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## Women With Influence: Creating A Powerful Woman Leader Identity Through Impression Management

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WOMEN WITH INFLUENCE: CREATING A POWERFUL WOMAN LEADER  
IDENTITY THROUGH IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Women hold few leadership roles in the workplace, and even though research indicates the positive benefits of more women in top positions, leadership has a longstanding association with masculine qualities. If a woman seeks a position of power, she may find herself negotiating between a conflicting “woman” identity and “leader” role performance. Previous literature on the subject offers two opposing perspectives. While the first school of thought emphasizes the importance of a woman assuming masculine characteristics to successfully assume leadership positions, a second body of research points to gender equality in leadership by driving industries and organizations to change. The current study seeks to determine what kinds of face threats to identity that women leaders encounter in the workplace, how women leaders use impression management to negotiate conflicts between a “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance, and the kinds of facework utilized to manage those face threats. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 15 women in leadership positions in the southeast United States revealed participants encountered numerous face threats to identity including positive and negative face threats to their face as hearer, positive face threats to their face as speaker, and the enhancement of negative face by others – especially by mentors. Additionally, participants utilized impression management by assuming a masculine gender performance as well as many backstage behaviors, including strategic preparation and planning, in order to be successful. Corrective facework strategies included avoidance and, conversely, direct confrontation.

In loving memory of my grandmother

Willene Dees Coady

(August 23, 1921 – May 24, 2015)

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

To all of the leaders who contributed to this project: Thank you for generously sharing your time and your stories with me. Thank you for the mentorship and feedback from Dr. Sally Hastings, thesis chair, as well as Dr. Jennifer Sandoval and Dr. Ann Miller, thesis committee members. Thank you to my husband Mitchell, my family, and my friends for your interest in this research and for your steadfast support during the thesis process.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a young girl, I remember being the first student to raise my hand to answer a question in class, the first volunteer to sing for try-outs for a school musical performance, and the first to throw my name in the ring for a group leadership position. Without reservation, I loved speaking up first, sharing my voice and my ideas with others, and leading a group. I always thought of myself as a leader.

To my surprise, others did not see me as a leader. In fact, this innate desire to go first and to take charge was sometimes discouraged by teachers or peers when I was growing up. As a young adult entering the workforce, I was often overlooked, ignored, or rejected for leadership opportunities. When I was 25 years old, I joined women's leadership training organization focused on providing meaningful community impact in the nonprofit sector. Immediately after joining this organization comprised of over 700 women, I was asked to step into a leadership position. Thrilled with the opportunity to lead a team toward a common vision, I worked hard, proved myself, and moved from being a committee chair to serving on the board of directors. The organization and its members trusted, supported, and endorsed me to be the leader I always knew I wanted to be. Why did it take an organization of women to support my desire to become a leader and push me to grow in this area? Why wasn't I given the opportunity to prove myself in any other arena? Why did I face so many challenges being taken seriously as a leader? Perhaps the answer to these questions was because I am a woman.

A bias against women in leadership occurs due to cultural norms that indicate women are not suitable for positions of power (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). Across all industries, more men than women hold positions of power (Pew, 2015;

World Economic Forum, 2016). For example, women hold only 5% of leadership spots in Fortune 500 companies and 19% of leadership positions in Congress (Pew, 2015). This power gap between men and women, as well as the prejudice against women associated with this disparity, may lead to an unhealthy work environment. For example, an absence of women leaders links to “increased performance pressures, isolation from informal social and professional networks, and stereotyped role encapsulation for women” (Ely, 1995, p. 589). Negative effects on both men and women may be felt in workplaces without women leaders present, and all professionals may benefit from more women holding positions of power at work.

Koenig et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis which “establishes a strong and robust tendency for leadership to be viewed as culturally masculine” and that “women who possess outstanding qualifications for leadership may have the burden of overcoming preconceptions that they are not well equipped to lead” (p. 637). Koenig et al. argue that men, but not women, align with societal norms on leadership which grant men access to leadership positions with fewer obstacles to achieving success in those positions.

The social constructionist perspective asserts that social interactions with other people define and redefine one’s identity. Thus, the social constructions of identity – and gender – are not fixed but are constantly shifting and changing through communication with others. Masculinity and femininity, then, serve as cultural gender norms; culture expects for men to behave utilizing socially constructed masculine characteristics and for women to behave utilizing socially constructed feminine characteristics. With respect to communication, gendered speech communities highlight socially constructed norms

surrounding the language deemed acceptable for men, who should utilize the masculine speech community, and women, who should utilize the feminine speech community.

When leadership and leadership roles in the workplace carry masculine connotations, how do women assume those positions of power? How can women see themselves, and be seen by others, as leaders? Since women may feel a conflict between a socially constructed “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance, how can women work to resolve those conflicts effectively? Impression management serves as a useful tool for examining these questions. Goffman’s (1959) theories of face and facework as well as dramaturgy help explore the challenges that come from identity conflicts.

To uncover how women leaders use impression management to negotiate conflicts between a “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance, I applied the theory of face negotiation (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). The concepts of face (the social construction of one’s identity in the presence of other people) and facework (the work done to preserve, maintain, and repair face) describe ways people understand and manage the contradictions experienced in performing roles associated with identity conflicts. I also applied the theory of dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959). Dramaturgical analysis, with its focus on identity as a performance, aligns well with the social constructionist perspective. Additionally, the dramaturgical concepts of front stage behavior – the self in front of others – and backstage behavior – the self alone – provide a more thorough understanding of how women negotiate identity conflicts.

Two bodies of research provide conflicting answers on how women might achieve success in leadership positions. One suggests women might adopt masculine

characteristics so as to assume powerful roles. A second school of thought advocates for gender equality in leadership positions by proposing that industries and organizations should change. This change could come from mandating women in top workplace administrative positions or from viewing leadership in a different and more inclusive way. The present study contributes to this literature by reporting results of interviews with 15 women in top-tier professional leadership positions in the southeast United States, to determine how participants used facework to negotiate conflicts between a “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance, the face threats to identity encountered in the workplace, and the kinds of corrective facework utilized to manage those face threats.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Women who seek leadership positions in the workplace encounter many obstacles including a tradition of more men than women holding positions of power as well as a predominately masculine view of leadership. Thus, women must overcome cultural expectations to secure a leadership role, and once they do step into a position of power, they must manage difficult expectations about women in leadership. The present study examines one specific challenge: how women leaders negotiate conflicts between a socially constructed “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance through the use of impression management. To address this issue, existing research on the topic will be examined which will include the social construction of identity gender, gendered speech communities, leadership by women in the workplace, impression management, face and facework, and dramaturgy.

### The Social Construction of Identity and Gender

The social constructionist perspective asserts that knowledge and meaning are built from the interactions of human beings. Pearce (1995) explained that social constructionists see communication as “a *social* process of *creating* the world” (p. 98). Identities form and reform as people communicate with one another and as communication creates knowledge and meaning. According to the social constructionist perspective, producing and reproducing the self relies on the social world (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As opposed to believing each person has one true and fixed identity, social constructionists believe daily social interactions and processes constantly shape and reshape identity. Thus, identity changes based upon one’s social interactions. According to Cerulo (1997), social constructionists believe identity is not fixed but “a

social artifact – an entity molded, refabricated, and mobilized in accord with reigning cultural scripts and centers of power” (p. 387). Considering identity as a “social artifact” helps conceptualize identity as complex and fluid based on a number of external factors such as societal norms. It also invites the exploration of how cultural scripts, such as those for gender, influence identity.

In the presence of others, an individual will behave in a way that deliberately communicates a particular identity (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) likened the presentation of self as a performance based on an individual’s assessment of a particular situation and decisions stemming from that assessment on how to behave and communicate. Cultural norms and societal cues then mold those identity performances. For example, different cultures have different expectations about women’s and men’s attire, and people must conform to those expectations in order to enact a “woman” or “man” identity. Butler (1999) similarly believed in identity as constructed and performed with the performance either aligning with or working against social norms. If an identity performance aligns with societal norms, it executes cultural expectations and receives societal approval. However, an identity performance can also defy societal norms.

Many critics argue gender research in the social sciences continues to see gender as fixed rather than as the socially constructed concept defined and redefined by the ideology of the dominant culture (Fine, 2009). Researchers focusing on this particular area of study must first create a clear definition of gender to position their work. One way to look at gender comes from Ely (1995) who proposed gender as perpetually socially constructed with variability across cultures. Similarly, Lengel and Martin (2010) saw gender as socially constructed based upon cultural expectations of men (and masculinity)

and women (and femininity). Socialization theories about gender suggest that an individual's gender identity forms over time based on cultural influences (Brinkman, Rabenstein, Rosen, & Zimmerman, 2014). When a person performs his or her gender role in the way most consistent with cultural expectations, that individual typically feels supported by other people. Performing gender roles congruent with societal norms can increase an individual's self-esteem (Casby, Servatka, & Song, 2013; McDowell, 2015). When individuals perform gender roles inconsistent with cultural expectations, they may be ostracized. Thus, women feel societal pressure to perform as feminine, and this pressure extends to the workplace. Gender role performance proves particularly important in the professional workplace environment, as positive assessment and affirmation by others leads to an increased network, greater opportunities, and even promotions (Casby, Servatka, & Song, 2013).

#### Gendered Speech Communities

Individuals perform gender identity through the language they use. Communicating in accordance with socially constructed cultural norms about gender reinforces one's identity performance. The concept of a gendered speech community explains how language and communication can align with social norms about masculinity and femininity. Morgan (2014) defined a speech community as a group of people with shared ideas about language and communication. With respect to a gendered speech community, Wood (1995) said, "Men and women live in two different worlds and this is evident in the disparate forms of communication they use. Given this, it seems appropriate to consider masculine and feminine styles of communicating as embodying two distinct speech communities" (p. 19). A masculine speech community comprises

those who utilize a socially constructed “masculine” style of communication while a feminine speech community comprises those who utilize a socially constructed “feminine” style of communication. These socially constructed norms about masculine and feminine communication are consistent across American culture. In fact, Hogg (1985) said, “Stereotypes of masculine and feminine speech are overwhelmingly the same in Britain and the United States” (p. 99). Thus, expectations about masculine and feminine speech communities translate across all areas of a person’s life including the workplace.

Societal norms dictate the communication styles associated with masculine and feminine speech communities, and individuals learn those styles beginning in childhood. Wood (1995) explained that “boys’ games” and “girls’ games” in childhood reinforce these distinct masculine and feminine speech communities. Boys’ games traditionally teach three rules as related to communication: first, to communicate to assert oneself or to achieve something; second, to communicate to gain attention from an audience; and third, to communicate to move the focus from others back onto oneself (Wood, 1995). Girls’ games traditionally teach three rules as related to communication: first, to communicate to build and preserve relationships; second, to communicate to avoid criticism; and third, to communicate to show empathy for others so as to respond to feelings and emotions (Wood, 1995). Due to these lessons learned during childhood games, Wood (1995) argued the masculine speech community uses communication for “proving oneself and negotiating prestige” (p. 23). Conversely, the feminine speech community uses communication as “a primary way to establish and maintain relationships with others” (Wood, 1995, p. 21). According to Wood (1995) and McDowell (2015), the masculine speech community employs characteristics such as arrogance, assertiveness, confidence,

control, dominance, independence, interruption, and lack of responsiveness and self-disclosure while using communication as a tool to accomplish specific objectives. The feminine speech community utilizes behaviors such as empathy, symmetry, equality, support, responsiveness, tentativeness, and inclusivity with a focus on relationships and divulging personal details (Wood, 1995). Again, traditional expectations hold that men should embody qualities of the masculine speech community and that women should embody qualities of the feminine speech community.

In studying gendered speech communities in the workplace, McDowell (2015) argued “occupational professions are frequently categorized as suitable for one gender or another,” and “gendered jobs are shaped by the skills and characteristics that men and women are *assumed* to encompass due to their sex” (p. 274). Leadership positions such as President, CEO, and Chairman often align with stereotypically masculine qualities. If women must perform according to gender roles in the workplace in order to advance and achieve success, what are the expectations about communication for women who hold positions of power? Should women leaders embody qualities of a masculine speech community associated with a workplace leadership title, or should they utilize characteristics from the feminine speech community associated with their gender?

#### Leadership by Women in the Workplace

Men continue to outnumber women as occupants of top leadership positions across all fields, and the women who do hold positions of power often feel discriminated against (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006). For example, of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions in Fortune 500 companies, women hold only 5% or 26 leadership spots. In national politics, the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress boasted a record number of women with 104 serving in the House and Senate; however, this number represents only

19% of Congress as a whole (Pew, 2015). According to the United States Department of Labor, some industries can even be defined as “male-dominated” because the number of women employed comprises 25 percent or less of total employees. Such positions include architects, chefs and head cooks, computer occupations, chiropractors, clergy, detectives and criminal investigators, environmental scientists, farmers, and many, many others (United States Department of Labor, 2014). A study on gender equality in decision-making and leadership conducted by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2005) recommended that women should “seek greater involvement in the decision-making processes at all levels and to provide a systematic significant influence on decision-making processes and policy outcomes” (p. 30). But how do women achieve greater involvement in male-dominated fields? Two bodies of research seek to solve this problem by offering two very different solutions.

One body of research indicates women seeking positions of power are expected to adopt traditionally male characteristics, behaviors, and communication styles in order to be successful as leaders (Lester, 2008; Pecci, 2014; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). According to Lester (2008), women “are often signaled early in their careers that traditional male characteristics are expected in senior administrative roles and that promotion depends on their ability to act like men” (p. 278). According to Pecci (2014), panelists at the New England Women’s Leadership Institute conference “urged women to be more assertive at work” in order to solve gender-related workplace issues such as the pay gap (p. 17). The advice of communicating and behaving in a more masculine fashion holds true across many industries. For example, in a study of women holding community college leadership positions, Tedrow and Rhoads (1999) found participants “largely constructed

their leadership identity as a response to organizational expectations and norms as defined by typical male instrumental roles and behavior” (p. 1). Certainly, many women leaders achieve positions of power by acting like a man.

However, Gill, Mills, Franzway, and Sharp (2008) found that while acting like a man was one way women achieved positions of power in the male-dominated engineering industry, in fact, “women are shown to engage in a range of tactics in the effort to achieve a degree of workplace acceptance and some professional recognition” (p. 223). Additionally, research by Hatmaker (2013) indicates women in the male-dominated engineering industry achieve success not by acting like a man but by either projecting “an image of a competent, gender-neutral engineer” or by projecting “the positive aspects of being a woman engineer” to “emphasize and capitalize on the strengths that being a woman may bring to the engineering role” (p. 394).

The act-like-a-man strategy may not work for all women in all industries. A second body of research argues that in order to achieve gender equality in the workplace, women do not need to rely solely upon adopting masculine characteristics. Instead, industries and organizations themselves must change – either by ensuring that women hold top positions of power or by viewing leadership differently (Bierema, 2016; Ely, 1995; Hatmaker, 2013; Joshi, Son & Roh, 2015; Maddock, 2002; Sjaafjell, 2015; Yoder, 2001). When women hold more top positions of power, research has revealed the positive benefits for both the company and its employees. According to Joshi, Son, and Roh (2015), “only a higher representation of female executives at the industry level enabled women to reverse the gender gap in rewards and performance evaluations” (p. 1516). In addition to more equitable rewards and performance evaluations, more women in

positions of power can shape company culture in other positive ways. Companies with greater gender diversity “show lower risk and deliver better performance” (Perryman, Fernando, & Tripathy, 2016) including better financial performance (Catalyst, 2007a; Sinar & Paese, 2016). Additionally, just as companies with more women in leadership see benefits, companies with fewer women in leadership see problems. For example, research by Ely (1995) supported these findings and revealed that “sex roles are more stereotypical and more problematic in firms with relatively low proportions of senior women” (p. 589).

So how might women move into more senior-level positions across all industries? A study analyzing Norway’s mandated boardroom gender equality laws proposed a similar approach for other countries. Norway’s laws requiring public boards to be comprised of 40% of each gender impacted gender equality in other ways including an increase of women directors in public companies, overall stronger boards with more competent participants, and an increase in cultural diversity (Sjafjell, 2015). Sjafjell (2015) argued, “Boardroom gender diversity has such a positive effect that it should be sought to be achieved, through mandatory legislation if necessary” (p. 49). Some research in America indicates resistance to such sweeping legislation. Fraser, Osborne, and Sibley (2015) studied gender-based affirmative action and found that sexism is “independently associated with people’s opposition to affirmative action for women” (p. 231). Cultural expectations that women are less competent than men, especially in the workplace, factor into this rejection of gender-based affirmative action.

While laws mandating gender equality could put women into positions of power, value exists in thinking about leadership in a more inclusive, and less masculine, way. A

large part of the disparity between men and women in leadership positions relates to the expectation of who a leader is and what leadership means. According to Winston and Patterson (2006), leadership refers to someone who “selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s)” so as to carry out the mission of an entity or organization (p. 7). Winston and Patterson presented communication as one key element of leadership. According to the researchers, the primary goal of a leader is to communicate a vision “through the use of critical thinking skills, insight, intuition, and the use of both persuasive rhetoric and interpersonal communication including both active listening and positive discourse” (p. 7). Leaders hold positions of authority and may influence, manage, guide, and inspire other people.

This definition largely relates to the workplace, a public sphere historically reserved for men while women worked at home in the private sphere. Most of the words used to define “leader” or to describe leadership more closely align with the male gender, and characteristics associated with strong leaders link to masculine qualities (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006). Fine (2009) argued that women were outnumbered in top leadership positions due to this association of leadership with masculinity. Not surprisingly, as a result of socially constructed and gender identity, women take on gender-specific roles in the workplace. Sloan and Krone (2000) interviewed 30 women managers who associated gendered values with power orientation. Participants saw clear differences between a feminine orientation to power focusing on democratic leadership versus masculine orientation to power focusing on authoritarian leadership. Similarly, Lester (2008) studied women instructors and discovered a link between their gender and expectations of positive, happy, nurturing, and maternal behaviors. Additionally, more

women than men prioritized a service mindset and participated in workplace and professional activities (Lester, 2008). Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, and Bongiorno (2010) conducted three studies on gender stereotypes related to company managers and found male participants saw successful leaders as possessing masculine not feminine characteristics while female participants saw these successful leaders as possessing both masculine and feminine characteristics with an emphasis on the masculine characteristics. Research conducted on public attitudes of gender and leadership revealed that participants claim to believe women possess leadership characteristics; in fact, on seven of the eight leadership qualities measured by the study, participants rated women equal to or greater than men (Pew, 2008). However, despite ranking women equal to or higher than men on a list of leadership characteristics, 1 in 5 participants in the same study felt men made better leaders than women (Pew, 2008). Similarly, Fraser, Osborne, and Sibley (2015) studied gender-based affirmative action in the workplace and found that “women are still widely viewed as incompetent within the workplace relative to” men (p. 231).

In addition to not being seen as effective leaders by other people, women may have a hard time viewing themselves as leaders. Little research is available to suggest how women might construct a “woman leader” role in a masculine organizational role (Fine, 2009). Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011) described a woman’s leadership development as impression management or “identity work” (p. 476). Similar to the construction and performance of a gender identity, one must also perform the role of a leader. Gender bias poses a problem, however, for women attempting to perform a “leader” identity. “If constructing and internalizing a leader identity is central to the process of becoming a leader [...], then subtle yet pervasive forms of gender bias may impede women’s progress

by obstructing the identity work necessary to take up leadership roles” (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011, p. 475). Women holding positions of power in the workplace feel two conflicting identities: a socially constructed “woman” identity versus the socially constructed “leader” identity. Cadsby, Servatka, and Song (2013) elaborated on this conflict by explaining that woman leaders often experience “a professional identity that is highly competitive, competent, and ambitious and a gender/family identity that is warm, supportive, and caring” (p. 285).

Just as gaps in a gender identity may be resolved by viewing gender on a continuum versus at fixed, rigid points, Yoder (2001) emphasized the importance of seeing leadership on a continuum as well. She argued that instead of equating effective leadership with one extreme endpoint of “powerful men barking orders and staking their effectiveness on their ability to get the job done,” we must prioritize context (p. 825). Determining an effective leadership style would examine each specific situation including the task, the audience, the organization’s mission and values, and so on, and then selecting and applying the best course of action on a continuum of leadership (Yoder, 2001). Similarly, research by Maddock (2002) proposed a more flexible model of leadership which will only come with a transformation of what it means to be “male” and what it means to be “female.” In addition to ensuring women leaders hold top positions of power, will viewing leadership differently work as a strategy to influence gender equality in the workplace? Because these two bodies of competing research offer two opposing perspectives, further research must be conducted on women in leadership to determine how women manage the conflict between those contradictory “woman” identity and

“leader” role performance in the workplace. Impression management is one theoretical tool to study those contradictions.

### Impression Management

Originally defined by Goffman (1959), individuals utilize impression management as a tool to construct an identity in the presence of others. Impression management includes face and facework as well as dramaturgy, two concepts also defined by Goffman. Both concepts provide frameworks for better understanding identity and role performance.

Impression management allows a leader to communicate competence alongside communicating a message or content to a particular audience. According to Domenici and Littlejohn (2006), “Almost every time you communicate with others, you will have at least two goals. One is a content goal, accomplishing some objective, and the other is a self-presentation goal, managing the impressions others have of you” (p. 69). Though connected, the concepts of identity, role performance, and face are distinct. Burke and Reitzes (1981) defined identity as the “meanings one attributes to oneself in a role,” or a person’s idea of *who they are* (p. 84). In contrast, a person’s behavior and *what they do* comprises their role performance. Burke and Reitzes (1981) described the relationship between identity and role performance: people act and perform their roles in ways that reaffirm their identities. As the definitions of identity and role performance vary, so do the definitions of identity and face. Unlike identity, face refers to an individual’s desire to be seen positively by others (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Face can be described as the social construction of one’s identity in the presence of other people, and facework as the work done to preserve and maintain face. Thus, face serves as one’s public identity while facework is the work done to manage that identity. Additionally, considering the

“performance” element in role performance, Goffman’s (1959) theory of dramaturgy utilizes the metaphor of identity as theater complete with front stage behaviors in the presence of others and backstage behaviors in the presence of only the self. Face, facework, and dramaturgy comprise impression management.

Impression management is an important concept for leaders who want to represent themselves and their companies in a positive way. Women leaders find impression management particularly critical to success. Hatmaker (2013) studied women working in the male-dominated field of engineering and found that the impression management tactics of proving oneself and image projection served as keys to success. Thus, impression management may offer key insights into how women may succeed in leadership positions.

### Face and Facework

Face and facework help people recognize and manage the contradictions experienced in performing roles associated with identity conflicts. Goffman (1959) was the first scholar to operationalize “face” in American academia. Goffman viewed face as that ever-changing social construction of identity, an identity in the presence of others, a public identity (Domenici & Littlejohn, 2006; Metts, 2000). Face changes based on environment and interactions with others, so one may present multiple faces.

The relationship between identity and face is complex. Miller (2013) said identity and face do not mean exactly the same thing but “the processes by which face is managed and through which identities are constructed happen concurrently and are co-constitutive” (p. 76). Like identity, face does not remain constant; face may undergo periods of loss or gain. Sometimes, social interactions threaten face. When face threats occur, others may

question our identity. We must work to rebuild any loss of face, and this conflict might cause internal conflict over identity. “When identity is expressed in communication and diverges from a person’s own view of self, the difference is labeled as a person-enacted identity gap” (Jung & Hecht, 2008, p. 314). If identity is considered on a continuum as opposed to a fixed point, identity gaps can be more clearly understood, managed, and resolved. Domenici and Littlejohn (2006) explained that “three points, or ‘ranges’ on this continuum [include] personal identity, relational identity, and community identity” (p. 6). As opposed to one fixed point, viewing identity as three points on a continuum or as a range may help resolve conflicts in identity.

One’s face may not always remain perfectly poised and intact while communicating with others. Sometimes, threats to face occur. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), based on the “universality of face and rationalist, it is intuitively the case that certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face, namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker” (p. 65). Thus, a face-threatening act, or FTA, may challenge the face of the speaker or the face of the hearer.

Facework also helps bridge identity gaps because it helps individuals manage an ever-changing face. Face threats often challenge identity, specifically an individual’s desired identity for a particular audience or in a particular situation, and these challenges to identity must be resolved (Cupach & Metts, 1994). All interactions offer the potential for face threats, so care must be taken to manage face. Whether others question our identity, or whether we question our own identity, facework may resolve those questions. Goffman (1967) defined facework as “the actions taken by a person to make whatever he

is doing consistent with face” (p. 309). Thus, facework encompasses any behavior related to gaining or losing face, and that work can manage face for both self and other.

Facework may include preventive or corrective facework. Cupach and Metts (1994) defined preventive facework and corrective facework as tools to manage face threats to not only the self but also to others. Preventive facework, also known as avoidant facework, involves a variety of actions such as preventing certain topics which might threaten face to come up in conversation, avoiding certain topics if they do come up in conversation, redirecting a conversation if it moves in a direction which might threaten face, or ignoring a face-threatening topic if it comes up in conversation (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Corrective facework, also called restorative facework, “may be defensively offered by the actor responsible for creating face threat, may be protectively offered by other people who witness the loss of face, or may be offered by the person who has lost face as he or she attempts to regain lost social identity” (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 8).

To explain face even further, Lim and Bowers (1991) defined positive face and negative face. Positive face includes fellowship face, the desire to be included and accepted in a group, as well as competence face, the desire to be respected by others. Negative face includes autonomy face, the desire to be free versus imposed upon. Positive face and negative face sometimes work in opposition with one another. For example, even if a woman may feel compelled to maintain her socially constructed gender role in order to feel liked by others, that woman also feels the need to reject society’s impositions of what a woman should be in order to gain autonomy and independence. FTAs may threaten one’s positive face or negative face. FTAs that impact positive face may include indifference, disrespect, disapproval, or exclusion (Brown &

Levinson, 1987; Nodoushan, 2012). FTAs that impact negative face may challenge or dismiss one's freedom of action (Nodoushan, 2012).

Current trends in the study of face focus on the identity of groups of people such as immigrants (Pagliai, 2011), mothers (Heisler & Ellis, 2008), and Facebook users (Dalsgaard, 2008). Identity construction and face management strategies used by a group prove essential in managing conflict. For example, one study of transgender individuals reveals "instances of facework that occur in interpersonal interactions lend insights into how gender norms are enforced in particular communication moments" (Wight, 2011, p. 73). Current facework research trends have not, however, studied women in positions of power.

Women leaders may feel threatened or even stigmatized because their words, behaviors, and professional identities may depart from traditional expectations of their gender. Facework may help resolve those self-worth issues and identity conflicts because facework involves "a set of communicative behaviors that people use to regulate their social dignity and to support or challenge the other's social dignity. Face and facework are about interpersonal self-worth issues and other-identity consideration issues" (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998, p. 188). Women in positions of power may use facework to resolve face threats to their identity as women, to their "leader" role performance, or to both simultaneously. Since many face threats arise in interpersonal conflict situations, utilizing facework to examine interpersonal conflict in the workplace can aid our understanding of women leaders' conflict behavior. This conflict behavior includes thinking about a variety of important factors occurring simultaneously, as interpersonal conflict may lead to face threats to one's individual face as well as the face of one or

more participants in the conflict (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Women leaders must skillfully apply facework in conflict situations.

Schnurr and Chan (2011) examined identity construction in instances of conflict between co-leaders through facework. Results indicate that a leader identity, like many other socially constructed identities, will shift and change through social interactions. If daily interactions and cultural norms dictate identity, and if gender identity exists on a complex continuum, then women holding positions of power may feel identity conflict. Society ascribes women leaders a female gender identity because of their sex but also a masculine identity because of their positions of power. Research has not fully explored how facework ties into this identity conflict and proves important in understanding how female leaders use facework to ensure the cohesion and success of both a “woman” face and a “leader” face.

Irizarry (2004a) examined face-threatening acts toward women physicians in the workplace and found that “the professional identity or face needs of female physicians focused on three major issues: 1) the need to comport one’s self according to professional norms and standards; 2) the need to command respect and compliance; and 3) the need to project task competence” (p. 54). Additional research on women leaders in the workplace – not just on face-threatening acts specifically but on impression management generally – may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these women leaders achieve positions of power and how they manage challenges to either their woman identity or their leader role performance. Because research indicates the complexities surrounding the success of women leaders, and because some work is done behind the scenes, combining face and facework with dramaturgy may provide a clearer picture.

## Dramaturgy

Goffman (1959) also introduced dramaturgy to explain the self. Like face and facework, dramaturgy sees identity not as fixed but as constructed and reconstructed through interactions with other people. Dramaturgy relies on a theater-driven metaphor. Goffman likened dramaturgy to a theatrical performance involving work behind the scenes and in front of the audience. This complex performance includes a variety of communicative and behavioral strategies, codes, and actions which require careful forethought and planning (Vosu, 2010). Goffman identified two important stages: front stage and backstage. Dramaturgy relies on an individual's participation on both stages. Front stage refers to the self in the presence of others, the public self. An individual enacts his or her performance on the front stage, so this stage involves the application of those communicative and behavioral strategies, codes, and actions (Greener, 2007). Backstage refers to the self alone without the presence of others, the private self. Artists in a theatrical performance may use backstage time to rehearse lines, warm up, or prepare for slipping into a role onstage in front of the audience. Similarly, individuals must engage in thinking, planning, and strategizing front stage behaviors while backstage. "Backstage interactions, in contrast, take place behind the scenes and involve hidden preparation that allows actors to carry off idealized presentations of their selves" (Greener, 2007, p. 286). Importantly, behaviors displayed backstage are hidden, concealed, and secret; this "allows the process of preparation to be hidden, so that performances may be practiced and, where possible, errors removed" (p. 286). Backstage serves as a place where significant work can be done in order to perfect one's performance front stage in the presence of others. Viewing the workplace as the stage where women leaders must perform specific front stage actions allows for an application

of Goffman's dramaturgical model. Additionally, because of dramaturgy's ability to identify and study nuanced behavior performances, the tool works well for examining women leaders.

For example, Greener (2007) applied dramaturgy to gender and managerial behavior in the healthcare field. Results indicated impression management as "a universally recognized phenomenon by the women managers interviewed" (p. 292). Additionally, women "have a wider repertoire of roles [than men] they are able to employ" including a "mother" role and a "flirt" technique (p. 295). Do these findings apply to women leaders in other industries? And how do women use facework to negotiate these varying roles in the professional environment? To contribute to impression management and women leadership research, the present study will research the following questions:

RQ1: What kinds of face threats to identity do women leaders encounter in the workplace?

RQ2: How do women leaders use impression management to negotiate conflicts between a "woman" identity and a "leader" role performance?

-Which strategies are used front stage?

-Which strategies are used back stage?

RQ3: What kinds of corrective facework do women leaders utilize to manage these face threats?

## CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

I interviewed 15 women leaders in central Florida using a semi-structured approach. In-depth interviews work well when a researcher wants to gain insight into a participant's thoughts, feelings, and recollections. The level of detail provided by an in-depth interview provides rich qualitative data. In particular, "semi-structured interviews allow for the exploration of lived experience as narrated in the interview in relation to theoretical variables of interest" (Galletta, 2013, p. 9). Through qualitative, in-depth interviews, a conversation with a purpose can occur, providing information about participants' experiences through their stories (Lindolf & Taylor, 2011). A thematic analysis of interview data uncovered how women leaders use facework to negotiate conflicts between a "woman" identity and "leader" role performance, kinds of face threats to identity these leaders encounter in the workplace, and kinds of preventive and corrective facework utilized to manage face threats.

### Participants

Women holding a widely recognized leadership position in the Central Florida area who were available to meet for a face-to-face interview met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Participants were initially identified based on public recognition for local leadership positions. For example, publications such as *Orlando Magazine* publish an annual list of its "50 Most Powerful People in Orlando" containing men and women in various industries throughout the area. Other publications, such as *Orange Appeal*, announce "Women of the Year" while still others, such as the *Orlando Business Journal*,

showcase an annual list of the area's "Top 40 Under 40." I compiled an original list of interview candidates from these local publications.

From that original list derived through purposive sampling of women holding recognized positions of power in Central Florida, a snowball sample added further participants. Each interviewee could name one or more local women from her professional network who might also participate in the study. A snowball sample often proves "the best way to reach an elusive, hard-to-recruit population" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 114). In this case, well-known women leaders in positions of power and authority comprise a relatively small part of the Central Florida population, so interviewee recommendations of personal connections from their personal networks did increase study participants. In many cases, my personal network combined with interviewee recommendations allowed me to connect with and interview a total of 15 participants.

Interviews began with general questions about leadership. Next, questions about impression management asked participants about conflict in the workplace. Interviews concluded by asking participants if they wanted to share anything that had not been asked. Please refer to the Appendix for the full interview guide.

Interviews took place at the location suggested by the participant and included office and workplace locations with the exception of one interview conducted at a local restaurant. Voluntary participation allowed participants to leave the semi-structured interview at any time. All participants consented to an audio recording of the interview, and I assigned pseudonyms to all participants to ensure privacy during the transcribing process.

As a researcher passionate about the subject of women in leadership, it is important to note that I did deeply connect with interview participants due to my status as a cultural insider. Access to this population due to my personal network as well as sharing a common language with interview participants assisted in the quality of interviews.

### Procedure

The Institutional Review Board of the university where the research took place reviewed and approved all procedures. Each participant received and responded to an emailed letter request for an interview. Upon arriving at each interview location, the IRB packet was discussed, and the study was briefly explained. After consent from the participant to begin recording, the semi-structured interview consisted of 15 questions. “The overarching goal is to ensure that everyone in the sample hears the same questions in the same way” which “increase the reliability and credibility of the qualitative data” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 199-200). However, each interview was conducted differently with respect to the order of questions and the number of follow-up questions based upon the participants’ responses. The semi-structured interview process “is sufficiently structured to address specific topics related to the phenomenon of study, while leaving space for participants to offer new meanings to the study focus” (Galletta, 2013, p. 24). Interviews lasted approximately 45 to 75 minutes. After each interview, I transcribed that interview and stored the interview transcripts on a password-protected home computer.

## Data Analysis

Transcribing all 15 interviews myself yielded 64 total pages of data. Two coders reviewed the three documents and looked for themes, highlighting and adding comments to each document. Coders discussed those themes until consensus was reached.

Coders applied Owen's (1984) three criteria for noting a theme: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness (p. 275). In observing recurrence, the first criterion, when "at least two parts [of the data] had the same thread of meaning, even though different wording indicated such a meaning" (Owen, 1984, p. 275). Repetition, the second criterion, occurred through the "repetition of key words, phrases, or sentences" involving "an explicit repeated use of the same wording" (Owen, 1984, p. 275). Finally, forcefulness, the third criterion, occurred when "vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses [...] serve to stress and subordinate some utterances from other locutions" (Owen, 1984, p. 275). Coders utilized Owen's (1984) three criteria of recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness to ensure themes were based upon confirming instances. "When a sufficient variety of confirming instances, with no (or relatively few) disconfirming instances, is obtained, we inductively conclude that *T* is empirically true" (Leinfellner & Kohler, 1974, p. 83).

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Findings are organized according to the three research questions: face threatening acts to identity, preventive facework, and corrective facework. With respect to face threatening acts to identity, themes included face threats to the hearer's positive face, face threats to the hearer's negative face, enhancing negative face, and face threats to the speaker's positive face. A thematic analysis revealed two primary strategies for impression management: assuming a masculine gender performance and the backstage behaviors of preparation and planning. Finally, corrective facework strategies involved two themes: avoidance and direct confrontation.

### Face Threats to Identity

Despite working to achieve and maintain a positive self-presentation as a leader, face threats do occur which can negatively affect one's face. The participants described a variety of face threats that they experienced as leaders. Face threats impact both positive face and negative face as well as both speaker and hearer. Participants described encountering face threats to the hearer's positive face, face threats to the hearer's negative face, enhancing negative face, and face threats to the speaker's positive face.

### Face Threats to Hearer's Positive Face

Participants did report face threatening acts toward their positive face as hearers through disapproval, criticism, and accusations by others that sought to force them into a pre-existing stereotypical roles defining women. These face threatening acts impacted the hearer's positive face because the speaker rejected or disrespected the hearer. Participants demonstrated how they resisted those preconceived, external notions about how women should or should not behave. Positive face threats included challenging the hearer's

integrity by asking questions or spreading rumors about the hearer's sexuality and disapproval of the way the hearer dressed or behaved.

A nonprofit director, reported being interviewed for an internship at the beginning of her career approximately 30 years ago. She said, "The lady who interviewed us young people, she met [us] in hotel bars and met with [us] and asked [us] a whole host of inappropriate questions. For women, it was 'Would you ever sleep with board members to get ahead?'" Another participant demonstrated that this kind of behavior is not relegated to the distant past. This entrepreneur claimed people, specifically women, insulted her integrity by spreading rumors she obtained her leadership position in an unscrupulous way. She said, "I have been surrounded by men who have been incredibly supportive of me. Incredibly. When I first started my career in this line of work, you have the traditional 'well she slept her way to the top.' You get a lot of that – women, you know, [saying] that – and it is very common and unfortunate." In this instance, the entrepreneur often heard other women making assumptions about her platonic work relationships with men. This kind of face threat negatively challenges the hearer's positive face through accusations claiming women lack integrity by sleeping with powerful men to obtain positions of power. A portion of this face threat targets participants as women. Even if a woman tries to adopt a mix of masculine and feminine behaviors, it does not safeguard her from others assigning outdated stereotypes to threaten positive face. The face threat also represents a viewpoint that some women often encounter: assertions that sexuality plays a factor in their attainment of leadership roles. These comments imply that a woman cannot achieve success on her own and that she must trade sexual favors to men in order to obtain a certain leadership role.

A second type of face threat to the hearer's face included disapproval of study participants by other people if they did not align with preconceived notions of women. One board member reported a conversation with a colleague, a man, who told her, "I just don't like you." Because they had to work together, the participant sat down with the man to discuss their differences. She reported, "He said, 'There are two people in town that I don't like,' and he named this other woman and me. And he goes, 'Every time you speak, I just like, it's like scratching on a [chalkboard].'" The participant explained that the man probably felt that way because of her direct nature and focus on getting down to business versus engaging in small talk. She said, "And then he got to know me better, and we were telling stories, and it was just like – by the end of it, he was like, 'Whoa! My whole perception of you has completely changed.' And he was like, 'What motivates you?' And I said, 'I am a people pleaser, but my people are my clients.'" The initial rejection by the speaker threatened her positive face; however, upon having a more in-depth conversation one-on-one, the speaker accepted the colleague changed his attitude and restored her face. In this case, the rejection of the participant occurred because the colleague felt she did not speak and behave like a woman should.

Another instance of disapproval or criticism to the hearer's face occurred when an executive did not adhere to the company's dress code as mandated in the employee handbook. Again, this threat to face relied on traditional stereotypes of how women should look and dress. The participant explained:

I first entered the workforce, and I was conscious of being a woman. In fact, women here were required to wear pantyhose, and I did not. It was the second week of working here, and I don't wear pantyhose [to work]. This very meek

secretary came down to my office, and she had the employee handbook. She's like, "So right here, it says women are supposed to wear pantyhose."

The face threat describes a "meek" secretary challenging the positive face of the participant by disapproving of her attire and complaining about her not following the employee handbook's dress code. The executive went on to describe the ensuing confrontation. She said:

So I asked [the secretary] who sent her in my office, because if it was my boss, and he just wasn't comfortable having that conversation with me, that was one thing. What it ended up being is what I suspected, and it was a nosy secretary who worked down the hall who didn't like this 25 year-old girl that everybody was checking out.

As the hearer on the receiving end of the face threat by the "meek" secretary, the participant engaged in an internal dialogue to assess the threat. She explains that she might not have taken the face threat as a criticism if it had come from her boss, but since it came from her subordinate, the insult and threat to her positive face was not something she was willing to accept. The executive rounded up the "meek secretary" and the "nosy secretary" who initiated the conflict. This participant explained:

So I said, "Let's go to [the boss] about this." So we went to his office, and I asked, "Do you care that I don't wear pantyhose?" And he was like, "I've never noticed that you didn't wear pantyhose." And I said, "Exactly." I stood in the door and said, "Ladies, I'm not going to wear pantyhose."

The executive did not acquiesce to the request by the secretary to comply with the employee handbook. When confronted with a threat to her positive face, the executive

instead challenged the faces of the two secretaries by refusing to succumb to their disapproval and complaints. The participant went on to describe the repercussions of her confrontation as “a mini revolution” in her office whereby the dress code changed and pantyhose was no longer required or worn. In both cases, despite others insisting that they comply with stereotypes about women, participants often sought to reject those stereotypes and even change them.

#### Face Threats to Hearer’s Negative Face

Although women show more permeability of gender roles, there were some occasions where stepping outside of one’s gender role became difficult because of internal dialogue. Negative face threats may threaten face by contradicting a person’s desire to be independent, to do what they want to do. Roberts (1992) refers to this as “self-determination” (p. 289). One executive said, “Women are absolutely afraid – myself included in times in the past. We can do the research that we want but still somehow feel that we shouldn’t ask for that, we’ll get in trouble for asking for that, or we’re more willing to accept what’s given to us than men are.” In this instance, the executive described a threat to her own negative face by her unwillingness to ask for too much in the past. Another participant said, “I tend to not sit at the head of the table, but men have no problems coming in and grabbing that seat and sitting down.” The theme of self-doubt and lack of confidence related to seating choice – sitting in the most powerful position in the room – indicates a threat to the participants’ own face. She did not feel comfortable enacting the masculine behavior of assuming the most powerful position in the room. Despite her title, the participant did not feel comfortable behaving as a leader might be expected to.

Another participant threatened her own negative face by questioning the way she dressed. She explained, “I think there are many times when I could have said to myself, change the way you dress because then you’re not going to have to worry so much about sexual harassment or about being treated equally or about being thought of as intelligent. And instead, I’ve just said no. I’m going to prove myself in other ways.” Through her own reflections on her negative face, this participant felt that she could mentor future women not to threaten their own negative face and experience shame in the same way that she did. She said, “That’s something I really want young leaders to know [...] That’s one of the things I think is so important for female leaders to share with the emerging generation.” Just as others expect women to behave according to a certain feminine style, often, participants draw on the same schema to threaten their own face and, in some ways, to conform to gender roles.

#### Enhancing Negative Face

For many participants, other people enhanced their negative face. Mentors, especially, played a vital role in enhancing negative face. For example, one board of directors chair saw an issue at the board table that she wanted to confront. She talked the issue over with her mentor who gave her advice. “She was like, ‘If you think that is the right thing to do, then that is what you carry through.’” Taking her mentor’s advice, the board chair felt confident in her decision to bring up the issue to the board. Similarly, one executive needed to confront a co-worker about an issue. The co-worker was much older than the executive by about 20 years, and he was also celebrated in the community. The executive described feeling nervous about needing to confront him, so before her meeting with the co-worker, she talked with her mentor. The mentor’s reply was, “You just do

what you need to do.” Similarly, one law partner described a colleague’s support for her negative face. When John Smith (pseudonym), a more senior member of the law firm changed jobs, the law partner wondered who would replace him. She said that her co-worker looked at her and said, “You are!” This led the participant to say, “I am!” After her conversation with her colleague, the participant said, “The next day, I was dragging my stuff into his office. And [others] go, ‘What are you doing?’ And I said, ‘I’m the next John Smith!’ And I did. I became the next John Smith.” The participant points out that it was a colleague, another woman, who initially suggested this to her.

Another mentor displayed great negative face. She was described by one study participant as “fearless.” The participant said, “She was not afraid to stand up and say, ‘This is the right thing to do.’ We did a lot of stuff that was unpopular, but we made a great team.” By seeing the fearlessness of her mentor, and by working closely with her in a fearless way, the participant learned how she might enhance her own negative face.

In addition to confiding in and receiving support from a mentor, bringing in a third party was another tactic for enhancing negative face utilized by study participants. One businesswoman said, “Sometimes if there’s a conflict, I also think you might be too close to it, so bringing someone else into the fold to help resolve it – I have no issue with that.” She added that bringing in a third party provided a different point of view and allowed for everyone to move forward.

If women typically experience restraint as a part of their gender role enactment, the ability to blur the parameters on gender role performance depends upon the ability to enact negative face. Breaking free from gender stereotypes calls for autonomous action.

Participants described their success in this area which may be a pivotal reason why they hold their positions of power and influence.

### Face Threats to the Speaker's Positive Face

Not all threats to women leaders' positive face were external. Participants reported positive face threats to their speaker face. These threats included feeling like a work in progress and always wanting to grow, improve, and do better. These feelings may indicate the struggle participants face when juggling both internal and societal expectations of their gender role as well as enacting permeable gender boundaries during their leader performance.

For example, one executive threatened her own positive face by speaking about herself as an imposter. She said, "Every time I am highlighted in some way, I am just like, 'One of these days, they're going to find out that I am just [mom's name]'s daughter.' One day! They're going to find out because I don't think of myself like a leader – and I don't know that I am comfortable with that designation. I'm such an imposter!" She continued that when she was invited to speak on a panel by and for women in leadership, she had to be convinced to join the panelists. She felt the other women speaking were so prestigious, and she felt that she had not arrived as they had. She said, "I'm like a work in progress. I can't be espousing all of these theories and practices and 'this is how I made it,' etc. because I am still a work in progress." Another participant similarly described seeking continual self-improvement. She said, "I am never satisfied with where I stand in time and place and space. I still ask the question, Where do I want to wind up? What do I want to be when I grow up? What do I want to accomplish?" Feeling like a work in

progress or an imposter may be attributed to the complex impression management participants must engage in to be successful as leaders in the workplace.

A common theme for participants was to understand perceived weaknesses so as to grow and develop. The leader of a nonprofit organization acknowledged a personal weakness of feeling uncomfortable talking with others. She said, “I do appreciate and try to put myself in uncomfortable situations that allow me to kind of work on that [weakness].” By understanding what she perceived as a weakness and then by challenging herself to overcome that weakness, the participant displayed her commitment to growth and learning. Another participant explained, “I need to be a little bit more stern, and I think that’s something I need to improve. You care too much. Sometimes you might have to be stern and, for lack of a better word, cold.” Sometimes, as in this case, it seems the desired improvement is shifting away from the female gender role; however, this does not come naturally. Participants reveal examples of working to achieve gender permeability while not always feeling comfortable doing so.

In summary, participants primarily encountered face threats to the hearer’s positive face, face threats to the hearer’s negative face, enhancing negative face, and face threats to the speaker’s positive face. Face threats to the hearer’s positive face as well as the hearer’s negative face enforced pre-existing stereotypes about how women should look, talk, and act. External face threats from other people enforcing these stereotypes as well as internal face threats such as self-doubt from within the participants themselves indicated the complex role performance women leaders must understand and execute. For some participants, other people – especially mentors – enhanced their negative face by supporting them and building their confidence. However, enhancement by others did not

negate the internal conflict participants experienced. While working to achieve gender permeability and success as leaders, backstage behaviors included feeling unsure about oneself and a desire to focus on constant improvement. All of the face threatening acts encountered in the workplace revealed the complex role performances required by successful women in leadership positions.

### Impression Management Strategies

Thematic analysis yielded two primary impression management strategies: assuming a masculine gender performance and engaging in the back stage behaviors of preparation and planning.

#### Assuming a Masculine Gender Performance

Presenting the self involves attire, nonverbal communication, and delivery as well as situational messaging about the self that is targeted toward a specific audience. To manage conflict between a “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance, participants made changes in self-presentation including changing vocal delivery to mirror the delivery of a man, promoting masculine-like confidence, and modifying behavior to fit in as “one of the guys.” These changes signified an adoption of a male leader role performance. In order to present the self as a competent leader, some participants altered behavior to diminish traditionally feminine qualities and enhance or assume traditionally masculine qualities.

An example of both a paralinguistic and speech content adaptation was provided by an executive who made changes to her delivery – specifically her voice. She said:

My mentor/boss said to me once men do not like the sound of the voice of a woman. That when women speak, all they hear is “nah nah nah nah nah.” And he said to me, “Lower your voice at least two octaves.” I used to talk up here [spoken

in a higher voice tone]. I really did. And I started talking down here [spoken in a deeper, lower voice].

In addition to changing her vocal delivery, the participant also changed the content of the messages. She said her mentor taught her, “Less is more. Don’t say more than what you have to say. Don’t elaborate. Don’t think you have to say more than you were asked. Just answer the question. Present the information.” These two changes to self-presentation allowed the executive to feel successful based on the advice of her mentor, who was a man. She reported, “As somebody that wanted to participate and be at the table, I took [the mentor’s advice] as a good mentor session. He was out to help me to be successful, and I want to be successful. So I can tweak that.” Both behaviors recommended by the mentor fit a masculine stereotype of gender role enactment.

Other participants mentioned the importance of “promoting an air of confidence” and “having some innate personality that allows you to have confidence.” One business leader further explained that the concept of “confidence” could be embodied by presence and a strong handshake. She said, “Have you noticed how when men enter a room and sit down, they spread out? They take up a lot of space. And we [women] sit like this [crosses arms and legs to simulate taking up less space].” For the participant, confidence could be displayed by physically taking up a lot of space in the room and by sitting in a particular way. She went on to add that the best advice she received was “you better have a damn good handshake.” To adopt a male leader role performance, this participant believed in embodying confidence via physical presence and a firm handshake.

Another executive described her adoption of a male leader role performance based on the people surrounding her. She told a story about a work retreat she attended

with four colleagues, all men in leadership roles equivalent to hers, and their boss, a woman. After returning to the hotel after a day of work, the boss went to bed early while the interviewee and her colleagues went to the hotel bar for a drink. “If I had gone to bed, that would have been bad for me because [the men] would not have looked at me as a peer. And so I had to be their peer but still be ladylike.” She added:

I will even change the way I interact with them when [our boss] is not around because I need to be able to be with them. So I might change the way I talk when I am with them and change the language to be a little bit more casual. I want them to see me as their peer.

A flexible self-presentation in this case allowed the participant to feel as if she fit in whether in a group of mixed company (women and men), a group of only men, or a group of only women. Flexibility in self-presentation in order to fit in with the men by adopting male qualities was highlighted as important and as a key to success.

One context cited where permeable gender boundaries were needed involved conflict. A CEO described a very public attack on both her company and on her personally as a leader. False accusations swirled that she was forced to confront in the public arena on numerous occasions. She said of the experience, “I very much took it as I need to stand strong, show absolutely no emotion, but sort of be a broken record of trying to get the correct facts out there without being accusatory. At that point, it had gotten very personal and incredibly aggressive.” Despite the personal attacks on her leadership abilities and on her character, this participant’s goal was to demonstrate one clear, highly composed self-presentation to the public. She went on to explain why this was important to her. She said, “I believe really strongly that it hurts the entire cause if a woman is

emotional – whether angry or crying – in a situation like that. I feel like it’s my responsibility not only for my profession but also for my gender to try to keep it together” In this case, the participant’s goal was to counter the nasty public attacks by proving her strength as a leader to the community. To do this, she felt as if she needed to put her emotions backstage and to present a careful “leader” face to the public on the front stage. She expanded:

I think when it first started, people were questioning, “Is she really not a good leader?” I continued to stand up and give the facts, I think it actually bolstered people’s view of my leadership to a huge extent. By the time we got to the end of it, it was like, wow, look at the great job she has done with someone that is so difficult. Look how ridiculous this other person has made themselves into.

Her strong, stoic self-presentation resulted in a positive outcome to the difficult situation which, as a result, increased the way others saw her as a leader.

#### Backstage Behaviors: Preparation and Planning

Participants utilized rigorous preparation and planning backstage to ensure successful conflict management front stage. As a preventive facework strategy, careful preparation and planning served as a confidence-builder for participants. Once participants built confidence backstage, they were able to feel poised and self-assured in managing face threatening acts front stage. Examples of preparation and planning as backstage behaviors included clearly explaining a thoughtfully planned rationale, scanning the environment, supporting one’s point by preparing examples and stories, and relying on the preparation provided by the advice of a mentor to remain calm in the face

of conflict. These strategies emphasized a masculine-driven front stage performance while keeping feminine behaviors backstage.

In response to other people challenging her authority, one executive credited her success in handling these face threats with thinking things out in advance. She said, “You have to fully think out what you’re going to do, what the changes are going to be, what the consequences are, and what the challenges are that are going to come forward.” She elaborated that she felt confident in predicting how people would respond but that this confidence came from preparation and planning. The executive continued, “You can say ‘no’ to somebody, but you have to have good reasoning behind the ‘no,’ and you have to make sure they understood why. They may not agree with you. Some of the people may not agree with you, but at least they understand the why.” Ensuring face threats were minimized by strategically thinking out her rationale backstage before confrontation took place on the front stage enabled the executive to feel confident in protecting her face. The participant utilized preparation and planning backstage to support her ideas and defend herself against possible challenges and attacks from others. She also sought to avoid emotionally confronting others in the moment by instead opting to be fact and logic driven. Any feminine reactions, emotions, and behaviors occurred backstage while the front stage served as a place for a largely masculine style.

Another participant used the term “scanning” to describe her preparation and planning technique. She said, “I scan. I really look out for things that could be challenges. I always need to know what’s going on.” By scanning for possible threats to face, this participant felt she could prepare proactively backstage as opposed to reacting in the moment front stage in the presence of others. An entrepreneur also utilized the scanning

technique. She said, “I’m always sitting back and analyzing what’s causing the conflict, what is the creation of the conflict, and working through it.” As opposed to simply addressing conflict as it arises, the participant engages in constant preparation and planning so she can think about and prepare for conflict. For her, this strategy leads to successfully overcoming challenges in what she perceives to be a proactive as opposed to a reactive and emotional style.

A director described being prepared with evidence in order to convince others to accept her idea. When she proposed a new project, she explained that her co-workers did not get it. They questioned her idea by asking why the project should move forward. She defended her idea by explaining how the project aligned with the company’s mission and was prepared with stories and examples to prove her point. When asked about the key to persuading others to accept her project, the director credited the backstage behaviors of preparation and planning. She said, “I just had to give them a lot of examples. Sometimes you have to talk people into stuff – on the spot – but you have to know what you’re talking about.” The director detailed three specific examples during the interview which she recalled vividly. These were the examples she provided to her co-workers to accept her vision. She added, “You have to have credibility, and you have to know what you’re talking about because people will challenge you. And so you have to really be prepared.” When asked about how to display credibility and how to prepare, the director credited one skill she learned in business skill: brevity. She elaborated, “Businesspeople talk in bullet points, and if you’re going to make your point, you need to make it in your first three bullet statements. Get in there, have your points ready, make them [in] one minute or less, [and] get to the point succinctly.” The director relied on scrupulous preparation

and planning to feel confident in successfully managing face-threatening situations. Again, this participant preferred a more typically masculine style while suppressing some feminine characteristics.

A final participant also sought to adopt masculine characteristics such as brevity, detachment, and calm while suppressing feminine characteristics such as passion and emotion. This nonprofit director described extensive preparation for the unexpected situation of putting a motion up for membership vote. She included a mentor in her preparation process, and this mentor was present during the vote to assist the director. The director explained that her mentor “was a pillar of furious calm” during the volatile voting situation. During voting, several members became impolite and disrespectful, but the director relied on her mentor’s support. Both the director and the mentor displayed calm front stage behaviors. The director said of her mentor, “If you saw her face... She was whispering that she was furious, but she also remained extremely calm. When you have people around you that you know are supportive, feeling what you are – feeling extreme emotion but cool as a cucumber – you feel calm, too.” Importantly, not just the director but also her mentor, another woman, exhibited this masculine-driven behavior front stage while suppressing feminine behavior.

In summary, participants engaged in two primary strategies for impression management in order to negotiate conflicts between a “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance. Those strategies included assuming a masculine gender identity and engaging in the back stage behaviors of preparation and planning. Participants carefully controlled emotional outbursts, a traditionally feminine behavior, in favor of a more masculine-driven front stage performance. Still, permeable gender boundaries

emphasized masculine characteristics front stage in some instances while highlighting the importance of feminine characteristics front stage in other instances. Participants constantly thought about societal expectations front stage and engaged in relentless internal dialogue backstage to prepare and practice the required performance.

### Corrective Facework

Corrective facework seeks to correct or restore any damage caused by a face threat after the act occurs. Individuals who aim to correct face threats may do so in a variety of ways and by a variety of participants. The person responsible for the face threat, the other people witnessing the face threat, or the person whose face was threatened may all participate in corrective facework strategies (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Participants most commonly referenced the use of avoidance and direct confrontation as corrective facework strategies.

### Avoidance

While avoidance can be a strategy for preventing face threats, avoidance also refers to “a large class of behaviors intended to contain or control the extent of damage to face” (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 9). One businesswoman explained that she strategically avoided conflict because she felt conflict wasted everyone’s time. Another executive explained a specific time she used avoidance in the workplace. She described a specific incident where her co-worker yelled and lashed out at her during a conference call. Instead of confronting the conflict head on, the executive says, “I kept my composure. I tried to talk her off the ledge, and she just wasn’t able – there was no helping her. I had my leader with me, so I am glad I had someone to witness that I was cool and collected under pressure.” In this case, managing her emotions was the central facet of the

participant's avoidance. The participant sought to relegate emotional, feminine-style behaviors backstage while presenting a calm, composed, masculine front stage.

Other participants used avoidance in public and were forced by a superior to avoid conflict. One executive sought to avoid a conflict in public while directly addressing the face threat head-on with only the person involved with the conflict. The participant said, "In public, [my goal] is to diffuse for the moment. And then I directly address and squash it." In this case, avoidance was "accomplished by acting as if face has not been threatened" in the public situation and "gracefully continuing with social interaction" which "demonstrates one's poise and minimizes the extent to which other people become embarrassed or annoyed" (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 9). However, avoidance in public was countered with a direct communicative approach to the face threat in private. The privacy of the confrontation allows for less public fallout for the faces of everyone involved, including bystanders. In this way, the leader attends to the face threat without suffering as much damage to the relationship or threatening the face of the person who initiated the face threat. Another participant, a president of a nonprofit board of directors, explained a time she was forced to avoid a conflict. A third party was in the wrong and bypassed the participant, instead going to the participant's boss. "My boss told me in person – he did not write this in an email – that he knew [the third party] was in the wrong. However, to save all of our sanity because she won't stop, he told me I was going to have to give in. It was one of the few times that I came home and cried." Even though this conflict strategy was not the participant's choice, she was directed by her boss to avoid the conflict. As with previous participant responses, avoidance

emphasized the importance of performing more masculine front stage such as calm and emotionless behavior while keeping feminine behaviors such as crying backstage.

Humor was a specific avoidance technique utilized by some study participants. Cupach and Metts (1994) noted that humor is frequently used as a response to conflict. One participant describes using humor as her avoidance strategy. She said, “What I’ve always done is deflect via humor because sometimes when you have conflict, so in that particular one, that was a mean-spirited conflict. In that sort of instance, they were trying to get under your skin, and you can’t let people do that. You can use humor in that sort of way to just continue to move forward. It’s not worth it.” In this case, humor was used as a way to keep the conversation going to accomplish a particular goal. Again, humor allowed the participant to address the face threat while incurring less relational damage.

Another participant used humor to cool tempers and to eliminate tension. She said, “Sometimes you input little bits of sarcasm and joking in there – because it kind of cools you down and cools everybody else down. It allows people to chuckle or smile. In some of those cases, sarcastic humor can eliminate a really tense situation.” In order to minimize the face threat in these two cases, participant humor was designed to deflect the conflict which resulted in the ability to maintain face.

### Direct Confrontation

While some participants utilized avoidance, others opted to directly confront the issue at hand as a preferred corrective facework strategy. When discussing their direct approach to conflict, participants described themselves as wired for conflict, frank, and candid. One participant described a time when she needed to confront two people who held views opposing her view in order to execute a company strategy. In this highly face-

threatening environment of two people against one, the corrective facework strategy of direct confrontation was utilized. When asked if she hesitated to argue her point against two opponents, she replied, “No. I’m Irish. I like conflict.” She elaborated, “I’m missing a filter, I guess. I don’t get my feelings hurt. I don’t really care what other people think necessarily.” In this case, the participant’s direct approach may have been a defensive response to two people attacking her viewpoint or a protective response as an attempt to present a strong face since her face may have been lost in the confrontation.

Two participants used the terms “frank” and “candid” to describe their individual approaches to conflict which indicates a stereotypically masculine style. A nonprofit director said, “I’m very, very, very frank with my staff.” She continued, “I feel very strongly and won’t keep someone on the team who is having a lot of parking lot discussions and won’t be up front. I talk about that in interviews, and I know that’s my leadership style. I think if you’re warned up front and you can’t do that, then you’re probably not going to be a good member of this team because I don’t have the time to deal with it.” This participant leads with a traditionally masculine style – communicating in a frank manner, avoiding gossip – but makes sure to warn staff, including potential staff, of this leadership style. In this case, offering the frank leadership style up front in interviews serves as a corrective facework strategy since these masculine characteristics may emerge as a basis for reprimand or termination of employees.

Taking a more direct, traditionally masculine approach to conflict may constitute the preferred leadership style for some women in positions of power; however, as noted in the section on threats to positive face, such a choice may prompt backlash. Another participant, a law partner, used the word candid to describe her approach to conflict. She

explained, “I am a candid person.” To describe what this meant in more detail, she said, “With my candidness, if somebody messes up something, I go and I tell them. I say, ‘This wasn’t what I asked for, and you should fix it.’ Not nasty... but [candid].” Unfortunately, her candor appeared on multiple year-end reviews. She said, “I would get perfect reviews, but it would say ‘needs to get along better with staff.’ And I would say, ‘Yes, or maybe staff needs to get along better with me because I’m their boss!’ And if a man pissed off [his staff], would we write in your review that you need to get along better with [them]?” Interestingly, even after her candor was reprimanded in multiple annual workplace performance evaluations, the law partner sought not to change her own leadership style but to instead question why others would ask her to change. Adopting a masculine style received formal and routine critique, so participants do face challenges when creating permeable gender boundaries.

In summary, corrective facework strategies utilized by women leaders in the present study included avoidance and direct confrontation. Avoidance often required participants to exhibit masculine front stage behaviors such as masking emotion at work while still experiencing those emotions backstage. Participants also used avoidance to execute the traditionally feminine qualities of being nice and protecting the faces of others. Still, other participants preferred the typically masculine approach of direct confrontation. One consequence of this approach included being chastised for this approach in multiple year-end performance reviews. Another way a participant managed the fallout from displaying such a masculine style was to warn staff of her leadership style in advance. Indeed, displaying a candid, frank, direct confrontational style can and

did prompt criticism which indicates, as with previous results, the skill with which a leader must understand and execute permeable gender boundaries.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Discussion

The present study sought to uncover what kinds of face threats to identity women leaders encountered in the workplace, how women leaders used impression management to negotiate conflicts between a “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance, and the kinds of corrective facework utilized by women leaders to manage face threats. One of two bodies of research on women in leadership suggests that success comes from the adoption of traditionally masculine characteristics. Evidence from participants in the current study also supports these previous findings, as women who maintain more permeable boundaries in enacting both male and female characteristics, but especially emphasizing a masculine gender performance, are likely to do well in leadership positions. However, this performance comes with a significant focus on impression management. With respect to facework, participants created permeable gender boundaries through the use of both preventive and corrective strategies. With respect to dramaturgy, participants emphasized traditionally masculine behaviors front stage while minimizing some feminine behaviors or relishing those behaviors to only the backstage. Overall, participants engaged in masterful impression management despite the perils and challenges involved in doing so.

Research question 1 asked what kinds of face threats to “woman” identity the leaders encountered in the workplace. Previous research indicates that face threats in the workplace may impact women more often and more severely than men (Irizarry, 2004b). Because women may experience more frequent and intense face threats at work, it is

likely that women have developed more complex ways of thinking about and managing those threats. Results of the present study revealed participants did report encountering both positive and negative face threats. Examples of these face threatening acts included positive face threats to the hearer's face, negative face threats to the hearer's face, the enhancing of one's negative face by other people, and positive face threats to the speaker's face.

Many face threats to positive face also threatened negative face. Face threats from other people relied on a common prototype. The external expectations that they needed to "act like a lady" often conflicted with how participants viewed themselves as leaders. For example, old ideas about sexuality and women needing to sleep with a man in order to get ahead were reflected in stories from participants' past and present. Antiquated views about how a woman should look and dress threatened the face of one participant. Insinuations that a woman cannot achieve success on her own without using her sexuality threatens negative face, specifically autonomy face, but also positive face, specifically competence face. When considering positive face threats, even when women adopt traditionally masculine characteristics in the workplace or in leadership positions, they continue to be evaluated as women first and as leaders second (Catalyst, 2007b; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Indeed, "maintaining a 'professional face' involves managing perceptions of competence that are interwoven with perceptions of gender" (Irizarry, 2004b, p. 20). When examined alongside the findings of research question 1, contradictions emerge. Participants feel as though they must act like a man and think like a woman in order to achieve leadership success; however, face threats from others impose traditionally feminine behaviors upon them that are designed to guide and constrain participants'

future behavior. For women, the job evaluation becomes a site where other people try to constrain violations of gender role enactment.

With respect to dramaturgy, responses to these various face threats included careful thought by participants. Backstage, some participants thought, “I don’t have time for this,” or “I want to get down to business.” Front stage, participants convinced others they were gender appropriate by displaying more feminine characteristics. Additionally, participants threatened their own face through self-doubt and insecurity. Feelings of not being good enough or being an imposter also revealed threats to positive face. These feelings sometimes emerged in response to comparing one’s leadership abilities with the abilities of others, especially men. In response to self-doubt and lack of confidence, many women focused on a growth mindset geared toward constant learning, betterment, and improvement. By viewing oneself as a work in progress, participants allowed themselves to be critiqued without losing their “leader” identity; leaders could be flawed because they hadn’t finished growing. This backstage thought process mirrors the complex performance expected front stage by women leaders. One may not feel “good enough” because of those incongruent expectations of a woman identity and a leader role performance on the front stage. Just as with the findings of research question 1, much thought occurs backstage in order for participants to effectively manage front stage behavior. This extensive backstage behavior may reveal possible keys to the success of women leaders. Understanding of a variety of facework strategies to negotiate conflicts between a “woman” identity and a “leader” role performance may allow women to manage the variety and frequency of face threats most effectively. Mastering face threats

successfully may also lead to increased confidence in the perception of that woman's leadership ability by others.

Many participants reported that other people enhanced their negative face. Support from mentors and colleagues played a key role in decision-making, addressing conflict, and even seeing oneself as a leader. Mentors often displayed great positive and negative face which enhanced the face of participants. These findings bring up an important topic for future research on mentors as support for the impression management and, ultimately, the success of women leaders.

Research question 2 asked how women leaders used impression management to negotiate conflicts between a "woman" identity and a "leader" role performance. Participants utilized two primary preventive strategies: assuming a masculine gender performance and implementing the backstage behaviors of preparation and planning. Both of these strategies sought to reduce feminine qualities commonly associated with participants' "woman" identities, often while increasing traditionally masculine qualities associated with a "leader" role performance. Preventive facework strategically focused on what kind of identity to display.

In order to negotiate conflicts between a "woman" identity and a "leader" role performance, many participants worked to diminish that "woman" identity by decreasing traditionally feminine qualities while highlighting their "leader" role performance by assuming more traditionally masculine qualities. In all cases, participants mindfully strategized about assuming these behaviors and about altering or diminishing their more feminine characteristics. In most cases, participants minimized feminine behaviors backstage while promoting masculine behaviors front stage.

The present study's findings on adopting more masculine attributes align with previous research on the success of women leaders (Lester, 2008; Pecci, 2014; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). Previous literature discusses the tendency to under-value traditionally feminine characteristics in most workplaces which prioritize a traditionally masculine leadership style (Koenig et al., 2011). Irizarry (2004b) noted that "gender is very salient as [women] attempt to adapt and conform to the masculine work environment in which they interact" (p. 20). Results of the present study support this literature, as participants often sought to minimize feminine qualities in an effort to better perform their leadership roles.

In addition to the adoption of masculine qualities in the workplace, participants also utilized the backstage behaviors of preparation and planning which assisted participants with adopting a masculine role on the front stage. Being tough and firm, showing no emotion, and minimizing feminine characteristics appeared on the front stage while carefully thinking and strategizing occurred back stage. These findings offer interesting into the nuanced nature of women leaders adopting masculine qualities and behaviors by showing the importance of a double consciousness and the ability to work backstage so as to exhibit an acceptable leader performance on the front stage. For study participants, negotiating conflicts between a "woman" identity and a "leader" role performance does often require acting like a man but thinking like a woman.

Research question 3 asked what kinds of corrective facework women leaders utilized to manage face threats. Corrective strategies included avoidance and direct confrontation. One executive used avoidance in a public confrontation while pulling the person threatening her face aside after the incident to address it privately. Another

participant was forced by her supervisor to avoid a conflict, and while she followed those orders, she described her frustration at this approach. To avoid in public and confront directly in private indicated skilled strategy which avoided threatening other people's face in public, publicly enacting an accommodating and feminine-style of self presentation, but utilizing a more direct, confrontational, and masculine style in private which would threaten face. Avoidance was also strategically used to prevent wasting time. For many, participants who kept composure and avoided conflict engaged in a high standard of front stage behaviors – presenting the self as professional, cool, calm, and collected – even if emotions ran high backstage.

Participants also used humor as an avoidance tactic. Cupach and Metts (1994) said, “Laughter allows the release of nervous tension and signals that the problematic circumstances need not be taken too seriously” (pp. 9-10). Not only does this allow for corrective facework via deflection on the part of the woman leader, but humor also allows listening bystanders to feel more comfortable with the face threat. Additionally, humor was used to diffuse and deflect. This may be an example of a more feminine approach through careful avoidance of direct confrontation.

Finally, some participants addressed conflicts head-on in a more outspoken, frank style. For one law partner, this led to more conflict, as her candor was discouraged in the workplace. Because a more direct communication style is typically associated with masculinity, the participant did see societal pressures in the form of her annual performance reviews asking her to change her communication style to be more agreeable and indirect in dealings with her co-workers. In this case, the participant's candor was used as a defense for any loss of face occurring in several negative year-end reviews.

Additionally, the participant felt that to regain social identity, her candor, which was rejected, should be compared to the candor of men in her office, which seemed to be generally accepted.

Another participant felt her frank approach to conflict needed to be explained up front during the interview stage so as to prepare potential colleagues of this style well in advance. In this case, the more masculine communication style was communicated defensively but prior to any face threatening act so as to correct any loss of face before that loss occurred. Finally, one executive qualified her masculine approach to conflict by attributing the approach to her heritage, to being Irish.

Very little research exists on corrective facework in organizational contexts. A study by Cupach and Carson (2000) examined how employees managed face threats while being reprimanded by their managers; however, little is known about how managers engage in face work with employees including those who work at levels above them, for them, and below them. In addition to offering insight into corrective facework strategies utilized in the workplace, the present study's focus on gender also offers new contributions to the literature.

#### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Two major challenges existed in data collection. First, the participant population of powerful women leaders in Central Florida proved difficult to contact and schedule a 60-minute interview with due to busy agendas and timing. Fifteen leaders in Central Florida were interviewed, but only after approximately 50 were identified and contacted as qualifying as a good fit for the study. Despite the desirability of more data, scheduling interviews with some of the busiest, most high-achieving women in the region presented a challenge. Several participants declined due to busy schedules, and some cited travel

schedules. After scheduling interviews, two participants needed to reschedule, and one cancelled due to work and time constraints.

A majority of study participants reported being passionate about the topic of leadership, and specifically about women in leadership, which may indicate a high level of knowledge on the topic prior to the interview as well as a high level of engagement with the material during the interview. An additional limitation might include participants' facework during the interview due to a desire to share stories and events highlighting one's positive face.

With so much interview data from the present study, an abundance of information still needs analysis. One important theme emerging from the data included outside support, especially support from mentors and colleagues, as important to the success of women leaders which might be explored in more detail through targeted, mentor-specific interview or focus group questions. Additionally, multiple participants cited the importance of earning the MBA degree as a career-defining moment which would be interesting to explore through the lens of impression management.

### Conclusion

My innate drive to lead combined with my inability to be seen as a leader by others initially sparked my interest in the women in leadership topic. In conducting this research, I hoped to gain a better understanding of leadership best practices from women holding top positions of power. Interviewing women who held important leadership roles in a variety of fields and hearing their stories of success initially inspired me. However, upon analyzing the data, I became frustrated that the present study's findings aligned with previous literature on the importance of women adopting traditionally masculine qualities in order to be successful as leaders. Even today, there remains a privileging of masculine

behavior that we have not escaped. While participants utilized facework and dramaturgy to facilitate their success in positions of power in the workplace, these complex performances and enactments of permeable gender boundaries may not be accessible to all women seeking leadership roles. In the short term, creating and presenting a more masculine-driven “leader” role performance may afford individual women success; however, acting like a man while minimizing feminine characteristics will not endure as a long-term strategy for gender equality in leadership.

## **APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Alex Rister**

Date: **November 04, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/04/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Modification Type: Changed recruitment inclusion to all female leaders in Central Florida. A revised protocol and initial recruitment email have been uploaded in iRIS.  
Project Title: WOMEN WITH INFLUENCE: NEGOTIATING A POWERFUL FEMALE IDENTITY THROUGH FACEWORK  
Investigator: Alex Rister  
IRB Number: SBE-15-11485  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#)

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kanille Chay" with a horizontal line extending to the right.

IRB Coordinator

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

## Purpose

*Read aloud:* My name is Alex Rister, and this interview will be used to collect data for my graduate thesis at the University of Central Florida's Nicholson School of Communication. The primary objective of this research is to analyze how women leaders manage any conflict of identity they may feel as a woman in a position of power. You have been invited to participate in this study because you were publically recognized as one of central Florida's most prominent leaders. This interview and our discussion should take between 60 to 90 minutes and will be audio recorded and later transcribed. The information you provide will be presented to my thesis committee and may also be published. Pseudonyms for you and your organization will be used to ensure any information you provide is confidential. Please feel free to give as much or as little information as you feel comfortable, and if you do not wish to answer a question, please feel free to decline. If you wish to stop the interview at any time, please feel free to do so.

## Interview Questions

### Leadership

1. Did any influential mentors shape your perspective on leadership? If so, how?
2. Did any significant events shape your perspective on leadership? If so, how?
3. What are the most important qualities you possess that make you a strong leader?
4. What leadership qualities are you still working to acquire or to develop further?
5. What is the most important leadership lesson you've learned so far?

### Impression Management

6. What kinds of problems do you think you need to be more aware of as a woman in a leadership position?

7. What do you do to halt any potential problems before they begin?
8. Can you describe a recent workplace situation in the last few years where another person challenged your leadership or authority?
9. Why do you think your authority was challenged in that particular scenario?
10. What did you learn from that scenario? Have you made any changes to the way you lead because of that incident?
11. Can you describe a recent workplace conflict? How did you manage that conflict?  
What did you learn from that conflict?
12. Can you identify a workplace conflict you feel you handled especially well?
13. What are the biggest challenges that women leaders face in the workplace?
14. What are the biggest challenges that women leaders face in your specific industry?
15. What are the biggest challenges you face as a women leader? How do you personally work to overcome those challenges?

#### Additional Thoughts

You've provided such great information about your experiences as a woman in a position of power. Can you think of anything else I did not ask about that you would like to include in this interview?

#### Conclusion

*Read aloud:* Thank you again for sharing your experiences with me. If you know of another woman leader in your professional network who might like to participate in this study, please let me know. I hope to complete all interviews by December 2015. This

interview has been extremely helpful in the completion of my graduate thesis, and I sincerely appreciate your participation in the study.

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