

Examining Why Some Women Speak Out -
A Preliminary Study using TEDtalks by Women

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Abstract

Studies continue to show that gender discrimination is an ongoing barrier for women seeking leadership roles. Further, the research evidence also shows that gender equality has stalled and, in some cases, has even gone backwards in business, industry, and politics. Yet, many women chose not to speak out about the barriers or challenges that they face in attaining and/or working in leadership roles. The literature on gender discrimination has provided very little explanation as to why some women choose to speak out about the barriers and challenges they have experienced. In order to better understand this phenomenon of women speaking out, three TEDtalks by women were selected for analysis. The analysis of the three TEDtalks showed that each of the women took personal accountability for their choices, ignored social expectations of women's roles in the home and at work, had a personal impact on those around them, and experienced gender discrimination first hand. Findings from this preliminary study indicate that even successful women continue to face barriers and challenges; as such further research is recommended with a focus on why it is that some women do not speak out.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Background

Women continue to face challenges and barriers that impede their progress towards, and success in, leadership positions. As of August 2015, women's representation in business and government leadership positions was less than 10 percent. For example, 4.4 percent of CEOs in S & P 500 companies were women, even though women make up 45 percent of their work force and 22 percent of all national parliamentarians were women (11 women serving as Head of States, 13 women serving as Head of Government and 17 percent of government ministers were women) (UN Women, 2015). While research has continued to show that women leaders have a positive impact on performance, that women positively impact the bottom line and risk management, that companies with women board members have better financial success (Johns, 2013) and that women legislators are more likely to introduce civil right, education and progressive policies (Vinik, 2014), the underrepresentation of women in business and government persists. This persistence has many impacts such as causing women to leave the work force and taking their education, knowledge and skills with them (Reinhold, 2005). Despite both the benefits of women leaders and the negative impacts of their continued underrepresentation, the challenges and barriers that contribute to this inequality at a more nuanced level remain less understood.

One possible reason for this phenomenon may be that women do not speak out about the issues that are prevent them from attaining leadership positions out of fear of the consequences that they may face if they did speak out (Lord & Preston, 2009). However,

while one can imagine why women are worried about speaking out if they are still trying to make their way in their chosen field, it is less clear why women who have overcome barriers and challenges do not speak out. And yet, from my personal observations and experience, even successful women tend not to speak out about the barriers and challenges they have faced, making it difficult to acknowledge, identify, and learn what can be done about these challenges and barriers.

While opportunities for women in the workforce are more numerous than they were decades ago, much can be done to improve working environment, conditions, and systems for women. According to Piderit and Ashford (2003), work related discrimination is a primary source of stress for women. Additionally, it has been found that women are more likely to leave an organization than speak out (Reinhold, 2005), which implies that current workplace policies and systems present barriers and challenges that do not support women speaking out. This exodus from the workforce disrupts the career progression of women (Piderit & Ashford, 2003), which in turn can affect the overall number of women leaders that there are at the top. Ibarra, Ely and Kolb (2013) note that a further impact of the underrepresentation of women is that it “reinforces entrenched beliefs, prompts and supports men’s bids for leadership, and thus maintains the status quo” (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013, p. 5). Thus, it is clear that in order to improve working conditions for women and potentially increase the number of women in senior leadership positions, a better understanding of why women choose to, or not to, speak out is needed.

Hoyt and Simon's (2011) research has shown that exposure to female leaders who are seen to be exceptions can be damaging to one's self-perception. Hoyt and Simon's (2011) research indicates that when women can relate to role models, and perceive their success to be attainable, the role model is then seen as inspiring as opposed to an exception. Frequent exposure to female leaders that are seen as relatable can reduce the chances of one experiencing a negative social comparison, thereby reducing the chances of damaging one's self-perception (Hoyt & Simon, 2011). The potential negative and positive impacts of exceptional female leaders on other women has been described in the literature (e.g. Hoyt & Simon, 2011); however, there is very little literature on the effects that women have on others when they share their stories, and why it is that some women chose to share their stories while others do not.

1.1 The author's interest

It has been my own personal experience that often women in leadership roles do not openly acknowledge or identify issues or barriers within the workforce. I have worked and studied in various settings, described in further detail later, which have sparked my interest and raised questions about what I have seen with regards to women speaking out. Given the negative impacts of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, one has to ask why women do not speak out about the issues and barriers they face and what can we learn from the women who do speak out?

I am the product of a broken home, raised for the most part by my mother. Growing up I didn't have much; in fact there were times when there wasn't even heat in our trailer.

Even though materially I didn't have much, what I did have from a very young age was

determination. I was driven to make something of myself, so I studied really hard and not only was I the second person in my family to complete high school, but I graduated at the top of my class.

The year I graduated, we had a female guest speaker. This was a big deal; she was from Cape Breton and had become the VP of a major Canadian company. I remember sitting there, listening to her inspiring speech about how each and every one of us had the potential to do great things. What she did not talk about however were the barriers or challenges she faced in achieving her potential or the ones we as the graduating class might face in achieving ours. After graduating I took a year off school to work at a local youth outreach center. After spending the year helping youth I returned to school to complete my Bachelor of Arts degree. In order to pursue my BA, I had to work two jobs to make ends meet. When I graduated, I became the first person in my family to receive an undergraduate degree.

Neither my work experience nor my limited exposure to leaders left me prepared for what I experienced over the following years. My first position after completing university was with a local hotel; it was also my first experience with stereotypical gender roles in business. I worked the front desk and housekeeping, as did every other woman in the hotel. At the time there were only two men on staff: one gentleman who did the hotel maintenance and one who worked the backshift one weekend a month to get discounts on his hotel rooms when travelling. My second experience with gender roles was a year or so later when I took a position as an office manager for a holding company. I was the only woman who worked for the firm; I completed bookkeeping tasks, created

presentations, planned office events for clients and worked the switchboard. All of which were historically conventional jobs for women. Both owners were men; a man was in charge of sales, and all four software developers were men. Again these were all very typical gender roles within the business world.

I did have one experience where I was able to learn from a woman in a leadership position. I worked for a subsidiary of a larger company and over 90 percent of the staff in this particular branch were women. On the frontlines, where the positions were all administrative and customer service related roles, it was more like 97 percent. This in and of itself was not very different from my other positions. However what made it different was my supervisor. She refused to hire men. She had told me that it was because men did not like reporting to women, so she didn't hire them. This was one of the only times I had ever heard a woman speak out about a specific challenge women face in the workplace and how it was addressed.

After three years with the company my career had been progressing nicely and I wanted to become a supervisor of a team, so I decided to pursue my Bachelor in Business Administration in Management. I believed that increasing my education would help me to achieve my goal. So, while working fulltime, I pursued my BBA fulltime in the evenings and on weekends. However, when I graduated with my BBA and was promoted to a supervisor role I found that I had been misled. No one had prepared me for the challenges I would face as a young female supervisor. No one told me I would have to work twice as hard to gain the respect of my peers and my directors.

1.2 Purpose

A common thread that runs through my personal experience in the workplace and in school is the gap that exists between what is said and what is actually happening in practice and how women are silent about barriers and challenges. While completing my studies I attended many seminars, guest lectures, and recruitment sessions. Many of my classes provided me with opportunities to hear from guest speakers who were successful women and leaders in their fields. The one thing that stood out from all of the talks and presentations was that none of the women said that they faced any barriers or challenges in attaining, maintaining, and sustaining their leadership roles. Each of the guests spoke about their companies and the positive experience it was to work for them, how much support they received within their firms, and how amazing their mentors were. And, in most cases, these women communicated how they almost never faced any barriers or challenges at any stage of their careers.

I remember one guest speaker in particular who was asked by one of my classmates if she had faced discrimination during her career because my classmate worked in similar field and had faced discrimination several times over the years. The speaker's response was that her two biggest supporters were men but she never talked about any other issues. Her response was typical of the responses I had heard from other speakers. The response received repeatedly was that they personally had not experienced any of these issues in their career – the only challenges they had faced were the ones common to both men and women when starting a career. They would also indicate that while their companies had not yet reached full equality, they were working towards it.

These responses made me wonder how could it be that none of the women who spoke at the seminars, lectures, or as guest speakers had faced any of the barriers or challenges that I had faced, or that my classmates had said they faced. How could it be that their stories were so different from the ones that I was exposed to and what the statistics show about women's representation in leadership roles? These observations made me wonder had they truly never experienced any barriers or challenges, or were they just unwilling to share their experiences? And, if they were unwilling to share their real experience, why then were some women, such as those in the TEDtalks (women who are, by at least societal, business, and political standards, highly successful), willing to speak out about the barriers and challenges that they had faced?

Thus, the purpose of this research paper is to explore why women do not speak out about the issues and barriers they face. The aim of the paper is seek out an understanding of what can be learned from women who do choose to speak out. To examine this phenomenon, I conducted a descriptive qualitative analysis of three TEDtalks by women who are considered leaders in their fields. The content of this paper will contribute the literature on women and leadership by providing a) a preliminary look at why women speak out, b) a starting point for understanding what can be learned from those who speak out, and c) providing the ground work for future research on why it is that some women do not speak out.

1.3 Organization of MRP

Chapter 2 includes guiding theories and definitions followed by a literature review on gender discrimination, what is holding women back and why some women may speak

out. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology including an explanation of the descriptive qualitative study process undertaken and the selection process for identifying the TEDtalks used in the study. Chapter 4 provides a brief overview of each of the selected TEDtalks, a discussion on the data collection framework, and a discussion on each of the four themes found in the talks: personal accountability, social expectations, personal impact and a sense of not belonging. Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the descriptive qualitative study, the implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of the literature review is to provide a brief exploration of the literature on gender discrimination and how women are being held back from attaining equality. The following areas of literature were selected as the most relevant to the topic of this paper: gender equality, breaking through the glass ceiling, women in business, women in politics, and women in leadership. Each of these areas provides insight and evidence of the barriers and challenges that women face. The exploration of the evidence may provide further understanding on why some women chose not to speak out about barriers and challenges, while some women do.

2.1 Guiding theories and definitions

Prior to proceeding, there are three definitions that need to be established as they were central to guiding the literature review and in determining the selection criteria of the TEDtalks included in the study. The definitions are as follows: (i) Leadership, (ii) Discrimination (first generation), and (iii) Second Generation Gender Bias.

There are many definitions of *Leadership*; an article by Helmrich (2015) draws on various prominent figures seen as leaders to bring together a better understanding of leadership. For the purpose of this research the following definitions of leadership by leaders will be used: *leadership* is “having a vision, sharing that vision and inspiring others to support your vision while creating their own” (Gibbins-Klein, as cited in Helmrich, 2015, para. 4). In other words, leadership can be understood as:

[B]eing bold enough to have vision and humble enough to recognize achieving it will take the efforts of many people — people who are most fulfilled when they share their gifts and talents, rather than just work. Leaders create that culture, serve that greater good and let others soar (Heasley, as cited in Helmrich, 2015, para. 8).

Leadership is “stepping out of your comfort zone and taking risk to create reward” (Easley, as cited in Helmrich, 2015, para. 16). Leadership is “the behaviour that brings the future to the present, by envisioning the possible and persuading others to help you make it a reality” (Barney as cited in Helmrich, 2015, para. 17). Leadership is “influencing others by your character, humility and example. It is recognizable when others follow in word and deed without obligation or coercion” (Newman as cited in Helmrich, 2015, para. 29). These definitions of leadership are important as they draw attention to the various ways the women in the selected TEDtalks are leaders.

Discrimination against women can be defined as:

[A]ny distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as cited in UN Women, 2009, para. 2)

According to researchers at the Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO), *second generation gender biases* are "work cultures and practices that appear neutral and natural on their face," (p. 2) yet they reflect masculine values and life situations of men who have been dominant in the development of traditional work settings (Trefalk, et al., 2011).

2.2 Literature Review Type

A quasi rapid evidence assessment (RAE) literature review approach was used to determine sources for inclusion based on the areas identified as relevant to this research project. In order to locate relevant sources, the following databases were used: JSTOR, SAGE, NCBI (pubmed central), EBSCO host, ProQuest, Elsevier Science Direct and Wiley online library. An open search using Google and Google Scholar were also used. The range of databases and open google search ensured a thorough collection of the available literature. The search terms used included combinations and variations of the following terms: 'women + leadership', 'why women stand up', 'women + leader', 'gender + leadership', 'narrative', "women + narrative", 'power of narrative', 'women + narrative', 'women + leader + story', 'why women are silent', 'silence + gender', 'breaking + silence + gender', 'women + barriers + challenges', 'women + storytelling + narrative' and 'why + women + don't +speak out'.

The combination of terms lead to the following relevant articles: "What's Holding Women Back", "Breaking Silence: Tactical Choices Women Managers Make in Speaking Up About Gender-Equity Issues", and "Smashing Glass Ceiling: Why Women Still Find It Tough to Advance to the Executive Suite". These articles were used, along with additional sources located using Novanet to conduct an implicit systematic review.

2.3 Gender discrimination and equality

Gender equity issues “describe the concerns that organizational members might have about discrepancies in career opportunities, about inclusion or exclusion in organizational events, and about differences in the treatment of employees’ daily activities, based on their sex” (Piderit & Ashford, 2003, p. 1478). There were seven areas in the literature that identified factors that contribute to discrimination and gender biases. These factors include organizational culture, second generation gender bias, lack of developmental opportunities for female leaders, non-recognition of ‘soft skills’ as valuable, work place policies, reduced access to informal networks and the double bind (Reinhold, 2005). The following section provides a brief review of the literature on these seven areas.

Organizational culture

Crosby’s (1984) findings that discrimination exists “as an unfortunate consequence of institution (and national) history of practices that evolved for valid reasons under circumstances that no longer apply” (p. 348) fits with Reinhold’s (2005) statement that women face barriers and challenges because “the culture of most companies today is still overwhelmingly ‘white and male’” (p. 44). Oakley (2000) also indicates that there are barriers that are created by corporate practices such as recruitment policies, retention plans and the promotion of men over women (Oakley, 2000). These gendered recruitment practices and barriers are, according to Johns (2013), “significant for women” (p. 2). In addition, organizational cultural aspects such as “stereotyping, tokenism, power, preferred leadership styles, dynamics of male/female relationships” (Oakley, 2000, p. 322) are also barriers to women in leadership positions. Byrd (2009)

speaks about “stereotypical images” (p. 582) being listed as “the most salient encounters” (p. 582) experienced by the women in her study, while Cook and Glass (2014) state that “in male dominated organizations, women leaders suffer from token status” (Cook & Glass, 2014, p. 101). These are all examples that show an engrained organizational culture that is part of the reason why organizations have moved from outright gender discrimination to second generation gender bias, as defined in section 2.1.

Gender Bias

Another reason that may explain why women are not reaching the top is because gender bias may still exist (Reinhold, 2005). Johns (2013) explains:

Subtle gender discrimination still exists and accounts for the lack of movement in shattering the glass ceiling. Such discrimination, exemplified in various work practices and cultural norms, is so entrenched in organizations that it is difficult to detect. (p. 7)

These second generation biases are further explained by Lord and Preston (2009) who indicate that “so many of the so-called ‘normal’ organizational practices are gendered” (p. 772). Hellman (2001) points out that it is these underlying gender biases that filter down into other aspects of business, such as performance reviews. Due to these underlying gender biases, “being competent provides no assurance that a women will advance” (Hellman, 2001, p. 657).

Underlying gender biases are not the only barriers that women face. Preston and Lord (2009) argue that for women, “micro-politics that are played out in organizations act as

demonstrations of how patriarchal power is practiced not just possessed” (p. 774). They further discuss micro-politics in terms of how the workplace has become the site of gender politics wherein strategies are developed to resist change through the use of everything from “rumor to gossip, humor to sarcasm, networks to power bases” (Lord & Preston 2009, 774). The barriers of gender bias and micro-politics are consistent with Reinhold’s (2005) finding that “women identify male stereotyping and preconceptions of women’s roles and abilities as top barriers to a woman’s advancement” (p. 45).

In conclusion, these second generation gender biases which are so entrenched within organizations are very hard to detect and as such make it difficult to combat through appropriate policies and practices. In addition to these cultural gendered norms, micro politics feed into the issue of the *double bind*, detailed later, and make it even harder for women to move up in a company by reinforcing gender stereotyping, and questioning women’s abilities to lead.

Lack of developmental opportunities for female leaders

Reinhold (2005) claims, “many companies have not created a culture of accountability for the development of female managers and executives” (p. 46). Part of this lack of accountability is that women are given “inadequate career opportunities” (Oakley, 2000, p. 321). This claim is echoed by Johns’ (2013) finding that women’s “initial placement in dead end jobs” (p. 2) effects their career opportunities and contributes to women’s “lack of line experience” which, in turn, impacts their ability to gain experience necessary for advancement (Oakley, 2000, p. 321). Similarly, Reinhold (2005) also finds that companies steer women away from the line jobs that executives are expected to have

experience in and instead push them towards public relations, human resources, and communication roles (Reinhold, 2005), where it may be more difficult to acquire the executive qualifications needed. These hiring practices are some of the greatest failures of companies to develop female leaders because it means “women are not offered the kinds of opportunities that lead to the executive suit” (Reinhold, 2005, p. 45).

Non recognition of ‘soft skills’ as valuable

Another reason that Reinhold (2005) discusses as a barrier and challenge to women, is the tendency companies have not to “view people skills as executive skills” (p. 46). A very similar point is made by Lord and Preston (2009) when they state that women’s advancement is stymied by “differing gender communication styles, behaviors, and ways of socializing” (p. 772). Reinhold (2005) says that women tend to “listen, collaborate, emphasize, be inclusive and build consensus”; all of which are deemed to be soft skills and, as such, women are not believed to “possess hard, quantitative executive skills” (p. 46). This difference in linguistic style is further discussed by Oakley when she indicates that because women are often more likely to ask a question than give an order, their politeness is often seen more as lack of self-confidence by men (Oakley, 2000). These types of misperceptions and lack of understanding of the benefits of so-called ‘soft-skills’ are very common challenges faced by many women and, often, rather than the company accepting these skills as valuable, women adapt their styles to the more masculine, or develop “hard skills”. This aspect of the research evidence is further discussed in section 2.3.

Work place policies

Reinhold (2005) indicates that another challenge faced by women is that “many companies fail to help women juggle the competing demands of work, life, and family” (p. 46). According to Reinhold, many companies still have “unfriendly workplace policies” (p. 46) which do not help women attain any type of work-life balance. In addition, Oakley (2000) finds that “corporations were still not creating enough diversity initiatives or policies to effectively lessen the obstacles for women” (p. 323). This lack of initiative to create policies that can help women to balance various demands could be due to the “lingering bias about the competence of women and their willingness to embrace demanding careers” (Reinhold, 2005, p. 45)

Reduced access to informal networks

The last challenge that Reinhold (2005) discusses is that women “often lack the mentors and collegial networks of their male colleagues, they are frequently shut out of informal networks of communication often to which their male colleagues are privy” (p. 47). Johns (2013) also finds that women are “locked out of the informal networks that are important pipelines from promotion” (p. 5). In addition, Oakley (2000) finds in her research that women’s “minority status often makes it more difficult to tap into the information they need from informal sources and networks” (p. 330). Not only are women for the most part shut out of these informal networks but they also tend to “lack a sponsor who promotes and sells their skills and abilities” (Johns, 2013, p. 6) and they tend to lack women role models (Lord & Preston, 2009). Hellman (2001) finds that when women do have a mentor, the “mentoring programs that are set up to mitigate against sex bias in

organizations, promote it by providing a plausible explanation for a women's success that is not based on her own competence" (p. 665). Thus, based on evidence, it is these types of underlying biases that cause women to face challenges, such as double-binds.

The double bind

In addition to the six barriers and challenges discussed above, women also face what is referred to as the double-bind. The double bind is described by Oakley (2000) as a woman's inability to win no matter what she does. For example, women need to "be tough and authoritative (like men) to be taken seriously, but they will be perceived as "bitches" if they act aggressively" (Oakley, 2000, p. 324). Oakley (2000) goes on to share Jamison's (1995) insights that "throughout history, double-binds have been used by those with power to oppress those without power, and most often the victims are women" (p. 324).

The research evidence on gender discrimination and inequality is clear; there are many barriers and challenges that exist today for women seeking leadership roles, including those discussed in the above literature review. These foundational evidentiary findings may also provide some level of understanding as to why women do not speak out about the barriers and challenges they face.

2.4 Why women may not speak out

During the quasi rapid evidence assessment five relevant articles were located. Below are the highlights that further help to explain why women do not speak out. Each of the explanations are discussed below.

Non acknowledgement of being disadvantaged

The first possible explanation as to why women do not speak out is that they are unaware or are unwilling to accept that they have experienced discrimination. For example, Crosby (1948) states “if you are a woman, you are probably at a disadvantage because of your gender, but you are not very likely to acknowledge the fact” (p. 371). In addition to not acknowledging their discrimination, Crosby further notes that even as “a woman denies her own disadvantage, she recognizes that women are generally disadvantaged” (p. 372). This denial as explained by Crosby could provide an explanation to the questions Piderit and Ashford (2003) ask in their article *Breaking Silence: Tactical Choices Women Managers Make in Speaking Up About Gender Equality*. In the discussion of their findings, Piderit and Ashford (2003) state that some of the women in their sample, in particular a cluster labeled as bystanders, had little interest in raising issues around gender equality as they did not “feel that gender equity is an important issue and see instances of it rarely in their context” (p. 1494). This lack of interest can be further explained by Crosby (1984) when she states “it seems as if virtually every working woman imagined herself to be the lucky exception to the general plight” (p. 376). It is this belief that one is not a victim of discrimination that may explain why women failed to speak out.

How women are socialized

Based on the literature, a second possible reason for why women do not speak out is because women are socialized differently than men. Oakley (2000) points out “most girls are socialized to believe that sounding too sure of themselves will make them unpopular”

(p. 325). Oakley (2000) goes on to say that boys “are expected to emphasize, rather than down play their status” (p. 325). This difference in socialization helps to explain why Crosby (1984) indicates “politeness makes it difficult to portray one’s own suffering” (p. 377) and why some women experience “discomfort in confronting their own victimization” (p. 380). The way in which a woman is socialized could also explain why Reinhold (2005) notices that women are “much less likely to complain about workplace challenges or scheduling inconveniences ” (p. 46).

Current approaches to addressing gender biases

The third possible reason why women do not speak out is because the current approach to addressing gender biases is to blend in, not to stand out. In her article, Oakley (2000) states that “current approaches designed to help women move up the hierarchy usually focus on helping women to find ways to adapt and blend in, rather than speak out and find their own voice” (p. 322). This phenomenon of trying to blend in and re-socialize oneself is further discussed by Ibarra et al. (2003) in their Harvard Business Review article where they explain that:

Voice coaches, image consultants, public-speaking instructors, and branding experts find the demand for their services growing. The premise is that women have not been socialized to compete successfully in the world of men, so they must be taught the skills and styles their male counter parts acquire as a matter of course. (p. 8)

This attempt to fit in rather than speak out is certainly linked to how women are

socialized, and may also be linked to the fourth possible reason for why women do not speak out.

Not speaking out, and a perceived lack of power

The fourth possible reason that women do not speak out is that, even when women are interested in speaking out about the barriers, challenges, and discrimination that they face, the “existence of gender bias in organizational policies and practices may suggest that they have no power to determine their own success” (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013, p. 5). In addition to what can be perceived as a lack of power, Ibarra et al. (2013) describe the challenge of the persist/desist dilemma. They describe this dilemma as knowing when to speak out about issues and when not to, due to the potential damage it could do to the individual (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). This perceived lack of power, combined with the assessment of the harm speaking out might do to one’s career, provides a strong argument for not speaking out. Beyond this, there is also the consideration of the reception women would get if they did speak out. According to Piderit and Ashford (2003):

While both men and women may notice and speak up for gender-equity issues, we believe that women’s acts aimed at raising gender-equity concerns will have different connotations than would men’s when they are speaking on behalf of women. For example, people may be more likely to ascribe self-serving motives to women speaking gender-equity issues than they would to men speaking issues on behalf of women. (p. 1479)

Combined, these three issues make a very strong case for not speaking out. Yet some women do speak out – and offer invaluable advice to other women in order to support development and advancement to leadership positions.

2.5 Why women may speak out

Despite the personal risk associated with speaking out, there are still women who are willing to do so. But why is it that they choose to take a stand and speak about barriers, challenges, and discrimination? A review of the literature offers insight into the possible reasons. The first reason found in the literature is loyalty, not to one's company or oneself, but to one's group. As Crosby (1984) points out, "group loyalty demands a sensitivity to the plight of one's group" (p. 377).

A second reason that some women may speak out is because they feel safe enough to do so. Piderit and Ashford (2003) state that women are more likely to speak out when they "sense that the organizational culture is inclusive" (p. 1480). This inclusiveness can provide women with the security required to feel empowered enough to speak out about the barriers and challenges that they themselves have faced.

A third reason that women may speak out is a feeling of duty – that by sharing their stories they can "connect individual experiences in order to expose gendered practices" (Lord & Preston, 2009, p. 770). Lord and Preston (2009) state that the risk of not speaking out is that "experiences remain individual and potentially trivialized by others and the culture remains unexamined and unchallenged" (p. 770). The danger in not examining or challenging the culture is that such incidents will be dismissed as "isolated

incidents, a heightened sensitively or just ‘part and parcel’ of leadership” (p. 772).

However, the benefit of speaking out, as Lord and Preston (2009) point out, is that it will “result in a tipping point being reached where awareness of the gendered implications of comments and actions is heightened and they can no longer be ignored” (p. 773). This sense of duty to speak out is further discussed by Reinhold (2005) who points out that Lazurus, the chairman and CEO of Ogilvy & Mathers, asserts:

Women should do both themselves and their companies a favor by speaking up more for what they need to succeed at work, rather than quitting good jobs to go elsewhere. She believes in some cases, this can help to participate needed cultural change in companies. (p. 47)

It could be that this sense of duty to one’s peers compels some women to speak out about the barriers and challenges that they face in becoming leaders and in their current leadership roles.

A fourth reason that women may speak out is to start a dialogue. As Byrd (2009) states about her research on women telling their stories, the “aim is to begin a dialogue that might stimulate interest for more inclusive and sociocultural theoretical frameworks of leadership” (p. 603). This same sentiment of developing theoretical frameworks for understanding is echoed by Lord and Preston (2009) when they discuss where their conversation about women ‘surviving’ leadership has led them:

They have provided a lens through which to view a range of experiences which appeared trivial when considered in isolation, were difficult to interpret and which

were at times highly unsettling... It also provided ongoing encouragement to us both regarding the importance of providing a language and frameworks that enable the gendered nature of women's leadership experiences to be shared and understood when viewed through a gendered lens. (p. 771)

This need to create a language of understanding of the gender implications that women face in their leadership roles is another reason that women speak out and tell their stories.

Finally, Byrd (2009) states that the women in her research "are telling their stories because *if they don't tell them, they won't be told*" (p. 585). While this is the simplest explanation as to why women tell their stories, it is also a very persuasive one. And while some may argue that women's stories are told by others such as those shared by Klenke (2002) in her study *Cinderella Stories of Women Leaders: Connecting Leadership contexts to Competencies*, the original stories used in the study were first told by the female leads themselves. This reinforces the notion that a woman's stories, for the most part, can only be stories if they are told and otherwise are lost.

2.6 The gap

The evidence shows that there is a gap between what the research shows, in regards to the existence of gender discrimination and biases, and women's acknowledgement of its existence. The quasi rapid evidence assessment (RAE) approach to the literature review drew out seven areas that contribute to gender biases and discrimination. Through the review of the literature on the seven areas, the evidence shows how women continue to face barriers and challenges in their careers.

The literature shows these continued challenges are due in part to the engrained second generation biases within organizational cultures such as the lack of developmental opportunities, reduced access to the informal networks that can often be invaluable to the progression of careers and the devaluation of soft skills by decision makers. All of this, in conjunction with unfriendly workplace policies and the double bind, strongly suggest that each and every woman in the workforce has at some point experienced barriers or challenges.

Yet despite the evidence to the contrary, research shows that women often continue to refuse to acknowledge that they have personally ever been discriminated against. Further evidence suggests that even when women are aware of facing barriers and challenges they refuse to speak out about it. The literature provides several possible reasons for the gap between what women experience and what they are willing to talk about experiencing. These reasons include the fact that women are socialized from a young age not to discuss their personal problems, that the current approach to gender issues is to blend in rather than speak out about them and that there are many possible negative consequences to speaking women speaking out about their experiences with discrimination and biases.

To help address the gap between what the literature says and what women discuss in public, this paper analyzes three TEDtalks by women who have chosen to speak out. The talks will be examined to see if women who speak out identify the same barriers and challenges that the literature speaks to, or if they will identify a different set. The talks

will also be examined to gain an understanding of what motivates these women to speak out.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Method

According to Shamir and Eilam (2005), a leader's narrative of their life-story is an account of the relationship among self-relevant events which establishes coherent connections in an attempt to understand how their life events are systematically related. This process gives the leader a highly developed self-knowledge, which provides them with self-concept and clarity. Through sharing their life-stories, leaders provide implied answers as to how they became a leader and why they have become a leader. These stories explain and justify how the leaders present self and their leadership motivations. They also represent who a leader was, who they are, and who they might become (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Narratives in the form of TEDtalks were selected for analysis for this research paper because, according to Alexander (2006), "the richest sources of data are those which deal with the spontaneous recollection from memory of various aspects of life already lived, as in freely produced autobiographical essay or directed interviews focused on lived experience" (p. 266)

To analyze the content of the TEDtalks, a qualitative data collection technique was employed. This was appropriate given that the research being conducted was open-ended and exploratory in nature. Specifically, a descriptive qualitative method was used for this study as the content was drawn from a secondary source (Kumar, 2014), namely archived TEDtalks and the associated transcripts.

Each talk was examined for the seven factors of possible discrimination found in the literature and discussed in section 2.3. Those factors were: organizational culture, second generation gender bias, lack of developmental opportunities for female leaders, non-recognition of 'soft skills' as valuable, work place policies, reduced access to informal networks and the double bind. Direct quotes were then used to provide a description-rich example of the barriers faced, the impact that the barrier had, as well as the evidence that was cited by the speaker. This data was then used to identify common clusters of barriers faced by each speaker. These clusters were compared and contrasted between the three talks to identify common themes within the talks. *Theme* can be understood as the subject of a talk, a piece of writing, a person's thoughts, or an exhibition; an idea or topic expanded in a discourse, discussion, etc. It is a unifying idea, image, or motif, repeated or developed throughout a work (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.). In addition the AP English Glossary of Literary Terms defines a theme as:

A theme is an author's insight about life. It is the main idea or universal meaning, the lesson or message of a literary work. A theme may not always be explicit or easy to state, and different interpreters may disagree. Common literary themes involve basic human experiences such as: adventure; alienation; ambition; anger; betrayal; coming-of-age; courage; death; the testing of faith; overcoming fear; jealousy; liberation; love; loyalty; prejudice; the quest for an ideal; struggling with fate; truth-seeking; vengeance. (N. Lund/Oxford Tutorials, n.d. para 96)

3.1 Selection of relevant talks

The following search engines were used for to locate suitable TEDtalks: Google,

YouTube and TEDcom. The range of search engines allowed for a more thorough key word search for TEDtalks. The search terms used included combinations of the following terms: ‘women’, ‘women leaders’ ‘inspirational women’, ‘women leadership’, ‘inspirational’, ‘women gender’, ‘success’, ‘ambitious’, ‘perseverance’, ‘discrimination’, and ‘achievement’. As per table 1 there were 154 talks located that might fit the selection criteria; each talk was than checked for suitability in the study.

Table 1: General Search Results

Keyword(s)	Talks returned (total)	Speaker was a woman
Women leaders	4	4
Inspirational women	0	0
Inspirational	24	13
Women leadership	8	8
Women gender	8	7
Success	261	66
Ambitious	53	18
Perseverance	15	8
Discrimination	35	13
Achievement	57	17
Total	465	154

The original 154 talks were narrowed down by removing any talks that were duplicated between keyword searches. This left 110 talks, which were further reduced to 106, by eliminating talks that were given by the same speaker on a very similar topic i.e. Jane McGonigal’s “Gaming Can Make a Better World”, “The Game That Can Give You 10 Extra Years of Life”, and “Massively Multi-player...Thumb-wrestling?” The number of talks was then further reduced to 60, by eliminating all talks that were considered to be general pieces of advice and lacking personal content i.e. Bel Pesce’s “5 Ways to Kill Your Dreams”, Chrystia Freeland’s “The Rise of the New Global Super Rich”, and Hannah Fry’s “The Mathematics of Love”. The remaining 60 talks were then reviewed using the selection criteria listed below.

The selection criteria for TEDtalks use were:

- ✓ The speaker spoke specifically about challenges/barriers they faced
- ✓ Talk is given by a leader as defined in Chapter 2 (vision, inspirational, impactful)
- ✓ The idea in the talk spread (based on viewership numbers)
- ✓ Talk was 10 minutes or longer to provide enough content for analysis
- ✓ The talk was presented by an individual speaker, not a group, pair or as part of an interview.

Upon a review of each of the transcripts of the 60 TEDtalks and additional 54 were eliminated for various reasons including; the speaker not discussing barriers or challenges, the speaker not meeting the definition of a leader, the talk being too short, or the talk was given by multiple people i.e. partners or interviews. The remaining six TEDtalks were further narrowed down by eliminating two that did not discuss barriers and challenges that were specific to women and one that did indicate that the leader affected others personally. The remaining three talks used in the analysis fit the selection criteria and discussed challenges specific to women and the impact that the leader has had on others through their work.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.0 Introduction to the Talks

The three TEDtalks included for analysis are by Sheryl Sandberg, Chelsea Shields and Dame Stephanie Shirley. The leadership roles of each of the speakers have been briefly outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Speaker's Leadership Roles

Speaker	Leadership Role
Sheryl Sandberg	COO of Facebook, Disney Board Member and Author
Chelsea Shields	Anthropologist, Women's Right Activist, Author and Strategic Consultant
Dame Stephanie Shirley	Founder of F.I. Group, Philanthropist, Chairperson of Autism Speaks and the Shirley Foundation

The following section provides a brief description of each of the three talks that were analysed. The first talk is by Sheryl Sandberg (2010) titled *Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders* in which she provides women with three pieces of advice if they want to stay in the work force. This advice is: first, they need to sit at the table; second, they need to make their partner a real partner; and. third, they cannot leave before they leave. Sandberg uses stories, experiences, studies, and evaluated research evidence to support her advice and her perspective on why it is so important for women to take control of where their career is going (Sandberg, 2010).

The second talk is by Chelsea Shields (2015) titled *How I'm Working to Change Inside My Church* in which she discusses the inequalities experienced by women within her faith and how she is working to change her faith from the inside out. Shields uses powerful stories about the costs associated with trying to affect change within her faith. She also speaks to the impact that her faith has in secular society and why it is so important to regain the morality of religion and affect the changes she and her fellow activist are struggling to see (Shields, 2015).

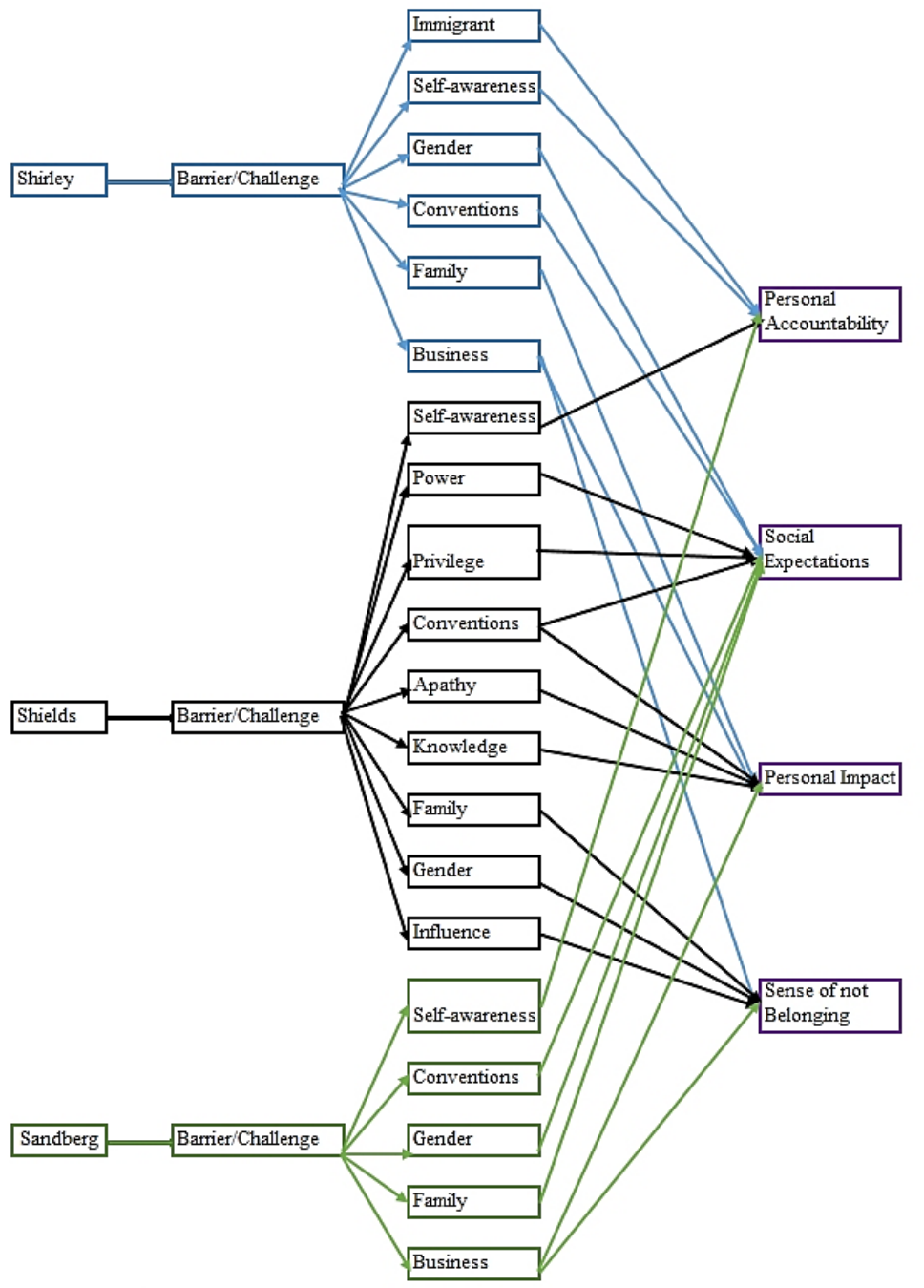
And finally, the third Tedtalk included for analysis is by Dame Stephanie Shirley (2015) titled *Why do Ambitious Women Have Flat heads?* This is Shirley's personal story on her journey to create her tech company, the F. I Group. In her story, Shirley provides examples of how she defied conventions, overcame personal struggles and pioneered new ways of doing business. The experiences shared include both negative reactions to her ideas and positive outcomes of her success (Shirley, 2015).

4.1 Arrival at Common Themes

In order to arrive at common themes within the speakers' talks, quotes from each of their TEDtalks that described their experiences both as a woman and as a leader were compiled. The selection of these quotes was a subjective process based on the researcher's interpretation of the meaning behind the stories and experiences being shared by the speaker. The quotes were then further broken down by the impact the experience had on the speaker and others, the type of evidence the speaker used and whether the experiences were positive or negative. This process identified 9 clusters of stories and experiences among the talks; each gave an overarching description of how

being a woman and a leader was experienced by the speakers. The framework in figure 1 shows the various barriers and challenges faced by each of the speakers and how they fit into each of the four themes.

Figure 1



This process resulted in four common themes: Personal Accountability, Social Expectations, Personal Impact, and a Sense of Not Belonging. Table 3 provides a brief description of each of the four themes.

Theme	Description
Personal Accountability	Stepping up and taking ownership of your own life and your life choices
Social Expectations	Stepping outside the conventional gender roles society places around careers and family
Personal Impact	Affecting the lives of and empowering others through one's work
A Sense of Not Belonging	Having firsthand experience with gender discrimination

The selected quotes from each of the speakers, which provide a rich description of each of the themes, will be subsequently presented.

4.2 Theme One: Personal Accountability

The theme of personal accountability is evident throughout each of the three selected TEDtalks. Each of the speakers discusses their choices to be accountable for their lives, careers and futures. For the purpose of this theme, personal accountability can be considered a “personal choice to rise above one's circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results—to See It, Own It, Solve It, and Do It” (Connors & Smith, 2011, p. 195). During their talks, each of the speakers demonstrated their belief in the need for all women to rise above their individual circumstances, be accountable for their own paths and actively be involved in achieving their own goals and aspirations.

Shields comes from a very religious Mormon family, one where you accept without question the roles of men and the roles of women. Shields is the first to admit that she expected things in her religious life that she would not expect in her secular life, but that this does not mean that she did not have goals, or a desire to do things that other women have not yet done within her faith. Shields' dreams growing up were big, and so were her fights against gender discrimination - she states:

We accept things in our religious lives that we do not accept in our secular lives, and I know this because I've been doing it for three decades. I was the type of girl that fought every form of gender discrimination growing up. I played pickup basketball games with the boys and inserted myself. I said I was going to be the first female President of the United States. I have been fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment, which has been dead for 40 years. I'm the first woman in both sides of my family to ever work outside the home and ever receive a higher education. (Shields, 2015, 1:03)

And while Shields is willing to admit that she accepted this discrepancy, she also makes it very clear that she fought gender discrimination in every other aspect of her life. Not only that but she made the personal choice to rise above the expectations that her family and faith placed on her to be a housewife and instead pursued higher education and a career. Shields not only stepped outside the conventions of her faith to become an educated career woman, she also made the decision to address her earlier acceptance of being treated as a secondary member of her religion. In so doing, Shields took ownership of the future she wanted for the women of her faith and began to actively participate in

changing the inequalities found in her religion. She communicates this change of heart clearly:

So that's why I accepted without question that only men can lead, and I accepted without question that women can't have the spiritual authority of God on the Earth, which we call the priesthood. And I allowed discrepancies between men and women in operating budgets, disciplinary councils, in decision-making capacities, and I gave my religion a free pass because I loved it. Until I stopped, and I realized that I had been allowing myself to be treated as the support staff to the real work of men. And I faced this contradiction in myself, and I joined with other activists in my community. (Shields, 2015, 3:26)

Dame Stephanie Shirley grew up in a time when women fought not for equal representation, but the right to work and the right to equal pay. Shirley had made the decision early in life that hers would be “a life worth saving” (01:59), and in so doing lived her entire life taking ownership for the results that she wanted to see in the world. And in the 1960s this often meant creating her own opportunities and making opportunities for other women:

To get past the gender issues of the time, I set up my own software house at one of the first such start-ups in Britain. But it was also a company of women, a company for women, an early social business. And people laughed at the very idea because software, at that time, was given away free with hardware. Nobody would buy software, certainly not from a woman. Although women were then coming out of the universities with decent degrees, there was a glass ceiling to our

progress. And I'd hit that glass ceiling too often, and I wanted opportunities for women. (Shirley, 2015, 2:12)

In keeping with her belief in personal accountability, Shirley did not let even the market dictate what she could do. Shirley found that in the 1960s and 70s, the software market did not align with her personal interest but, instead of giving up on her dream of creating opportunities for herself and other women, she found a part of the market that would both satisfy her professionally and bring in clientele:

My interests were scientific, the market was commercial -- things such as payroll, which I found rather boring. So I had to compromise with operational research work, which had the intellectual challenge that interested me and the commercial value that was valued by the clients. (Shirley, 2015, 4:58)

In her talk, Shirley speaks to the courage, determination and self-belief that one needs in order to be successful. As demonstrated through her life's work, she takes what she does very seriously and she takes accountability for her actions whether good or bad. Shirley very clearly understands that her success could have cost her everything and she takes ownership of that:

It's one thing to have an idea for an enterprise, but as many people in this room will know, making it happen is a very difficult thing and it demands extraordinary energy, self-belief and determination, the courage to risk family and home, and a 24/7 commitment that borders on the obsessive. So it's just as well that I'm a workaholic. (Shirley, 2015, 12:11)

Sheryl Sandberg's talk is as much about advice for other women as it is about retelling her own personal experiences. And while she does provide several stories from her personal life, her talk really focuses on what individuals can do in order to be the change that they want to see and achieve what they want to achieve. Very early in her talk she makes this focus clear, she asserts:

Today I want to focus on what we can do as individuals. What are the messages we need to tell ourselves? What are the messages we tell the women that work with and for us? What are the messages we tell our daughters?" (Sandberg, 2010, 3:11)

Throughout her talk, Sandberg provides examples of the many ways that women underestimate themselves, take themselves from the table, opt out before they leave and fail to reach for opportunities. She provides evidence from journals, articles and studies that show how women often attribute their successes to others. In so doing, her goal is to help women understand that while there are inequalities, those inequalities can be overcome by taking ownership and action and by being a role model for others. Sandberg calls for action:

We have to tell our daughters and our colleagues, we have to tell ourselves to believe we got the A, to reach for the promotion, to sit at the table, and we have to do it in a world where, for them, there are sacrifices they will make for that, even though for their brothers, there are not. (Sandberg, 2010, 8:42)

4.3 Theme Two: Social Expectations

The theme of social expectations found within the three talks speaks to each of the speakers stepping outside of traditional stereotypical gender roles, in regards to both family and careers. According to Brewer (2012), gender stereotypes are generalizations of each gender, as well as inaccurate generalizations of male and female attributes. Brewer (2012) states that while we realize stereotypes are untrue, assumptions are still made based on one's gender. Some of the most common stereotypes are that all women want to marry and have children (Brewer, 2012). Brewer (2012) explains how gender stereotyping begins the second a baby's gender is established. Essentially, by decorating everything in pink, buying frilly dresses and having tea parties, we are teaching our daughters how to become the stereotypical woman; that their role is to be aesthetically pleasing, serve (food), and be the primary caregivers to children rather than pursue careers. If you watch a girl as young as five or six play with dolls, they are already aware that it is typical for girls such as themselves to stay home with the baby while the husband goes to work. But gender stereotyping does not stop at family roles – there are others around careers as well, such as expectations for women to be secretaries, teachers, librarians, nurses; roles that are seen as less demanding or less likely to require managerial or 'hands on' skills. Stereotypes exist around women's strengths and interests, such as women are not as strong as men, or do not play sports or play video games. Or, even more generally, women are never in charge (Brewer, 2012)

Shields grew up in a traditional family; one where women stayed home, raised the children and tended to the home while the men went to work and provided for them. She

was raised to be the perfect wife and mother – everything she was taught from birth was to prepare her for taking on her role within the family she would start one day. Shields describes her upbringing:

I grew up in an enormously traditional family. I have eight siblings, a stay-at-home mother. My father's actually a religious leader in the community. And I grew up in a world believing that my worth and my standing was in keeping these rules that I'd known my whole life. You get married a virgin, you never drink alcohol, you don't smoke, you always do service, you're a good kid. Some of the rules we had were strict, but you followed the rules because you loved the people and you loved the religion and you believed. Everything about Mormonism determined what you wore, who you dated, who you married. (Shields, 2015, 1:48)

Shields could have made the choice to live that life, i.e. the traditional life of a Mormon housewife, but instead she made the decision to break from tradition and pursue both an education and a career. However, she did not pursue a different future only for herself; she became actively involved in several groups that fight for more equality for women in her faith, both at home and in the church. Shields highlight some of the challenges:

We tried to do things that were unignorable, like wearing pants to church and trying to attend all-male meetings. These seem like simple things, but to us, the organizers, they were enormously costly. We lost relationships. We lost jobs. We got hate mail on a daily basis. We were attacked in social media and national press. We received death threats. We lost standing in our community. Some of us

got excommunicated. Most of us got put in front of a disciplinary council, and were rejected from the communities that we loved because we wanted to make them better, because we believed that they could be. (Shields, 2015, 4:21).

Shirley grew up in a time when most social expectations were centered on family. The men of her generation found a job, worked their workday, built up their pensions and retired after, more often than not, working for one company their whole lives. The women of her generation stayed home and raised the children. Shirley notes that “nobody really expected much from people at work or in society, because all the expectations then were about home and family responsibilities” (Shirley, 2015, 4:09).

In Shirley’s time, it would have been easy to sit at home, raise a family and be content. However, she constantly chose to defy conventions. Even during personal crises, and in a time when society would have dictated that she stay home with her child who was diagnosed with autism, she pushed on and broke through every social expectation and gender stereotype there was and her results were amazing; they not only had a positive impact for women but they also had a very positive impact on her child who received opportunities that would not have been afforded him if his mother had not been so unconventional. Shirley tells her story:

If success were easy, we'd all be millionaires. But in my case, it came in the midst of family trauma and indeed, crisis. Our late son, Giles, was an only child, a beautiful, contented baby. And then, at two and a half, like a changeling in a fairy story, he lost the little speech that he had and turned into a wild, unmanageable toddler. Not the terrible twos; he was profoundly autistic and he never spoke

again. Giles was the first resident in the first house of the first charity that I set up to pioneer services for autism. And then there's been a ground breaking Prior's Court school for pupils with autism and a medical research charity, again, all for autism. Because whenever I found a gap in services, I tried to help. I like doing new things and making new things happen. (Shirley, 2015, 9:44)

Sheryl's story is a little different; she does not talk about defying conventions in her personal life. Rather, she talks more about the fact that she, like most women, sometimes feels guilty about not fulfilling the stereotypical role of women, of making the choice to go back to the workforce and not stay home with her children. Sandberg conveys some of this guilt:

I left San Francisco, where I live, on Monday, and I was getting on the plane for this conference. And my daughter, who's three, when I dropped her off at preschool, did that whole hugging-the-leg, crying, "Mommy, don't get on the plane" thing. This is hard. I feel guilty sometimes. I know no women, whether they're at home or whether they're in the workforce, who don't feel that sometimes. So I'm not saying that staying in the workforce is the right thing for everyone. My talk today is about what the messages are if you do want to stay in the workforce, and I think there are three. One, sit at the table. Two, make your partner a real partner. And three, don't leave before you leave. (Sandberg, 2010, 3:31)

It is not her story of guilt however that stands out; it is the story that she shares about the response a father gets when attending a mommy activity. Sandberg relays:

I know men that stay home and work in the home to support wives with careers, and it's hard. When I go to the Mommy-and-Me stuff and I see the father there, I notice that the other mommies don't play with him. And that's a problem, because we have to make it as important a job, because it's the hardest job in the world to work inside the home, for people of both genders, if we're going to even things out and let women stay in the workforce. (Sandberg, 2010, 10:56)

The story shows how society as a whole, women included, force, while seemingly unawares, gender roles onto others. That we have not yet reached a place where it is as common to see a father care for his child as it is to see a woman care for hers, highlights how far we have to go. Sandberg shows how very little progress has been made breaking down the stereotypes of men's versus women's roles in society.

4.4 Theme Three: Personal Impact

In the article "*Making an Impact: Do You Live or Merely Exist*" Gil Laroya (2013) says:

The idea of making an impact in life is nothing new. Doing things that have a profound positive effect on those around us means that we both stand out in people's minds, and also leave a lasting impression of what is possible with the right actions and decisions. But the act of making this impact requires something that many people are hesitant to do - to lead the herd. This is not to say that one has to be a big boss or a corporate president to take the reigns. It just means that impact sometimes requires a guided effort - one that cannot be accomplished while being a backseat driver. Impact requires purposeful, intended effort to

ensure that what needs to happen gets done the right way. Impact in most cases can also be an all-or-nothing proposition.(Laroya, 2013, para. 2)

Shields, Shirley, and Sandberg have made the commitment to this type of guided effort in order to bring about positive impacts for women, for their communities and for their chosen field of interest, whether it be religion or technology or philanthropy.

In spite of the personal consequences of choosing to speak out and fighting for equality within her faith, Shields has chosen to join with other advocates to fight for women's equality. The choice that she has made to dedicate her time, skills and effort to this cause has made a profound impact on others of her faith:

I'll tell you what my people have done. My groups are small, there's hundreds of us, but we've had huge impact. Right now, women's pictures are hanging in the halls next to men for the first time. Women are now allowed to pray in our church-wide meetings, and they never were before in the general conferences. As of last week, in a historic move, three women were invited down to three leadership boards that oversee the entire church. (Shields, 2015, 9:53)

Shields' group's continuous efforts have meant that a path has been paved for others to make further positive changes for women within the Mormon faith. This in turn has meant that future generations will belong to a faith that treats women more equally.

Shields highlight these shifts:

We've seen perceptual shifts in the Mormon community that allow for talk of gender inequality. We've opened up space, regardless of being despised, for more

conservative women to step in and make real changes, and the words "women" and "the priesthood" can now be uttered in the same sentence. I never had that. My daughter and my nieces are inheriting a religion that I never had, that's more equal -- we've had an effect. (Shields, 2015, 10:25)

Shields transmits a hope that women will one day be able to hold positions within the church and where the mention of equality will not lead to being brought before a disciplinary counsel.

Shirley hit the glass ceiling in her career in the 1960s and, as a response to that, chose to make the guided effort to provide other women with opportunities that they otherwise would not have had. She pioneered several major work initiatives that provided the flexibility for women who had left the workforce due to pregnancy to return to work and use their skills. The company Stephanie founded called F. I. Group allowed her to make profound impacts on the lives of many women:

I recruited professionally qualified women who'd left the industry on marriage, or when their first child was expected and structured them into a home-working organization. We pioneered the concept of women going back into the workforce after a career break. We pioneered all sorts of new, flexible work methods: job shares, profit-sharing, and eventually, co-ownership when I took a quarter of the company into the hands of the staff at no cost to anyone but me. (Shirley, 2015, 3:03)

When Shirley started her company, most people did not think that it would grow into anything. However, she was dedicated to her goal of providing women with a genuine career and by remaining true to her goal she was able to have a major impact on her industry and her employees:

"When I started my company of women, the men said, "How interesting, because it only works because it's small." And later, as it became sizable, they accepted, "Yes, it is sizable now, but of no strategic interest." And later, when it was a company valued at over three billion dollars, and I'd made 70 of the staff into millionaires, they sort of said, "Well done, Steve!" (Shirley, 2015, 8:10)

Sandberg provides a compelling story about the impact that she has had on one of Facebook's female employees. Sandberg explains:

I gave this talk at Facebook not so long ago to about 100 employees, and a couple hours later, there was a young woman who works there sitting outside my little desk, and she wanted to talk to me. I said, okay, and she sat down, and we talked. And she said, "I learned something today. I learned that I need to keep my hand up." "What do you mean?" She said, "You're giving this talk, and you said you would take two more questions. I had my hand up with many other people, and you took two more questions. I put my hand down, and I noticed all the women did the same, and then you took more questions, only from the men." And I thought to myself, "Wow, if it's me -- who cares about this, obviously -- giving this talk -- and during this talk, I can't even notice that the men's hands are still raised, and the women's hands are still raised, how good are we as managers of

our companies and our organizations at seeing that the men are reaching for opportunities more than women?" We've got to get women to sit at the table.

(Sandberg, 2010, 9:01)

This employee had an epiphany after one of Sandberg's talks in which she describes having a clarifying moment of how important it is to have women sit at the table. This is just one of the many women that Sandberg has made an impact on through her presentations, talks, lectures, books and public speaking events.

4.5 Theme Four: A Sense of Not Belonging

While Sandberg, Shirley and Shields all come from different generations and have varied backgrounds, each of these women has experienced a sense of not belonging. Shields and Shirley have faced first generation discrimination as they experienced deliberate exclusion or subordination based on their gender. Sandberg, on the other hand, experienced more second-generation discrimination, as her experiences had to do with conflicting work cultures and practices that seemed to be neutral.

As part of her goal to bring attention to the inequalities between men and women in her faith, Shields wrote blogs and articles because she knew that she could not fight against discrimination that people were not aware was happening: "I created lists of hundreds of ways that men and women are unequal in our community", Shields states. As part of her struggle to bring equality to the women of her faith, Shields and many other activists held silent protests that did not include signs or chanting. These protests were simply women trying to practice their rights to attend meetings and be part of their faith. They were met

with discrimination based on their gender; only men were allowed to attend meetings of faith. This type of discrimination is faced by women of Shields' faith on a daily basis:

It wasn't easy standing in those lines trying to get into those male meetings. There were hundreds of us, and one by one, when we got to the door, we were told, "I'm sorry, this meeting is just for men," and we had to step back and watch men get into the meeting as young as 12 years old, escorted and walked past us as we all stood in line. (Shields, 2015, 10:46)

Shirley's generation of women grew up in a time when they had to fight for the right to work, never mind equal representation. Shirley was frequently labeled as the first woman to do most anything in her field. When Shirley opened her IT company, it was ground breaking as she was not even able to open a bank account on her own:

For years, I was the first woman this, or the only woman that. And in those days, I couldn't work on the stock exchange, I couldn't drive a bus or fly an airplane. Indeed, I couldn't open a bank account without my husband's permission. (Shirley, 2015, 3:38)

When it came to new business development, Shirley faced gender discrimination. She was often not even able to get in the door when she wrote letters to prospective clients. Her solution to this discrimination was to use a stereotypical man's name on her proposals, so that no one would realize it came from a woman until they met her:

I started to challenge the conventions of the time, even to the extent of changing my name from "Stephanie" to "Steve" in my business development letters, so as

to get through the door before anyone realized that he was a she. (Shirley, 2015, 4:26)

Shirley is one of the most successful female entrepreneurs in history, yet when she first started out, men frequently belittled her efforts and her company. Even when her company grew larger, they still treated it as if it was not worth their interest. Once her company was a multibillion-dollar corporation, men finally took notice because by then her success was too large to ignore

As an article in the Harvard Business Review points out, women have worked so hard to take gender out of the equation that “most women are unaware of having personally been victims of gender discrimination and deny it even when it is objectively true and they see that women in general experience it” (Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013, p. 5). In her talk, Sandberg gives an excellent example of the type of second generation discrimination that women experience daily yet do not recognize as discrimination:

A couple of years ago, I was in New York, and I was pitching a deal, and I was in one of those fancy New York private equity offices you can picture. And I'm in the meeting -- it's about a three-hour meeting -- and two hours in, there needs to be that bio break, and everyone stands up, and the partner running the meeting starts looking really embarrassed. And I realized he doesn't know where the women's room is in his office. So I start looking around for moving boxes, figuring they just moved in, but I don't see any. And so I said, "Did you just move into this office?" And he said, "No, we've been here about a year." And I said, "Are you telling me that I am the only woman to have pitched a deal in this office

in a year?" And he looked at me, and he said, "Yeah. Or maybe you're the only one who had to go to the bathroom. (Sandberg, 2010, 1:34)

Through reviewing the TEDtalks given by these three women it is clear that each of them possesses charisma and has transcendent visions that are inspirational, optimistic and future oriented. These visions have a sense of purpose that not only motivates but also energizes their followers to take on challenges. These three leaders have displayed confidence, determination to perform beyond expectation, and persistence in the face of adversity. Each of these women has built the trust of their followers by caring, being competent and being committed to being trustworthy. They have overcome great odds, and have displayed strong core values, a drive to effect change and the ability to communicate their visions and form bonds with their followers.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Analysis, Recommendations and Conclusion:

5.0 Discussion of Analysis

There were four common themes among the three TEDtalks analyzed in this study.

Those themes were: personal accountability, social expectations, personal impact and a sense of belonging. The two of common themes corresponded with five of the seven factors of discrimination found in the literature review. The similarities were between the themes of social expectations and a sense of not belonging found in the TEDtalks and the factors of organizational culture, gender biases, lack of opportunities for women, the impact of workplace policies, and the double bind found in the literature.

While the speakers did not directly address issues of reduced access to informal networks; however Shields does discuss a lack of access to many functions within her religious system such as finance and leadership due to her gender. The speakers also discussed the role of apathy around religious equality and the social conventions around raising a family in addition to the seven areas of discrimination identified in the literature review. This variation between the literature and the TEDtalks can be explained in part due to the personal circumstances and context of each of the speakers; for instance, Shirley growing up in the 40s and Shields being raised Mormon.

While none of the speakers explicitly address why it is that women do not speak out, Shields' does provide some insight on the consequences of speaking out. Based on the literature, one possible explanation for women not speaking out is the fear of the possible consequences of doing so. In Shields' talk she discusses how women of her faith have

faced tribunals, ex-communication and expulsion from their communities for speaking out about the inequalities that they have experienced.

In addition, there were several similarities between the possible reasons women speak out that were outlined in the literature and the possible reasons each of the women chose to share their stories in the TEDtalks. The TEDtalk themes of personal accountability and personal impact were similar to the following reason for speaking out found in the literature: loyalty to one's group (i.e., women), a sense of duty and starting a dialogue inequalities. The speakers also identified the need to be true to one's self as reason for challenging social norms and gendered practices.

5.1 Future Research

Given the small amount of literature that exists on this topic, there is an opportunity to expand on our understanding of why women choose to, or choose not to, speak out about the barriers and challenges they face in reaching leadership positions. This paper may serve as a springboard for further research on why women do or do not speak out. While this preliminary study has shown this topic to be complex, future research could use theoretical frameworks to further understand the motivations behind women's choice to speak out or not. Two such frameworks are Authentic Leadership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) and Grit Theory (Duckworth, 2013); the examination through the lens of these theories may help to explain why Shirley, Shields and Sandberg chose to speak out.

Authentic Leadership

Shamir and Eilam (2005) define authentic leaders using four characteristics: 1) The degree of person-role merger i.e. the salience of the leadership role in their self-concept, 2) the level of self-concept clarity and the extent to which clarity centers around strongly held values and convictions, 3) the extent to which their goals are self concordant, and 4) the degree to which their behavior is consistent with their self-concept. (p. 399).

Shamir and Eilam's (2005) concept of authentic leadership development also has four components: 1) development of a leader identity as a central component of the person's self-concept, 2) development of self-knowledge and self-concept, including clarity about values and convictions, 3) development of goals that are concordant with the self-concept, and 4) increasing self-expressive behavior, namely consistency between behaviors and the leader's self-concept. (p. 399)

In addition, Avolio and Gardner (2005) have identified the positive psychological capacities of confidence, optimism, hope and resiliency as personal resources of the authentic leader. Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May and Walumbwa (2005) indicate in their research that a leader's personal history and key trigger events seem to be antecedents for authentic leadership development. In Shirley's case this is certainly true; she states in her TEDtalk, "all that I am stems from when I got onto a train in Vienna, part of the Kindertransport that saved nearly 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi Europe" (Shirley, 2015, 0:50).

Shamir and Eilam (2005) reference one of their previous papers and recount their findings that "leaders' life stories are organized around four major themes or proto-stories: Leadership development as a natural process, leadership development out of

struggle and hardship, leadership development as finding a cause, and leadership development as a learning process” (p. 399). Two of these four protostories are applicable Shirley, Sandberg and Shields.

Shirley and Shields’ stories are those of leadership developed out of struggle and hardship. This struggle refers to individuals who have experienced a defining life experience(s) which transform the person; in these stories, the leader’s motivation to lead is attributed to overcoming some form of injustice and often contain a moral element (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). These stories often attest to the existence of many qualities within the leader that are seen to be necessary for leadership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). For Shirley, this can be seen in her story of being a child refugee, a women in a time when women fought for the right to work and equal pay, or in her story on caring for a deeply autistic child. In Shields’s case, this can be seen in her stories about the inequalities she has faced within her religion and the threats, hate mail, and other negative religious consequences of her work.

While Sandberg is a leader in part due to her position within the technology sector, her role as a leader for women’s equality was developed through fighting for a cause that combined her personal story with a collective movement. According to Shamir and Eilam (2005), when leadership is developed by finding a cause, the leader often identifies with a movement and in that cause finds a sense of direction. This in turn helps them to develop a political or ideological outlook (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Part of being an authentic leader is having self-awareness. Avolio and Gardner (2005) state that self-awareness is an emerging process in which one continually comes to their

own “unique talents, strengths, sense of purpose, core values, beliefs and desires” (p. 324). Self-awareness can include an awareness of one’s knowledge, experience, and capabilities (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Further to self-awareness Gardner et al. (2005) have identified several features associated with the authentic self-regulation processes: 1) internalized regulation, which is driven by the leader’s intrinsic or core self, 2) balanced processing of information, the unbiased collection and interpretation information which is not distorted, exaggerated, and does not ignore externally based evaluations, 3) authentic behavior refers to actions that are guided by core values, beliefs, thoughts and feelings, and 4) relational transparency in which the leader displays high levels of openness, self-disclosure and trust (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005).

Each of the speakers has shown all four of the above features associated with the authentic self-regulation process. For example, Shields shows internalized regulation through her story when she states “I faced this contradiction in myself, and I joined with other activists in my community” (Shields, 2015, 3:55). Sandberg shows her relational transparency when she states that ““We are not going to get to where 50 percent of the population -- in my generation, there will not be 50 percent of [women] at the top of any industry” (Sandberg, 2010, 14:01)

Grit

In April of 2013, Angela Lee Duckworth gave a TEDtalk entitled *The Key to Success? Grit*. In this talk, Angela describes how, through various studies about success, one

characteristic continuously emerged as a significant predictor of success, and that characteristic was Grit (Duckworth, 2013). *Grit*, at the most elementary level, can be understood as the passion and perseverance for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2013). Grit can also be understood as “firmness of mind or spirit: unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger” (Merriam Webster Incorporated, n.d. full definition para 4)

Duckworth indicates that *Grit* encompasses a range of characteristics that are often difficult to measure. For example *Grit* is “having stamina, sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality” (Duckworth, 2013, 3:00). *Grit* is living life “like it is a marathon, not a sprint” (Duckworth, 2013, 3:21). Shirley opens her TEDtalk with a story that shows all of these characteristics:

When I wrote my memoir, the publishers were really confused. Was it about me as a child refugee, or as a woman who set up a high-tech software company back in the 1960s, one that went public and eventually employed over 8,500 people? Or was it as a mother of an autistic child? Or as a philanthropist that's now given away serious money. (Shirley, 2015, 0:01)

At the most basic level, Grit has been found to be associated with achievement and well-being as well as performance in challenging settings (Eskreis-Winkler, Gross, & Duckworth, in press). *Grit*, according to Duckworth and Gross (2014), also entails having a dominant superordinate goal that one tenaciously works towards in the face of obstacles and set-backs over the duration of years or even decades. Shields’ battle for

equality is an excellent example of a superordinate goal: “I have been fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment, which has been dead for 40 years” (Shields, 2015, 1:21).

Grit has also been linked to engagement and meaning. Von Culin, Tsukayama and Duckworth (2014) have shown that individuals who seek engagement in life are grittier, as are those who seek meaning. This desire for meaning and purpose in life contribute to both facets of Grit: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest (Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014). This type of perseverance of effort is similar to the type of commitment described in *The Scottish Himalaya Expedition*, written in 1951, by William H. Murray:

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: “Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it! (Murray, 2014, para. 8)

Shirley's childhood promise to herself when she “decided to make mine a life that was worth saving. And then, I just got on with it” (Shirley, 2015, 1:58) and fulfillment of that goal is a great example of unrelenting commitment to seeking meaning in one's life.

5.2 Limitations

Though this research study provides some insight as to why women speak out, due to its exploratory nature there are several limitations to the application of the findings. First, the TEDtalks used relied on self-reported data, which may contain biases. These biases may include the speaker remembering the events or experiences differently than how they actually occurred. Another possible bias is the speaker may have over or under exaggerated the event or experience. In addition, the speaker may have remembered the event or experiences in the incorrect sequence. These possible biases and the self-reported nature of the data both make it hard for the information to be independently verified.

A second limitation to this study is the lack of previous research on the topic of why women do or do not speak out. This points to the need for further research in this area of study.

The final limitation to the study is the small sample size used for the analysis. It is because of the exploratory nature of this study and the small sample size used that the findings of this paper are not be generalizable to the broader population of women.

5.3 Implications:

This research shows that there appears to be disconnects between what is experienced by women in leadership roles and what is spoken out loud about these experiences relative to

what was discussed in the TEDtalks and what is described in the literature. In light of this, this study may serve as a starting point for gender studies addressing the dynamics of what makes women remain silent about the barriers and challenges they face in striving and attaining leadership positions. As the findings of this study suggest, one goal of women who choose to speak out is to help other women and this could be a starting point for further exploration.

5.4 Conclusion

This preliminary study has found four common themes across the three TEDtalks that were reviewed. These four themes were: personal accountability, social expectations, personal impact and a sense of not belonging. The common themes discussed by the speakers corresponded to five of the seven factors that the literature review indicated may contribute to discrimination. The themes also corresponded with four of the possible reasons why women may speak out about barriers and challenges. The study has also proposed two areas of inquiry that provide opportunities for further research into what make some women speak out about challenges and barriers that they have faced in achieving their leadership positions. The first area of inquiry is authentic leadership and the second is *Grit*; both are relevant for our current and future leaders.

This study has also shown that there has been relatively little attention paid to date on the importance of women sharing their stories and the impact that these stories have on other women. In particular, the negative impact that these stories can have if the leader is perceived to be an exception and their success unattainable, as shown in Hoyt and Simon's (2011) research.

Thus, this preliminary study raises many more questions than it answers. For instance, what effect do women's stories have on other women? What role do these stories play in the development of future generations of women? What insights might be gained to aid in the understanding of why women speak out by using theories such as authentic leadership and grit?

I hope that in future work, researchers are able to better identify the effects that women's stories have on other women as well as to identify characteristics that help to explain why some women choose to share their personal narrative on the struggles and barriers they face in attaining their leadership roles while so many others do not.

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Perhaps one of the greatest quotes about accountability comes from The Scottish Himalaya Expedition, written in 1951, by William H. Murray:

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans:

that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets: "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it! (Murray, 2014, para. 8)

Each of the three speakers has proven that through commitment to ones goals you can not only achieve your own dreams, but in doing so can also impact others around you.

Laroya, G. (2013, June 20). *Making an Impact: Do You Live, or Merely Exist?* Retrieved from huffintonpost.com: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gil-laroya/making-an-impact_b_3468641.html