In Chapter Two, I show what it is often like for me to be quiet or shy in leader situations. As I depart on this new, reflexive and creative journey, I frame my stories with these questions in mind: What is the cultural significance of my being a shy woman who is placed in leadership roles? How can my lived experience help others? The upcoming chapter, I hope, addresses these questions.

I conduct this study to learn more about the meaning I get out of my quiet and shy behavior when in leader roles. My hope is it will shed light on what it is like for quiet and shy people to experience leading while coping with the natural tendency to shy away from uncomfortable situations. Chapter Two shows me in several different leadership

situations with different outcomes. I use poetry to help set up for the reader why I might be quiet. A narrative scene shows my anxiety of an upcoming social situation, and a dialogue scene speaks to how I overcome my shy discomfort for an evening by focusing on the needs of others. In a monologue I share how I attempt to organize a small group to no avail. Several journal entries allow me to share my thoughts and feelings at various group meetings I attend. I also include narratives of graduate school teaching experiences in which I encounter obstacles I must overcome.

**

Chapter Two: Quiet and Shy Takes on Leadership

Shy

We are leaving in an hour, and I have just begun to pack for the military awards mixer. It is in Eau Claire, WI, three hours away. "I'm falling apart, Betsy! I don't want to go." Betsy wags her tail. My mind is in overdrive. (*What if I say something stupid? Or worse, what if I can't think of anything to say? How embarrassing! People will think I don't care, or that I don't like them. Oh! New people. There are always new people!*) I pop some aspirin in my mouth and gently message my temples.

As I am thinking about these people whom I have not seen for at least a year, I toss toiletries and make-up into my bag. I dab at the sweat on my face. I dig my toothbrush out of the drawer and toss it in the bag, trying to link names with the faces of people I will see in a few hours. (*Who's married? Divorced? Who has kids? Damn! How am I supposed to remember these details? I scarcely remember their names!*) I rummage deeper in the drawer. (*And where is my toothpaste?*)

Betsy is lying on the bed, watching me. I toss a pair of black flats on the heap of clothes beside her. She tilts her head and gently thumps her tail to remove a fallen shoe. Disrupted now, she comes to me for a good scratch. I say, "It'll be okay, Bets, we won't be gone too long." She curls her body into me for a quick rub. "It's all okay, Betsy," I say. (*It's all-okay.*)

(*What is the Battalion Commander's wife's name? Lucinda? Linda? I don't know! I rub my eyes. Damn!*) I wash another aspirin down with the rest of my diet soda. I sit. (*Is it Brenda? No. Glenda. Maybe it's Miranda.*) My face is damp and warm. (*Great, now I'm down to half an hour to get packed.*) I lie on the sofa, covering my eyes

with my arm. Betsy crawls on top of me. She whines softly. (*I hate this! I need to be calm. Breathe.*)

**

Quiet

Perhaps I do not say a lot when first we meet.

Please do not take offense, I sincerely beseech.

For if I do not understand your ways, I will warily watch.

For I need to see what you are about, what you actually want.

When I fully understand your words, and feel I know who you really are.

You become part of my circle, no longer watched from afar.

And while I may not speak out loud a lot, I do, I assure you, deep inside my head.

So, until you know me better, there are many things I simply leave unsaid.

But when we know and feel that special kinship, like two old comfy shoes.

You will see that side of me, who happily, noisily, shares her views.

**

My experience in and with culture puts certain expectations on me, especially as I mature, to step up to leader roles. These expectations create problems for me because I do not have formal leader training, and because I am shy and quiet. As I hope is depicted by the Prologue, I was not allowed to participate in leader roles in my youth. Now a mature adult, I strive to educate and train myself, to become better in leader roles. To do this, I believe I must continually improve my communication skills.

Many times friends comment on my silence. They say, "Nancy, you are so quiet. You seem upset." When I am silent it is my natural state in that moment. If I have

something important to contribute to a conversation, I say it. Oftentimes I want to feel passion about a topic before I talk about it. This is not to say I am not interested, I simply do not want to speak to be speaking. And sometimes when attention is turned to me, I am silent because I feel the need to become inconspicuous, because I am extremely uncomfortable or embarrassed. Unfortunately, many times I am probably perceived by others to not like them. And this could not be further from the truth, in most instances.

An Assertive Monologue

I hate being ignored. In fact, I get pissed when I feel others are ignoring me. Problem is: I am too quiet about it. Then I think people assume I don't really care. Some think I don't mean what I say, either. Like when I try to get some cooperation, or to get something done, I get ignored. My two partners in this group I joined, Scene Study for the Senses, sometimes do this.

Scene Study for the Senses is a group for theater aficionados. We meet weekly to study scenes in plays. Or we can do monologues. Even though I'm not an actor, I'm drawn to theater. Since sometimes my silence offends people, I joined this group so I could learn how to talk more openly in different scenarios.

My partners are Sam and Tom. We get assigned a scene from *Francesca's Escape*. (One of the club members wrote it, but I don't remember her name.) We need to practice and present to the group in a week. Whether or not we can coordinate ourselves and get prepared is still to be determined.

Now, everybody's busy, I get it. But does it take too much time to answer texts? I don't think so. A text usually only takes a few seconds, in fact. I sent a group text to Sam and Tom, suggesting we meet tomorrow evening.

No response. Next morning I resend to Tom and Sam. Finally, Sam gets back to me. He wants a different day and time. Fine! I'm ecstatic to have a response, so I agree. I text Tom, "Can you meet Saturday, at 4 pm?"

Tom is sorry but the only time that works for him is two hours or so, before our meeting. Great! Both Tom and Sam are experienced actors. They've been in real plays. Not me, though. So I need all the practice I can get. I don't want to make a fool of myself in front of everybody!

On meeting day there's some road construction. I leave home extra early so I won't be late. I'm about five minutes away from the coffee shop, when I receive the first text from Tom, saying, "I'm running about 15 min late."

I park near the coffee shop, and text them back, saying, "I'll get us a table." Half a cup of coffee, and forty-five minutes later, comes another text from Tom. It reads, "Sorry. Was at parts store. Now, stopped in traffic."

Next, Sam sends a text. It reads, "Held up at work. Leaving soon."

I text them back, saying, "I have a great table, in back. See you soon." Twenty minutes later comes another text from Tom, "It's late. Let's go to regular meeting. Be there in 5." My attempt to organize our group is for naught. Now we will not have our scene planned out prior to performing.

Tom is setting up our scene with props when I arrive. He says, "Hey, we can practice our parts, even though Sam isn't here yet. I'll read his parts, too."

Sam finally gets here, and we are practicing our scene. I play the part of Francesca. Sam is Francesca's father, Mr. Murphy. Tom is Francesca's dying, ex-fiancé, Rupert.

As Francesca, I say, "Please help Rupert, Father. I know you can. We will help him, whatever it takes. It is possible."

Sam says, "No, Nancy. Francesca needs to show far more emotion just then. Let's do that line again." I am interrupted four more times. Just on that one line. I am ready to hit the wall with my fist! Don't get me wrong; I know I need the help. But I also need to get through more of Francesca's scene, so I get to know her. So I feel how she'd be reacting, now, in this moment.

A few more minutes into our practice, Tom says, "Hey, I think Francesca would stand here as she watches for the nurse. Come here, let's try it." No matter where I stand or sit, Tom wants me to do something different.

I can't take it anymore. I say, "Tom, you make a good point. But it just feels right for Francesca to stand here. Yes, I'll project my voice more, too."

To Sam, I say, "Francesca is emotional, but she is also realizing her strength in this scene." To both men, I say directly and without equivocating, "Let's run through this whole scene one time. Without stopping. Okay?"

Both men blink at me, damn near in unison. Sam says, "Okay, from the top, then."

Even though I was unable to coordinate our group meetings, I did get their cooperation today. Throughout the rest of our practice and when we did a rudimentary performance before our group, Sam and Tom refrained from correcting and repositioning me while I performed the role of Francesca.

Since I am usually quiet, it seems some people assume I do not mind if I am corrected, sometimes to excess, as is my experience in this scene. When I am ignored, I

also feel that others do not think I care. I do care. As I do in this scene, I now allow myself to speak up to others when I feel I am either being ignored or corrected in excess. Because my tendency in the past has been to hold my feelings in, when I do finally express my discontent, people are often surprised. My experience shows me I cannot be a successful leader if I allow people to push me around.

Evening as a One-night Bartender

Our stories are created together with others and communication is the common thread. As Littlejohn and Foss (2008) state, “relationships are made in dialogue” (p. 210). This means whether we talk or are silent, we are communicating and creating relationship with others. Since we do not escape communicating with others, like when I am silent, it is probable that I communicate to others that I do not want, or value their company. I use dialogue here to share how I experience being quiet or shy, and how it works to help or hinder my leader proficiency.

We share communication with one another. “We do not create our stories—or ourselves—in a vacuum; we are always shaped by and shaping our context” (Lerner, 1993, p. 81). Communication allows us to create new perspectives from which we view our lived experience. This experience enables us to create and re-create with one another, as we continue to develop new meanings.

*

A pivotal event a while back helps me create new meanings from social events. I call it, “Emergence - Social Butterfly for an Evening as a One-Night Bartender.”

I find out a couple days before the mixer:

Jon: “Did I mention you’re our bartender for the evening, at the mixer?”

Nancy: "...me, a bartender? I don't think so. I won't know many people there."

I pop some ibuprofen in my mouth.

Jon: "You will by night's end. As bartender, you'll talk to everybody there."

Nancy: "I don't know. I don't know much about making mixed drinks, either."

Jon: "You'll figure it out. Just have fun with it."

Nancy: "I really don't care to talk to everybody. Are they really counting on me?"

Jon: "Yes, but I'll help you."

Nancy: "Okay, I'll do it with your help. But we need a bartending book."

The mixer:

(Oh, boy, I hope they don't care that I can't make many specialty drinks.)

Sam: "Hi there, sweetheart. You're our bartender for the night?"

Nancy: "Yes, I am. What can I get for you?"

Sam: "A shot of whiskey and a lite beer."

Trevor: "Two beers and a vodka sour."

Walter: "Hey! I heard this is the watering hole. Brandy old-fashioned, please."

(Oh, crap! Already an order for a drink I don't know how to make.)

Nancy: "Remind me, what's in a brandy old-fashioned?"

He points.

Walter: "That brandy, bitters, some 7-up, and a couple of cherries."

Nancy: "How does it taste?"

Walter: "Don't look so serious. You made it just right. It's perfect!"

(Whew! They gladly tell me what's in a drink!)

Nancy: "Thank you."

- Reginald: "Hi, two beers and some pretzels. Honey, you should have a tip jar."
- Nancy: "Thank you."
- Betty: "Hon, do you have wine coolers? Two berry and one margarita flavored?"
- Nancy: "Sure do. Mmmm, those look good. Does it taste like a real margarita?"
- Betty: "It does. You should try one."
- Nancy: "Maybe later."
- Lucy: "I love your jumpsuit. The cut of the jacket is so cute! Vivid blue, too."
(Wow, people are so friendly.)
- Nancy: "Thanks. We need more bitters, beer, and Riesling from the cooler, dear."
(Hey, I'm in a groove now. I can do this!)
- Nancy: "I'm getting into this bartending gig. I can handle this, you go mingle."
- Jon: "You're sure?"
(I AM sure!)
- Nancy: "Yes, I'm sure. Go ahead."
- Ben: "Three beers, and whiskey sour."
- Nancy: "Hi, Connie. You said, a Blue Hawaiian? What do I need for that?"
- Connie: "Yes, pineapple juice, rum, Curacao, crème de coconut, and cherries."
- Nancy: "Thanks. Oh, they're so pretty! And easy to make, too."
- Connie: "Mmmm, mmmm! Just right."
- Nancy: "Connie, speaking of Hawaii, what sights did you see on, was it Kauai?"
- Tom: "Two martinis, and a red wine, please."
- Nancy: "How many olives? Are your kids playing on the waterslide, Tom?"
- Tom: "Yes, they're playing water tag, too. How are your kids?"

Nancy: "Fun! Oh, the kids are good, one's at college. More gin? How's that?"

Nancy: "Jim, what's your wife's name? Trudy? Here's a fresh glass of wine for Trudy."

Spencer: "Are you a real bartender?"

Nancy: "I am tonight. It's my first time, and I'm enjoying the hell out of it!"

Spencer: "It's great to see you talking to everyone."

Nancy: "Thanks, Spencer."

(Yikes, what was that look all about? He looks like he just swallowed something horrendous. Crap! I knew I'd mess something up! Why is it suddenly so hot in here? Get a grip on yourself. It's only a drink.)

Nancy: "Oops, too strong? Let me add more soda. No? I'll make you another."

(I wonder how many other drinks I've screwed up, and people were just too nice to tell me.)

Spencer: "Yeah, go a little lighter on the whiskey. It's not a big deal though. No worries."

Nancy: "Sorry, I'm too busy yakking, not paying attention to your drink."

Spencer: "This one tastes about right. Thanks, Nancy."

Nancy: "James, remind me again, how do you like your Long Island Iced Tea?"

Jon: "Nancy, you look a little flustered. You still doing okay?"

Nancy: "Yes, dear. I've got it all under control. Yes, go visit some more."

Nancy: "Congrats on your promotion, Theo. Do you like your new position?"

Theo: "It's good, it's good. In fact, I'll have another Jameson to celebrate!"

Valerie: "It is so great to see you, Nancy! Are you free for lunch tomorrow?"

- Nancy: "Yes, let's meet in the lobby. How does noon work for you?"
- Valerie: "Noon is great! I'd like two Buds, please."
- Nancy: "Dear, we need more Miller and Bud. A bottle of brandy and sour, too."
- Jon: "How's it going?"
- Nancy: "It's fun! I'm meeting people I never talked with before."
- Nancy: "I'm sorry. I couldn't quite understand what you ordered."
(I guess I better make his on the weak side. I hope he's not driving.)
- Nancy: "Can you grab the pretzels and chips from the other room, dear?"
I set fresh snacks on the bar. *(Ah, people are hungry.)*
- Caroline: "Four shots of whiskey, please. Join us?"
- Nancy: "Five shots, coming right up!"
- Jackson: "Wonderful job bartending tonight. It's great you're coming out of your shell."
- Nancy: "Thank you, Jackson! You've been a wonderful customer, too."
It is finished!

My face hurts from smiling. I speak with more people in one night than I usually do in one month. It is such a relief to have made it through. *(You did good, girl! It's amazing how interesting some of these people are. Back in the suitcase with you.)* I toss the bottle of aspirin back in my suitcase.

Tonight's informal setting enables me to act as bartender, and in doing so, begin to shed—perhaps even if just for the night—aspects of my quiet and shy selves, as I make drinks and serve snacks for strangers and casual acquaintances. It is uncommon for me to banter and chat with strangers, like I do tonight. As I experiment in these ways, it is as if

my quiet chrysalis begins to crack and unravel. My foray toward leadership, much like my quiet chrysalis, is slow and tentative to unravel itself, in preparation for the uncertain, yet exciting journey ahead.

As bartender, I temporarily forget my shy identity and lead within this social setting, because I shift focus to my customers' needs in the moment. I am an active, attentive participant, rather than an inactive observer. I reveal a talkative side I rarely reveal to strangers.

**

Thoughts of leadership sometimes bring to mind, for me, famous people like Margaret Thatcher and Hillary Clinton. Quiet or shy individuals are seldom noticed or remembered. The exception is when these quiet people, carried by their missions of peace, lead others to remarkable outcomes, such as in the work of Mother Theresa and Gandhi (Cain, 2012). In the United States, introversion, in particular, is often taboo and seldom talked about, especially if adults appear to exhibit traits. In fact, introverts are often seen as less desirable than extraverts. And shy people are regularly understood to have a disability (Scott, 2004), particularly when viewed in professional contexts (Cain, 2012). My personal experiences corroborate this position. For instance, in the course of conversation with friends, other mutual friends who are shy and quiet are mentioned. During those conversations, adjectives like "socially inept," or "anti-social," are often used to define these individuals. Given this, admitting I am shy and introverted publically through this thesis feels risky. It is risky because I reveal fears and the anxiety I experience in social settings. Anxiety, when it becomes overpowering, distracts me and causes me great pause.

**

I learn by observing others and by hands-on (practice) leading. This is especially useful for me. I do not regularly ask for help, because I do not want to bother others, and at other times, it causes me embarrassment to admit I do not know something—because I feel I am supposed to have most of the answers . . . Therefore, I rely on observation and previous experience to guide me as I practice leading. By observing others I can see how, and figure out why, they do things a certain way. Yes, other people also use these methods; however, these tools are especially indispensable for me. As observer, I see what works for others. As active participant, I put leadership into action, based on what I see and the advice others provide. In this way, I attempt to control the situation by relying on observation and prior experience, which in turn helps me maintain feelings of safety and security.

**

Graduate students must excel. My performance as student teacher, presenter, or facilitator is expected to be stellar, so shyness is not a legitimate reason not to fully participate. Some days I do not feel like being a stellar student, but I do it anyway because I agreed to do this to my best ability. I truly enjoy reading, writing, preparing presentations, and my other assignments. Most classes, however, require active participation in class discussions, and there are days I just want to listen, learn, and think about what is being said without having to speak in class.

*

My first class, Public Relations, challenges my decision to enroll in my graduate program in Communicating Arts. My assignment is to work with a small group. We will

prepare a brief presentation depicting a popular four-step model for influencing public opinion. Even though this public relations concept is fairly simple and visual, I lack artistic skill. Also, I am not feeling particularly creative today, so I lag behind Tony, Bobby, and Scott as we head to the "green room," the space where the department's theater students most often hang out, to plan our project.

The green room today is cozy and cluttered, with sheets of music and numerous periodicals on the end tables. Books and dirty food containers are strewn about on shelves, tables, and the piano. I usually feel more relaxed in here, perhaps because the overstuffed chairs make it seem like home décor. A guy I don't know with curly brown hair, and wearing a black T-shirt and baggy jeans goes over to the microwave in the corner. Today, I am irritated at the clutter. I move food containers and sheet music so I can set my notebook down. Ideas are free flowing among the three guys of my group as they talk about their vision for the project.

Wanting to contribute and do my share of the work I say quietly, "We could go online to find pictures for our poster. I'll get images for the second step in the model, communication. Maybe I can find images of people talking on the phone, or something like that." Totally ignoring me, Tony says, "Scott, you wanna get the third step written up? Bobby, how about if you do the last step of the model?" (*Damn! They ignored me.*) Tony turns to me, and says, "And how about you, do you want to do the second one, communication?" Now I am hurt, and even more irritated. (*I want to yell, "I have a name too. It's Nancy!"*) (*Why do they act like I'm not here? Is it because I am a non-traditional student?*) Suddenly I feel old. And I can only hide in my quietness because I cannot escape: I will not abandon my first group on my first day of classes. (*What is that*

awful odor?) Someone is cooking something in the microwave. *(Boy, I hope I don't puke!)* A few agonizing minutes go by while my group members chat amongst themselves, before Tony says, "Okay, I'll make the poster and prepare the first step in the model. See you guys on Monday." *(Finally! I need to get out of here! Thank you, universe, I couldn't lead this group right now.)* I walk briskly to my car. *(Chicken shit).*

I work on the project at home over the weekend, and have questions. *(Oh, no! We didn't exchange phone numbers. What should I do? Will they even prepare for our presentation? Just write a blurb for each section of the model, yourself. Just in case.)*

Finally, it's presentation day. *(I wasted so much time!)* The poster is beautiful. We are all well prepared, and I learn in class, that Tony is a gifted artist.

*

In my graduate course, Creative Writing for the Media, we discuss commercials and their effects on viewers and listeners. This semester I have to student teach one day in this class, and today is my day. Our professor gives a prelude to the day's topic, effective advertising copy. As he speaks, I stand at the computer desk in front of the classroom, double-checking my television and radio clips. *(Good, my online stuff is all here. Ah, in the correct order, too.)* I listen more closely to him now, as I watch the students. *(How interesting! These kids are totally interested in what he's saying. They really do seem to want to learn.)* My observation of the students relaxes me because they seem non-judgmental. When it is my turn to teach, I feel calm and fairly confident. I feel I am doing well, even when he stops me a couple of times, calling me to further elaborate . . .

Then I show a clip advertising a popular line of girls clothing. I say, "Now this commercial is well done. It grabs the target audience's attention and sends them out shopping . . . in fact I would buy this if . . ."

The professor interrupts and begins to explain what he sees to be moral and ethical concerns in advertising. He says, "Whenever we write advertising copy, we must always be cognizant of the fact that our words can influence others." My face suddenly becomes hot. I start to sweat. This classroom is usually warm, because it is so small. Now it feels like a toaster oven. (*Oh, God! I want to crawl inside this computer console.*) Instead, I momentarily step into the shadows created by the projection machine. (*Your information represents only one perspective. Wow, how did you not even think to look at this lesson critically?*)

He continues, "I just want to point to a couple of things. First, Nancy is teaching about the effectiveness of advertisements today, and on Thursday we will discuss ethics in advertising. Given the nature of these clips, however, I feel it is important to clarify . . . and not about her teaching." (*Whew!*)

I step back to the computer desk. A random student occasionally looks at me, but now I do not mind being scrutinized. Soon, I am asked to resume the lesson. I say, "Another important consideration in advertising copy is style . . ."

*

In Principles of Persuasion I have to student teach on three separate days. Today is my third day, and the professor is a few minutes late. (*Okay, she's not here yet. Should we go ahead and start? It shouldn't be a problem. We have a lot to cover today. The group activity will take about fifteen minutes. Go for it!*) I love today's topic, the

use of spin in the media. This lesson will fill the full seventy-five minutes. I start the session.

Our professor arrives a few minutes later. She frowns. (*What's that look all about? Oh, no! I've done it now. My stomach tightens. (Oh, I wish I hadn't eaten this morning.)*) The confident momentum, with which I had started the class session, wavers now. My water bottle is on the computer desk, several feet away. I usually walk a bit as I teach, so I casually go to it. My voice shakes slightly. A bit of water spills as I sip. (*Damn! Get your focus back. She'll stop you if you're out of line. Breathe. Ah, she is settling in to listen and observe. This is a good sign.*) Some of my confidence returns, but the momentum is lost. The students do not participate as much now. Eventually I say, "I planned an activity, but we're running close on time. Should we just forgo it?" Most of the students nod yes. I am both relieved and disappointed.

My face is so hot. I see my hands tremble as I collect my things after class. (*I taught on the wrong day? How can that be? What did I do?)* Sure enough, I read it in the syllabus. (*I am scheduled to teach next week!)* Somehow though, I manage to teach based on the correct readings the students are assigned for today. (*I need to get to a computer, now! How should I word my apology?)* My fingers feel numb as I write the email to my professor. She emails me back saying, "Nancy, it's okay, and you're welcome."

Compassion is crucial in relationships. It is also important in leadership. This professor chose not to point out that I was in the wrong, while I was presenting. Her compassionate leadership provides me: 1) learning through honest feedback and critique; 2) lessons in humility; and, 3) inspiration to demonstrate compassion and patience toward

others, especially when I am their leader. I am struck by how her actions show that compassion is an effective leadership tool in certain circumstances. Since shyness often allows feelings of inadequacy to spring forth, I feel grateful to not have experienced that kind of public embarrassment. By allowing me to find out after class what I did wrong, I took time to reflect on what I need to do to correct it.

*

Group work is challenging and rewarding. My relationships in Small Group Communication class with fellow graduate students are as diverse and enlightening as each member within the group. Each experience with this group emboldens me to venture a little further outside my comfort zone.

Throughout the semester we conduct group meetings to accomplish various assignments, both written and in presentation form. I am in our first group meeting, and I struggle with feelings of inadequacy when one of my suggestions receives blank stares from my peers. (*Damn! What did I do wrong? I can't afford another headache right now. It's going to be a long semester.*) I re-read the assignment. (*Ah, I misinterpreted it, that's all.*) Still, I am very quiet as I watch and listen to each one give their ideas. My stomach feels tight. They are speaking even more animatedly as we work on the short assignment in class, and I am more subdued. I feel self-conscious when one member asks me a question and I ask her to repeat it because I am too distracted to listen properly. When I finally give an intelligent answer I feel more connected to our discussion. Then I glance at the clock. (*What, class is ending? Now I'm into what we're talking about, and I won't be able to share more ideas.*) I know I have not impressed anybody in my group today. (*I'll make up for it at our next meeting.*)

*

Today I do not enjoy the energy of the students in Small Group Communication, as I facilitate our class discussion. My meditation, (*I am calm and confident, and we are all here to learn and practice*), does not help me. Even though I am well prepared, the students do not engage. This reflects on my ability to guide our discussion. I begin to feel guilty calling on the same three students to help carry the discussion. To change scenery a little I call on a new student. I say, "Tom, how do you see dialectic tensions coming through in today's reading?" Tom smirks and shrugs, saying, "I didn't really give it much thought." With each question I ask, it is more apparent that many of the students have not read the reading for today. And the more I rely on the few who have done the reading to keep our discussion moving, the less confidence I feel. Two students in the center rows are passing a phone back and forth, laughing at something on the screen. My voice wavers as I try to ignore them by saying, "Cindy, can you think of an example from your own life when dialectic tensions have brought about positive outcomes?" This question stimulates the best discussion of the hour, but I am still distracted by the giggling students.

At the end of the semester we evaluate one another in our peer group. Leader evaluations from members of my group indicate that my quiet nature, shows in our first meeting, and is a concern early on. An evaluation from one member says, "At the beginning for me, Nancy's participation looked like something fragile, but the more we worked together, and the more decisions we made together, the more I see her confidence in problem solving and decision making processes. It's like a little creek, that became the big river." Another member, upon reflecting on my facilitation skills says, "Nancy,

comes off as an unconfident person, especially when it comes to public speaking.” This same evaluator points out I am usually very well prepared and that I know my topic well. Problems arise, however when I sense people are not engaged.

**

For some time I have lived with an ongoing desire to learn. Its deep roots stem from a lack of creative ideas, encouragement, and resources that inspired, during my youth. We did not have books on hand, nor were extracurricular activities encouraged. The daily newspaper and a fishing magazine were our reading choices. In grade school, I visited the library as often as I could. Walking up the aisles and seeing all the books about people and the things people do, created a desire in me to continually look for new ways to expand my knowledge. One of the ways I seek to do this is by thrusting myself into participating in speaking groups.

Community Leader International is a leadership group open to anybody wanting to improve leadership and public speaking skills. I join this group as a way to further my autoethnographic research on leadership. I believe it will give me an opportunity to get comfortable with a group of people. Once I become comfortable I will speak and perform meeting duties. As I observe and gradually participate in speaking publicly, I will have those experiences to reflect on and write about.

*

I am so excited to be going to my first meeting. I want to observe how one goes about becoming a better leader. More specifically, I want to observe women in leadership roles.

(What's this?) I am shocked to see when I first arrive that the seats are arranged so participants sit in an intimate circle. *(Now I can't sit in back, and blend in!)* In fact, attending a meeting obligates attendees to participate in some way, with no preferential treatment granted to anyone based on gender, group familiarity, or shyness. I am supposed to speak for one to two minutes, sharing a little about myself. My heart pumps like I am running a marathon. When I look at the members' faces I start to tremble a little bit. Then my right leg starts to twitch. To hide it, I move behind the lectern, and say, "Hi, ah, I'm Nancy, and I am a graduate student at, um, UW-S, studying speech communication . . . my Master's thesis on leadership." My speech is complete in under a minute. *(What in the hell am I doing here?)* I have dressed in business casual for tonight's meeting, so my heavy black blazer is making me sweat profusely. I relax once I sit down. After the meeting I stay after to speak with some of the group members.

*

Tonight I am timekeeper for the first time. I will time each speech with a stopwatch, and give a lighted visual cue to the speaker, based on the time they have left. Lights—similar to traffic lights—are mounted on a wooden box. For a two-minute speech, I flip on the green light when one minute is left, and then with thirty seconds remaining, the amber light. I turn on the red light when two minutes are up. Since only four members are here, we decide to give mini speeches, that last three to five minutes. I suggest that we choose our own speech topic, rather than have the "speech grandmaster" choose for us. Most members like this idea.

I am confident when I speak about planning to run a half-marathon. "Today I share with you a five step plan to run a half-marathon. First, decide which race to run.

Second, set realistic goals. Third, set up your training schedule. Fourth, perform your training, as per your schedule. And finally, on race day, run your best while remembering to have fun..." Now, I feel guilty. (*Was it right for me to suggest we choose our own topic, and then make a rough outline for my speech? Well, it was a good speech! All of the speeches were good.*)

*

It is the following week, and I arrive a few minutes late. This sets the tone for the rest of the meeting. Meeting roles are still being assigned, like they usually are at the beginning of each meeting, which means I am not detrimentally late. Even so, I am flustered. There are four tables, set up in two columns, with two or three people at each one. (*How can these tables appear to be full with only nine people here? Is there any room for me? You have to get here early! Man, I hope he doesn't ask me to be an evaluator or grammarian*). The meeting master asks for volunteers, but I am silent, even though I have filled these roles before. I hate being late, and I often do not feel confident when I am. When I am late I feel I send the incorrect message that I do not care. My two-minute speech is about my favorite trip. Being late distracts me so much that I forget to make a mental outline of the speech I want to present. But I begin anyway. I say, "We went to California." (*I can see it on their faces. They know my thoughts are not organized!*) My mouth suddenly feels dry. I continue, "I need to back up. First, we flew to Seattle. It was the Fourth of July... the coast to San Francisco...oh, that's right, we visited Butchart Gardens in Canada. We took a ferry...after we saw the temperate rain forest of...that is in Oregon." *I cannot believe the meandering trip you just described!* Once I realize my thoughts are not organized I become nervous. My voice is not strong.

Also, my distraction and nervousness are exacerbated by my knowledge the audience sees these things happening to me.

*

Evaluating others is sometimes difficult for me because I do not want to hurt people's feelings. However, I see how honest evaluations of my speeches, teaching, facilitations, and group work help me improve each time I receive feedback. It also shows me how to incorporate positive and negative feedback into evaluations of others, lessening my fear of hurting others' feelings.

Tonight I agree to evaluate Christian's seven-minute speech. (*This is crazy. It's so hard to listen, take notes, and watch him! What did he just say about the hospital volunteers? I can't write, and listen at the same time, when his speech is so interesting!*)

When it is time to give my evaluation, I say:

Christian, thank you for the opportunity to evaluate your speech. You spoke on a difficult subject, but made it interesting and enjoyable to listen to, with your use of humor and by showing us with body movements what this medical experience was like for you. You kept the audience engaged. One area for improvement would be to try not to go back to a previous part of your discussion. But it was understandable this evening, given yours is an impromptu speech.

I am not prepared for Christian's response. He says, "Wow, I am blown away by your professionalism, Nancy. I would like to take this opportunity to ask everyone to give Nancy a round of applause for her outstanding evaluation of my speech." Attention is turned to me, and my face feels on fire. In shy moments like these I can sometimes

feel overwhelmed by my emotions. Everybody is looking at me and clapping, smiling. I truly am pleased and proud to have given such a positive evaluation to Christian. When the applause stops, I quietly say, "Thank you Christian. It was my pleasure to evaluate your speech." Tonight I ventured a little further out of my chrysalis.

*

I am discombobulated at tonight's meeting. I am self-conscious because I have missed several meetings. People in attendance seem okay with it, but my own guilt keeps me quieter than normal.

*

Tonight I am conducting my first meeting. As meeting master I assign meeting duties and call the volunteers up when it is their turn to perform their assigned meeting duty. I must also keep the meeting running in the order of the agenda, and on schedule. (*Girl, what are you doing? This is such a huge plunge! You can do this. You need to know you can successfully lead meetings. Ask for help, if you need to. You can do it. Show your confidence!*) Ten minutes into it, I say, "Zelda, is our meeting evaluator this evening. She will call forth the speaker evaluators and others who have reports to share with the group." As she speaks, I look at the agenda. (*Oh, no! I called her up too soon. I better stop her before she gets going.*) I start sweating. I try to sit still, but I cannot. My leg starts bouncing. I feel sick. (*Well, if we strayed from the agenda, we'll back up if we need to.*) Meanwhile, Victoria, a seasoned group member, sits near me. I quietly say, "I think I called Zelda up too soon." Victoria reassures me, "No, you were right to call her up here now." My heart rate returns to normal. I calmly jot a couple notes for the next meeting segment. Even though I am calm, it bothers me that my composure was

affected for those couple of minutes. It feels like weak leadership and in this moment I am disheartened. By allowing my thoughts and emotions to cloud the bigger picture, which is the meeting overall, I give in to feelings of failure.

After the meeting, Victoria says, "Nancy, the meeting went smoothly. And you finished it ahead of schedule, even with our late start." (*Thank you!*)

**

During my youth, I come into regular and specific practices that feel oppressive to me. Many of the oppressive acts are steeped in sex and gender. Because of my femininity, I am expected to fulfill the traditionally feminine roles and tasks. Conversely, I am not allowed to participate in certain activities, also because I am a woman. I say, "I'm old enough now, I want to go deer hunting this year." Without any discussion, I am told, "You can't hunt, Nancy." I say, "Why not?" I am told, "Because you're a girl. Girls don't hunt. Besides, you'll talk too much." Other family members are going fishing. I say, "I want to go fishing, too." They say, "No, you can't go with today, because it is cleaning day." I fish by myself.

*

During my youth, I also live up to some gendered expectations society places on me. Even though the 1960s-1980s are a time of great feminist progression in American culture, I missed that boat. For example, I married, and am a full-time parent while my spouse travels overseas for the military, and around the U.S. for his civilian job. In the role of mother and wife, I often forget my identity, to the extent that I mostly see myself through the lenses of mother and wife. And in order to avoid conflict, I mostly ignore my

feelings and thoughts on feminist issues. Fulfilling so many feminine labeled expectations means my feminist side is slow coming out of the chrysalis.

*

During my youth, experience shows me girls acquiesce to boys. Playing “trench” on the playground teaches this lesson well. I grab the ball before a boy gets it and make a play with it. The next opportunity he has, he violently throws the ball at me, as hard as he can. I am not supposed to keep him from what he feels rightfully belongs to him. Only some of the boys play that way. Nonetheless, the speeding ball that hits me is so painful, that I do not attempt to get the ball from boys anymore.

Of course, I am not alone historically by acquiescing to men. Ritter & Yoder (2004) found that women most often acquiesce to dominant men in dyads. It was true of dominant women paired with a non-dominant man as well, especially when the research task was labeled masculine, such as changing oil in a car. I often assent, especially if a man comes across as knowing more. If I feel a man can do a task better than me, I let him. Often I concede so I do not appear too knowledgeable or controlling.

*

No longer in my youth, some men in my circle still have negative views of strong, opinionated women. When I point out an interesting bit of information about certain women in politics, film, or creative home living, men sometimes say, “She seems so bitchy,” or, “I think she hates men.” Comments similar to these about strong women make me hesitant to embrace a feminine identity that is too strong. I am not alone in this way of orienting to life, and leadership.

Deborah Pope (1989) writes, "Power belongs to those who regard the authority to determine meaning as rightfully theirs" (p. 26). Admittedly I allow others to assume power over me, which to some extent carries over to my ability and willingness to lead, or not to lead. Many feminists might see this as a "cop out" on my part. As I assert myself more and see that others are not hurt as a result, I gradually increase the frequency and intensity of my assertive behavior. When I want to plan a get-together, for instance, I try to stress how much it means to me to have the event take place. Sometimes I need to compromise because others do not want to get together as badly as I do. If some are still interested in the event, I will plan it, even though others are not interested. And I do not plan on them being there.

*

Cain (2012) asks, "What does it mean to be quiet and have fortitude?" (p. 2). She poses this question regarding quiet people who make a difference. Recently, a male friend says, "Nancy, you are a rugged country bumpkin with fortitude." Encountering such similar statements, one in my research of leadership, and the other as a personal evaluation of me, has me pondering what it means. Admittedly, my friend's appraisal insults me initially. Now I see it is a compliment to my strength and courage. I also see it as a cultural artifact that perhaps I do not quite keep to my gendered role of femininity.

*

No longer in my youth, the trick is to find that important balance where I express myself and make reasonable demands, but without infringing on those same rights of others. It is important for me to assert myself, I now understand with more clarity. Also of importance is my need to respect and cooperate with others, for when I work

collaboratively with, rather than buck up against others, it is then I feel my strongest and most creative.

**

My research of women and leadership leads me to observe myself as well as other female leaders even further. As I do, I read scholars suggesting that women are typically talkative (Helgesen, 1990; Lambert & Gardner, 2009), especially if few, or no men are present. My demeanor typically changes in the presence of men. Early in our leader group meeting, when only women are present, I am asked to volunteer for meeting tasks. "Yes, I will keep time for our speakers. I will also evaluate our first speaker this evening," I say.

Twenty minutes later two men, Tom and Charles arrive. As they take their seats I suddenly feel safer, more content. I do not know these men well, so this is a curious reaction. When I am asked to report on our speakers' times, however, I become nervous. (*Oh, please. Let me get this right.*) I say, "Hazel was at five minutes, four seconds, and Daisy was six minutes, forty-three seconds." My face is warm. As I sit down quickly, I note that Charles is writing something in his notebook, and Tom is smiling, listening intently. Nothing in either man's demeanor is threatening, yet I feel uncomfortable speaking in their presence tonight. Women are present when we start the meeting; when the two men arrive it creates change that affects both my comfort and my speaking proficiency.

*

Men are present tonight. Gordon says, "Nancy, will you count mistakes in grammar and word usage?"

“Yes,” I say. “I think I can do that.”

*

Men are not present tonight. “Nancy, what would you like to do tonight?”

“I want to conduct our meeting,” I say, “If nobody else has volunteered yet.”

*

Our leader also appears to be affected by men's presence at meetings. Wauneta says, “Hi Gordon, Hans, welcome. Would either of you care to take over as master of ceremonies tonight?” Both men decline. “No? Okay. We are on schedule. Do either of you . . .?” It is interesting because Wauneta, a veteran member of this group, is willing to concede the leader role to either man (Ritter & Yoder, 2004). I note this because we are well into the meeting. This is particularly meaningful, because it appears I am not alone in feeling that men might perform better, or that they may be offended if I have a prominent role. It seems other women may also be willing to give men the first chance at leadership roles.

Even so, why am I more comfortable in group settings giving a two-minute impromptu speech than when I have months, weeks, days, or hours to prepare for speeches in classrooms and community teaching settings? Sometimes I am nervous when women and men appear to be strong, but why I do not feel threatened enough to remain silent? Is it because each week members arrive to a meeting and are considered equal to every other member? Yes, we treat one another with respect, and as equals.

**

The experience of leadership has taken many shapes in my life. I lead my family when my spouse is away for prolonged periods of time. I like looking at an issue

critically, assessing potential outcomes, and making decisions based on my interpretations of the information I collect. Oftentimes it is difficult for me to relinquish the lead when he returns home.

For instance, a recent home repair is necessary when a batch of defective building materials causes a section of the deck to rot. I am told the replacement lumber I bought cannot be used because it is wood, and the current decking is not wood. I say, "I do not want to leave a gaping hole. It's too dangerous. I want to fix it temporarily with this lumber." I am told, "No, you can't use that. It's the wrong size." I say, "No, it's already been cut to size." I enjoy the unpredictability of the outcomes of decision-making. It is exciting, and good for me. Because I experience successes when he is away, I now understand and appreciate that being quiet or shy does not mean I am flawed (Scott, 2004).

**

In fact, different parts of my life yield moments when I must lead. Now opportunities for responsibility and leadership denied me in my youth come to me through a different framework: that of an aging man, my father, who now relies on his daughter. This reversed relationship provides new meaning in my and his life. Where once he dictated my actions, I now serve in a familial leader role whereby he sometimes relies on me to make decisions, often-important decisions, for him. When he was hospitalized and unconscious, for instance, I consulted with doctors on his behalf. He is not incapacitated; he just occasionally requires assistance, input, or advice from me. He relies on me for some household help, such as lawn care, as well. He requires me to lead.

Changes in his health can limit his ability to reason. His aging shows itself, for instance, on a summer day when the temperature outside is ninety degrees Fahrenheit, and yet inside his house it is well over one hundred degrees. I step into his house, and I instinctively step backward when a blast of extremely hot air envelops my body, as it rushes through the open door. He sits in his chair, drenched in sweat. I say, "Dad, why don't you turn your fan on?" He assures me he does not need a fan. He says, "I just can't take the heat, like I used to."

This change in relationship is creating a bond of mutual respect for where we each are, where we have come from, and where we are headed as father and daughter. We are each mature and independent adults. I respect his need to adhere to familiar and punctual routines. He says, "I have to eat supper at 4 pm." I prefer spontaneity and to eat dinner whenever, especially with friends. Our life experiences include past family struggles. He might say, "I hope I don't ever go through that again." While I do not care to relive those experiences, I understand I am who I am, in part, because of them. I see more positive value in them. His hard work keeps his family together in circumstances others might not want to endure. I have tremendous respect for his efforts. This time I spend with him now allows me to reflect on our relationship, on how we are becoming good friends, the way a father and daughter should be.

As well, it creates meaning for me overall. My professional and personal life is stronger because I have this role in my father's life. Sometimes decision makers or leaders make choices that hurt others. "No, Nancy, you cannot babysit, until you are eleven years old." The decisions I make for my father sometimes hurt him. "Dad, I found an assisted living place where you can go to recover. It's in the country." He

agrees to go, but is not happy. "I hate the country. I like the city." I feel guilty because I know I hurt him. Yet, it was the best choice at the time. Like he did in my youth, I strive to make decisions with his best interest as my impetus. But I must also be mindful of his happiness.

My new relationship with my father helps me emerge into a new person/leader, while at the same time I am dividing into new dimensions of me, like that of light through a prism. As a daughter, sister, wife, and mother, I fulfill traditional gendered roles that others and I use to identify me. I am also a friend, neighbor, athlete, gardener, office assistant, and a housekeeper. These early roles provide a foundation from which I merge into new dimensions of reflexive and critical thinker, scholar, leader, and me, as writer. The writer in me reaches out to others creatively. As I reflexively look at my life and the people I am in contact with, I see my relationships with more depth than I did in the past. Learning serves as a threshold to leading, which requires me to ask critical questions of both myself, and the situations I am in. With my father, my emergence as leader is gradual. Once I looked to my father for advice and leadership, now he needs these from me. We are vastly different, yet each new dimension emerges from the relationship that is my father and me.

**

Chapter Three – A Zig and Zag Journey

We encounter choices as well as contradictions every day, and meaning is created with each relationship within our lived experience. In Chapter Three, I share a little about the type of leader I now see myself as and why. I include here a narrative showing my failure to communicate. I also examine how contradictions affect my leadership, communication, and important relationships in my life. While I do not necessarily come to certain or fixed conclusions, I do offer brief reflections on my findings.

**

I do not want to lead because I want power. The acquisition of leadership knowledge, and titles may be a goal of some, because they are seen as “a presumed path to money and power” (Kellerman, 2012, p. xiii). The leadership I aspire to is where I take charge to co-create some change for an overall good, for others and myself, (Bond, et al, 2008); as well as for the kinship it can create (Lambert & Gardner, 2009). This leadership creates change that is good for many.

*

Leader Kinship

I entered leader kinship school

Hoping to become the best leader

I could possibly, hope fully become.

Each story shows through personal experience,

Of which a fair number of challenges may outweigh

My meager leadership successes—even so, heart-fully I

Share, and at times boldly bare my innermost fears. Humble

Accomplishments attest to my quiet and dogged determination to
Experience leadership, through loving kinship and scholarship.
My shy chrysalis, cracking ever so slowly, as I re-create myself
Through the confident lens of a woman no longer separated.
I share stories of a quiet woman who knows she can lead
In those certain times when her knowledge necessitates.
Leader kinship allows me to emerge and lead
In times when I am guided toward others
Who grow with me and collectively soar.

**

Fall Down, Pick Yourself Back Up

My more formalized leadership journey is fairly short, though in some ways it seems like a lifetime. Like others, I read books that tell how to learn or improve certain skills. After I read about a topic, like introductory leadership or speaking principles, I take time to think about what I read. Since I now actively engage in learning about leading and speaking, I understand it is most effective to put into practice immediately what was just read. The information is freshly learned and personal motivation and excitement are often quite high. This line by Max De Pree (1989) is especially meaningful: "Leadership is an art, something to be learned over time, not simply by reading books" (p. 3). It is meaningful because, at the start of this research, my intention was to observe leadership before participating. I see now it would not work. By being engaged and creating meaningful relationships, I was able to examine myself in a far richer way.

**

It is not easy to lead when you are quiet, because good leadership requires a lot of open communication. This then creates conflict for me, because I am quieter than many people. Here then, is a glimpse of failing communication and not knowing how to fix it.

I am working at Federated Gardener's Hotline. A nonprofit organization, we attempt to help homeowner's with garden and pest questions. Occasionally, informational classes and workshops are also offered in order to help educate people on the natural wonders in their own backyards. My supervisor at work asks, "Nancy, can you facilitate this six-week class, one evening per week? You will set up the interactive video conferencing. Also, you will need to order appropriate booklets . . . write a press release . . ." I want to do this! (*Finally, I get to contribute something different and more meaningful to my job.*) For a couple years I have dreamed of working with groups, to share my knowledge and love of plants and gardening. I do not take my normal time to deliberate all the pertinent aspects of this project—the time commitment and others' help I should seek. I say, "Yes, I want to do this." I immediately begin ordering publication materials, writing appropriate correspondence, and doing other preparatory tasks. Unfortunately, I fall behind in my emails and voice messages.

As a result, over the course of a couple of weeks, I lose the aid of a valuable coworker and ally who knows all the ins and outs of setting up this weekly training program. We usually help one another, but now I sense a change in our relationship. *What is going on?* I turn inward, trying to sort it all out, even though I know I should be communicating with this person who can help me. Suddenly I am terrified. My stomach hurts, and I lose my appetite. Things are unraveling. (*How can I fix this? Should I ask*

for help? Problem is, they think I know how to do all of this. How can they think that? I've never done this before! How should I ask? I don't know.)

(I think I've waited too long to ask for help!) I finally ask for some of the help I think I need, and I am told, "Sorry, I cannot fit you in until next week sometime."

My poor communication skills alienate the individual who has vital knowledge of the technical equipment in this organization. I was asked, "Why don't you answer my messages, Nancy?" I feel like a trapped rabbit. *(I don't have a good reason. I am so ashamed and embarrassed.)* My silence creates extreme tension. I was told, "You are ignoring my messages! You are ignoring me now! Answer me!" *(I want to answer you. But you are so angry now. Nothing I say will matter).* I know I am at fault, and I can't even find my voice to say that.

Now I seek the help of another who does not realize I do not remotely understand how the interactive video equipment works. At this point, I have yet to realize how little I actually know about the equipment. The evening of the first class I arrive an hour early, but am unable to start the video conferencing machine. It is painful for me to let others down, and it is extremely painful to tell of it here, but I had to because it shows I need to better understand my communication with others, especially when I am a leader.

Dialectics

Leadership and quietness create interesting intersections in my relationships, as the story above aims to convey. Culture tells me I need to communicate boldly and loudly, especially as a leader. If I do not act assertively, I most likely will not be considered for leader roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kahnweiler, 2009; Cain, 2012). Yet, in line with Cain (2012), I am often at my strongest when being somewhat quiet, because it

allows me time to think and make well thought-out decisions. As I acclimate to people and situations, I become more talkative, assuming an assertive gradient toward extraversion.

“Dialectic refers to the tension between opposing forces within a system” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008, p. 209). Many ideas, beliefs, and even rules, sometimes-contradictory ones, shape our decision-making. I refer here to dialectic tensions I experience as a quiet, shy woman in an extraverted culture. As autoethnographer, to get at that cultural understanding, this invites me to ask, why am I interested in leadership? Why do I feel I need to improve my speaking skills? And because I seek to learn how to behave more like extraverts in speaking publicly, does this mean I am lacking? These questions guide these reflections . . .

*

When I outwardly appear calm and talkative, I often inwardly experience dialectic tensions because I am trying to hide, to some extent, my quietness. Recently I acknowledged publicly I do this. Our professor, on the first day of Communication in Conflict class, challenges us: “Let’s all share something no one else knows about you.” It is a teaching attempt, he later reveals, that aims to build trust within the class group. Without hesitating, I raise my hand and proclaim, “I hate being shy and quiet, and really work to hide that I am.” Having known me—and my quietness for some time—the professor looks slightly surprised at my revealing statement. Some students are curious. I am in the back row, so a few of them turn to see who spoke. (*Oh my lord! Why did you just say that in a room full of strangers?*) I busy myself by writing what I just said in my notebook, not wanting to look at anyone, so they hopefully won’t remember me.

A discussion ensues around my statement about being quiet. The professor says, "Thank you for sharing that, Nancy. How does your being shy work to create conflict?" My heart is pounding now. My face, once again feels very warm. I say, "Often I don't speak up. Then people think I'm mad and I'm not. Or they think I don't like them."

A student asks, "Have you always been shy?" I say, "For much of my life I have been, but I know I was not when I was a young child."

Another asks, "Why do you think you became shy, if you weren't when you were a young child?"

(Oh, shit). I fidget with my pen. "Certain childhood events may have contributed to my shyness," I say. *(How are you going to face these kids for the rest of the semester, after telling them all these things about you?)*

*

Another dialectical tension I experience is in my relationship with my father. In reflecting on this tension in being a daughter who must now be a parent to her parent, I come to realize it has provided yet another opportunity for me to examine what leadership means to me. In this case, it means I am of service to my father. Even though I feel I am of help to him, at times it is overwhelming to know he relies on me increasingly more, while at the same time, the contradictions in this newly forming relationship are not something I can necessarily fix.

The dialectical tensions arise when I know I must address certain issues with my father and he occasionally resents that I am acting on his behalf. Until recent years, he has taken care of his own health concerns. He (other people too) sometimes does not recognize his health needs, so I attempt to help him. I experience tensions when they

misunderstand what I do on my father's behalf. I generally try to keep our familial relationships healthy, so this dissonance is painful.

*

Lerner (1993) quotes what an English professor wrote on a student's composition: "Be yourself!" And then added, "If this is yourself, be someone else" (p. 106). At times I feel as if I am not myself because I endeavor to lead when I need to, which is often a direct contradiction to my quietness. But I feel I must learn how to be someone else, in order to be a productive career woman as well as an active community member

Dialectical tensions arise when I feel my identity is attached to others in my family. People often address me or associate me with others, and not on whom I am -- separate from them. I am introduced at an annual function, the Great Lakes Builder's Symposium, "I'd like you to meet my wife, Nancy." A lively conversation and jokes will ensue until we part ways. In a few weeks I will see that same individual in another setting, at a convenience store, and greet him, "Hi, Gordy, it is good to see you again." Gordy looks at me with some confusion as he tries to figure out who the hell I am. "I'm Nancy Gallagher, we met at the builder's symposium a couple weeks ago." Gordy's face lights up. "Oh, yes, you're . . . wife. Yes, it's good to see you again." I understand it is common not to remember people when you do not navigate in their circle. However, Gordy is someone I re-meet every year at the builder's symposium. I am only remembered in connection to my husband. The same thing sometimes happens with people I meet through my father or my children. To some I am known as this one's daughter, or as her or his mother.

It happens to other women as well. Recently I was sitting in a restaurant and bar eating a salad. A man and a woman are seated at the bar having drinks not far from me. Two men, probably in their mid-fifties, walk up and begin talking excitedly with the man. The woman sits quietly sipping her drink while the men joke and chat. After a couple minutes go by, one of the men leans over and politely asks the woman, "I'm sorry, what is your name again?" She smiles briefly before she says, "Oh, nobody knows me unless I'm with him. I'm Karen. And you are?" I was so enthralled with this exchange I stopped eating my salad so I could listen better. When Karen says that, it occurs to me that is also who I have become – only known in relation to others. And it happens often enough that it seems my identity is wrapped, so to speak, in that chrysalis I am emerging from.

Conscious awareness of the various dialectical tensions in my everyday life, as well as in leader roles is helpful. Awareness allows for reflection and hopefully preparation for future events. It also helps me maintain a compassionate view of the situation—I try to help my father with understanding and patience. If I become angry or frustrated at wanting to have a quiet moment when I am with gregarious people who want to visit, I try to understand they need to talk with others.

Conclusion -- Style

Many leaders incorporate a different blend of leadership styles. The hierarchal style leadership that was for many years popular (see Helgesen, 1990/1995; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fine, 2009; Chandler, 2011) and considered the norm is changing. I feel a natural propensity toward three styles of leadership. More popular and widely accepted now by many, is transformational leadership (Krzyzewski & Phillips, 2000/2004; Eagly,

2007; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Lambert & Gardner, 2009; Rosenberg, 2010; Chandler, 2011), in review, which incorporates building relationships of trust, cooperation, and encouragement that builds teams who work toward common goals. Ongoing communication is an integral component of transformational leadership, so I find myself wanting and needing to work hard to meet those needs. A second is the servant leader style (Eicher-Catt, 2005; Waddell, 2006) that can be ideal for quiet people who concern themselves with the needs of others. Thirdly, self-leadership (Cooley, 2008; Chandler, 2008) is present in most of us, and has played a major role in my decisions to enter graduate school and to pursue an autoethnographic study of leadership. That same deep introspection keeps alive in me a desire to learn more of these three styles. I naturally and quietly lean toward helping others, especially as I listen to the inner voice that guides me toward achieving goals.

I feel I can and do lead. No matter which leadership styles I blend to make a comfortable fit for others and myself as we work toward achieving a goal, it will most likely be a challenging feat for me and others who self-identify as living in quiet ways. Yet I will prevail because I am strong and have fortitude.

**

Epilogue

As I Emerge –

A leader - I transform and help others to create more good deeds in our world. First, in small steps as I continue to observe and learn, and then when it is time and the cause is ripe, I will arise -

*

A newfound woman - I explore my own identity and what it means to be living in this exciting, fast-paced historical time. Cultural expectations cause me less concern for what it is I feel I should be doing because I am a woman arising -

*

A shy woman freeing herself - from the cumbersome shroud of fear, I continue to seek those social occasions I simultaneously love and hate as I overcome and continue to break free -

*

A quiet woman - who continues to think and speak, and whenever I can, also to teach. And while I will embrace others in their space, I seek then to rest in mine as I continue on -

*

An improved communicator - I remind myself to keep the dialogue going. Shutting down never makes problems go away. Messages I send, whether worded or not affect others. Unless I heed these lessons, I may not emerge –

*

An autoethnographer - who through intense introspection digs deep, and reaches out to others in the name of leadership and scholarship. Reflective research and writing opens long closed doors, and what I find there encourages me to soar –

*

A woman - that is known as loving, daughter, sister, wife, mother, student, and assistant, but also knows herself to be a leader, researcher, and writer. In all of these I attempt to share compassion with others as I lead myself away -

*

As a nascent feminist - I want to live true to my beliefs and values. I respect those whose views differ from mine, while I also promise to stand strong in my newly unveiled feminist ideals and boldly bust loose -

- From my Shy Chrysalis

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