ANALYZING WOMEN’S DISCOURSE: HOW TOP-LEVEL WOMEN MANAGE THEIR COMMUNICATIVE CHOICES IN MALE-DOMINATED PROFESSIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on a group of women who have achieved top-level positions within predominantly male organizations. Grounded in Carol Gilligan’s gendered ethical framework and feminist standpoint theory, this study considers how these women may or may not be, reconstructing or reenacting masculine ways of communicating within their respective organizations through an examination of their discourse. The presence of masculinity and patriarchy in organizations is well researched, however, how women negotiate their identities and communicative choices in these organizations remains somewhat limited. Four women were selected to participate in one-on-one interview sessions discussing their leadership positions within their respective organizations and how they communicate. Critical discourse analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that the women contribute to ongoing masculine organizational practices, however, findings also indicated that the women display other shared factors that may have contributed to their success. Male mentorship, persistence, and an ethic of care were all common themes the findings uncovered for the participants. These findings suggest there are several factors which may influence women’s communication and success within predominantly male organizations.

Keywords: discourse analysis, feminism, feminist, male-dominated, organizational communication
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This study will seek to uncover ways in which four top-level female professionals navigate their communicative decisions in their respective male-dominated careers. More specifically, Forbes’ (2002) study, limited to women in Jamaica, serves as a basis for this study. Forbes (2002) study, focused on how female managers in Jamaica might be unknowingly participating in, and reconstituting, patriarchal and masculine ways of communicating in their professional lives. Due to deep-rooted patriarchal organizational practices and a lack of critical attention towards women’s preferences for communication, Forbes’ (2002) study highlights how women may be unknowingly succumbing to cultural constructions of gender systems within their professional lives.

Importance of the Study

Women make up a large majority of the workplace, yet many women find themselves stuck in mid-management positions, with less than four percent of working women employed at the highest levels of Fortune 500 companies (Allen, 1998). The ways in which women can overcome the obstacles they face should be studied further. This study used feminist standpoint theory (FST) as a framework, and a critical aspect to FST is the significance of enhancing our awareness of prevailing and privileged gender-based systems and organizational practices, and a chief aim of this study is to do just that. For the researcher and for the study participants, in particular, this study has the greatest potential for enhancing awareness and initiating change within their community.

Statement of the Problem
This study builds upon Forbes’ (2002) work by focusing on women in male-dominated careers in the United States in order to understand: 1) if they are also unknowingly participating in and reconstituting, patriarchal and masculine ways of communicating; and 2) to increase awareness of the ways in which these women may (or may not) be contributing to these factors. By analyzing the narratives of four American women, the researcher gained insight into how they negotiate their identities within their respective organizations, paying particular attention to how they may internalize masculine values and norms through their discursive choices.

This study takes an explicitly critical approach to the connection among communication, organization and power. From a feminist standpoint theory lens, the study focused on how the women view the social construction of gender (masculinity) through discourse in their professional/organizational lives. Furthermore, feminist standpoint theorists believe women’s experiences are “systematically and structurally different” (Wood, 2005, p. 61) from men’s, and as a result they bring unique knowledge and viewpoints to any organization. For instance, as Shenoy (2009), explains “the unequal structure of society creates different social locations for women and men. These inequalities shape women’s experiences and how they come to learn about and live those realities” (p. 8). Therefore, how the study participants’ achieved such high levels of success in male-dominated careers is interesting to examine more deeply.

**Definitions of Terms Used**

Some of the key terms used in this study include, *feminism, feminist, and feminist theory*; each of which refer to the women’s movement for equal rights. While feminism has changed over the course of the past century through varying “waves,” for the purposes of this study the term simply refers to the belief that women deserve equal rights.
Discourse is another key phrase used throughout the study and is a methodological term that refers to one’s dialogue or narrative speech.

Top-level is a term which refers to the highest rank of management or leadership within an organization. It constitutes a position that might have only one position higher such as a company president or CEO.

Male-dominated is another term used frequently throughout the study and refers to any organization where male employees outnumber female employees. It may also refer to any organization in which standards, procedures, and organizational practices were created and maintained by men. In other words, male-dominated refers to a predominance of patriarchal based organizational practices and organizational structure.

Organization of Remaining Chapters
This study is comprised of five chapters. Subsequent to this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a review of the pertinent literature informing this work. This chapter begins by introducing the philosophical and theoretical foundations that serve as a framework for the study. This chapter then reviews literature regarding how men and women have been shown to lead and communicate in different ways, and how organizations themselves can support certain gendered ways of communicating as well. The chapter ends with the rationale, specific purpose, and research questions for the study. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the scope of the study, the methodology used, and how data was analyzed for answering the research questions. Chapter 4 offers an analysis of the data broken out by themes, and includes excerpts from participant interviews. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings. Lastly, Chapter 5 overviews the limitations of this study, summarizes the study’s pertinent findings, and suggests possibilities for future research.


**Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

**Philosophical and Ethical Assumptions**

Carol Gilligan’s noteworthy claim that women speak about ethics in a “different voice” than men do serves as the ethical framework for this study. Gilligan’s popular work, *In a Different Voice*, outlines a model of ethics whereupon there are two ethical styles related to gender, and focuses on the concept that men tend to seek autonomy and think of moral maturity in terms of *justice*, whereas women tend to consider their ethical responsibility as one of *care* (Griffin, 2012). Gilligan contrasts men’s desire for ethical goals focused on “individual rights” and “equality before the law,” with women’s desire for ethical goals to be “immersed in the details of relationships,” focusing on “sensitivity to others, loyalty, self-sacrifice and peacemaking” (Griffin 2012, p. 443).

The applicability of Gilligan’s ethical theory to this study may help shed light on how women behave and make decisions within their professional lives. Additionally, while researchers have used Gilligan’s model to explore the differences between men and women in a range of areas, research focusing on women in male-dominated professions remains limited. An underlying aim of this study, then, is to understand how women in male-dominated professions balance a female ethic of care with men’s preferred ethic of justice, and whether these women are more apt to speak in a female or male ethical voice. Gilligan’s ideas are certainly worth exploring further and may also offer important implications for professional women in all fields of work.

**Theoretical Basis**

On a theoretical basis, this study utilizes communication theory rooted in the critical tradition because it takes an explicitly critical approach to the connection among communication,
organization and power. Just over 20 years ago, Mumby (1993) argued that in the field of organizational communication, a lack of feminist theory and research critiquing patriarchal ways of knowing was evident. And while research in this field has certainly increased since then, there is much more to learn. A small but significant body of research has emerged that addresses organizational studies from an explicitly feminist perspective (Buzzanell, 1994; Holmes & Marra, 2004; LeSavoy & Bergeron, 2011; Mumby, 1993). Nevertheless, women are still the minority in leadership positions, and many organizations continue to support patriarchal and masculine styles of organizational communication.

For the purposes of this study specifically, feminist standpoint theory (FST) serves as the basis upon which to understand the communication decisions of top-level female leaders working in male-dominated career fields. Feminist standpoint theory contends that women’s lives are “systematically and structurally different” (Wood, 2005, p.61) from men’s, and that these differences create different knowledges. In other words, women’s unique position and standpoint in culture allows for the creation of different knowledge – knowledge that is often overlooked for predominant and prevailing patriarchal-based knowledge.

One of many standpoint theories, FST was developed in the late 1980s and 1990s. In organizational communication, this theory has been used and promoted by a variety of scholars (e.g. Allen, 1998; Buzzanell, 1994; Shenoy, 2009; Sloan & Krone, 2000; Wood, 2005). At its basis, FST uses the experiences of women’s lived realities as sources of knowledge. As Wood (2005) describes, this theory engages the “material conditions of women’s lives” (p. 61), and draws from the Marxist claim that “the work we do – the activities in which we engage – shape our identities and consciousness and, by extension our knowledge” (p. 61). Put simply, “the standpoint we occupy in society influences what we know and how we act” (Wood, 1995, p. 19),
and FST gives precedence to women’s individual experiences and realities because their experiences of oppression, in the myriad of ways it may happen, potentially privileges them in terms of their knowledge.

Moreover, a defining feature of FST is the focus on relations between power and knowledge (Shenoy, 2009), where a standpoint develops in opposition to the dominant worldview, and is earned through the “critical reflection on power relations and through engaging in the struggle required to construct an oppositional stance” (Wood, 2005, p. 61). A standpoint doesn’t simply refer to a location or experience; it is a critical understanding of one’s location and one’s social and political context (Wood, 2005). So while a dominant worldview or perspective may be considered a position or social location, it is not considered to be a standpoint.

Additionally, as LeSavoy and Bergeron (2011) contend, FST encompasses a duality where it is both “‘explanatory’ in discerning the positionality of women-centered experiences and ‘prescriptive’ in validating women’s insights into patriarchal distortions ascribed to their realities” (p. 143). A critical aspect to FST is the significance of enhancing our awareness of prevailing and privileged gender-based systems and organizational practices. Research studies, therefore, offer invaluable insight and opportunities towards enhancing our consciousness of these issues.

This area of research serves to offer significant insights into the theoretical issues found when studying organizations because they both symbolize and reproduce the gender and power relations that can often exist in larger society. Top-level women in male-dominated professions have unique knowledge to offer, having surpassed “glass ceilings” and gendered stereotypes by succeeding in organizations that are rooted in patriarchal and masculine contexts. Through a
FST lens, this study seeks to stand by “feminism’s uniting goal and commitment to politics and social change” (Shenoy, 2009), by examining how four top-level women in male-dominated careers have reached their current leadership positions and as a way to understand their “lived realities,” while also seeking to deepen their own awareness of prevailing and privileged gender-based systems and organizational practices.

**The Literature**

*Masculine vs. Feminine Leadership*

There is a growing trend toward increased leadership and involvement by women in organizations that have been traditionally male-dominated (LeSavoy & Bergeron, 2011; Lucas & Steimel, 2009). Nevertheless, research shows that men’s communication and leadership style largely remains not only the most predominant style, but also is considered to be the most effective, in many organizations (Bruckmüller, Hegarty, & Abele, 2012; Kaufman & Grace, 2011; Koch, 2004; Walker & Aritz, 2015). Some researchers argue this is because “expectations and ideas about leadership are often taken from a perspective that adopts masculinity as the norm” (Kaufman & Grace, 2011; see also McEldowney, Bobrowski, & Gramberg, 2009). This expectation has the potential to undermine women’s individual preferences and strengths for communicating, because, according to Wood (1995), we “create our own gender through talk” with research showing “systematic differences in the ways men and women typically use language” (p. 18).

For example, studies on gender and communication have revealed that, in many ways, women and men function from divergent philosophies about the objectives and tactics of communication (Lucas & Steimel, 2009; Fine, 2009; Forbes, 2002; Walker & Aritz, 2015; Wood, 1995). The Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford University describes how
as leaders, men and women often use different types of language, where women are known for using more communal language – emphasizing collaboration, help, compassion and friendliness – while men are known for using more agentic language – emphasizing independence, confidence, and assertiveness (Stanford University, 2014). What’s more, they find that these language differences have nearly no similarities, which can affect perceptions of leadership and employee performance evaluations (Stanford University, 2014).

As Holmes and Marra (2004) state, “regardless of whether we are biologically perceived and categorized as women or men, we are continuously constructing relatively masculine or feminine social identities in our ongoing social interaction” (p. 391). A study by Fine (2009), for example, suggested that women’s performance in professional settings is likely to emphasize personal communication by including more collaborative, nurturing, and egalitarian strategies. These differences can not only create misunderstandings between men and women in the workplace, but can make communication particularly challenging for women in male-dominated career fields. For instance, a meta-analysis by Eagly (2007) revealed that women fared less well than men did in male-dominated and masculine leadership roles.

To further illustrate, a recent article by The Washington Post discussed how female staffers in the White House complained of having to “elbow their way into important meetings” (Eilperlin, 2016, p. 1). In politics, where just twenty years ago, the only women working were secretaries, women in senior positions today can sometimes struggle to have their voices heard. As a result, the article explains that female aides began using a practice called “amplification” during important White House meetings in order to ensure that women’s opinions and input were really being heard, and that they were given the appropriate credit for them. Women would repeat key points made by other women so that they could “amplify” their points while also
giving female authors the appropriate credit for their ideas (Eilperlin, 2016). This is just one scenario that can be used to describe the types of challenges women can face when communicating in male-dominated professions.

These challenges are disheartening as some studies suggest that characteristically feminine leadership traits can provide women with certain advantages in today’s workplaces (Elliot & Stead, 2008; Fine, 2009). For instance, because women tend to foster more participative and democratic leadership styles, they have been shown to better motivate their subordinates and emphasize open communication than their male counterparts (Fine, 2008). These findings suggest that feminine leadership styles should not be discounted, and rather more attention should be paid to the ways in which women tend to lead differently from men.

**Gendered Organizational Communication**

Just as men and women have been shown to communicate in gendered ways, so too, can organizations. For example, as West and Zimmerman (1987) posit, gender is socially constructed, both for individuals and for organizations, and “doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘nature’” (p. 126). In this sense, gender is different from biological sex and is better described as a “social patterning that has been created over time and that has been passed down from generation to generation within a culture” (Walker & Aritz, 2015, p. 454). This social patterning includes gendered norms and expectations for communication and interaction that are often developed and created through leadership (Walker & Aritz, 2015).

Additionally, “American organizations are typically characterized by a competitive, masculine organizational culture,” which “values respect for authority, competition,
individualism, independence, and task orientation” (Walker & Aritz, 2015, p. 456). This strong preference towards masculinity can lead to leadership biases and negatively impact women whose communicative preferences may not align with masculine work environments (Walker & Aritz, 2015; Forbes, 2002). As a study by Forbes (2002) illustrates, female managers were shown to craft masculine work identities that emphasized their ability to do their jobs by challenging their own associations with femininity because it aligned with organizational expectations. This practice was shown to only further contribute to the construction of more masculine and patriarchal communication practices within their organizations.

What’s more, because social expectations of the sexes are confronted in the workplace, it can have an impact on how employees are perceived and treated (Wood, 2012). Traditional masculine images of leaders, for instance, are a common norm often found in professional settings and can undermine women’s individual strengths and preferences for communicating (Wood, 2012). For example, in a study on women in organizations dominated by men, researchers found that women felt forced to change their behavior through their “performances” and display of stereotypical social roles (Lester, 2008). Elliot and Stead (2008) contend that this is not surprising seeing that much of the leadership and managerial literature has been developed by men, which in turn, “promotes male values as the behavioral managerial norm” (p. 159).

In contrast, some studies have discussed how adopting a more androgynous stance for communication and leadership has the potential for achieving positive organizational outcomes. For instance, Billing & Alvesson (2000) argue that “instead of seeing women’s and men’s traits and abilities as oppositions, it is possible to see them as complementary or loosely grouped,” where “men as well as women are capable of acting in what may be labelled masculine and feminine ways, based on instrumentality as well as on feelings, dependent upon the situation” (p.
152). Accordingly, it may be important that all leaders, regardless of their gender, consider the factors that contribute to their communication style.

Nonetheless, as gendered ways of communicating continue to be a focus for researchers, studies highlighting women’s individual experiences and contributions remain somewhat limited. This study offers real-world experiences of top-level women which may not be generalizable to the entire population, but may certainly offer unique “standpoints” from which much can be learned.

**Rationale**

As Shenoy (2009), explains “the unequal structure of society creates different social locations for women and men. These inequalities shape women’s experiences and how they come to learn about and live those realities” (p. 8). Therefore, how the study participants’ achieved such high levels of success in male-dominated careers is interesting to examine more deeply and offers greater insight into both female and male leadership practices. The literature revealed that women face unique challenges in organizations, and by analyzing the narratives of four top-level professional women in male-dominated organizations, the researcher gained insight into how these women communicate as leaders and negotiate their identities within their respective organizations.

**Specific Purpose**

The anticipated results of this study include an increased awareness and deeper understanding of how women lead when in leadership roles traditionally held by men. More specifically, by focusing on top-level women in male-dominated careers, this study attempted to: 1) uncover if these women are unknowingly participating in and reconstituting, patriarchal and masculine ways of leading and communicating, and 2) increase awareness of the ways in which
these women may (or may not) be contributing to these factors. Successful completion of the study centers on offering additional insight into gendered leadership and communication in male-dominated organizations, along with exposing implications for future research.

**Research Questions**

In order to understand how these women communicate in their male-dominated professions, this study will seek to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1**: What discursive choices do selected female professionals employ to navigate male-dominated organizations?

- **RQ2**: How do selected female professionals discursively produce or reproduce masculinity in their communicative experiences in their professional lives?
Chapter 3: Scope and Methodology

Scope of the Study

Based upon critical feminist methods, this study used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to understand how top-level women in male-dominated professions utilize discursive practices as leaders, paying particular attention to how these women may, or may not, be discursively producing or reproducing masculinity within their professions. According to prior research, women were shown to communicate and lead differently than men, however, the research also shows that organizations often utilize and perceive masculine communication to be the most preferred communication style. As such, this study focused on women’s communication by researching the specific ways these women chose to communicate throughout their careers, with an interest in how they may, or may not, be using gendered communication techniques.

Further, with the assumption that their individual standpoints would offer unique insights into women as leaders, the focus of the study remained narrow. Interviews with four women in various male-dominated fields were conducted in order to: 1) be able to gain a more in-depth understanding of their individual experiences, and 2) gain a deeper understanding of how these women have achieved their top-level positions in masculine organizations.

Methodology of the Study

The method of research for this study was qualitative, using qualitative interviewing as the principal method of data collection. Qualitative interviewing is a common and useful tool to use when attempting to uncover the beliefs and attitudes of others, particularly with regard to communication in interpersonal relationships. Researchers are able to gain a deeper understanding of a specific subject matter through the observation and inquiry of study participants, as “qualitative research is a matter of going where the action is and simply watching
and listening” (Baxter & Babbie, 2003, p. 325). Further, because the interviewer-interviewee interaction allows for open dialogue, the meanings and rules of meaning-making can be better understood (Baxter & Babbie, 2003).

**Participants**

The participants included four women holding top-level positions in male-dominated professions located in Cheyenne, WY. These participants were chosen because the researcher expected their narratives to contain explicit commentary about the discursive choices they employ that help them to succeed in male-dominated environments. The women ranged in age from 46-60 years old and worked in the military, information technology (IT), law enforcement, and electrical trade industries. Their backgrounds are outlined in Table 1.

**Data Collection**

For the purposes of this paper, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted in the participants’ place of work and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes. An interview list consisting of eight questions aimed at answering the research questions was created (Appendix A) to guide the researcher. The questions centered on the women’s professional backgrounds and their individual communication preferences and styles. Two specific types of questions described by Baxter and Babbie (2003) were used. Specific grand-tour questions ask the respondent or participant to provide a verbal overview of a recent event or activity in relation to some topic or phenomenon. Similarly, experience questions ask the participant to describe an experience to help comprehend a given situation. Interviewer prompts were also sometimes used to encourage the participant to give more in-depth information, or to explain or clarify something more. Floating prompts were also sometimes used during discussion, which involved the
interviewer giving verbal or non-verbal cues to direct the participant to “tell me more,” and helped to encourage additional dialogue.

A brief “tee-up” between the interviewer and each interviewee helped to make the informal setting feel more natural and helped participants to relax prior to asking any questions. During this time, participants were told what the interview would be about and were notified that their responses would be recorded and subsequently transcribed and used for an academic paper. Participants were also notified that their participation was completely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw their permission to the use and sharing of their information at any time.

Field notes were taken during and after the interview that included the researcher’s impressions about the interview experience and captured possible emergent themes and common ideas. Moreover, out of respect for the participants’ privacy, their names have been changed. Data from each interview transcript ranged from approximately 6-10 typewritten single-spaced pages and there were about two handwritten pages of field notes that served as a guide in the analysis.

**Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using discourse analysis and within the frame of Gilligan’s ethical theory and feminist standpoint theory in order to gauge the relevance of responses to the research questions. Discourse analysis focuses on the study of the contexts of language, such as social, cultural, situative and cognitive (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), and according to Forbes (2002), “organizational members enact their learned behavioral patterns and attitudes about gender roles through discourse” (p. 272). Discursive practices help to create workplace culture through a system of shared meanings and values (Walker & Aritz, 2015). The critical analysis of women’s discourse in male-dominated professions may give insight into how they manage their
communicative choices and are effective in their professions. Discourse studies often focus on how features of talk are coded as feminine or masculine; as Holmes and Marra (2004) state, “Our discourse is drenched in gender. Assumptions about what constitutes more “feminine” as opposed to more “masculine” ways of talking are constantly being reinforced in everyday interaction” (p. 392).

Further, “in order to understand women’s experiences, we need to hear from the women themselves” (Roper, Fisher, & Wrisberg, 2005, p. 34). A feminist standpoint offers a powerful lens to analyze how discourses reflect, reinscribe, and sometimes resist hegemonic practices, because “discourses are ways of constituting knowledge or ‘truth’” (Forbes, 2002, p. 274), as it focuses on the concrete practices in which people engage with, and give meaning to, the world.

In addition, as Hardy and Phillips (2004) explain, discourse produces power relationships by “holding in place meanings associated with concepts, objects and subject positions, which distribute power and privileges among actors” (p. 300). Therefore, through critical discourse analysis, these concepts, objects, and subject positions which hold power can be better acknowledged and understood, leading to the potential for possible changes in discourses over time.

With these concepts in mind, the research was designed to understand each woman’s lived perspective. A prearranged set of interview questions was designed and used to help uncover their perspectives and to increase opportunities to recognize consistent themes drawn out during the analysis process. After the one-on-one interviews were completed they were transcribed, and the analysis of each interview text, along with the researcher’s field notes, were then compared to help expose any major and recurring themes. Each interview was then
reviewed separately for any additional underlying themes. The major recurring themes were recorded and placed into a table (Appendix B).

**TABLE 1:**
Participant Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Area of Work/ Position</th>
<th>Time in Current Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marsha</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>Air National Guard/Commander</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>Law Enforcement/Deputy Administrator for Support Services – Dept. of Corrections Prison Division</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>Information Technology/Deputy Chief Information Officer</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>B.S.</td>
<td>Electrical Trades/President of large Electrical Company in Cheyenne, WY</td>
<td>24 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability and Validity

According to Neuman (2012), reliability means dependability or consistency, and in qualitative research, it is important to be consistent in how observations are made. However, qualitative methods also often study processes that are unstable over time (Neuman, 2012), therefore the approach of interpretivism was taken for this study. While attempts at eliminating any researcher bias during the interviews was made, from an interpretive perspective, researcher interpretations of the situations cannot, and should not, be removed from the research process entirely (Baxter & Babbie, 2003). So, even if different researchers or alternative measures may find distinctive results, there is value in the “changing or developing interaction between us researchers and the people we study” (Neuman, 2012, p. 214).

Consequently, this study emphasized validity, or “achieving authenticity over realizing a single version of “’truth’” (Nueman, 2012), and sought to uncover genuine portrayals of social
life that was true to the lived experiences of the study participants. This focus allowed for the detailed account and inside view of how participants understood certain events.

**Ethical Considerations**

Researcher bias when performing qualitative research is something that should be considered because the researcher, at times, is an active participant. For this study, the researcher is loosely acquainted with each of the study participants, which presents the concern that biased expectations or thinking may be transferred to the results. Additionally, there is the possibility that the pre-existing association may have influenced the participants’ responses. These concerns were mitigated by explaining these issues to the participants during the “tee-up.” Participants were asked to answer questions as honestly and openly as possible, emphasizing that their acquaintance with the researcher should not affect their answers, and should they feel it might, then they should refrain from answering.

Also, Baxter and Babbie (2003) argue that interviewees are not neutral reporters of the facts and that they have biased memories. Therefore, a researcher must understand that it is possible for a participant to give more of a communicative performance motivated by concerns about self-preservation, rather than a more unbiased and truthful account. This was an area that was attended to closely, as the researcher and participants were already acquainted with one another prior to the study. As such, the researcher attempted to refrain from speaking as much as possible in order to elicit the most impartial and genuine responses from participants.

**Informed Consent**

This study deals with human subjects and, therefore, each participant agreed to the informed consent form (Appendix C) and gave their permission to participate in the research. The agreement describes the study and informs them that there is no risk to participating,
however, they are also free to withdraw at any time. Prior to beginning the interview, participants were told what the interview would be about and were asked for their oral and written consent to record their responses. Participants were notified that their responses would subsequently be transcribed and used for an academic paper and that their names would be changed to protect their privacy. Once consent was granted, the interview recording began.
Chapter 4: The Study

Introduction

This study involved gathering the insights and experiences of top-level women working in male-dominated professions through one-on-one interviews. The study seeks to understand how these women communicate in their professional lives focusing on how their communicative choices may have assisted them in attaining such high level positions. Further, and of particular interest, this study seeks to uncover whether or not these women produce or reproduce masculinity in their communicative experiences and how that may have possibly contributed to their success and personal standpoints.

Over the course of two weeks the researcher met separately with four women who hold top-level positions in their respective male-dominated work places. In this section, excerpts from the participants’ interviews that delineate the ways in which they navigate male-dominated organizations and discursively produce or reproduce masculinity in their communicative experiences in their professional lives are highlighted. Further, findings are grounded in feminist standpoint theory (FST) and refer to pertinent literature previously reviewed.

Results of the Study

Analysis of the interview transcripts exposed a handful of recurring themes. A list of themes uncovered for each participant is provided in Table 2 of Appendix B. In the subsequent section, each theme is discussed and analyzed separately using text from the transcripts as supporting data. The discussion section focuses on how these findings help to shed light on the study’s research questions.

Emphasis on Ethic of Care
Interestingly, every participant clearly valued and emphasized an ethic of care when communicating in her professional life. Just as Gilligan argues that women tend to value different ethical goals than men do, this research clearly reflects the same view. Even when working with, and among men, these women emphasized an “ethic of care” as a significant factor in their decision making and the ways in which they maintain their professional selves.

For instance, as Jean commented:

…but I also think if you sort of understand people and you are personable and people feel like they can reach out and talk to you, they do. And you have an opportunity to really, first listen, which I think is really critical....

Here, Jean explains how important it is to her for her employee’s to feel she cares about them. She emphasizes being a caring and trustworthy person along with the importance of listening to her employees – all factors which point to creating stronger working relationships.

Additionally, in the interview with Mandy, she was asked how she prefers to lead and communicate with her employees and she explained:

And I love my people, I do want to say that. I love my employees regardless of, you know, I know they have bad days, I know they have personal stuff goin’ on, but I truly believe that everyone is fundamentally good and they want what’s best. Um, and when things, you know, when they go off in different path and go in a different direction, and it’s just, they just need help. They need to know, um, they just need to know that they’re cared for and um, one of the things that I do strive for is telling them the “why.” So, why we make decisions – why we decided to go in that direction. And so that seems to help people buy into where you’re going.
It is clear from this quote that Mandy highly values her employees, however, she also values her employees’ feelings and how they feel about their jobs, too. She stresses that she wants them to feel “cared for” and that there are certain things she does in her leadership and management decisions to achieve that goal.

In another strong display of an “ethic of care” when asked about her leadership style Marsha stated:

So you can learn something from anybody so I, um, try not to put that whole hierarchy of “Well I’m the Commander, so therefore, I’m the boss,” um mentality, but instead realizing that everyone has something to offer. So that’s kind of how I think that I lead. Showing people that I care, because I do, I wanna know about them but at the same time, um, we still have standards we’re gonna follow those and there’s not going to be deviation from that because I feel bad for you or, you know, you’re not going to be allowed to continuously show up late. My other big thing is, and they all know this, you are far ahead by coming to me and telling me you screwed up, then letting me find out about it on my own. Um, so I frequently have people standing outside of my office door and they’ll go “Ma’am, I screwed up,” and I’ll go “Great! What’d you do?” and “Ok, we’ll what’d you learn from it?!” and “Ok, are we gonna do that again?” and “How could we have done this differently?” I mean I recognize that we’re all human and I’m not going to beat somebody up because they made a mistake. …So, um, we talk about it, we talk about what happened. …And so I feel like I have a good relationship with the folks that report to me.

Again, Marsha seems to focus on getting her employees to understand that she cares for them first and foremost. Even though she has a bit of a “tough love” approach to following standards,
she still made it a point to underscore that her care for others comes first by being very open to discussing issues and mistakes with her subordinates. She wants them to feel comfortable around her enough to come to her with their problems so that they can discuss them. Without a basis of feeling cared for, this would certainly be more difficult for employees to do.

Lastly, Heather explained her leadership style and how she gets her employees to respect her and do their work according to her expectations:

I try to lead by example. You know, I just think you should treat people the way you wanna be treated and I try to do that here. You know, I’m not a super religious person but I was brought up in churches and I do believe that we need to treat each other right and I try to do that so… And usually when you treat somebody right they’ll respond, they’ll respect that.

Stressing the way you treat someone was a fundamental component to Heather’s leadership style. Specifically, treating them right and fair according to the golden rule.

Transcripts from the participant interviews revealed an emphasis on others and being considered a “caring” person. Moreover, according to Gilligan’s concept of moral development, women tend to add feeling to reason and often focus on their responsibilities to others (White, 1992), and it was clear from each participant that this was also the case for them. Whether the women were aware of it or not, they undoubtedly stressed the importance of a “connected” self in their professional roles by creating a network of “caring, protecting, nourishing relationships” (White, 1992, p. 52) with everyone they worked with.

Mentor Influence

Each participant also discussed the significance of, and overarching influence, they felt that a mentor or mentors had on their success. They each discussed having at least one very
influential male in their lives that led them into their respective career fields, or a male mentor in their lives that helped them learn communication strategies and helped them grow as leaders.

Marsha referenced her dad several times over the course of her interview. She explained how he stood as a very influential and grounded person for her throughout her military career along with her sisters who were also involved in the military – a traditionally masculine organization. As Marsha described her mentors she stated:

So, you know they’ve always been very positive role models – my dad and my sisters, and I counted on them a lot throughout my military career, through all the ups and downs. Marsha’s dad was an Army Colonel and so it would seem that she was primed from a young age to follow and respect masculinized communication practices and expectations. For example she described her dad in the following way:

So I grew up in a very strict household, um my dad, I swear to God, did not smile until he retired. [Laughs] And, uh, he was just a very stoic and stern man. If you started something, you finished it, whether ya liked it or not. Um, we were never allowed to quit anything, give up.

The influence Marsha’s dad had on her upbringing may have helped lead her into a career field that didn’t feel as masculinized to her because she was already used to certain communication styles and techniques. In fact, every one of his daughters joined the military following his lead, and each was quite successful as well, which again points to his overarching impact as a male mentor.

Similarly, Jean also had a very influential male family member who led her to enter law enforcement, as she stated:
I had my uncle, um who, and really he was just like the best uncle in the world and that’s
what he did, so I wanted to do it too.

While Jean also described a handful of female mentors who helped her throughout her career,
she attributes joining the law enforcement field entirely to her uncle. This realization may have
helped Jean to identify with masculine expectations and communication techniques from an early
age.

Perhaps the most prominent display of male mentorship came from Heather, who stated
the following when asked who her mentor(s) were:

My dad was huge, he was huge. I mean, when I first came in here I sat at that desk up
front and he sat in here. And when people were done for the day and gone we would just
sit and talk over things. My dad is, honestly, was the greatest influence on my life. He
was a wonderful guy, very fair, very um, low key in the back-ground, didn’t need to be
out in front, and I learned a lot from him.

Heather was open about the fact that she “learned to communicate in a man’s world,”
highlighting how her dad and other influential men taught her how to manage an electrical
company that predominantly employed men. Heather understood that men preferred to
communicate differently, stating that “…men are very, um, close minded (chuckles),” and had
learned strategies for communicating through the support and help of her male mentors.

It is interesting that each of these women was greatly influenced by at least one male
mentor, which suggests that they were primed by, or at the very least made aware of the
masculine ways in which to communicate. Learning such communicative strategies and lessons
may have also impacted their success within their respective organizations by giving them a leg
up on other women who may not have had similar male influencers.
Masculinity in Discourse

While the overt presence of masculinity in the participants’ discourse was somewhat less pronounced than expected, masculinized organizational discourse was clearly evident. For example, each participant in some way discussed how she enacts and reinforces masculinized organizational practices. One of the best examples of this came from Jean, who worked in law enforcement and stated the following when asked about being a woman in her career field:

You know your uniform is a male uniform, [laughs], you know, and everything, they dress you like a man, your hair had to be off the bottom of your collar and it couldn’t be more than two inches out of the side of your head when you pulled it out. Um, so there is a, an organizational effort to make you all look the same, which means there was this effort to make you all look like men. I had a, my favorite lieutenant, marked me down on an inspection because the inspection item said, “mustaches trimmed and within limits,” and since I didn’t have a one, he took points off for that.

These socialization experiences for Jean in the law enforcement field reinforced a strong masculine organizational culture. Jean was overtly aware of the masculine expectations for her, yet she still had to follow them as if she were a man and not a woman. Interestingly, Jean’s “favorite lieutenant” even held unrealistic masculine standards for her, yet she did not seem to question these standards and practices. This suggests that she felt as though the standards and practices should also apply to her, or that no other options were available for her to express her disagreement. This is a good instance of how masculine expectations can undermine women in the workforce by offering no alternatives.
Another distinct example of masculine organizational practices came from Mandy while she was working as a software developer. When asked about being a woman in her field she explained:

So the first software development job I had, there were fifteen of us, two women, um, one was the office manager and then me. I had different rules set by our board. So different rules, I mean like I couldn’t work at night, I had to leave at 5 o’clock… for safety reasons, yea so, it was in Greeley, CO, downtown Greeley and it was kind of an odd thing, we had a Board of Directors that were all men, and um, I was really the first software developer that was female and wanted to come in and I don’t know why they wanted to treat me differently, but we had, there were times when I had to work at night. So, I just made sure, like fine this is your rule, you want me to leave at five but let’s compromise and just make sure that I’m not here alone. Um, and I just think I broke that rule after a while.

For Mandy, this organizational practice of treating her differently because she was a woman did not sit well with her. Instead, she wanted to be treated and behave just as the men were expected to by being allowed to stay at work late, even if it meant compromising her safety. Mandy challenged this rule and found a way to work past it.

On the other hand, further on in her interview, Mandy describes one of her bosses as a male mentor to her and someone who helped “teach” her about certain organizational practices. When asked about her mentors she described this particular boss in the following way:

Also my boss here, who actually just left us to take a job with Google has also been very instrumental in getting me where I’m at and teaching me the ways… So, um, yeah, I had a lot to learn when I came over to this position – about protocol and how you enter a room when the Governor is sitting there, right? How you act when the Governor comes
into a room. So there was a lot of, of, just the little things, you know, where do you sit in
a room when the Governor is in there? How do you pick your chair? And I mean it’s
these little things and he really took the time to walk me through these things.

This quote from Mandy visibly displays how a male mentor was “teaching her the ways” that he
felt were necessary coming from a man in a largely masculine organization. He was essentially
showing her how she should behave in the political arena according to masculine organizational
practices. Some interesting questions arise here, however. First, would her boss have treated her
differently if she were a man? Would he have found it so necessary to walk her through such
minor details? Or would the “protocol” just have been different, i.e. the Governor tends to joke
about sports before starting a meeting?

Second, this quote brings into question the idea of “impostor syndrome,” a term used to
explain the internal barriers that women face when interacting in professional settings. For
instance, Mandy fully believed that she was ill-prepared for these sorts of circumstances and
whole-heartedly took her boss’s help as vital to her success. While impostor syndrome can be
present for both men and women, women tend to feel it more intensely and tend to be more
affected by it. Imposter syndrome speaks to the undervaluing of personal abilities and a lack of
belief about one’s own skill and qualities (Sandberg, 2013). So, when it was clear to her that she
was being treated differently as a woman, Mandy took objection, however, when posed as a
“learning opportunity” in a new organization, Mandy failed to question how her boss was
teaching her masculine organizational practices. This concept stands as an excellent area for
additional study on how women deal with self-doubt and underestimating their capabilities.
In another display of masculine organizational practices, Marsha described the military’s complete lack of consideration for women while deployed almost twenty years ago as she explained:

I hated sleeping in a tent with a bunch of men. I hated, you know, peeing in the woods every day, it was like “Oh my god! …when you’re the only girl and that’s all they do – they don’t bring a porta potty out just for me.

Marsha was given no choice as a woman serving in the military. She had to follow masculine protocol and expectations because there was no alternative at the time. Marsha had to make the best of her situation as a woman and learned to just deal with it so-to-speak.

*Assertiveness*

Comparable to masculine discourse, assertiveness was another recurring theme exposed during the data analysis. As Fine (2009) argues, in the U.S., stereotypical masculine qualities such as directness and assertiveness are often valued and rewarded in organizations. The data revealed that each of the participants displayed some level of assertiveness in their discourse. For instance, each of the women stated the following with regard to their assertiveness:

Mandy: I know that sometimes I come across as intimidating, because I am very…non-drama, very straightforward, I know what needs to be done…

Jean: So I’ve never felt like I have to be particularly assertive, I just am. You know, I just am. So, I uh, I think it’s more the words I choose and um, how the message is delivered that’s different for me.

Marsha: …sometimes you just have to make a decision and so I’m not afraid to make a decision, I’m very assertive, um, and if it needs to be done, I’ll make a decision and I’ll
stick by it. And if I screw it up, then I have no problem saying, “Yeah that was probably not a good decision, and here’s what we should’ve done.”

Heather: I’m a very strong personality, and as Phil says, “Brandon’s a little afraid of me,” which I never think is a bad thing. I kind of think it’s a good thing. So um, it’s not bad to have him be, I don’t think it’s a bad thing to be very sure of yourself – especially if you’ve done your homework, which I always try to do.

Remarkably, these characteristics of assertiveness came up without researcher prompting for all of the women, which clearly demonstrates that assertiveness is a conscious characteristic they each use in their communication. Another distinction is that all of the women expressed their self-assurance with being assertive, explaining that it was either a necessary part of their jobs, or just a part of who they are as people. The review of literature showed that assertiveness tends to be a trait most often attributed to men and masculine traits of leadership (Stanford University, 2014), which points to another way in which these women may be reenacting and recreating masculine communication within their professional lives.

**Emphasis on Persistence**

Lastly, each participant emphasized her persistence as a means toward achieving her success. Where certain women might have given up as inadequate to work in, let alone lead in male-dominated workplaces, these women continued to pursue their careers regardless of their experiences being fundamentally different from those of their male counterparts. This particular characteristic may also point to the fact that these women understood the importance of a “critical reflection on power relations and through engaging in the struggle required to construct an oppositional stance” (Wood, 2005, p. 61), regardless of whether or not they may have enacted or recreated masculine discursive practices. The interview data revealed that when faced with
difficulties relating to gendered stereotypes, the respondents used those opportunities to learn and strengthen their resolve for becoming leaders within their fields. For instance when asked how she felt about being a top-level woman in a male-dominated career, Jean noted:

I think what I thought about it was, this is what I wanted to do with my life as a career and so I’m gonna do this with my life as a career, whatever that means.

Jean knew from a young age that she wanted to work in the law enforcement field. Her interview data revealed that she held numerous positions within the field where she was often the only female, and she spoke about several instances of gendered expectations that she had to work to overcome as she explained in the following excerpt:

You know throughout my law enforcement career I don’t know how many times I’ve been told I should, you know, be home taking care of my children, and um, you know instead of out “doing men’s work.”

Jean may have been up against unfair masculine standards, yet she highlighted her persistence to remain in the field, no matter the stakes. She often used humor as a way to poke fun at the men who didn’t respect her as a woman, and to help her move past those experiences. For example, Jean was very proud of her early promotion in the Sherriff’s department as she described:

I was the first female promoted in the history of that department, so it was sort of a new thing for them. When I was promoted to sergeant, my lieutenant said, “of course this means you’ll have to do things twice as well as the men to get the same credit.” To which I responded, “Fortunately, that’s not too difficult.” [Laughs]

Jean was aware that she held a position far from the dominant viewpoint of masculinity.

Nevertheless, this excerpt from Jean’s interview clearly displays her unwavering conviction that
she belonged in law enforcement and would not allow traditional and outdated masculine standards hold her back.

Similarly, Marsha’s interview data also accentuated her persistence in the military as she explained:

I joined the military almost 27 years ago…I’ve been on pretty much every rung on the ladder – I’ve been in the very lowest of positions, as an enlisted and as an officer. I am not afraid to work, that’s for sure.

Marsha attributes her success to her hard work and persistence. Marsha didn’t let early deployments where she had to sleep alongside men and pee like men deter her from rising through the ranks in her organization. Today, Marsha is a Commander in the Air National Guard and has 87 people that report directly to her.

And likewise, Heather and Mandy each explained that their years of experience in their respective fields have brought them to a place in their careers where they have the ability to make major decisions. Their cumulative years of experience and expertise have made them indispensable to their companies, bringing them to points where they are in positions of power and influence. Nevertheless, they each stressed that their success did not come without struggle.

Discussion

The idea that a different knowledge among women can be uncovered as a result of their distinct position and standpoint in culture is a key tenet of feminist standpoint theory (Shenoy, 2009). The lived experiences uncovered by the women in this study support the claim that the women hold unique knowledge and offer significant insight into unexplored issues and concerns which might not be as obvious to the dominant class, or men in their situations. Particularly, the expectations for these women to conform to masculine organizational practices and their
emphasis on persistence only stresses their “critical reflection on power relations and their consequences” (Wood, 2012). Each of the women faced difficulties and setbacks prior to obtaining their top-level positions, and as a result, their standpoints certainly offer knowledge that may be “more accurate and less false than members of the privileged groups” (Shenoy, 2009). The women were able to observe and understand their positions within their male-dominated work places, while also being explicitly aware of their individual standpoints as women.

Furthermore, most of the participants were aware of masculine organizational practices, nevertheless, they still reenacted and recreated some. This perhaps points to the unfortunate world in which we live, where, as Winant (1987) argues, women use men’s language because their own has been silenced. Therefore, perhaps assertiveness, was expressed by each of the women in order to “get a leg up” in their organizations and/or to be taken more seriously? For example, women traditionally are not very assertive, nonetheless, each participant not only expressed that she felt assertiveness was necessary to her job, but they were all self-assured about the value of being assertive.

Now, this is not to say that women shouldn’t be assertive, however, it begs the question of whether or not these women were assertive because they felt it was a necessary part of achieving success within their respective organizations, or perhaps their male mentors and influencers in their lives may have impacted their use and perceptions of being assertive. This is an area where further research and inquiry may be warranted for future study.

Another thought-provoking finding is just how much an ethic of care was reflected in each of the women’s narratives. Even though these women openly expressed their assertiveness, their care for others, and specifically, building relationships, dominated above all else when it
came to managing their employees. This finding indicates that while these women may enact more masculine-type characteristics as leaders, when it comes to their deepest moral and ethical obligations, they still tend to follow Gilligan’s Theory of Moral Development.

As a whole, the interview data also answered the two research questions put forth for this study.

**RQ1: What discursive choices do selected female professionals employ to navigate male dominated organizations?**

The data showed that the women used a mix of both masculine and feminine discourse when communicating in their professional lives. When the women needed to get point across, or be taken seriously, they utilized their assertiveness. Nonetheless, each participant also expressed a strong desire to be considered caring, a much more feminine trait. This finding strongly underscored the philosophical assumptions drawn out in Chapter 2 of this study.

**RQ2: How do selected female professionals discursively produce or reproduce masculinity in their communicative experiences in their professional lives?**

While overt masculine discourse in the interview data was less pronounced than anticipated, the data did expose that these women often played into masculine organizational practices. Whether or not this was out of choice or necessity remains to be seen, and would offer as an interesting area for further research.

Ultimately, from a feminist standpoint theory lens, each participant clearly presented instances where her female experiences were fundamentally opposed to that of her male counterparts. Because of this, these women had unique knowledge to offer regarding the social understanding of working in male-dominated organizations. The interview data was able to accentuate some of their insights and knowledge, however, more research in this area is
undoubtedly merited in order to further elucidate, and bridge these oppositions, between men and women in the workforce.

Furthermore, Gilligan’s Theory of Moral Development may offer even more insight into the sphere of top-level women and how they choose to communicate in male-dominated professions. The participants in this study held true to Gilligan’s philosophical assumptions, with interview data revealing each woman’s personal discourse with respect to what “an ethic of care” means to them. Nonetheless, more research into how women negotiate their ethical and moral decisions with their communicative ones is needed as it stands to offer a greater understanding of contemporary female leadership.
Chapter 5: Summaries and Conclusions

Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations to this study worth noting. First, time was a factor as the study had to be completed within a short timeframe of 13 weeks. Second, the sample of participants was quite small with only four women. Third, while organizations with predominantly male employees were chosen, it is possible that the study results do not show a representative picture for women, generally, in male-dominated professions. Including additional participants in multiple business sectors and types of organizations would allow for more comprehensive results.

Additionally, Baxter and Babbie (2003) argue that interviewees are not neutral reporters of the facts and that they have biased memories. Therefore, a researcher must understand that it is possible for a participant to give more of a communicative performance motivated by concerns about self-preservation rather than a more unbiased and truthful account. This was an issue of concern for the researcher because the researcher and participants were already acquainted with one another prior to the study. Perhaps an unacquainted interviewer would help to eliminate these concerns, however the cost of hiring an interviewer were too high for this study. Future research should consider these limitations.

Recommendations for Further Study

Further studies should continue to focus on how women manage their communication in male-dominated organizations. In doing so, organizations may better recognize outdated and patriarchal based organizational practices that may be prejudicial to women. The more awareness and attention we can bring to these issues as researchers, the more likely alternative practices and expectations will be implemented.
In addition, future studies that focus on top-level men in female-dominated organizations may help bring additional insight into the overarching impact that organizational practices can have on leadership. It would be interesting to see if men elect to enact patriarchal communication or if they adopt some feminine traits as a result of working in a female oriented organization.

Similarly, one finding revealed that the participants each had at least one male mentor who assisted them in reaching their level of success. This points to the possibility that they were primed or taught masculine practices beginning early in their careers. Future studies may explore how male-female, female-female, and female-male mentorships can have differing influences on mentor-mentee relationships and a mentee’s overall success.

Lastly, Gilligan’s ethic of care is an area that warrants further study as it was exposed in this study, but limitations prevented the researcher from examining these findings more deeply. Future studies may specifically examine how an ethic of care relates to a leader or manager’s perceived knowledge and likeability, and how this may or may not differ for men and women.

Conclusions

Possibly the most beneficial aspect of qualitative data lies in the capability of repeating the basic process of gathering information, analyzing it, examining it, and testing it, in order to come closer to a clear and convincing model of the concept you are studying. This study offers a simple starting point for more in-depth qualitative research by pointing to specific ways in which top-level women manage their communication in male-dominate work environments. The study of communication, particularly in relation to leadership, should reflect the current environment, and that includes the growing number of female professionals in the workforce and in leadership positions.
The field of communication covers a wide-range of concepts and important topics that affect our everyday lives. This study explored the ways in which four top-level female professionals navigate their communicative decisions in their respective male-dominated careers. The results indicated that the participants discourse reflected less masculine values than expected, yet they were all shown to reenact masculine organizational practices. Findings such as these may assist communication scholars in determining how gender may play a role for other organizational concepts and interactions. By bringing awareness of these issues to the forefront, diversity in leadership and organizational practices may come one step closer to becoming the norm.
References


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APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

1. Please briefly describe your position and job duties.

2. Can you provide me with an overview of your career and how you reached your current position?

3. Can you describe any influential people that helped you in your career? Did you have a mentor or mentors? Please describe them.

4. How would you describe your leadership style, specifically how do you prefer to communicate? Are there any principles that you try to live by?

5. Can you describe a situation in your career where you felt unsure of yourself? Why do you think this was, and how did you get past it?

6. Can you describe what you feel is one of your greatest professional accomplishments? Why?

7. As a woman in your field, do you feel there were certain obstacles and barriers that you had to work to overcome? Please explain.

8. Do you feel that what you do in your day-to-day job is affected by being a woman in a male-dominated career? Why or why not?
## Table 2

Recurring themes exposed by participants

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Emphasized an Ethic of Care</th>
<th>Mentor(s)</th>
<th>Masculinity in Discourse/ Organizational Practices</th>
<th>Emphasized Persistence</th>
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<td>Marsha</td>
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<td>Male &amp; Female</td>
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<td>Jean</td>
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<td>Mandy</td>
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<td>Heather</td>
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APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Title of Project: Analyzing Women’s Discourse in Male-Dominated Professions: How Women Manage their Communicative Choices

Principal Researcher: The researcher for this study is Jordan Karabetsos (Phone number 307-214-2227), graduate student in the Communication and Leadership Studies program at Gonzaga University.

Advisor/Mentor Information: Dr. John Caputo, Chair of the Master’s Program in Communication and Leadership Studies will oversee this study, while Dr. Andrea McCracken, Communication Studies professor, will review the work as well.

Purpose of the Study

While this study is being conducted to fulfill certain requirements for degree award, it is also based off of personal interests and inquiry. Specifically, this study will seek to explore the ways in which successful female leaders in male-dominated career fields manage their communicative choices with a focus on how patriarchal organizational practices may influence those choices. Approximately four (4) female leaders will partake in this research with the goal of uncovering deeper insights into female leadership and communicative practices.

Procedures

The research will be based on one-one-one interviews with each of the four female leaders. Interviews will be unstructured and informal to allow for participants to feel comfortable and free to express themselves openly. Interviews should last approximately one (1) hour and will be recorded and transcribed. The issues discussed with participants will focus on their experiences in their professional lives.

Time

If you agree to be in this study, it will last approximately one (1) hour. You may also be asked come follow-up questions by email or phone that may require up to an additional 30 minutes.

Disclosure of Information

All information and responses provided by participants will be kept confidential and anonymous. The name of participants will remain confidential for the duration of the research process.

Study Withdrawal
If you choose to participate, you may withdraw your permission to the use and sharing of your information at any time. Please notify the researcher if you choose to withdrawal as soon as you are able, either by telephone, email, or in person.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. No payment or compensation will be made for your participation. You also have the right to stop at any time, and there will be no penalties for doing so.

**Contact Information**

You may ask any questions or voice any concerns you may have about this research and study at any time. If you have any questions, comments, complaints please do not hesitate to contact Jordan Karabetsos by phone (307-214-2227) or email (jkarabet@zagmail.gonzaga.edu).

**Signature and Consent to be in the Research**

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read the above information, and that you voluntarily agree to take part in this research.

____________________________________  ___________  ______________________________________
Printed Name    Date  Signature of Participant