Women's Leadership Identity Development in the Public Sector in Azerbaijan: A Grounded Theory Study

by Chilanay Safarli

B.A. in Translation Studies, June 2014, Azerbaijan University of Languages
M.A. in Human Resource Development, May 2016, The George Washington University

A Dissertation submitted to

The Faculty of
The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

May 15, 2022

Maria Cseh
Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Learning

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of The George Washington University certifies that Chilanay Safarli has passed the Final Examination for the degree of Doctor of Education as of March 11, 2022. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

Women's Leadership Identity Development in the Public Sector in Azerbaijan: A Grounded Theory Study

Chilanay Safarli

Dissertation Research Committee:

Maria Cseh, Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Learning, Dissertation Director

Yoshie Tomozumi Nakamura, Assistant Professor of Human and Organizational Learning, Committee Member

Lionel Howard, Associate Professor of Educational Research, Committee Member

Acknowledgments

Undertaking an endeavor such as doctoral studies is impossible without support and encouragement from others. Thus, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the many people to whom I owe gratitude for supporting me in this journey.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my chair Dr. Maria Cseh, who spent countless hours with me during the entire process, which ultimately helped me reach this point in my doctoral journey. Without her support and encouragement, I could not get where I am today! She has been not only an incredible professor, dissertation chair, and mentor but also a true friend and family member during the most challenging times. I will forever be grateful to you for everything you have done for me since the beginning of this doctoral program. I would also like to express my special gratitude to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Lionel Howard and Dr. Yoshie Tomozumi Nakamura, and to external reviewers, Dr. Neal Chalofsky and Dr. Beatriz Coningham, for their wisdom, support, and advice during this process. I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with such incredible faculty members like you. Next, I would like to thank all wonderful faculty members, staff, and colleagues in the program. Special thanks go to Oliver Crocco, Joanna Sztandur, Leslie Kirsch, Anna Marie Siegel, and Farah Al Hinai for always sharing their knowledge and experiences with me. I am grateful for your support and companionship during our doctoral journey together.

I must also thank my senior vice president at the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Anthony Vegliante, for encouraging me to apply for a doctoral program, for allowing me to gain a meaningful experience at work that contributed to my success at the program, for empowering me to apply my knowledge into practice, and for always trusting

me. I will always be grateful to him for his unending support, guidance, ad encouragement.

I would also like to acknowledge the role of my family and friends in this journey. One of my biggest supporters was my late grandfather, Sudja Safarov, with whom I grew up and whose biggest dream was to see me earning my doctorate. Although he was with me psychically when I started this program, he continued to be with me spiritually for the rest of the program. I hope he is proud of me now. Special thanks to my dear grandmothers, Zarnishan Aliyeva and Amina Hasanova, and my dear parents, Vugar Safarov and Sadagat Rzayeva, for teaching me the value of education and love of learning since my childhood. To my fiancé, Ramil Gasimov, thank you for believing in me and being my source of continual support in every way imaginable. Despite living in different time zones with 12 hours difference, thank you very much for staying up late to encourage me to work on my dissertation. To my sister, Fidan Mammadli, thank you for always being there to listen to me, for helping me with anything she could help with, for feeding me with her delicious meals, and for believing in me. I am also appreciative of my dear friends, Aytaj Gasimova and Khagani Karimov, for helping me in this process, discussing ideas with me for hours, and supporting me in any way possible.

Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible without the participation of the eighteen incredible women who agreed to share their stories with me and contributed to enhancing our knowledge about Azerbaijani women's leadership identity development. I sincerely appreciate your time and willingness to discuss your experiences with me openly.

Abstract of Dissertation

Women's Leadership Identity Development in the Public Sector in Azerbaijan: A Grounded Theory Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how women leaders working in public sector organizations in Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity. Given the increase in women aspiring to become leaders in the Azerbaijani public sector and given the lack of research on women leadership identity development in Azerbaijan or other Central Eurasian countries, this study was deemed to be significant in supporting women's leadership identity development.

The study was conducted using a constructivist grounded theory methodology proposed by Charmaz (2006). Eighteen Azerbaijani women leaders holding middle and executive leadership positions in public sector organizations in Baku were interviewed in this study. The following four major axial codes with their corresponding focused codes emerged from the study: (1) Factors impacting leadership identity development (factors inside the family; factors outside the family); (2) gender and leadership identity development in Azerbaijan (gender stereotypes; challenges when you are a woman leader; You are a professional! Forget about your gender!); (3) challenges of working in the public sector; (4) advice to future women leaders and organizations.

The leadership identity development model of Azerbaijani women leaders in the public sector that emerged from the study shows the continuous and constantly evolving nature of the leadership identity development process throughout the lives of the participants. Encouraging relationships and reinforcing experiences are significant elements of the model. The encouraging relationships allowed the participants to engage

in leadership experiences that reinforced and strengthened the development of their leadership knowledge and capabilities as well as the development of their self-efficacy. The socio-cultural norms of the patriarchal society of Azerbaijan where women's role is predominantly perceived to be in running their households and the unique challenges of working in the public sector in Azerbaijan, such as nepotism, long work hours, non-supportive leaders, and lack of room for innovation and independence at work, caused barriers in women's leadership identity development journeys. Paradoxically, the women leaders participating in the study overcame these barriers with the help of their male and female family members and sometimes their male teachers, peers, and leaders in their organizations Hopefully, with more male family members recognizing the leadership abilities of women in their surroundings, patriarchal societal norms will change in the future and more women will have opportunities to develop their leadership identities. The women's leadership identity development model that emerged from this study could serve as a roadmap for supporting women's leadership identity development in different stages of women's lives.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ..... **iii**

Abstract of Dissertation ..... **v**

Chapter 1: Introduction **1**

Purpose of the Study and Research Question 5

Theoretical Framework 5

Summary of the Methodology 8

Limitations and Delimitations 11

Significance of the Study 12

Chapter 2: Literature Review **12**

Literature Review Methodology 13

Leadership Identity Development 16

Women's Leadership Identity Development 23

Women Leadership in Azerbaijan and other Central Eurasian Countries 25

Summary 26

Chapter 3: Methodology **27**

Ontology and Epistemology 27

Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology 28

Participant Selection 29

Data Collection Method and Process 30

Data Analysis 33

Trustworthiness 35

Ethical Considerations 37

Subjectivity Statement 37

Chapter 4: Findings **38**

Description of Participants 39

Axial Code 1: Factors Impacting Leadership Identity Development 40

Axial Code 2: Gender and Leadership Identity Development in Azerbaijan 60

Axial code 3: Working in the Public Sector 70

Axial code 4: Advice to Future Women Leaders and Organizations 75

Summary of Chapter 4 82

Chapter 5: Interpretations **84**

Leadership identity development model 84

Discussion of the Findings 97
Implications for Research 103
Implications for Practice 105
References 112
Appendices 127
Appendix A—Recruitment Email (English Version) 127
Appendix B—Recruitment Email (Azerbaijani Version) 129
Appendix C—Interview Guide (English Version) 131
Appendix D—Interview Guide (Azerbaijani Version) 133
Appendix E—Consent Form (English Version) 135
Appendix G—GW IRB Exempt Registration Memo 141

List of Figures

Figure 1 Leadership Identity Development Model of Azerbaijani Women Leaders in Public Sector 85

Chapter 1: Introduction

While women's participation in the workforce has increased, and women have begun to exceed men in higher education, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in many countries around the world (European Commission, 2019). In Azerbaijan, although the participation of females in the workforce reached 48% (State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan Republic, 2018), leadership positions are held mainly by men. The UNFPA (2018) study revealed that social norms in Azerbaijan assert the gender division of roles with men considered breadwinners and women homemakers, and there is a need for a significant shift in social norms to address disparities in gender representation in leadership.

Geo-politically and geo-culturally located between the East and West, Azerbaijan has a multidimensional national and cultural identity (Tohidi, 2000). Azerbaijan declared its independence in 1918 and became the first secular democratic Muslim-majority country in the Southern Caucasus (Nuriyev, 2008). After being part of the Soviet Union during 1920-1991, the country regained its independence on August 30, 1991. The Caucasian historical and cultural milieu, the Islamic tradition, the Soviet cultural and political influence, and Azerbaijani nationalism have shaped the societal attitudes towards women and their gender roles. One of the unique characteristics of Azerbaijan that is still relevant today is being one of the most secularized and relatively modernized Islamic post-Soviet republics (Heyat, 2006).

During its short independence from 1918 to 1920, Azerbaijan was the first country in the Muslim world that passed a law on July 21, 1919, to allow women to vote

(Swietochowski, 2004). After the annexation by the Soviet Union in 1920, there were increased opportunities for women's education and employment as a result of socialist/communist ideology that supported women's advancement in education and in the workplace and provided healthcare and childcare for women (Pascall & Manning, 2000). Despite of these opportunities and support, female representation in leadership positions remained low (Katz, 2001). After 1991, Azerbaijan's transition from a centralized to a market economy led to a major transformation in labor markets and women's representation in the workforce (Najafizadeh, 2003) and to the reemergence of the traditional practices related to gender roles in the society.

During this period, the private sector, non-existent under communist rule, has developed to play a significant role in national employment. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as of 2018, 23.7% of the working population was employed in the public sector, while 76.3% was employed in the private sector in Azerbaijan. Women constituted 21% and 22 % of the employed population in public and private sectors, respectively (State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan Republic, 2018). While women's participation in the workforce was steadily improving, Azerbaijani women were represented less than Azerbaijani men in leadership positions in both the public and private sectors with even lower representation in the public sector (Asian Development Bank, 2019). Evidence shows that women's participation in economic and public life strengthens economic growth and equitable governance, contributing to an equitable and sustainable economy (Asian Development Bank, 2019). Thus, it is important to ensure that the public sector has a gender balance in leadership positions in order to serve the public of Azerbaijan, consisting of an almost equal

percentage of men (49.9%) and women (50.1%). Increasing women's representation in leadership positions in the public sector will help the country to achieve its goal for gender equality in the labor market, as outlined in its strategies presented in the "Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the Future" Concept of Development (Asian Development Bank, 2019, p. 79.)

Research regarding women leadership has emphasized the skills, characteristics, and abilities needed for leadership (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). However, the male normed paradigms for leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007a) have created questions about the process by which women develop their leadership identities (Ely et al., 2011). Leadership identity is defined as the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others (Gecas, 1982). Leadership identity development refers to the process an individual goes through in coming to see herself/himself as a leader. Epitropaki, Kark, Mainemelis, and Lord (2017) posit that understanding how leaders see and define themselves, as well as understanding the complex ways in which their leadership identities develop, change, and are influenced by social interactions and contexts, can offer unique insights on the drivers of leader behaviors and actions.

According to Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011), individuals hold multiple identities, including professional, family, religious, ethnicity, and gender identities. Gender identity is related to cultural expectations of beliefs, behavior, and feelings associated with male and female social categories (Deaux & Stewart, 2001). Eagly and Karau (2002) found that one of the significant challenges that women face in developing their leadership identity is their conflicting roles of gender and leadership.

Problem Statement

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there was a growing interest in studying leadership identity (Carroll & Levy, 2010; Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue, Ashford, & Cotton, 2009; Eilam-Shamir, Kark, & Popper, 2016; Ibarra, 2004; Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005; Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010). However, the exploration of leadership identity development is relatively new, and it started with Lord and Hall (2005) and Day and Harrison (2007) work who argued that the effectiveness of leadership development depends on the successful integration of leader identity into the self. Conceptual work on leader identity development acknowledges that coming to see oneself as a leader may be different for women (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011; Lord & Hall, 2005). Empirical studies on the leadership identity development of both women and men rarely discuss the differences in the experiences of women and men, and some of the studies (Gibson et al., 2018; Muir, 2014) recommend future research on women's leadership identity development.

Leadership identity development has been studied mainly in the context of developed countries: United States (Brue & Brue, 2018; Day & Harrison, 2007; Ibarra, 2015; Ibarra et al., 2013; Komives & Dugan, 2014; Komives, Owen, Logerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005), the UK (Chui, 2016), Canada (Kwok et al., 2018), Germany (Kerschreiter, 2013; Rappe & Zwick, 2007). Only a few studies were conducted in the context of developing countries, such as China (Zhao & Jones, 2017), Malaysia (Selvarajah & Meyer, 2008), Jamaica (Floyd & Fuller, 2016). However, no studies on women leadership identity development were conducted in Azerbaijan or Central Eurasian (CE) countries, which share cultural and historical similarities with Azerbaijan.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to understand how Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector of Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity. In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research question will be explored:

- How do Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity?

Theoretical Framework

The lifespan approach to leadership identity development presented by Gibson et al. (2018), influenced by Johnson & Murphy ‘s (2011) life-span view of leadership development, and role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders by Eagly & Karau (2002) have informed this research study.

Life-Span Approach to Leadership Identity Development

According to Gibson et al. (2018), early factors and contexts impact the leadership identity development of adults. Based on this perspective, leadership identity development continues and gets refined over the individual's entire life. It is stimulated by the influence, motivation, and support of family members, teachers, and coaches, by the acquisition of leadership skills, and by reinforcing experiences. Both Murphy and Johnson (2011) and Gibson et al. (2018) highlight the role of contextual factors, including societal expectations in impacting the extent to which life experiences of the individuals result in greater development of the leader identity. Murphy and Johnson (2011) posit that the same developmental experiences may prevent one from developing a leadership identity if society does not expect that individual to be a leader. As a result,

that individual loses motivation for pursuing leadership. This approach informs the understanding of leadership identity development of Azerbaijani women as impacted by their lifetime experiences in the Azerbaijani society.

Another study that took a lifespan approach to leadership identity development was conducted by Yeager and Callahan (2016). Considering that the development of individuals as leaders starts before they enter the workforce and employers often rely on their early leadership experiences when making hiring decisions, Yeager and Callahan (2016) used phenomenology to understand the developmental experiences of young adult leaders to find out how their early leadership experiences impacted their leadership identity development. They interviewed five female and five male 18- to 20-year-old participants from the eastern region of Texas who had experience in leadership roles during their senior years of high school. The findings showed that relationships of the participants with others, including authority figures, fellow peers/officers, and organization members facilitated their identities as leaders by providing opportunities for support and validation as leaders. The participants also highlighted the significance of qualities they learned in their families, such as trust, respect, accountability, and fairness for their leadership identity development.

Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice toward Female Leaders

Eagly and Karau (2002) developed a role congruity theory of prejudice toward women leaders to explain attitudinal biases against female leaders. Role congruity theory is based on the social role theory's treatment of the gender roles and their impact on contributing to gender differences in behavior (Eagly et al., 2000). However, role congruity theory goes beyond social role theory to consider the congruity between gender

roles and other roles, especially leadership roles, and to outline key factors and processes that influence congruity perceptions and their consequences for prejudice towards women leaders. The authors define gender role as the collection of both descriptive and injunctive norms associated with women and men in the following way: “Descriptive norms are consensual expectations about what members of a group do, and injunctive norms are consensual expectations about what a group of people ought to do or ideally would do” (p. 575).

According to the role congruity theory, there is a perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership role. The perceived incongruity between gender role and leadership role results in two forms of prejudice: "(a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when a woman enacts it" (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 573). The first type of prejudice stems from the descriptive norms of gender roles, which refer to communal characteristics that perceivers associate with women and the agentic characteristics they believe are required to be a successful leader. Communal characteristics, which are attributed mostly to women, describe a concern with the welfare of others such as “affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). In contrast, agentic characteristics, which are primarily associated with men, include an assertive, controlling, and confident inclination such as “aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, self-confident, and prone to act as a leader” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). Hence, leadership is perceived as more congruent with the male gender role than the female gender role.

The second type of prejudice originates from the injunctive norms of gender roles, which refer to beliefs about appropriate behavior for women. If women leaders violate these beliefs by following the agentic characteristics of their leadership roles and failing to demonstrate communal, caring, and supportive behaviors, this may invite unfavorable evaluations. Thus, women who want to pursue leadership roles face a paradox: On one hand, if they conform to their gender role, they will fail to meet the requirements of their leadership role. On the other hand, if women conform to their leadership roles, they will be evaluated negatively for failing to meet the requirements of their gender roles. Role congruity theory argues that this paradox would lead to a less favorable evaluation of women than men in their potential for leadership positions, attainment of those positions, and a greater challenge for women than men in being recognized as effective in leadership roles. Based on these propositions, Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory offers insights for understanding women's leadership identity development in Azerbaijani patriarchal society.

Summary of the Methodology

Informed by the social constructivist paradigm, this study will utilize a constructivist approach to grounded theory. According to the social constructivist paradigm (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2000), people construct their social realities; thus, the reality is subjective. Charmaz (2009) describes the constructivist grounded theory as a modern revision of Glaser and Strauss's classic grounded theory, which refers to a set of systematic inductive methods for conducting qualitative research aimed toward theory development grounded in participants' views in a study. According to Charmaz (2009), constructivist grounded theory "assumes a relativist epistemology, sees

knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and the grounded theorist, and takes a reflexive stance toward our actions, situations, and participants in the field setting – and our analytic constructions of them" (p. 129).

Charmaz (2014) also notes that if there is no prior research about the topic of interest, a grounded theory methodology is relevant because it allows the researcher to create a theoretical model or construct a conceptual picture of the process or experience. Thus, the grounded theory methodology has been selected for this study because there is no research on women's leadership identity development in Azerbaijan.

The target population of this study will be women leaders who hold leadership positions in public sector organizations in Azerbaijan. The purposeful sampling will be utilized because it allows choosing participants from whom the most information could be obtained for an in-depth study of the central phenomenon of the study (Patton, 1990). The following sample selection criteria described below will be used to recruit participants:

1. Women leaders who hold leadership positions in Grade 10-18 with prior experience in a formal leadership position for at least five years. Grade 10-18 includes middle and senior-level leadership positions in accordance with the Unified Tariff and Specialty Classification Handbook, approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Azerbaijan Republic in 2005.

2. Women leaders who work in public sector organizations located in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, because most of the country's public sector organizations are located in Baku.

Following Charmaz's (2006) guidelines about the appropriate sample size for a grounded theory study, the study aims to recruit 20 participants or until the saturation point has been reached. Based on the author's description of saturation, theoretical categories can be considered saturated "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories" (p. 113). The study participants, who fit the criteria outlined above, will be recruited through professional as well as personal contacts with the public sector organizations such as The State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues, the State Committee on Work with Diaspora of the Republic of Azerbaijan, different ministries in Azerbaijan, specifically the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Taxes, and the Ministry of Economy. If needed, social media, specifically Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, will also recruit participants.

The data collection method of the study will be semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in the Azerbaijani language, which is the native language of both the researcher and the participants. There will be one in-depth interview with each candidate. Each interview will last from 60 to 90 minutes. Due to geographical separation and COVID-19 virus, interviews will be held by utilizing technological tools such as Skype, Whatsapp, or Zoom, which will allow both the interviewee and interviewer to see each other. Calls will be recorded digitally after receiving the participants' consent. After each interview, the researcher plans to write a memo about her feelings and perceptions

that occurred during the interview, such as the interviewee's tone and facial expressions. (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Saldana, 2013). Following Charmaz's (2006) recommendations, the researcher will also be memoing about the process and emerging themes after each interview. Once all interviews are completed, they will be transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Also, since the interviews will be conducted in Azerbaijani, the researcher will translate the transcript into English. Then, to ensure the trustworthiness of the translations, a back translation will be performed by another Azerbaijani speaker who has had previous translating experience.

For data analysis purposes, the study will follow four types of coding, namely initial, focused, axial, and theoretical coding, as suggested by Charmaz (2006). In grounded theory, data collection and analysis tend to co-occur. The process in this study includes a constant comparison method, where the focus is on how emerging themes related to the preceding ones.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study is delimited by its purpose of exploring only the leadership identity development of women in the public sector of Azerbaijan. The study will also be delimited by its research design and sample selection criteria of interviewing only women leaders who hold leadership positions in Grade 10-18, which includes middle and senior-level leadership positions in the public sector organization located in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. The study is limited to women's openness to describe their stories, challenges, and perceptions. (Creswell, 2009). Also, social desirability bias, the likelihood of participants providing responses they perceive as more desirable than their genuine feelings (Beal, 2015), could be another limitation in this study.

Significance of the Study

Given a lack of research on the Azerbaijani women's leadership identity development, this grounded theory study will contribute to the theories of women leadership identity development.

The findings of this study will also help leaders and human resource development professionals to establish organizational structures, policies, and processes that will support women's leadership identity development.

Considering the slowly increasing number of women leaders in Azerbaijan, the findings of this study could serve as a roadmap for women who aspire to hold leadership roles in the public sector.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to understand how Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity. In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research question will be explored:

- How do Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector of Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity?

Although this research study takes a grounded theory approach that ideally does not require a literature review, given that the theory should emerge from the data, Charmaz (2006) emphasized the value of using literature reviews. She notes the importance of understanding the literature related to the phenomenon of the study to prompt the researcher "to make explicit and compelling connections between your [the

researcher] study and earlier studies" and to facilitate the discussion of the findings of the grounded theory study" (p. 168).

This chapter begins by describing the methodology used in the literature review, followed by the results of the literature review that have been divided into three main sections. The first section, leadership identity development, has three subsections: Role-based leadership identity development, social constructivist view of leadership identity development, and a life-span approach to leadership identity development. The second section focuses on women's leadership identity development, while the third section is related to women leadership in Azerbaijan and other Central Eurasian countries. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Literature Review Methodology

Access to the sources for this study was gained through the George Washington University Gelman Library and the Washington Research Libraries Consortium. The following databases were used to review literature pertinent to leadership identity development (LID): ABI/Inform, Gender Studies Database, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Ultimate, Social Science Database, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Psychology Databases, SocINDEX with Full Text, Sociology Collection, ProQuest Central, and Web of Science. Sources included books, conference papers and proceedings, dissertations, theses, government, official publications, reports, scholarly journals, and working papers written in English or Azerbaijani. The literature review also included international reports, gender assessments, and country reports about Azerbaijan prepared by international organizations such as the United Nations, United Nations

Development Program, United Nations Population Fund, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development.

This study followed Cseh's (2020) guidelines about conducting literature reviews for dissertation studies. First of all, articles on women's leadership identity development in Azerbaijan and other countries of Central Eurasia, namely Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, and Georgia, which share sociocultural and political similarities with Azerbaijan, were searched. Using a Boolean search strategy in the above-mentioned databases, the following combination of search terms in the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the sources were used: "leadership identity development" or "leader identity development" or "leadership identity construction" or "leader identity construction" or "leadership identity formation" or "leader identity formation" AND woman or women or female or females AND Azerbaijan or Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan or Tajikistan or Uzbekistan or Armenia or Georgia. Using the search terms in the title, abstract, and keyword sections heightened the probability of finding the articles most relevant to the phenomenon of this dissertation study.

The search with the above-mentioned keywords yielded no results. To expand the search, the keywords "women or woman or female or females" were taken out. However, even in this round of the search, no studies were found. In the next round, to find out if there were any studies on leader identity or leadership identity in these contexts, the following search terms were used: "leader identity" or "leadership identity" AND Azerbaijan or Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan or Tajikistan or Uzbekistan or Armenia or Georgia. Again, the results yielded no studies. In a final round, it was decided

to search for studies on women leadership in these countries by using the following search terms: women or woman or female or females AND leadership or leader AND Azerbaijan or Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan or Tajikistan or Uzbekistan or Armenia or Georgia. This round resulted in 22 studies, but none was conducted in the Azerbaijani context. 19 out of those 22 articles were excluded after reviewing their abstracts because they were focused on political or religious leadership, which is outside the scope of this study. A detailed analysis of the remaining three articles was done. Google Scholar was also explored to identify additional articles as well as published reports, government, and official publications about Azerbaijan. As a result, 16 international reports and government reports related to leadership and women leadership in Azerbaijan were selected.

After completing the search for relevant articles in Azerbaijan and the region, another search using the same process was conducted to find out studies on women's leadership identity development or construction or formation. The search yielded 23 English-language articles. Nine articles were selected for review given that the rest of the 14 articles were focused on political or religious leadership and/or their study population were school-age or traditional-aged students, not adult working professionals.

The search was then expanded by taking out women or women or females from the search. In this new search, the goal was to determine if the studies related to leadership identity development of both men and women reported differences by gender of their experiences. This search resulted in 89 articles. Following the same exclusion criteria outlined above, 40 articles were selected for review. The review of their references also yielded 11 articles, totaling 51.

Leadership Identity Development

It was evident in the literature that the terms leadership identity and leader identity and leadership identity development and leader identity development have been used interchangeably. The meanings of leadership identity development, construction, and formation are also closely aligned. Thus, although this study uses the term "leadership identity development" in the discussion of the literature below, the terms used by the author(s) of the cited studies are used.

Scholars who conducted studies on leadership identity development used various definitions of leader identity and leadership identity, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Definitions of Leadership/Leader Identity

Leadership Identity	Leader Identity
Leadership identity is the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others based on "the group memberships a person holds" (Hogg, 2001, p. 184).	Leader identity is "…the sub-component of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader" (Day & Harrison, 2007, p. 365)
Leadership identity is comprised by three elements: individual internalization in which individuals start to view and identify themselves as leaders; relational recognition, during which the leader identity is strengthened as it is acknowledged by	Leader identity refers to how individuals' thinking about themselves as leaders directly influences their interactions and their leadership behavior (Lord & Hall, 2005)

others; and collective endorsement in which individuals' leader identity is supported and endorsed within a larger organizational context (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).	Leader identity refers to "knowledge, experiences, and self-perceptions," …which are "built through the integration of learning and leading experiences" (Day et al., 2009, p. 184-185).

The literature review revealed the following three main theories that influenced the above definitions of leadership identity and leader identity: Role identity (Gecas, 1982), social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and social construction (Snow & Anderson, 1987) theories. Accordingly, scholars who studied leadership identity development or construction or formation developed their conceptualizations based on these definitions. The interest in studying leadership identity development or leadership identity construction or formation started with conceptual work by Lord and Hall (2005) and Day and Harrison (2007), that viewed the leader development through the lens of role-based identity as informed by the role identity theory (Gecas, 1982). Lord and Hall (2005) conceptualized leadership identity development as progressing through three skill levels from novice, to intermediate, to expert while keeping in mind the individual's experience gained from participating in various personal and professional domains. As one's identity as a leader solidifies with increasing experience, a self-view as a leader should become a more central aspect of one's identity" (p. 596). The authors suggested that shifts in the level of identities occur in parallel with the development of leadership knowledge structures and social processes. A novice leader may have a more generic way

to approach leadership and limited behavioral complexity. They may also be more focused on the individual level of identity work. As a leader gains a better understanding of the impact of his/her behavior on others, the relational level of identity may be activated and subsequently, the collective level. In parallel, the behavioral complexity of a leader's responses increases. Lord and Hall (2005) suggested that the effectiveness of leadership development depends on the successful integration of leader identity into the self. Day and Harrison (2007) agreed that incorporating an "identity lens into leadership development efforts is long overdue" (p. 371). The authors posited that if leadership development is to be effective, it needs to focus on leaders' sense of identity and how it develops because leader identity is the source of meaning from which leaders operate.

DeRue and Ashford (2010) present a social constructivist view of leadership identity development embedded in the social interaction with people. The authors claim that leadership identity is not stagnant, and social interaction among individuals as well as contextual factors cause leader identity to change over time. They refer to this process as identity construction in which individuals go through a cognitive process where they claim leader identity, which can be granted (or not) by others.

Murphy and Johnson (2011) presented a life-span approach to leadership identity development as part of their leadership development model. The authors draw attention to the impact of early developmental factors (i.e., genetics, parenting styles, and early learning experiences such as education, sports, and practice) on individuals' leadership identity development. They also discuss the role of contextual factors (societal expectations, time in history, and the age at which some developmental experiences occur). The authors claim that the same developmental experiences may prevent one

from developing a leadership identity if society does not expect that individual to be a leader. As a result, that individual loses motivation for pursuing leadership. Murphy and Johnson (2011) give the following example in that regard: “In the United States today, a young girl's early experiences might make her a highly motivated and self-efficacious leader. The same girl might not have had the same aspirations in the 1920s or if she were born in Afghanistan” (p. 465).

In the following sections, empirical research informed by role-based identity theory, social construction theory, and the life-span approach to leadership identity development are presented.

Role-Based Leadership Identity Development

The empirical studies informed by the role-based identity theory were conducted in the context of leadership development programs. For example, in a mixed-methods longitudinal study conducted between 2007 and 2009 in South Africa, Moorsi (2014) explored the leadership identity construction of 24 practicing school leaders, deputy principals, and heads of departments who participated in a leadership development program. The findings of the study revealed that three factors impacted leadership identity construction of the participants: (1) the identification and development of personal attributes; (2) the interaction of gender, race, background, and context; and (3) the interaction with mentors and networking among the participants. Based on the findings, the study concluded that leadership identity construction is a non-linear process that is dynamic, relational, and contextual and changes over time. With regards to the gender differences, the study discussed a complex intersection of gender, race, background, and context in impacting participants’ leadership identity development. This

intersection led to unexpected results where women appeared to benefit more from the program despite their less privileged entry status. Especially, African women working in rural contexts turned their disadvantage into empowerment by actively participating in the program and gaining the necessary knowledge and experience.

Muir (2014) conducted a qualitative case study to examine the leadership identity development of participants in a non-degree leadership development certification program. The following three themes emerged from the study: (1) the mentoring partnership–leader identity discovery, (b) leader identity development through critical learning moments, and (c) leader identity development through self-knowledge. Overall, the study emphasized the pivotal role of formal mentoring, which allowed participants to critically reflect on their learning moments, contributing to identifying and developing their leader identity. Although the author presented demographic data by gender (twelve female mentees, nine female mentors, three male mentees, one male mentor), there was no discussion of the findings on the leader identity development by gender.

Middleton et al. (2018) also conducted a quantitative longitudinal study to examine a leader identity (LI) developmental trajectory of 39 executive directors throughout a 5-month formal museum leader development program. The results of repeated measures multilevel modeling, using Hiller's (2005) measure of leader identity, indicate a positive, linear increase in LI across 12-time points. Although gender was included as a control variable (67% of the participants were women), it did not significantly predict LI trajectories when included in the model and thus, was excluded from subsequent analyses. In the beginning, the authors observed LI growth to be linear in nature, indicating a continual development, confirming a stage-based view by Lord and

Hall (2005). However, after participants received their 360-degree evaluations that showed discrepancies between their own views of themselves and others' views of them, the authors noted a non-linear and dynamic LI trajectory, which supported the social constructivist view of leadership identity development by DeRue and Ashford (2010).

Social Constructivist View of Leadership Identity Development

In their conceptual work utilizing a psychodynamic perspective to explore a leader's identity formation and development, Petriglieri and Stein (2012) joined DeRue and Ashford's (2010) stream of research focusing on social and relational conception of the leadership identity development process. They described leadership as a dynamic relationship between leaders and followers. Their work proposed two main characteristics of leaders' development: "internalization of a leader identity within the individual's self-concept and the validation of that identity in social interactions." (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012, p, 1220). They believed that this understanding of leadership identity development contributes to the emergence of leadership at all levels of an organization. In conclusion, their study suggested considering both leaders' reflective capacity and followers' expectations in supporting the identity work of leaders.

Marchiondo, Myers, and Kopelman's (2015) empirical study also tested DeRue and Ashford's (2010) leadership identity development theory using avatar videos with a sample of 200 U.S. working adults. The participants in the study observed the process of claiming and granting that happened between team leaders and their team members in the videos. All team leaders in the videos were male. The authors found statistically significant support for the hypothesis that observer's perceptions of a leader's effectiveness depended on whether team members granted that leader leadership identity.

The authors noted a need to replicate the study with videos in which team leaders are either only female or both female and male to find out if the claiming-granting processes will be different based on the gender of the leader.

Brue and Brue (2018) also built on DeRue and Ashford's (2010) relational view of leadership identity development and analyzed women's only leadership development training to find out how women constructed their leadership identities independently and collectively. The findings of this phenomenological study exploring the perceived experiences of alumni from the state of Oklahoma Career Tech Women in Leadership (OCTWL) program showed that the identity work of those women occurred on personal and social levels. Participants acknowledged the need for leadership validation to own their new leadership identity. This validation came from primarily three major sources: self, fellow participants of the program, and program mentors. Especially for these women, being recognized by mentors for their leadership was crucial to the formation of their leadership identity. The validation enabled the participants to develop, test, and adjust their preferred leadership self.

Life-span Approach to Leadership Identity Development

In their grounded theory study with 12 past presidents of the American Counseling Association, Gibson et al. (2018) took a life-span approach to examine leadership identity development. In terms of the gender of the participants, the authors do not disclose that information due to confidentiality concerns of the research participants. The main finding of their study included three major factors that stimulated the development of leadership identity: (a) influence, motivation, and support of family members, teachers, and coaches to lead; (b) leadership skills; and (c) reinforcing

experiences. The feedback they received from the outside about their leadership skills, self-reinforcing leadership experiences, and inspiration of others led to a greater self-perception of leadership and motivation for leading of the participants. The study concludes by emphasizing that leadership identity development continues and gets refined over the individual's entire life. As a recommendation for future research, the authors discuss a need to further explore the life-span approach to leadership identity development by focusing on women's experiences.

Women's Leadership Identity Development

The literature review of studies on women's leadership identity development, construction, and formation revealed that while most of the research has focused on overall leadership identity (Carroll & Levy, 2010; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Karp & Helgø, 2008), limited research has explored leadership identity in women.

Skinner (2014) used the constructivist grounded theory methodology to explore developmental factors involved in executive coaching of 11 senior women leaders in Australia. The study revealed that the coach as a role model, managing motivation at senior levels, and leading with authenticity were factors that contributed to participants' leader identity formation. The study emphasized the role of executive coaching experience in helping senior women to figure out their personalized approach to leadership rather than internalizing predominant male norms of leading.

Vinas's (2017) dissertation study used a narrative inquiry approach to understand leadership identity development of eighteen senior-level Information Technology leaders who graduated from a women-only leadership program. The participants reflected on the role of the program in facilitating their leadership identity development through (1) the

promotion of practical skills, (2) increased self-awareness and realization of others' perceptions, (3) feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness, and (4) feeling recognized and empowered. The participants also reflected on the impact of their organizational context on their leadership identity development. Three contextual factors that emerged from the study were (1) the availability of advocates (also referred to as supporters), (2) executive visibility, and (3) fit with the organization's leadership culture and ability to lead authentically. As a result of the program, the participants gained a better awareness of gender dynamics in their organizations and as a result, advocated for changes in the system by promoting equality and diversity.

Le Ber et al.'s (2017) book chapter presented how the authors (eight women) created, developed, and sustained their leader identity through a collaborative autoethnography (CAE). Through personal narratives, the women described significant events and the sociocultural contexts that shaped their perspectives, behaviors, and decisions. The findings show that social and personal identities, together with a leadership role, gender role, and other sectional (e.g., race, socioeconomic status) roles within a cultural context, construct these women's leadership identity. The findings of the study supported the argument by Murphy and Johnson (2011) that "early experiences create the foundation for future leadership development to build on" (p. 459), and the development of a leader identity does not follow a straightforward trajectory.

In their book chapter, Ricks-Scott et al. (2017) explored the impact of early leadership experiences (from girlhood to emerging young adulthood) on the leadership identity development of the authors (six professional women) using collaborative autoethnography (CAE) as the methodology. The findings showed that self-confidence,

supportive relationships, and group experiences impacted these women's leadership identity development, and the process they experienced was a non-linear and cyclical one.

Women Leadership in Azerbaijan and other Central Eurasian Countries

Kuzhabekova, Janenova & Almukhambetova's (2018) qualitative study explored the leadership experiences of fifteen female leaders in civil service organizations in Kazakhstan. The authors found that these leaders experienced a conflict of western, neo-liberal values and traditional expectations of women in their society. The participants in the study discussed the barriers to their leadership advancement in civil service in Kazakhstan as being connected to the following societal expectations:

> (1) a woman's primary role is in the family, where she plays the role of a servant of her husband and children, and she should be emotional and caring, while a male is the breadwinner and should be rational and uninvolved; (2) a good leader should have a rational, masculine style of leadership, and hence the role is more appropriate for a male.
>
> (3) a civil service employee is a servant of the state who should sacrifice their personal life for the interests of the job. A woman who chooses to pursue a leadership role in civil service faces conflicting cultural expectations about her performance as a mother and her performance as a civil service leader (p. 1299).

Kuzhabekova and Almukhambetova (2019) conducted another study to understand the leadership experiences of 13 female academic leaders in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. They found that the participants' leadership experiences were impacted by the three dominant cultures (i.e., traditional, Soviet, and Westernized neo-liberal) present

in their countries. They described how they struggled more than their male colleagues because they had to perform the double roles of caregiver at home and professional academic leader in the workplace. They also highlighted informal power networks, described as groups of connected individuals who are representatives of formal bureaucracies involved in an informal exchange of influence or favors for service or cash (Lomnitz, 1988). Because of the unique characteristics of the contexts of this study, the authors argue that existing Western theories fail to explain the barriers to female leadership advancement in these countries and call for more research on women leadership in the Central Eurasian countries.

Kakabadse et al.'s (2018) study of the leadership journey of 18 senior female entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan also revealed the impact of contextual factors, such as institutional voids, unfavorable legal frameworks, and embedded norms (patriarchy, religion, and male dependency) on women's leadership.

Summary

The findings of this literature review revealed that women's leadership identity development or formation or construction is described as a linear and/or a dynamic, cyclical process that is a result of role-based leadership identity development approach, social constructionist view of leadership identity development, and a life-span approach to leadership identity development. The dearth of studies of women's leadership identity development as well as the dearth of studies conducted in the context of the Central Eurasian countries, that included Azerbaijan, showed a need for women's leadership identity development studies in these contexts.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to understand how Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity. In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the following research question was explored:

- How do Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector of Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity?

This chapter describes the researcher's ontology and epistemology followed by the constructivist grounded theory (GT) methodology selected for this study, participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis, the trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations, and the subjectivity statement.

Ontology and Epistemology

The social constructivist paradigm, relativistic ontology, and subjectivist epistemology informed the design of this study and the selection of the constructivist approach to grounded theory methodology. Crotty (1998) defines social constructionism as the epistemological "view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of an interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). This paradigm is based on a relativistic ontology and subjectivist epistemology. According to Creswell (2013), ontology is defined as how the nature of reality is perceived by the researcher, while epistemology is described as how the researcher "knows what she or he knows" (p. 16). In accordance with a relativistic

ontology and subjectivist epistemology, it is believed in this study that Azerbaijani women construct their social realities.

Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology

Charmaz (2009) describes the constructivist grounded theory as a modern revision of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) classic grounded theory, which refers to a set of systematic inductive methods for conducting qualitative research aimed toward theory development grounded in participants' views in a study. According to Charmaz (2009), constructivist grounded theory "assumes a relativist epistemology, sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and the grounded theorist, and takes a reflexive stance toward our actions, situations, and participants in the field setting – and our analytic constructions of them" (p. 129).

Charmaz (2014) also notes that if there is no prior research about the topic of interest, a grounded theory methodology is relevant because it allows the researcher to create a theoretical model or construct a conceptual picture of the process or experience. Thus, because there was no research on women's leadership identity development in Azerbaijan, constructivist grounded theory was selected for this study. It allowed the creation of a theoretical model of the process (Charmaz, 2014) of the leadership identity development of women leaders in the public sector in Azerbaijan.

Grounded theory is especially relevant for exploring multi-faceted, complex phenomena (Martin and Turner, 1986) and revealing contextual factors (Kempster and Parry, 2011). Unlike objectivist grounded theorists, constructivist grounded theorists acknowledge that their theories and explanations are partial and context dependent

(Charmaz, 2009). Thus, constructivist grounded theory methodology allows for exploration of the meanings of actions and their social context.

In addition, for constructivist grounded theorists, it is impossible to create knowledge from a neutral stance. Charmaz (2009) argues that the creation of knowledge is dependent upon "… the perspectives, privileges, positions, interactions, and geographic locations" of the researcher (p. 130). Constructivist grounded theorists take it a step further and encourage researchers to demonstrate a genuine and constant effort to maintain reflexivity during the entire research process.

Given the purpose of this study to understand the leadership identity development process of the participants and given the lack of exploration of this phenomenon in the Azerbaijani context, constructivist approach to grounded theory methodology was selected for this study.

Participant Selection

The target population of this study was women leaders who held leadership positions in the public sector organization in Azerbaijan. The purposeful sampling method was utilized because, as Patton (1990) noted, it allows for choosing participants from whom the most information could be obtained. The following sample selection criteria were utilized:

1. Women leaders who held leadership positions in Grade 10-18 with prior experience in a formal leadership position for at least five years. Grade 10-18 includes middle and senior-level leadership positions per the Unified Tariff and Specialty Classification Handbook, approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Azerbaijan Republic in 2005.

2. Women leaders who worked in public sector organizations located in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, because most of the country's public sector organizations are located in Baku.

The study participants, who fit the criteria outlined above, were recruited (see Appendix A) through professional and personal contacts with the public sector organizations, including different ministries, parliament, and other public sector organizations. Half of the participants were found through a Facebook post shared by the researcher on various platforms that included communities of working professionals. The Facebook post contained the information shown on the recruitment email but in a shorter version, appropriate for Facebook.

When using the grounded theory methodology, Charmaz (2006) recommends the selection of 20-30 participants or until saturation has been reached. Based on Charmaz's (2006) description of saturation, theoretical categories can be considered saturated "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories" (p.113). In this study, saturation was reached after interviewing 18 participants.

Data Collection Method and Process

The data collection method of the study was in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in the Azerbaijani language, which was the native language of both the researcher and the participants. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) was developed for this study and was translated into Azerbaijani. Based on Charmaz's (2006) guidelines, the interview protocol included open-ended questions and probes informed by the study's

theoretical framework while being cognizant of not limiting respondents into pre-determined categories.

Language plays a major role when interviews are conducted in the native language of the participants and translated into the English language. Constructivist grounded theory allows for the exploration of the context-specific understanding of the construct instead of imposing existing framework on the findings. However, as Charmaz (2006) has noted, the researcher still comes to the research with an understanding of the topic impacted by the literature. Thus, although the research was conducted in Azerbaijani language with open ended questions and the special attention was given to develop the emerging model based on the participants' stories, the interview questions still involved western concepts. The researcher pilot-tested the interview protocol with two participants from Azerbaijan before starting the data collection process to check for clarity and comprehensiveness of the questions. After pilot-testing and analyzing the pilot data, the researcher made several changes in the choice of words and sentence structures in the Azerbaijani version to make the interview questions more comprehensible for the participants, who did not have an academic background in the theoretical concepts of this study. For example, the word "identity" translates into "kimlik" in Azerbaijani, meaning a government-issued identification document (ID). Therefore, instead of having a word-by-word translation, the researcher described the word "identity" in the context of leadership identity. Also, the word "leader" usually refers to the president of the country in Azerbaijan. Therefore, since the beginning of the process of recruiting the study participants until the end of all of the interviews, the researcher described the focus of the study by placing the concepts of "leader" and "leadership" in the organizational context.

This approach helped with recruiting the participants because not many of them who held middle to executive leadership positions thought of their roles as leaders in this regard.

Due to geographical separation and the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were held using technological tools such as Whatsapp or Zoom, which allowed both the interviewee and interviewer to see each other. Two participants requested to have the interview without using the video feature of Whatsapp. Each participant was interviewed for 60 to 120 minutes.

Prior to each interview, each participant was emailed the Consent Statement written in Azerbaijani. Calls were recorded digitally after receiving the participants' consent. All participants allowed the interviews to be recorded. When participants requested interview questions prior to the meeting, the interview questions were sent to them.

After each interview, the researcher recorded her memo informed by Saldana's (2013) and Bernard and Ryan's (2010) recommendations in order to capture her feelings and perceptions, for example, about the interviewee's tone and facial expressions appropriately. During the interviewing process, the researcher listened to each recording before the next interview. Once all interviews were completed, the researcher manually transcribed and translated each interview into English. Then, to ensure the trustworthiness of the translations, a manual back translation was performed by Azerbaijani and English speaker who had previous translating experience. This process showed no major differences in meaning in the translations.

Data Analysis

The study followed the grounded theory analytic strategy described by Charmaz (2006) for data analysis. The constant comparative method where the researcher thought and took notes (memo) about how emerging themes were related to the preceding ones served as the base of this analytic strategy. This process continued until the research reached saturation, meaning there was no new information. This analytic strategy included four types of coding, namely initial, focused, axial, and theoretical coding.

Initial coding was the first step in the analysis process. In this step, the researcher read each transcript for the first time by focusing on how the interviewee described her leadership identity development incidents and how this description was related to the research question. While conducting initial coding, the researcher was engaged in theoretical memoing and made notes about how different codes were related to each other. According to Charmaz (2006), in initial coding, "you compare incident with the incident, then as your ideas take hold, compare incidents to your conceptualization of incidents coded earlier. That way, you can identify properties of your emerging concept" (p. 53). The primary rationale behind using the incident-by-incident coding was that the actions and stories of participants might not be “amenable to line-by-line coding" (p. 53).

The researcher coded the data and kept memos using MAXQDA software. This software allowed all the interview transcripts to be in one platform and eased the navigation between them. Also, the software allowed various ways of coding, such as in-vivo coding or free coding. In this way, all the initial codes with their data excerpts were in one platform and could be easily exported into Word or Excel.

During initial coding, the researcher captured the data through mainly in vivo coding, where the actual words of the participant were used as a code name. In vivo coding, which is particularly common in grounded theory studies, allowed for identifying the social environments to which the participants belonged and uncovered the gender stereotypes within those environments. Considering that this study was conducted in the Azerbaijani context, in vivo coding facilitated a specific understanding of that context. In combination with in vivo coding, the initial coding utilized emic codes and etic codes that were informed by the theoretical frameworks of the study when relevant. As a result of this coding process, 709 initial codes emerged from the study.

Compared to the incident-by-incident codes as part of the initial coding, focused codes involved using the most important and repeated prior codes. As Charmaz (2006) noted, "focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely" (p. 57). This process involved some back-and-forth consideration about what makes analytic sense while moving through the data. As a result of focused coding, the number of codes was decreased from 709 initial codes to 95 focused codes, which were eventually grouped under 17 focused codes.

The third phase of coding was axial coding. According to Charmaz (2006), "axial coding relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding" (p. 60). As a result of this coding process, following four axial codes emerged: (i.e., (1) Factors impacting leadership identity development (factors inside the family; factors outside the family); (2) Gender and leadership identity development in Azerbaijan (gender

stereotypes; challenges when you are a woman leader; You are a professional! Forget about your gender!); (3) Working in the public sector; (4) Advice to future women leaders and organizations).

During the theoretical coding, the relationship between the categories identified during the axial coding was explored, and this exploration contributed to the development of the theory. As part of this theoretical coding process, MAXQDA's MAXMaps functionality was used to create a concept map, which was helpful in the sense-making of the data and construction of the theory.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the four criteria described by Charmaz (2006) for evaluating the grounded theory-credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness- was followed. Credibility includes familiarization with the topic and setting, the sufficiency of data, including the number and depth of observations to support claims, systematic comparisons between observations and between categories. These broad categories cover a wide variety of empirical observations, logical connections between the collected data and the research argument and analysis, and finally, a richness of description of the data and extensive evidence to allow the reader to independently evaluate and agree with the research claims. In order to understand women's leadership identity development and the context of Azerbaijan, the researcher conducted the literature review as outlined in Chapter Two. Also, in line with the grounded theory methodology, the researcher used constant comparative analysis to develop broad categories grounded in the data collected and connect them. In addition, by following the roadmap of constructivist grounded theory, the researcher constantly reflected on her

assumptions and their potential impact on the study (Charmaz, 2006). During data collection and data analysis, memoing helped to capture those assumptions.

According to Charmaz (2006), originality refers to the newness of categories that provide fresh insights, novel conceptual interpretation of data, the social and theoretical significance of the results, and the extent to which the evolving theory challenges, advances, and clarifies the current understanding of the phenomenon under consideration. In order to determine the originality of the emergent theory, the researcher referred to the literature provided in Chapter Two as a comparison point.

Resonance addresses the following questions: (a) do categories demonstrate the richness of the studied phenomenon? (b) have the study exposed assumed meanings, (c) does the study draws connections between larger institutions and individual lives of the participants, and (d) do the study participants or people who share their conditions understand the study and its deep insights. The researcher used thick, rich descriptions to support analysis and findings and create the emerging leadership identity development model. To ensure the richness of the data, while analyzing the data, the researcher paid attention to see if she had gathered enough data that allowed her to identify categories with the depth of experiences to support those categories. This thick description also contributes to the transferability of the study. In this study, the researcher provided a thick description as well as a thorough description of the context in which the study was conducted.

The final criterion for evaluating the grounded theory is usefulness which involves (a) whether the study provides clear interpretations that can be used by people in their daily lives, (b) whether the emerging categories of the study offer general processes,

(c) whether the researcher has examined implicit implications of these processes, (d) whether the study sparks interest in continuing research in other major areas and (e) finally, how the study contributes to theory and practice (Charmaz, 2006). By advancing an understanding of women's leadership identity development based on participants' views, this study aims to address a gap in the literature about women's leadership identity development in the particular context of Azerbaijan and guide women who aspire to hold a leadership role in the public sector in their pursuit of leadership and identification of themselves as leaders.

Besides these criteria, in line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendation, the researcher also ensured an audit trail with raw data, field notes, analytic memos, coding and analysis processes, and protocols. This contributes to the confirmability of the study, which refers to the extent to which others can confirm the study data and its analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality was maintained in this study by assigning pseudonyms to each participant. The researcher saved all study records on her private and secure computer protected by password access. All data were presented in aggregate form in the study. The researcher did not

start data collection until the IRB committee approved the dissertation proposal.

Subjectivity Statement

Being born and raised in Azerbaijan, I have assumptions about existing socio-cultural norms about gender in Azerbaijan and their potential impact on women's leadership identity development. I did not have formal leadership experience in

Azerbaijan, but I have been surrounded by immediate family members and friends who have held middle and senior-level leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan.

Also, being a millennial, I expected to see differences between younger women born in the independent country of Azerbaijan, who have similar education and work experiences to mine and older women who were born, raised, were educated and started working during the Soviet time. As I interviewed the participants, I consciously did not let my experiences impact the way I anticipated or interpreted the participants' responses. I refrained from engaging in a dialogue with participants whose responses were different from my views on the topic of discussion. To check my assumptions during the whole study, I used a continuous process of memoing to ensure that I bracketed my assumptions to the best of my ability. This helped me do my analysis through critical eyes and make necessary adjustments.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to understand how Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity. This chapter starts with the description of the participants, followed by the presentation of the four major axial codes with their corresponding focused codes that emerged from the data: (1) Factors impacting leadership identity development (factors inside the family; factors outside the family); (2) gender and leadership identity development in Azerbaijan (gender stereotypes; challenges when you are a woman leader; You are a professional! Forget about your gender!); (3) challenges of working in the public sector (nepotism, leadership styles in public sector organizations, lack of room

for innovation and independence at work, and long work hours); (4) advice to future women leaders and organizations. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Description of Participants

Eighteen Azerbaijani women participants who became leaders in various government and non-profit organizations in Azerbaijan participated in this study. The participants represented diverse ages, educational backgrounds, and professions. They held leadership positions in public sector organizations, such as ministries, non-profit organizations, and government organizations. The age of the participants ranged from 36 to 66 years old. Nine of them were between 36 and 42 years old, and nine were between 52 and 66 years old. Participants' years of experience in leadership positions ranged from 12 years to 39 years.

The participants grew up in different regions of Azerbaijan, including big cities, urban, and rural areas. Some of them grew up as members of internally displaced persons under challenging conditions. Some of them grew up as members of IDP (internally displaced persons) under challenging conditions. IDP in the Azerbaijani context is defined as “any person who has moved to another place of Azerbaijan by being forced to leave his/her permanent residence within the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan in connection with military aggression.” (UNHCR, 2009, p. 16).

The participants were also diverse coming from different educational backgrounds. All participants received university degrees, ranging from bachelor's to Ph.D. in various fields, including international relations, medicine, law, history, accounting, marketing and communications, statistics, human resources, economics, political science, engineering, and pedagogy. Eight of the study participants received a

degree or attended certification programs in different countries, such as the UK, European Countries, Russia, and the US.

Given a limited number of women holding high leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan, it was critical to ensure their confidentiality in this study. Thus, since this study was conducted to fulfill the doctoral degree in an American university, each participant was given pseudonyms using American names instead of Azerbaijani names.

Axial Code 1: Factors Impacting Leadership Identity Development

This section discusses the axial code factors impacting leadership identity development mentioned by the participants. This axial code describes the meaningful ways in which the significant people and events in the lives of these participants impacted their development of leadership identity. The ways in which each of these factors impacted these participants were unique to each individual. However, overall, the people with whom participants had meaningful relationships either noticed and encouraged the participants' leadership potential or supported the continuous development of their leadership identity. This main axial code is explained through two main focused codes: 1) Leadership identity development factors *inside* the family, and 2) leadership identity development factors *outside* the family.

Leadership Identity Development Factors inside the Family

A common factor among all the study participants was the crucial role family members, including immediate and extended family, played in developing their leadership identity since childhood. Childhood was an essential stage in the participants' lives because of the influence of family culture on the formation of self. Fathers, mothers,

grandmothers, grandfathers, siblings, and husbands were the main socializing agents that cultivated their leadership identity.

Role of Fathers. A distinctive factor among all the participants was that they recalled and highlighted the role of their fathers in influencing, motivating, and supporting them to be successful since childhood. Each participant described the role of their fathers in encouraging them to study well at school and university, providing the initial push to become involved in leadership positions at school and extracurricular activities, developing their sense of self as leaders, and providing the foundation of values, ethics, and behaviors as role models from which participants' leadership identity developed.

Reflecting on the early years of their lives, participants recalled the role of their fathers in their daughters' education, which was not the case for girls in many families during the time [pre-independence from the Soviet Union] majority of the participants grew up. For example, Mary recalled the influence of her father as an aspiration to study well at school:

> In our village, girls were not allowed to study as a cultural practice. However, my father was a teacher and said that I would support my daughter's education as far as she wanted to go. One of the reasons I became a leader was indeed my father. He was a teacher at school. When he used to teach us, he would start each class by asking me to explain what we learned during the last class to my classmates. At that time, I was not happy that he always put me on the spot and was very hard on me compared to other students. However, later I realized why he was doing it and how much those experiences prepared me for later life challenges. He always stood

behind me and continued supporting me throughout my life until he passed away. After I lost him, it felt like I had lost my biggest supporter.

Mary believed that if she was born into another family in that village who prevented their daughters from getting even elementary education, she could certainly not be where she was today.

Similarly, Elizabeth reflected on the positive impact of her father on her education:

> My father was an education specialist in the remote city we grew up. He valued education and educated people a lot. If I got a score of four out of five in my classes, he would be upset. Thus, I always did my best to get a good score to make him happy.

Melinda was another participant who believed that her father's role in her education was profound. Her father was also a schoolteacher and gave her a good education when she did not have educational resources as a member of IDP (internally displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan) family growing in one room with five other family members. Despite all challenges, she continued her education, and her father supported her through the whole process. She further mentioned that given the environment in which she grew up, when somebody brings up not having proper conditions to study or be successful as an excuse, she always told them, "I think you did not have a desire because growing up in poor conditions is never an excuse."

Olivia also noted that despite her father being a diplomat and traveling for long periods, she and her education were always her father's priority. Whenever he was at home, he used to monitor her progress at school and her extracurricular activities. She believed these discussions served as the foundation of her knowledge, skills, and abilities to execute

her current role as a leader. Olivia also emphasized that "if my family did not support my journey, I could not come to such an influential position in the society. The family's support, particularly the father's support, is crucial for any girl in our society."

It was also explicit in these stories that from an early age, the influence of a father who treated his daughter as an individual by paying attention to her thoughts and desires was profound in her formation as a confident woman. While reflecting on her father's role, Grace remembered family dinners in which her father always asked her and her siblings about different world countries, their histories, and cultures. He held conversations where children were encouraged to discuss with each other and express their opinions. This expanded her worldview and helped her to explain her thoughts with confidence. Also, when Grace moved to Russia when she was seven years old to stay there for a few years with her family, these skills that she acquired through her interactions with her father helped her catch up with children at school in Russia. She remembered that time as follows:

> It was a completely different environment. I was a child back then. When I arrived there, I noticed tall and confident girls of my age around me. I felt deep inside that I had to be very strong so that they did not look down on me. I gained their respect in such a short time. People who grew up with me there still call me, and we keep in touch.

Grace also recalled her elementary school years during which her father used to give her different kinds of projects to work on besides school homework. When she asked her father why he used to give these tasks to her while he allowed her siblings to play outside, her father, who was a diplomat for years, answered: "I can sense that spirit and potential in you. I know you will continue my way." Grace emphasized how inspiring

receiving this affirmation from her father was for her. Although she lost her father, she remembers her father's words in any challenge. The moral of her story, as expressed by her, was that "For girls, it is crucial to be respected, trusted, and supported by family members, especially fathers during childhood. This contributes to their formation as confident women, whom others will always respect in the society."

Similarly, Alice shared,

> My father always wanted to have a daughter. This was unusual for Azerbaijan for that time to dream of having a daughter. However, he was very demanding. He used to get upset when he saw me crying because of something. He just wanted me to be strong. Later I realized that it is the same in real life. We should calm down and resolve all issues with a clear and calm mind. We use the word "kişi kimi" (strong like a man) to describe someone strong in our language. I find this word discriminatory and unfair to women, but since we use it in our daily vocabulary, I wanted to note that my father helped me to be "like a man" (strong).

Alice also highlighted the importance of the environment where she lived for a short period and had similar interactions with her father. For several years during childhood, she lived in Russia with her family. It was easier to be "more independent and confident to express ideas" with her father's support in an environment where women's education and integration into the work-life was crucial.

For some of the participants, their fathers served as role models influencing their motivation for pursuing specific paths and becoming leaders. Patricia was one of these women who discussed his father's influence as an inspiration to acquire an educational background and career in sports. As a sports professional, her father was the one

responsible for sparking her passion for the sport. Her father's enthusiasm for sports was a part of Patricia's early childhood identity. This passion was later nurtured through her involvement in physical education classes at school, particularly when it was not appropriate for girls to love sports or be physically active. She described that time as follows: "There were very few opportunities for girls outside of the compulsory physical education classes at my school. Some parents at that time even wrote notes to the principals to excuse their daughters from physical education classes. It was a different mindset, a different time." However, with the support of her parents, particularly her father, Patricia was lucky to participate in sports-related classes, which encouraged her to take this path in her future education and career. Also, through these experiences and conversations with her father, Patricia came to understand leadership concepts, some of which include being part of the team, responsibilities of team leaders, resolving conflicts among team members, and clear communication.

Other women who explicitly talked about their fathers as role models for their pursuit of leadership were Emily and Linda. Emily described her father as a young and wise man from whom everybody sought advice and spoke highly. Since she was a child, she always dreamed of being like her father, someone everybody respected. Linda also described her admiration for her father, a law professional, stating that he was her role model. Growing up and seeing her father as a lawyer had an impact on her career as a lawyer. Before deciding to be a lawyer, she wanted to be a surgeon. She recalled how her father, being a conservative person, was against it because "for her father, being a surgeon woman means to be called for a surgery in the middle of the night." Despite this, she started studying medicine, but she dropped off and applied for a law program in the middle of the

program. She believed that her interest in law derived from her interactions with her father during childhood and seeing him as a role model.

Role of Mothers. Although all participants particularly emphasized the role of their fathers in their lives, four of the participants highlighted the unique role of their mothers in their development as leaders. The overarching advice these women received from their mothers was to get a good education, establish a successful career, and become financially independent. The participants who grew up with these messages of their mothers discussed how their mothers were unable to receive education or establish a career due to several reasons, such as growing up during World War II or pressure for early marriages. Most of these mothers who were not able to realize their dreams were the ones who grew up in rural areas where they had fewer opportunities to achieve their goals. However, independent of whether the participants' mothers were able to achieve their dreams or not, all the participants' mothers were great advocates and supporters to their daughters' education and achievements. The participants also wanted to realize what their mothers had been unable to do, as illustrated by the following examples.

Anna was one of these women who stressed the motivation and support that she has received from her mother. She indicated, "As my mother has been a housewife and has experienced its challenges, she always encouraged me to study well and have a successful career. She wanted me to be financially independent. I did not know why she was doing it [messaging] that time, but now I understand."

Like Anna, Mary grew up hearing her mother's advice about the importance of being an independent, educated, and successful woman. As her mom grew up during World War II and did not have a chance to receive an education, she wanted her daughter

to be educated. Thus, realizing her mother's dream was her constant motivation throughout the whole journey.

Karen, who grew up in a family with uneducated parents, particularly a mother who did not have writing and reading skills, described her family, particularly her mother's role in her education and her sisters' education. Her mother was forced to leave school in the second grade because she was doing well at school, and her parents were worried that this was not good for girls during that time. As her mother was not given a chance to study, she did her best to support Karen's education. Karen still recalls her mother's words: "Get an education. It is a beautiful feeling." After losing her mother, her elder sister became her "pathfinder."

Catherine also reflected on her conversations with her mother in the kitchen since she was a child: "When my mother was cooking in the kitchen, she was telling me that I had to study well at school, earn my own money and become financially independent when I grew up. We never had any discussion about my future partner or my marriage. All she was telling me was to be financially independent and successful first."

Another emerging topic within the discussion on mothers' role in women's lives was the support they received from their mothers to bring up their kids during later stages of their lives. Alice discussed the time in which she had a newborn baby, worked full time, attended graduate school in the evening, and came home extremely tired with no energy. During those times, her mother used to take care of her kids. She attributed her successful and uninterrupted career to the support of her mother. Rose also reflected on her mother's continuous support, especially when she was divorced with one child and had to work long hours to bring home money. She noted that besides her mother's

support with her child and home responsibilities, Rose always relied on her mother's life experience to make decisions about her life. For Rose, her mother was a "life guide."

Unlike the participants described above, some participants grew up with conservative mothers, and their behavioral messages aligned with traditional role expectations. However, one commonality about their stories was that their mothers never pushed them to do anything they did not want to. They were just worried that their daughters would not be a good fit for society. For example, Patricia described her experience growing up with conflicting messages from her modern and open-minded father and conservative mother. Her mother, who grew up in a religious family in a remote village, was worried about her career in sports since it was primarily associated with men. Her mother was concerned that society would not accept it well. However, Patricia did not describe this as a restriction or pressure from her mother. She highlighted that growing up with a modern father and conservative mother created a good balance in our family through which we maintained traditional family values in Azerbaijan and a modern and progressive approach to issues because of Soviet education.

Elizabeth also remembered her early experiences and her mother's concerns about Elizabeth's future marriage life. As Elizabeth was focused on her studies at school, she did not have time to do housework or cook. Her mother used to scold her for not doing housework. In those instances, her father used to tell her mother not to interfere with her education because, for him, girls' education was much more important than their ability to do housework. He believed girls could always learn that later.

Role of Husbands. The role of the husbands was another factor that positively impacted women's leadership identity development journeys, as emphasized by 16 out of

18 participants. The husband's role was the most cited factor after the role of the father. While reflecting on the role of their husbands, participants mostly talked about their husbands' help with family responsibilities, their affirmation of their wives' leadership, and continuous support for their education and self-development. For example, Patricia identified herself as a happy woman with a supportive husband. When she was given an opportunity to receive an education abroad by the organization she worked for, she wanted to refuse it, thinking of her responsibilities as wife and mother of their son. She recalled that time as follows:

> When I shared the opportunity with my husband at a dinner table, he asked what I would do if he were given such an opportunity. I said, "of course, I would encourage you to go, and I would be a mother and father to our son." He then said: "I am saying the same to you. Go and do not worry about us. I will be both mother and father to our son.

As she reflected on this memory, she expressed how much she appreciated her husband's support for her education. She called this "qadın xoşbəxtliyi" ("female happiness") in Azerbaijan. She thought families like hers should be examples in Azerbaijani society, not those who oppressed their girls and wives. Similarly, Grace and Anna gave credit to their husbands for their support and noted that if their husbands did not support them and help them bring up kids and share life responsibilities, they could not get where they were today in their careers.

The participants also discussed the support they received from their husbands in their self-development as leaders. In this regard, Julia noted:

> I am grateful to my husband because he never prevents me from doing anything. I am independent. I can go to any country I want without any problem for work or education purposes. He is proud of me. At the beginning of our marriage, I used to go to work meetings in the evening. I used to take him with me. I used to ask him to join me to discuss the meeting after that. We are more like friends.

Anna, who worked in the same organization as her husband, also thanked her husband for always encouraging her to attend conferences and training for her self-development. However, she also added that despite his support, she could not spend as much time as her husband on her self-development because, as a mother, there were certain things that she had to do, and her husband could not assist her in those matters.

Similar to Julia and Anna, Emily also talked about her husband's role in her career, stating:

> When I was offered to be the department head, I was hesitant because it would require a lot of domestic and international travel. I texted my husband and told him that I was offered the position. His response was, "Accept if you want to." He supported this promotion because he joined me in my prior international visits, met our team, and realized how valuable my job was. Thus, when I received the offer, he supported it. I always felt the support of my family: my parents' support in childhood and my husband's support later.

Finally, Catherine explained that her decision to become a leader in the public sector was influenced by her husband, who was also her best friend, coach, and significant support. She trusted her husband so much that she would take whatever advice he gave without hesitation.

Another emerging topic within this discussion was conservative husbands who did not necessarily support their wives' education and career aspirations at the beginning of their marriages but later became on their side. Within these stories, women described their ways of changing their husbands' minds and getting their support.

One of these women was Linda. She believed that clear communication without the involvement of emotions is the key to success. Given that her profession involved fighting against gender-based discrimination and violence, she noted that "If I could not establish a healthy relationship with my husband where my rights as a woman were protected, and I was respected as a woman, I would not be able to help other women who experienced the discrimination and violence." She also shared the following personal story in this regard:

> I used to go on many trips a month. When my husband was invited to weddings while I was abroad, he used to say that she was ill to the people who were asking about me. He said, in our society, nobody could understand why I sent you abroad alone, and their opinion would become a problem. Our family is liberal. But sometimes, I involuntarily hear "*what would others say*" from my father or my husband.

Alice shared another interesting story in this regard. She did not give up on her career when her fiancé asked her to quit her job after marriage and eventually received her husband's support. She said:

> After we got engaged, my fiancé told me that I did not have to work anymore once we were married. That was the first time we argued. I would like to tell all women that they must defend their position at that time. Because if they do not protect their position at that moment, that means everything is over. I patiently explained to him

> my desire to have a successful career and support my husband financially to have a good life together. Honestly, in Azerbaijani realities, it was a significant factor for my husband to agree with me because he could have said, "Ok, it is over, you are not working." Maybe that is why many of our successful women who have established promising careers do not have families. I always tell the girls to find a man who would understand their desires and respect them.

Mary was another participant with a conservative husband who did not support her decision to pursue another university degree with two kids. She noted that her husband's family was on her side during this time. According to Mary:

> Women were not allowed to work at that time. So, my husband's restriction was not rare. However, my late brother-in-law, a very educated person, told him not to prevent me from getting an education. My mother-in-law and sister-in-law also helped me raise kids when I had a lot of schoolwork. If my husband's family did not support my decision and changed my husband's opinion, I could not do anything because at that time (during the 1980s), you could not explain to anyone that you wanted to divorce because of this reason.

Role of Grandparents. The role of grandfathers and grandmothers was less cited than the roles of parents and husbands, but the ones who reflected on their interactions with their grandparents described their role in encouraging women to study well at school and being good examples of leaders.

For example, Catherine reflected on her grandmother's role in her upbringing and success at school. She noted that every time she came home from school, she told her grandmother that "I got score 5 (A)". Seeing her happy when she shared this news with her

was her motivation to get A's all the time and be successful at school. Another participant who was influenced by her grandmother was Emily. Although she wanted to be a lawyer at school until she was in the 9th grade, as she observed her grandmother helping people as a doctor, she changed her mind and decided to be a doctor. Thus, she pursued a degree in medicine. She added that her grandmother's passion for saving lives had been her lifetime motivation.

Both Emily and Linda also stressed the role of their grandfathers as role models. Both shared a similar opinion that growing up with grandfathers who were respected by family and community and observing their grandfathers' interactions with those people encouraged them to become leaders like them. Both wanted to be influential and respected like their grandfathers in the future.

Thus, through the experiences mentioned above and interactions with the family members, the participants felt supported to pursue the education and career path they desired, developed personal skills and self-confidence in their abilities, and received affirmation from adults who were important influences in their lives. Thus, relationships with family members significantly impacted women's leadership identity development.

Leadership Identity Development Factors outside the Family

Other people and developmental events outside the family also contributed to the participants' leadership identity development and emerged as the second focused code within the axial code factors impacting leadership identity development. These factors included teachers at school, support of their leadership at work, their peers (groupmates at the university and friends), and self-development through training programs and conferences. These factors encouraged them to pursue leadership roles, challenged them

to think critically about their leadership views, and contributed to their leadership identity development.

Role of Teachers at School. From the early years of school, the influence of teachers who believed in them and gave them opportunities to practice leadership was significant in the participants' stories. Through their roles as class leaders and interaction with their classmates and teachers in these roles, the participants began to develop a sense of what it means to be a leader. Patricia, one of the participants who believed that her initial leadership qualities were formed at school, highlighted the role of her teachers in helping her to be a responsible and confident individual. Her teachers assigned her as a class leader. She believed this assignment put responsibilities on her shoulder. For example, when her classmates broke a glass, she felt responsible for explaining it to the teacher and resolving the issue. She mentioned that when she held this leadership role and was noticed and valued by her teachers, she developed the self-confidence to pursue more leadership opportunities later in life.

Like Patricia, another participant whose teacher gave her a class leader role was Linda. She reflected on that experience as follows:

> When my teacher gave me this role and trusted my ability to lead the class, I felt responsible for taking care of people. When any of my classmates experienced bullying, I protected them and made sure it did not happen again. As I executed this role, I realized how much I enjoyed it. I also realized that my teachers agreed with me on many matters. I have always had a positive reputation at school.

Interestingly, her passion motivated her to be a lawyer in the future. So, now, she is professionally defending many people as a lawyer. She also added that "I started to

sense the leadership in me when I saw the results of my hard work at school, which my teachers recognized."

Emily and Mary also discussed the role of their teachers in their development as leaders during school years. One commonality in their experiences was that they both had a tendency to be noticed and praised by teachers. Thus, they worked so hard and always did something extra to be the best-performing students and recognized by teachers. Their teachers also gave them class leader roles during school years, reinforcing their leadership identity development. Emily recalled that experience as follows:

> When the teacher praised other students at school, I always did something extra to be noticed, praised, and the number 1 student in the classroom. For example, I wrote two pages when the teacher asked me to write a one-page essay. I saw the result of my hard work and was assigned by my teacher as the class leader. When I grew up and worked in an organization, I had the same approach to my work. The same happened there as well. My immediate manager noticed my potential and gave me my first formal leadership position. I believe my experience at school and my leadership role assigned by my teacher gave me motivation and confidence to continue that approach when I was an adult.

Leadership Support at Work. Several participants discussed the role of the leadership in their organizations, particularly their direct managers, in trusting them with leadership positions and supporting them throughout the whole process. Those people served as mentors to the participants and helped them make meaning of their experiences. These mentors also contributed to developing an environment where participants felt comfortable learning to communicate their thoughts, relate to their peers, and be

successful as a team. One of those examples was Barbara, who discussed the positive impact of her current work environment, particularly the organization leader, on her leadership development:

> My leader trusts me a lot. I am more confident to do things when I know that I have leadership support. My leader is Western-educated which has impacted his work attitude and the culture he has created inside the organization in a positive way. For example, I am not afraid to say what I think because I know he will not misunderstand me. Maybe you must think twice before saying something in some public organizations, but not in my organization. I am not that person who would survive in that kind of environment.

She also added that "My leader always tells me that he is on my side. When you know that he gives you full support, you want to do your best for the organization."

For many of the participants, encouragement and support from leadership helped them gain a sense of confidence in themselves and challenged them to get involved with leadership opportunities they may not have considered on their own. Mary discussed the role of the head of the department in her progression to the leadership position. She noted that she would be “forever grateful to him for his support and kindness.” At the beginning of her career, when she did not have self-confidence, her immediate manager gave her a lot of responsibilities and developed her as a leader. She also added that when he offered her to be the department head for the first time, Mary refused it, thinking she did not have enough experience to do that. However, her manager came to her house and insisted on accepting the position. That is how she had started her first leadership position, which

was the foundation of her future leadership roles. She admitted that her leadership identity was developed through these experiences.

Another thing she learned by observing her leader was the importance of decision-making. Mary stated that "leadership is an ability to make the right decisions at critical moments and take responsibility for those decisions." She believes leaders should take responsibility for their decisions, even when they make wrong decisions. By doing that, they will gain the trust of their employees.

Margaret and Karen had similar experiences with their directors. Margaret reflected on the time when she applied for her first full-time job as a new graduate. In her interview with the hiring manager, she was offered a managerial position instead of the specialist position she was applying for. She mentioned being shocked when she received that offer and admitted that “until today I do not know what that person saw in me, but I thought it was a huge responsibility for someone like me with limited experience. However, as I worked on tasks and did well, I realized that I could do this work. After that, I was not that scared anymore."

Karen, who worked in the law field, experienced a similar situation with her director. Her director promoted her to a managerial position within one month of her time in the organization. She thought in her early 20s she did not have enough knowledge and experience to execute the job. However, she mentioned that "when the manager gave me this position, he probably saw something in me that I did not know about myself. Since then, I have done my best to deserve that trust.” She also added that the following statement by her director had been her lifetime motivation: “Women have the best sense of justice. I do not doubt that you will be successful in your role.”

The Role of Peers. The influence of peers in these participants' leadership identity development emerged as another sub-code within the topic of leadership identity development factors outside the family. Numerous participants described their peers as groupmates and friends who encouraged them to become involved, take on various roles, and run for leadership positions.

For Anna, her university mates played a significant role in her development as a leader. Anna stated that having bright students around her who always developed themselves motivated and created an environment for a healthy competition. Anna also shared an interesting experience that impacted her development as a leader:

> My groupmates used to see me in high leadership positions. I never thought that way about myself. Maybe people could see it better. Their confidence in me inspired me a lot. I always remember our conversations with them.

Similarly, Melinda discussed the role of women's community of practice they established in the university with her groupmates in developing them. Within the learning communities, they held discussions about various topics. They also organized debates, which increased their communication, public speaking skills, and ability to bring up arguments and support them with facts. She continued that practice in the organizations she joined. She believed that if she did not organize those communities that contributed to her constant self-development, she could not stay in the current leadership position. She also added that by having intelligent and successful people around us, we learn from them.

Several participants also discussed their conversations with their friends working in various fields and the role of these conversations on expanding their views,

challenging them to approach things from multiple perspectives, and contributing to their self-development. For example, learning from friends working in different fields was a significant source of motivation for her development as a leader, as stressed by Barbara. Margaret also reflected on when she graduated from the university and did not know how to start searching for jobs. At that time, her friend used to work in an organization where there was a vacancy, and she encouraged Margaret to apply for the position. Margaret recalled that time noting that,

> It was a turning point in my life because it has been over 40 years that I have been working in that organization, and now I am holding an executive leadership position. My friend knew my potential more than I did. If she did not encourage and push me to apply for the position, I would probably be somewhere else now.

Self-development. Another factor that influenced leadership identity development was participating in conferences inside and outside the country, exchange programs, training, and certification programs. The participants' exposure to developmental events where they had opportunities to discuss ideas about leadership with their colleagues and where they learned new knowledge and skills about leadership broadened their understanding of how they can be successful leaders. They all agreed that these programs helped them develop themselves and be more effective in their roles as leaders, contributing to their leadership identity development. Emily also highlighted the importance of sharing that knowledge with her team after returning from those conferences or training programs.

In summary, encouraging relationships inside and outside the family and developmental events influenced the participants' leadership identity development

uniquely at different times. However, it was clear that those factors were salient to all in this process. Family members and reinforcing experiences during childhood carried the most influence early in their leadership involvement experience. In contrast, other adults such as their leaders, professors, peers, self-development opportunities, and experiences in formal leadership positions were more influential to this process at later stages of their lives.

Axial Code 2: Gender and Leadership Identity Development in Azerbaijan

Participants also shared how gender expectations influenced their involvement in leadership experiences and thus their leadership identity development. This axial code reflects gender stereotypes in Azerbaijani society, impacted by the socio-cultural norms, the challenges experienced by women leaders in this context, and the participants' view of professionalism.

Gender Stereotypes

One of the focused codes that fall under the axial code of gender and leadership identity development in Azerbaijan is gender stereotypes. By gender stereotypes, women described the specific attributes, characteristics, or roles ascribed to women because of their gender identities in the Azerbaijani context. The participants shared their experiences at the workplace in which they have faced challenges because of gender stereotypes. These challenges were either experienced by them or other women in their organizations. Several focused sub-codes that emerged from the discussions have been explained in detail below.

One issue, impacted by existing gender stereotypes in the society, evident in many interviews, was a common approach in Azerbaijan towards girls in most families: "You

are a girl! What would others say?" This statement emphasizes the importance of others' opinions about girls' lives as well as the societal expectations from girls. Rose shared her frustration about the existing "What would others say" mentality in Azerbaijan. She lost her father at an early age and divorced her husband. She had to work until late hours to take care of her mother and child. When she returned home late, her mother used to be concerned about what neighbors would say as she came home with a taxi at night as a divorced woman. Rose mentioned that once she had a conversation with her mom, she asked her whether she was more important to her or the others. Her mom said, "Of course, you." In return, Rose asked her to support her in all her decisions and be by her side. Since then, they did not have any problems.

Mary also added that "In our society, girls are oppressed with the pressure of what others would say." However, I have always said that we should not hinder girls. Instead, we should open their ways. The development of a country and society depends on women." Patricia was another participant who discussed this issue and noted that the formation of women in Azerbaijani society is constantly prevented directly in the family by saying, "You are a girl! It is not ok for girls to do such things." She found this treatment unfair and discriminatory and posed a question for those families: "Well, is it ok for boys?"

The participants shared various stories of experiencing gender stereotypes at their workplaces. For example, Patricia discussed how as the only female head of the department in a meeting with 12 other men and the executive, she always spoke up for the discrimination against women. There was hiring for a position, and most of the candidates were women. In the meeting, one of the male directors said to the executive

that he would balance the number of women and men candidates for the job because he did not think “girls” could handle the job well because it required some travel or working long hours. In the Azerbaijani language, “qiz” means “girl” while “xanim” means “woman.” The word “qiz” (girl) refers to females who are in the development phase of maturity. However, the word “xanim” (woman) refers to a mature woman and has a connotation of respect and professionalism. Thus, the executive’s use of the word “girl” was disrespectful and patronizing. As the only woman in the meeting, Patricia felt a need to speak up and became the voice of those female candidates by saying, "Obviously, more female candidates have applied for the job. How will you balance it and make the number of male and female candidates equal? These girls have put their time and effort into this." When she reflected on that experience during the interview, she mentioned that "Apparently, it would have continued to be that way if I was not there." She related this discrimination to those men's lack of understanding of the women's struggles to come to the interview, such as lying to their brothers and saving lunch money to attend the interview. She believed that those men did not comprehend these facts because they had never experienced those struggles. She concluded her experience by noting that “the meeting was a great lesson to me that this injustice will continue if you do not speak up for women in such environments. It also shows the importance of having women voices at those tables where big decisions are being made."

Alice identified herself as a victim of the gender stereotypes formed in society while sharing her educational background. Her mother made her apply for a bachelor’s degree in Pedagogy just because teaching was the best profession for women. Because her mom had to work in a company between 9 am and 6 pm and did not have enough

time for her family, she wanted her daughter to go to school, teach for a few hours, and come back to her family. However, they did not consider her character and dream. She also discussed how families sent their daughters to receive an education to add to their dowry in Azerbaijan, which would increase their potential for good husbands.

While reflecting on challenges she experienced due to gender stereotypes, Alice also shared an experience in which she was very offended by how her manager talked to her. She stated:

> There was one thing that happened at work that had shaken me. I approached one of the colleagues who was leading the organization with some recommendations. He was a very civilized and intelligent person. He tried to explain something to me during our discussion by using the kitchen example. He said: You know it is as if you are cooking something in the kitchen, and you realize that one of the meals you are preparing is burning. So, since it is burning, you should go after that one to take care of it first." When he used the word kitchen, I stopped listening to him because he brought me back to my womanhood by giving a kitchen example. By providing such an example, he meant that I would not have understood him if he had explained it to me differently with other examples. Therefore, he had to use an example of the kitchen because I am a woman. After that incident, he lost my respect completely. After that, I quit that job because I could not work with him anymore.

Another participant who experienced gender stereotypes discussed her way of navigating through them to achieve her goal. As someone who grew up in the city center, Catherine never experienced gender stereotypes in the past. Besides having an intelligent family, she grew up with like-minded people. She identified herself as privileged to grow

up around these people who knew and supported her. However, when she wanted to participate in elections, she recalled meeting her constituents and experiencing the "woman thing" for the first time in her life. When she held meetings with her constituents, some old me thought that she could not be their representative because of the stereotype of seeing "big old men" in those positions instead of a young woman like her. She had an interesting approach to that. Instead of being discouraged by this or complaining about it, she took her brother, father, and husband to those meetings with her. She reflected on those experiences by noting, "I felt that it helped me become accepted by those people. It was my way of showing my respect for our values and traditions. It helped a lot." When she was asked a follow-up question of how she felt when she had to take those men with herself to be accepted by those constituents, she responded that "I know this is not fair. However, I also know that it is because of the gender stereotypes in our society. I believe we will slowly change them. Until then, we need to find ways of navigating through them."

Two other participants discussed how existing societal expectations in terms of women's and leaders' roles impact the behavior of women leaders. For example, Alice recalled her experience of visiting the south part of Azerbaijan, the most conservative area, for training with directors of local organizations. There was no female participant in the training. She remembered one woman coming at the end of the training. Based on Alice's description, that woman dressed up to fit her position's requirements and was accepted by those in that conservative community. She also remembered her aunt, who was the first and only woman notary in the region. According to Alice, her aunt used to greet people

like a man [with a firm long handshake]. She attributed this to the requirements of her role as a leader.

Further, according to Anna, there is a stereotype in organizations in Azerbaijan that if the head of the department is a man, it is easier to explain something to him. However, they must take more time to explain it to women. She disagreed with this stereotype and considered women more successful in diplomacy. She noted that having women leaders usually created a more positive environment and required men to be more polite.

Challenges when You are a Woman Leader

The study participants were asked about the challenges they experienced during their leadership identity development journeys because of their gender as women. The participants shared their experiences about the difficulties and discriminatory approaches they received because of their gender.

The participants referred to various kinds of difficulties, such as not being allowed to study abroad, receiving pressure because of the nature of her job, or not having a proper work-life balance. For example, Jennifer stated that when she tried to go to Turkey to get a master's degree, her parents opposed it and did not allow her to go. She usually agreed with her parents on different matters, but she did not want to give up on her dream to study abroad. When she tried to leave, her parents locked the door and did not allow her to go.

Tiffanie also shared her challenges that were specific to her work. She led the organization that worked with the victims of human trafficking or drug addicts. Many people around her left her alone because she worked with this group of people. Despite all

challenges, she did not give up on her passion for serving these people and resolving their issues.

Another topic of discussion was related to work-life balance, as stressed by some participants. All of them were married with at least one kid. Catherine was one of those women leaders who made sure to balance her responsibilities at work and home. She indicated that "I am a mother after all. I have two children. So, for me, it is important to be as good in my motherhood as I am in my job because that is also part of the thing that makes me happy." She noted that this was not always easy, but she always did her best.

In this regard, Alice mentioned that "depending on the time of year when you had increased or decreased responsibilities at work, you could or could not spend enough time with family. It is not always easy to spend equal time with both." Often, she questioned her motherhood when she could not spend enough time with them. However, she always tried to monitor their education or have a conversation with her kids when she came home, even when she was tired. Like Alice, Patricia also questioned her motherhood when she went to the UK for two years to get her master's and left her son with his father. She remembered crying a lot when professors asked about her son or talked to him over the phone. However, she believed that she could not achieve this much success if not receiving that education abroad.

A couple of the participants explained how their family situation impacted their self-development. For example, for Anna, compared to when she was single, it was more challenging to spend time on her self-development after she got married. Unlike her husband, who could work on himself constantly, she could not do that because of family responsibilities as a wife and a mother. Emily also noted that she had to travel abroad a lot

because of her job. Her husband did not prevent her from that, but she decided not to go to long-term training or programs abroad because she felt guilty for leaving her family alone.

Three of the participants described the challenges of women in the Azerbaijani context regarding discriminatory behavior based on gender. One example included Elizabeth, who noted that

> When a woman, especially in public-facing high-level leadership positions, is fired or leaves a job in our society, everybody starts talking about it for days, saying that she could not work or was incompetent. However, nobody says anything about it when men are fired or leave their jobs. I tell young girls that we have a double responsibility as women: First, we have been given opportunities to hold leadership positions. Thus, we should work in a way that they end up saying, Good Job! Only women can do this job so well.

Grace also noted that if women had male competitors in any field, women had to be five times more professional and successful than them to be selected into the position. However, if they were equal, preference would be given to male candidates because "men had fewer problems: they did not go on maternity leave or did not have to take care of kids."

Anna contributed to this discussion by noting that it was hard to be a woman leader in Azerbaijani society and other societies. Because women always felt a need to prove themselves. She indicated, "If a man is given a task, you have to work harder to be given the same task."

You are a professional! Forget about your gender!

While reflecting on their gender in relation to leadership identity development, several women discussed the importance of professionalism. For these women, everybody should be professional at the workplace despite their gender. Primary comments by some of those participants have been described below.

Barbara was one of those participants who recalled her advice to her employees when she got into her current leadership position: "Forget you are woman or man at work because, for me, everybody is equal." She also admitted that at work, she did not care about gender. For her, "we could be woman, mother, daughter, sister at home, but we all are equal professionals at work. She admitted that she never supported the idea of women's solidarity. Gender is irrelevant at work" Grace also advised women to maintain their professionalism all the time at work. If any problem arises, "women should act like professionals, not poor women." Similar to Grace, Patricia noted the importance of professionalism and her way of maintaining gender equality at workplace. Although she was a social person in her personal life, she kept her distance from male employees at work. She stated the following in this regard:

> I never leave my workplace earlier than others. Some women say: "Well, why do I have to work late? I have a family and a child. I must be home early and make dinner." I do not do that. I do not want to give others a chance to judge me or discriminate against me, just like they do to other females. I work no less than other male managers. I do not let others pay for my coffee or my taxi. My point is that if you want gender equality, you must leave your comfort zone. So, you must choose whether you want your comfort or gender equality.

Alice was also one of those participants who recalled her experience at her previous position before she joined her current organization. She was the only woman in the department, leading a group of five male employees. From day one, she brought them all together in the meeting and told them that "Here I am not a woman but professional. Please approach me that way. I do not discriminate based on gender. For me, there is a good vs. bad employee. Let us do the work together as a team."

Interestingly, three of the participants who also discussed professionalism gave conflicting messages. For example, Julia mentioned that she went to meetings where most participants were male. She was proud that they saw her as a professional, not a woman. She indicated, "If they saw me as a woman, I would feel awful. My husband would not allow that either."

Similarly, Barbara mentioned that "I do not go to meetings as a woman. For example, I do not wear perfume when I go to meetings. I go there as a colleague or a director because it is not a meeting of men and women." Finally, in this regard, Alice noted that "I do not go to work to represent my woman side. Everybody should understand that I go to work as a leader to fulfill my responsibilities, not as a woman."

What was especially interesting about these responses was the contradiction that was expressed. These participants shared that they did not experience any gender discrimination or the negative impact of their gender on their leadership at work. However, at the same time, they made statements such as “not wearing perfume to the meeting” or “not going to meetings to show their women sides,” which sounded like they were trying to hide their gender in order not to let it impact their acceptance as leaders by others. Also, given that it is a common practice in Azerbaijani society for women always

to dress up, wear makeup, and be good looking, when these women expressed these ideas such as not showing women side or not wearing perfume, it was unclear if they were doing it because of the unwritten norms in their organizations where they would be approached differently if they did those things. When they were asked follow-up questions to clarify what they really meant by those statements, they mostly repeated the same idea or refused to go deeper. These women did not seem to be aware of the contradictions in their reflections.

Axial code 3: Working in the Public Sector

Another axial code that emerged out of the study was related to working in the public sector in Azerbaijan. It mainly refers to the organizational culture in the public sector organizations and the challenges experienced by participants while working in those organizations. Several focused codes that emerged from these discussions include nepotism, leadership styles of people in public sector organizations, lack of room for innovation and independence at work, and long work hours.

Nepotism

By nepotism, participants referred to favoritism granted to relatives and friends in various fields. Elizabeth described nepotism as the remainder of Soviet time. In her workplace, she observed people, especially in high positions bringing their relatives and friends into positions in the organization. Mary also mentioned that "if you want to move up in the public sector, then you have to have a relative in a high position or you have to be from a wealthy family." According to Jennifer, it was particularly challenging for women because their salaries were low. For example, if they were going to offer the salary of $3000 to a woman candidate, when they brought their friends or relatives,

particularly men, they offered him the salary of $7000. Thus, according to her, "to come to a good position, you have to have good friends."

Leadership styles of in public sector organizations

Another problem expressed by a couple of the participants was related to the leadership styles in some public sector organizations. According to Jennifer, there is an unwritten rule in public sector organizations that if somebody is assigned the head of the organization, they (mostly he) want everything to be the way they want. She described her frustration with this and added:

> Those directors have an assumption that if you come from a low-income family like I am, you are in need and will accept anything, but it is not true. I never stayed in any organization which was not in line with my values or where I was not treated well.

Karen, who was a lawyer by profession, recalled the assignment of the new director to the organization she had been working for the last 20+ years. When the new director started working, he held individual meetings with everyone in the organization and asked them to leave because he wanted to bring his people. When he met Karen with a similar request, Karen told him that he had not accepted her into the position; thus, he had no right to ask her to leave. She experienced many struggles because of that behavior, but she never gave up. That director and his people eventually left the organization, but she is still there. Her primary rationale was that "if she could not defend her rights as the law professional, how she could defend others!" Thus, she encouraged women not to give up when they experienced similar treatment."

In this regard, Alice shared her views on how some leaders in public sector organizations expect employees to stay longer and do all the work while they do not do anything. Alice, who had a background in financial auditing, referred to "tone at the top" to state the idea that "Followers do not look at the leader's words but their actions. Thus, if the leaders do not do what they ask others to do, then they will not get any result." As she explained:

> Leaders should be good examples to their teams. If leaders ask their employees to work on tasks, but they watch tv in their rooms, employees will not complete those tasks. They have a right to do so because if the leader does not work, why should they work?

Similarly, Emily noted how important it is for leaders to be role models to their employees. She stated:

> Employees often try to hide their mistakes because they are afraid of losing their jobs. It may be because leaders do not accept their mistakes either. If leaders take responsibility for their mistakes and admit them, employees will follow that behavior and feel safe informing their leaders about their mistakes.

Emily also reflected on leadership style during the Soviet time and how the style does not fit the current reality of Azerbaijan.

> Another wrong belief that comes from the Soviet time in public sector organizations is that leaders should not divide the tasks among team members while working on something. Organizational leaders during Soviet times saw dividing work among team members as a weakness. However, I believe organizational leaders should

share the responsibilities among team members and attain the goal together instead of trying to be “heroes” by doing everything by themselves.

Emily used the metaphor of "sea captain" to describe the role of a leader in working together with team members and guiding people toward a strategic direction. She further explained:

> Leadership, to me, is the ability to get the team together, determine a goal, motivate the team to believe in that goal, work through challenges together, take risks when needed, and attain that goal.

Lack of room for innovation and independence at work

Another topic highlighted within this discussion was the lack of opportunities for innovation and independence at public sector organizations. For example, Julia stated that there was no business mindset in the public sector organizations. She wanted to bring innovation, but her director could not see the light and was not open to new ideas. When she suggested those ideas, her director resisted that idea stating, "Your ideas do not work for us because they are too modern. We are in Azerbaijan." She also added that individuals could not demonstrate their leadership in the public sector because those organizations' director(s) did not like it. The directors expected their employees to abide by their rules.

Emily, who grew up during the Soviet time, had a similar view about the lack of room for innovation and creativity. She critiqued an aspect of leadership [leaders’ inability to listen to their people] that is reminiscent of the Soviet time to emphasize the significance of active and open listening as a leadership capability. She stated:

> During the Soviet time, employees were afraid to share their concerns or challenges with leaders because leaders would scold them. However, in a modern system, employees should share their concerns, and leaders should always listen to them to develop solutions together. It would be better if we got rid of an understanding of leadership that existed during the Soviet time and transitioned to a modern understanding of it because if those concerns are not discussed today, they will turn into more significant problems tomorrow.

Alice also discussed the lack of opportunities for innovation at public sector organizations. In the interview, she shared her frustration over the fact that in her organization, the leadership did not take her innovative ideas seriously because they did not like going outside the established boundaries.

Long work hours

Most participants also complained about the work hours in public sector organizations. For example, if the work ended at 6 pm, people had to stay until 7 or 8 pm to wait for the head of the organization to leave first. Many of the participants found these formalities unnecessary and frustrating, particularly for women whose families waited for them at home. Per Julia, although working in the public sector gave job security and benefits, having these rules created additional difficulties for most women. Alice also shared her frustration about this rule. She noted that if her work ended at 6 pm, she did not have to wait. However, she had to follow the unspoken rules. Thus, she mentioned that she always left some work for that time, at least not to feel bored. She believes somebody must change this ineffective approach. Mary also recalled when she had to refuse a promotion to be the head of the department. Her main reason for refusal

was the long work hours in her organization. The department heads in her organization might have to work until 7 or 8 pm or come to work over the weekend. She chose to spend time with her family and kids over the promotion with long work hours.

Axial code 4: Advice to Future Women Leaders and Organizations

At the end of the interviews, the study participants were asked for their advice to women who wanted to follow their path and become leaders in the public sector and the organizations, leaders, and HR professionals based on their experience and lessons learned. This axial code covers the discussion of their advice.

Regarding their advice to women, participants discussed their lessons learned based on their previous experiences. In order to get to the leadership positions and maintain success in those positions, potential women leaders were advised to have a clear goal and self-confidence through the whole process. For example, Margaret believed that nobody could achieve success in those positions without having a clear goal.

Also, Melinda emphasized the importance of having self-confidence. Based on her experience, "People may have education and wealth, but if they do not believe in themselves, then they will not achieve their goals." Karen also recommended that women work towards their goals with confidence. She reminded them that, “Life is complicated. If you say that it is difficult in the middle of the road and give up, you will not accomplish your goal. You just need to believe in yourself and never give up.” Emily also encouraged women to believe in themselves and to establish reasonable goals. She states, "I am not saying that they have to think of being presidents of the organizations immediately. They can start from the lowest position in the organization. If they have hope and work hard, they can achieve anything they want."

Another common piece of advice highlighted by participants was about self-development. Catherine suggested that women take advantage of the internet, which gives people access to most resources. She believes that women must establish a routine and work on their self-improvement regularly to maintain success. She acknowledged that this could be more difficult for women in rural areas because of their access to resources, but even they could find ways to develop themselves. Mary, Linda, and Emily also mentioned the importance of self-development, which has been more accessible via the internet. They added that women needed to know both Russian and English languages, mainly English, to access and utilize those resources available on the internet.

While discussing their advice to women, participants also made appeals to parents of girls. They believed that women's development started from childhood. According to Mary, girls should be treated and respected as individuals since childhood. They had to be given freedom. She further added:

> Girls must know how to be free so that she does not stumble when making decisions in the future. Girls should be able to stand on their feet. That is why I have always said that our girls must be educated. In general, the education of our daughters and our sons should be given a priority in the family. If our girls are educated, our nation and society will develop.

Similarly, Rose, a professional working on gender issues, recommended families to buy books for their girls instead of buying things for their dowry. She added, "Her dowry is her education. If she is educated, she will bring up educated children."

Linda emphasized the significance of giving women an opportunity to make their own choices:

> The issue is not about whether women should study, work, get married or not. It is about giving women an opportunity to decide these for themselves. If they want an education, they will study. If they want to earn money, they will work. If they want to have a family, they will get married. We first need to give them a chance to make their own decisions. Can only one person achieve this change in behavior? No, we need to work together on this.

Elizabeth was the only participant who explicitly stressed the importance of having a passion for the profession. She stated that if women wanted to be successful and progress as leaders, they had to love their professions. Elizabeth noted the following regarding women's representation in leadership positions in the parliament:

> Women candidates mostly do not see being a Parliament member as a profession because they present their candidacy to the parliament at the first round of elections, but they disappear in the second round. They do not come back again in the second round because they see it as one time interest more than a profession. When I meet women, especially young ones, they ask why we have an underrepresentation of women in the parliament, and I ask them back: What do you think about it? If enough women candidates participated in the elections, then we could expect more women's names to be taken out of the voting box? If the number of women candidates is low, we cannot expect their selection to be higher.

Another common topic that emerged from these discussions was women's choices of life partners. Five out of 18 study participants recommended that women pay attention to the person they choose as life partners. They believed that their husbands should be able to support them. For example, Olivia stated that "I advise single women to make

decisions not only because they love their partners but also if they are a good fit rationally." Alice also discussed this issue and noted that the root cause of discrimination against women most often started at home during their childhood. She said the following in this regard:

> I tell my husband that he has to approach our daughter as an individual because if my father did not raise me the way he did (expressing my own opinions or not letting anyone make me down), I would not be like this in my personal life. Girls who do not have much to say in the family get used to this and accept this as usual. In Azerbaijani reality, the role of men is huge in the development of women. Tone at the top…The top of the family says that he will raise you and find a suitable husband for you, and he will take it from there. You wait until you are 18 years old to make your own decisions, and then they hand you over to another male to make decisions on your behalf. This is unacceptable.

Thus, she recommended that women think about it when they get married. She concluded her thoughts on a positive note by noting that men had been more progressive during recent years, especially in big cities. Also, recently, fathers and husbands tend to support their daughters' and wives' education and career decisions more than in the past.

Julia had a slightly different view on this matter. According to her, women leaders had to understand that they were not leaders at home. They were mothers and wives. If they started applying leadership at home, it would cause problems because men did not like it based on her experience. She emphasized the support she had always received from her husband in sharing home responsibilities, attending conferences abroad, or

working long hours. There was a mutual understanding between them since the beginning of their marriage. She concluded her thoughts as follows:

> My husband wants the house to be clean. When we got married, this was the only thing he asked me. He helps me with house chores, but I always cook and clean the house. I enjoy doing it. I am not living my life only for my career or leadership positions. I feel happy that I can meet my family's needs. Divorced women usually do not understand that their husbands do not see them as leaders but as wives. Thus, they do not have to practice leadership at home."

Finally, Emily encouraged all women to work together in fighting against discrimination based on gender:

> To fight against gender-based discrimination, the number of bright and successful women in leadership positions should increase so everybody can see their potential. Only that way, those stereotypes may disappear. Women should work together towards this goal.

The study participants also advised organizations, leaders, and educational institutions regarding what could be done to support women's leadership identity development. As suggested by several participants, leaders have a big responsibility in this matter. According to Olivia, how women are treated at the workplace depends on the work environment, particularly the leader and his approach to women: "If the organization's leader has a patriarchal mindset, then he will create that environment at work. If he is more tolerant and considerate of gender equality, then it will be a much more conducive environment for women."

Another topic that the participants discussed was the need to make changes in the country's education system. For example, Anna mentioned that the development of women leaders starts from school. She reflected on her role as the class leader for nine years at school, which enabled her to feel like a leader for the first time, allowed her to practice leadership skills such as communication with classmates and teachers, public speech, working with a team of students, and solving classroom problems. She believed those experiences at school and the support of her teachers and classmates were the foundation of her success as a leader today. Thus, according to her,

> Teachers should not only make students learn something by heart. They must pay attention to developing them as competent individuals and give them opportunities to develop skills that they will utilize in the future. Besides technical knowledge, schools should train students with other skills needed at the workplace. Our girls should be prepared to think independently and make their own decisions since childhood.

She also discussed some improvements in this regard, especially in private educational institutions. To be able to compete with them, public institutions try to catch up with them. She believed we needed time to see these changes.

Alice also discussed the importance of paying attention to improving the education system. She approached it from a slightly different perspective. She highlighted the significance of updating the curriculum to make the education more competent to prepare women based on the market's needs and global standards. She believed that education was crucial for boys and girls because it would teach men to treat women fairly and respectfully.

Another key point that emerged from these discussions was the importance of having gender-friendly laws and proper mechanisms for their implementation. In this regard, Patricia discussed how all the rules are women-friendly in our country, but the mechanism does not work well when it comes to implementation. She gave the following example to explain her thoughts: "For example, a female worker goes to her male manager and complains. The male manager says, "These women talk too much and complain about everything again." Alternatively, the female who experiences violence at home goes to the police station to file a complaint, and the police say, "It is a shame for me to solve your family issues. Just go home and solve your problems inside the family". Patricia's main point was that those responsible for ensuring women's rights in Azerbaijan act according to their own beliefs instead of acting according to the law. Unfortunately, this discourages women from filing a complaint because they know that no one will investigate it or take it seriously. Thus, according to Patricia, "since the mechanism does not work properly, everyone is the boss. Men are the boss most of the time, and women are the victims."

Finally, many of the participants (13 out of 18) finalized their interviews with positive comments about recent developments in the country. The overall idea was that compared to 10-15 years ago, there were a lot of improvements in society in terms of gender. Grace recalled the early 2000s when the initial documents on gender issues, including domestic violence or gender-based discrimination at the workplace, were being sent to the leaders of public sector organizations. Many of them were not knowledgeable about these issues, and they used to ask, "What is gender? Why are we even discussing these issues? Discussing these matters is against our traditional family values" Grace

disagreed with this approach and added the following example about the Azerbaijani culture:

> One of the indicators of gender equality and respect for women in our history is having "agsaqqal" (oldest and wisest man) and "agbircek" (oldest and wisest woman) in the family. Younger people go and consult with both men and women about various matters.

She also highlighted how much progress as a country we have achieved during recent years. She also remembered organizing training in the regions and meeting with community members. In most discussions, she used to tell women: "You complain that my husband is like this. Who brings up those men? Other women… Those men grow up in your families…" Grace also added that currently, in Azerbaijan, 200+ organizations were focused on women's issues, which was a good indicator. Those are groups of women who work in different fields, and within these organizations, they come together as communities of practice and share their challenges and lessons learned.

Catherine also discussed having more women driving cars, being entrepreneurs, or being leaders in organizations compared to years ago. She admitted that we still have a long way to go in terms of these issues, including gender-based discrimination and domestic violence, but the good thing is that "those things that were under the blanket are being discussed now."

Summary of Chapter 4

The study participants reflected on their experiences of leadership identity development in the Azerbaijani context. This chapter started by describing the study participants, followed by the discussion of the four main axial codes that emerged from

the study with their respective focused codes (i.e., (1) Factors impacting leadership identity development (factors inside the family; factors outside the family); (2) Gender and leadership identity development in Azerbaijan (gender stereotypes; challenges when you are a woman leader; You are a professional! Forget about your gender!); (3) Working in the public sector; (4) Advice to future women leaders and organizations).

All the participants described their leadership identity development as a continuous and constantly evolving process. They shared the factors, including people in their lives and developmental events that impacted their leadership identity development over their lifetime. While describing those factors, they also shared the reinforcing experiences in leadership roles that impacted their leadership awareness and development of their identities as leaders. These factors and reinforcing experiences influenced the participants to choose specific leadership experiences that developed into a sense of responsibility for the profession and reinforced their leadership skills. They also helped the participants understand what it means to be a leader and practice leadership skills, becoming reinforcing to them in their development of leadership identity. Their experiences varied in the ways they came to see themselves as leaders, the stage of life at which this understanding of leadership and self as a leader emerged, and how these experiences and their context impacted them.

Within the axial code gender and leadership identity development, this chapter described the participants' experiences as women leaders in the Azerbaijani context, including the challenges they experienced due to their gender. Later, the participants also shared the challenges of working in the public sector in general. The chapter concluded

with the participants' advice to future women leaders and organizations based on their lessons learned.

The four axial codes were interrelated so that eliminating one from the others would cause a partial representation of the influences that contributed to women's leadership identity development. The model that connects the main findings that emerged from the study will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Interpretations

This grounded theory study aimed to understand how Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan developed their leadership identity. One of the unique characteristics of the studies that utilize constructivist grounded theory as methodology, as described by Charmaz (2006), is to generate a model or a theory of the central phenomenon as an outcome of the study. Thus, following Charmaz's (2006) recommendations, Chapter 5 starts by presenting an overview of the emergent leadership identity development model of Azerbaijani women leaders in the public sector, grounded in the participants' stories and then by discussing the main findings of the study in relation to the existing literature on this topic. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the implications of the findings for research and practice.

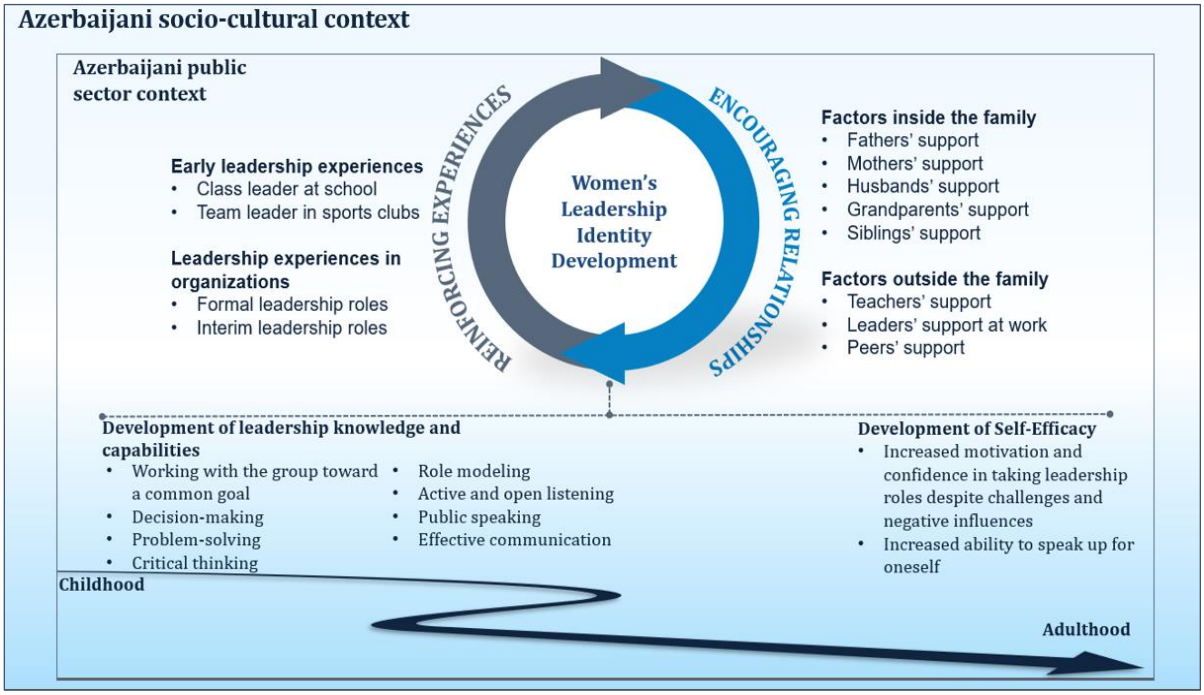
Leadership identity development model

The leadership identity development model (see Figure 1) emerged from the participants' reflections on their leadership identity development journeys and factors impacting their development as leaders. Although each participant's story was unique, commonalities in their stories led to this model, which presents a general process of the

leadership identity development of women leaders in public sector organizations in Azerbaijan.

Figure 1

Leadership Identity Development Model of Azerbaijani Women Leaders in Public Sector



This model shows the continuous and constantly evolving nature of the leadership identity development process, experienced by the women leaders participating in this study, starting from their childhood, and continuing through their lives. At the beginning of the interviews, all the participants discussed how they started to see themselves as leaders from childhood. Thus, childhood emerged as a significant period of leadership identity development in the participants' lives. Although the components of this model may be familiar to the constructs presented in the Western literature, their meaning is shaped by the socio-cultural and public sector context of Azerbaijan.

While reflecting on their leadership identity development from childhood to adulthood, the participants discussed several factors impacting this process. Although

these factors were unique to each individual, all the participants discussed the role of encouraging relationships and reinforcing leadership experiences as contributors to their development as leaders. Therefore, encouraging relationships and reinforcing experiences emerged as common to the Azerbaijani women's experiences of leadership identity development and served as the significant elements of the leadership identity development model. The following paragraphs will explain those relationships and experiences and the mutual relationship between them across the lifespan of the individuals.

Encouraging Relationships

The participants' relationship with influential people in their lives played a central role in this developmental process. In other words, women leaders' sense of what it meant to be a leader was developed through their relationships with others. While reflecting on their childhood, all the participants reported that people inside and outside their families, such as fathers, mothers, siblings, grandparents, and their teachers and peers at school, supported their leadership identity development. This support manifested itself in various ways: recognizing and affirming their leadership potential, encouraging them to participate in various leadership experiences inside and outside the school, having skill-building conversations, and continuously mentoring them.

One interesting finding in this study was the significant role of male figures in women's lives. While discussing encouraging relationships, fathers and husbands were the most cited people who supported their leadership identity development. The participants emphasized the role of their fathers in being good role models as leaders, in encouraging them to get a good education and establish a promising career, teaching

them the importance of being independent and strong women, mentoring them throughout their lives, and helping them constantly develop themselves. Many of the participants grew up in remote villages during a period when girls' education was not allowed or encouraged. All of them attributed their ability to receive good education to the support of their educated parents, particularly fathers. Their fathers were schoolteachers and were very strict about their daughters' education in most cases. The participants believed that growing up with such fathers and being encouraged to do well at school and to get involved in school activities contributed to their success at the early stages of their lives. Many participants also reflected on family discussions or individual discussions with their fathers where their opinions were heard and deemed important. They believed this helped with their formation as confident women. This finding also connects to the participants' emphasis on the importance of active and open listening as a leadership capability. As all of the participants were listened and respected as individuals in their families, when they experienced discrimination at the workplace, they always spoke up for themselves and for others who experienced the discrimination. Also, they made sure to always listen to their team members' opinions, which they believed that contributed to their effective leadership.

In terms of their husbands, 16 out of 18 women described their spouse's role as helping them with family responsibilities, affirming their leadership potential, and encouraging them to take on leadership roles, in some cases acting as mentors, inspiring them to develop themselves by attending domestic and international conferences and degree programs, and providing advice in challenging situations. Women noted that this support that they received from their husbands shaped how they saw themselves as

leaders or accomplished the work of a leader. For example, most women would mention that they consulted their husbands before deciding about pursuing a leadership position requiring more time at the office, and their husbands always supported them to take on those positions.

The support of husbands was a somewhat unexpected finding in this study considering the social norms on gender roles in Azerbaijan, which emphasize women's role as caregivers and men's role as breadwinners. However, in their stories, those 16 women mentioned that they chose the right life partners and talked about advising young women to choose supportive partners. It is also worth noting that all participants considered family as their priority, which is in line with the social norms of Azerbaijan.

Some participants noted that although their husbands supported them in pursuing their goals and attending developmental events abroad, they chose not to participate in events that separated them from their families for a more extended period of time because of their feelings of duty as women and mothers in their families. When they selected to participate in developmental events, they often felt guilty about leaving their families.

The participants also discussed the role of other family members such as mothers and grandparents. For example, many participants noted that their mothers did not have a chance to study because of growing up during World War II, early marriages, or restrictions of their parents and experienced the challenges of being housewives. Therefore, mothers always encouraged their daughters to study well, be successful, stand on their feet, and be financially independent. They also gave credit to their mothers for helping them with family responsibilities later in life that allowed these women to focus on their jobs and continuous self-development. The support of immediate and extended

family members, particularly mothers with home responsibilities and children, is common in Azerbaijan, especially for working women.

Another common characteristic of the context that emerged from the study was the role of grandparents. Most of the participants grew up with their grandparents in the same household. They talked about seeing their grandparents as role models when they were children and always wanting to be like them. Many of them noted how being praised by their grandparents motivated them to do well at school. Another commonality in the participants' stories about the role of their grandparents was observing how everybody always asked for their grandparents' advice and spoke so highly of them. These women always dreamed of being like their grandparents and being respected by everybody as their grandparents were.

In terms of the people outside their families, many participants emphasized the role of their teachers at school in recognizing their potential, giving them responsibilities to practice leadership and gain self-confidence, and providing them with a good education. All participants stressed that education played a central role in their development as leaders. Also, many of them discussed how they started feeling like a leader when their teachers and classmates recognized them for their hard work.

Besides encouraging relationships during their childhood and adolescence, the participants also emphasized the role of people outside their families in the later stages of their lives. These influential people included professors, peers at the universities, and their leaders at work. Their professors acted as role models, gave them advice about the paths the participants wanted to pursue while their peers recognized their leadership potential at the university and supported their development within communities of

practice that they established in the university. Within the learning communities, they held discussions about various topics, organized debates, and different events through which they learned/developed new skills such as effective communication, public speaking, and critical thinking.

When the participants started working in organizations, many established good relationships with their leaders in the organizations. The participants stressed their managers' role in trusting them with leadership opportunities despite their lack of work experience, being good role models for effective leadership, and developing their leadership knowledge and capabilities. Although there were no formal mentorship practices in their organizations, several of the participants referred to the role of their immediate managers as mentors. The participants who discussed the positive role of their managers also added the significance of having an organizational culture where they were not afraid to make mistakes, be misunderstood, or fail. They also discussed the significant role of leadership in creating this culture. Many of them believed that if the organization leader supported gender equality and did not discriminate based on gender, the organizational environment would be gender friendly.

In summary, family members, teachers, peers, professors, organizational leaders impacted their exploration of leadership by serving as role models and supporters. These people always saw the participants' leadership potential, inspired confidence in their abilities, and created a culture or context where they could thrive as leaders.

Reinforcing Experiences

The encouraging relationships led to the participants' involvement in experiences that reinforced their leadership. To be more specific, the people mentioned above

motivated the participants to be involved in leadership opportunities throughout their lives. Their involvement in experiences that gave them opportunities to practice leadership started during childhood. For example, during the early years, they were involved in leadership opportunities in the capacity of a class leader at school or team leader in extracurricular activities, such as school events, sports clubs, or dance classes.

Besides early leadership experiences, the participants also discussed their roles in formal leadership positions. One commonality among many participants was that they were hesitant to take on a leadership role when offered it for the first time. However, due to their supervisors' confidence in them and ongoing support, they were successful in those positions, making them more confident in pursuing future leadership positions. Their supervisors acted as their mentors in those situations. Some of them discussed experiencing challenges due to the type of work, the authoritative leadership style of their directors, or challenges they experienced as a woman. However, none of the participants were discouraged by those challenges: They either left those organizations where their values did not fit with those of the organizations, or they persisted and became successful. Their concluding thought was that it was not easy to succeed as women leaders in society, but it was not impossible either.

As depicted in Figure 1, there is a recursive relationship between encouraging relationships and reinforcing experiences. Once involved in those additional activities, the participants developed connections to other people in those places, who motivated them to pursue more leadership opportunities and encouraged their leadership identity development.

Development of Leadership Knowledge and Capabilities

During leadership experiences, the participants started developing leadership knowledge and capabilities. The development of the capabilities intensified during adulthood when they started holding leadership positions in organizations. The following is a list of capabilities participants developed: working with the group toward a common goal, decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking, role modeling, active and open listening, public speaking, and effective communication.

With regards to the development of leadership knowledge and capabilities, the participants also discussed the importance of learning through training, domestic and international conferences, communities of practice, technology, observations of their directors at the workplace, and experience in various roles in the organization. Although all participants emphasized the importance of receiving formal education in their careers as it opened more doors for them, they all agreed that it was through actual experiences that they learned how to lead better. Knowledge gained from those experiences and mistakes helped the participants identify their strengths and weaknesses and clarify which path they wanted to pursue in the future.

Development of Self-efficacy

As the participants got involved in more leadership opportunities, they became more confident in their leadership abilities. In other words, self-efficacy was the main characteristic the participants developed because of being involved in and overcoming the difficulties in those experiences, which contributed to their leadership identities. Many of the women admitted that when they were offered the first formal leadership position at the beginning of their careers, they did not think they could do that. However, primarily due to their managers' persuasion, they agreed to take on those roles, and while

enacting the role, they realized that they could be successful. That perceived success in those experiences made them more confident in taking other opportunities. The self-efficacy also helped them deal with negative influences on their leadership identity development, such as speaking up for themselves when experiencing discrimination or having the courage to leave the organizations and move on to new organizations where they were respected as women leaders.

Azerbaijani Socio-Cultural and Public Sector Context

It is crucial to remember that this model describes the leadership identity development of women leaders embedded in the socio-cultural context of Azerbaijan, which emerged as influencing their leadership identity development journeys. Also, all of the study participants described their leadership experiences in the particular context of the public sector in Azerbaijan, which has unique characteristics that impacted women's leadership identity development.

The participants discussed the context of Azerbaijan as progressive with gender-friendly laws and regulations that ensure equal treatment of people despite their gender, race, or ethnic background. Although all the laws are gender-friendly, it was revealed in the study participants' experiences that problems arise when implementing those laws and regulations. For example, a few of the participants noted that leaders in their organizations used their values and subjective opinions regarding gender-related issues. When attempting to solve such issues, they expressed their views by giving examples from everyday life, such as women going to the police because of experiencing domestic violence, and the police's advice to women was to respect their family and solve their problems inside the family instead of bringing them to the police department.

Despite having no legal barriers, women mentioned other barriers, such as societal norms about the expectations from women about their family responsibilities and the predominant masculine view of leadership. One of those norms was related to others' impact on these women's lives. "What would others say" is the most common statement heard by those women in their families since their childhood when they wanted to do anything that may not be in line with societal expectations. Thus, the participants highlighted the critical role of families, particularly parents, in supporting their daughters' aspirations instead of hindering them by saying, "You are a girl! What would others say." The participants found this approach discriminatory because it only targeted girls.

Also, most of the participants admitted that they had to work a lot more to compete with their male colleagues in Azerbaijani society. When they applied for leadership positions, they frequently faced discriminatory approaches because of their gender. They mentioned how leaders of the organizations held certain stereotypes, such as women taking longer to learn the job or not being able to manage responsibilities of leadership positions because of their family responsibilities. The participants believed that this often contributed to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. However, all participants in this study noted that they persisted on their leadership journey despite these challenges and did not get discouraged by those difficulties.

The participants in this study referred to the importance of professionalism in the workplace and talked about how they believed there should not be a difference in gender between professionals. "If you are a good professional, you are a good professional despite your gender." This belief helped them face some of the challenges they

encountered in the workplace. Despite this belief, they gave examples when they consciously tried to minimize the differences between genders in appearance. For example, despite the fact that in Azerbaijani society, women always show a special care for their appearance in social spheres, they mentioned how they downplayed their appearance by not wearing perfume and not being "as feminine as" it was expected outside of the workplace.

Overall, the participants' experiences show a paradox regarding women's leadership identity development in the Azerbaijani socio-cultural context. On one hand, the participants emphasized the role of male figures in their families such as their fathers, grandfathers, and husbands in supporting their leadership journey. It was also apparent from the participants' stories that the family environment in which they grew up had a positive impact on their gender-neutral behavior, attitudes, values, and worldviews. They learned, and repeated patterns of behavior that they observed in their families. On the other hand, the women leaders participating in the study faced challenges in their leadership journey caused by the patriarchal society of Azerbaijan where leaders and leadership roles are connected to male figures and where women's main role is still perceived as running their household. Hopefully, with more male family members recognizing the leadership abilities of women in their surroundings, patriarchal societal norms will change in the future and more women will have opportunities to develop their leadership identities

The participants also talked about the specific challenges of working in public sector such as nepotism, leadership styles of people in public sector organizations, lack of room for innovation and independence at work, and long work hours. The participants

referred to the existing practice of favoring relatives or friends of existing leaders when hiring into their organizations. They believed that women who wanted to find leadership positions in the public sector and did not have family members working in the public sector had to develop their social networks that could support proving that they had knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for that position. The prevalent stories of the participants showed the negative impact of non-supportive leadership styles in the public sector organizations on their creativity and innovation. Another leadership practice mentioned by the participants in this study was the requirement to stay at work after regular work hours. In their experience, nobody left the organization until the head of the organization left the organization. Staying for long hours at work posed extra challenges for women, given their expected responsibilities outside of the work in the Azerbaijani society. Two participants out of 18 who were not married at the time of this study reflected on how they would have handled the long hours and fulfilled the responsibilities of families based on the social norms of Azerbaijan. They recognized that it would be more challenging for them to work long hours if they were married with kids. the challenges of working long hours.

Summary

The leadership identity development of the participants was impacted by the support of both family and non-family members in their lifelong journey. The support of people surrounding them allowed them to engage in experiences that reinforced and strengthened the development of their leadership knowledge and capabilities as well as the development of self-efficacy and led to their leadership identity development. As professionals, all participants reflected on the challenges of working in the public sector

in Azerbaijan and how facing those challenges such as nepotism, long work hours, the existence of non-supportive leaders, and lack of room for innovation and independence at work. By facing those challenges and being successful in those experiences, they further developed their leadership self-efficacy. Thus, facing those challenges contributed to their leadership identity development.

Discussion of the Findings

This section presents the discussion of the findings of this study in relation to the existing literature on leadership identity development. Given that the study was conducted in the Azerbaijani context, specifically in the public sector organizations in Azerbaijan, this section will highlight the importance of understanding women's leadership identity development in their specific cultural context.

The findings showed that developing a leadership identity for the participants in the study was a continuing, cyclical, and life-long process. This aligns with the contemporary view of leadership identity development as being a continuous, dynamic, relational, and contextual process, as suggested by scholars such as DeRue and Ashford (2010), Murphy and Johnson (2011), and Gibson et al. (2018). This life-long approach to leadership identity development highlights the impact of people's early experiences on their leadership identity development. In this study, the encouraging relationships and reinforcing experiences starting since their childhood emerged as major factors contributing to Azerbaijani women's leadership identity development.

It is not surprising that relationships emerged as a significant finding in this study because of the importance of relationships in the Azerbaijani culture and the emphasis in the literature on the significance of connections with other people in the process of

leadership identity development (Eagly & Carli, 2004; Gibson, 2018; Josselson, 1987; McKibben et al., 2017; Moorosi, 2014; Muir, 2014; Skinner, 2014; Smith & Roysircar, 2010). These studies discussed how the inspiration of others in the participants' lives led to their greater self-perception of themselves as leaders and how being recognized by parents and teachers at early years for their leadership potential boosted the participants' self-confidence. Although the review of the literature on this topic showed the importance of encouraging relationships in the participants' leadership identity development journeys, in the context of Azerbaijan, the meaning of encouraging relationships is unique given the social norms related to the position of girls and women in the society. In this study, the participants started by describing the support they received from family members. Family plays a crucial role in the family-oriented culture of Azerbaijan. Many participants stated that if their families had not supported them, they would not have chosen leadership careers by disobeying their families' wishes.

The participants particularly highlighted the role of their fathers, husbands, mothers, and grandparents. While acknowledging how lucky they were to have educated fathers who encouraged them to get a good education, they also mentioned that not all women in the society received this support from their families. Because of the existing social norms emphasizing their role as the caregivers of the family, the priority is usually given to their marriage, not to their careers. Although society and existing socio-cultural norms are slowly changing, there is still pressure for women to get married and take care of their families.

Besides their family members, the participants also emphasized the role of their teachers, professors, peers at the universities, and managers in their organizations in their

leadership identity development. When reflecting on their working lives, all the participants referred to the support or mentorship of their managers. The importance of mentorship is also highlighted in the literature. In his study of the leadership identity development of participants in a non-degree leadership development certification program in the U.S., Muir (2014) highlighted the importance of mentoring, which allowed the participating leaders to critically reflect on their learning moments. Also, in the study conducted by Komives et al. (2006), all students mentioned mentoring by adults or older peers as significant to their leadership identity development. According to their study, adult and peer mentoring "helps students make sense of past experience, and predict future actions, model challenge and support, and model more complex ways of thinking about leadership" (p. 214). What differentiates the findings of this study from the ones in the literature is that mentorship is not a common practice in Azerbaijani public sector organizations.

As the findings of this study showed, the encouraging relationships were closely connected to reinforcing experiences because those relationships acted as triggers and motivators for the participants' involvement in leadership experiences since childhood. The literature also shows that if individuals are provided with leadership opportunities early in their lives, their propensity to become leaders in adulthood is heightened (Amit et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2004; Komives et al., 2005; Pearlmutter, 1999). In terms of early leadership experiences in the Azerbaijani context, there is a practice in Azerbaijani schools to assign a class leader role to individuals in classrooms by teachers who make those individuals accountable for the good behavior of the classmates, acting as liaisons between the teachers and students, and being good role models to other students. All the

participants talked about their roles as class leaders and the importance of that role in their leadership identity development. For example, the participants talked about how their experiences at school taught them essential leadership skills such as working with others towards common goals and supporting each other. Overall, all the participants agreed that through leadership experiences since childhood, they developed their leadership identity. This is a significant finding that is consistent with experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

Studies on leadership identity development in the Western world (Amit e al., 2014; Day et al., 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005; Moorosi, 2014; Yeager & Callahan, 2016) discussed the positive impact of leadership experiences and self-development that happens within those experiences. When reflecting on their leadership journeys as working professionals, all participants in the study talked about their self-development through participating in conferences, training sessions, and enrolling in graduate programs. These pursuits are not common in the Azerbaijani public sector context, and it showed these women's initiatives to find ways to continuously develop their leadership skills and abilities.

All participants in the study talked about the importance of their leadership experiences in building their self-efficacy. This finding is in alignment with the leadership identity development literature where self-efficacy was developed as a result of leadership experiences (Amit et al., 2014; Brue & Brue, 2018; Day & Harrison, 2007; Karelaia & Guillen, 2014; Kwok et al., 2018; Gibson et al., 2018; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Previous studies on this topic also noted that the development of leadership self-

efficacy leads women to search for more opportunities (Day & Harrison, 2007, Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Yeagley et al., 2010).

All women in this study experienced gender-based discrimination in their workplace. For example, they discussed not being promoted into a specific leadership position because it was assumed that women could not perform in diplomacy, engineering, or other fields primarily associated with men. Women in this study noted that they had to work many times harder than their male colleagues to be noticed or given leadership opportunities. Although the Western literature talks about the prejudice against women in certain male dominated fields (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and about the pressure that women feel that they must prove themselves in men's worlds (Karelaia & Guillen, 2014), in the Azerbaijani public sector context these challenges are heightened given the small number of women in leadership positions, and socio-cultural norms about the role of the women as homemakers.

Another challenge of working in the public sector in Azerbaijan, experienced by women in this study, was related to long work hours. This was a significant challenge because women's primary role in Azerbaijan is still considered to be caring for their families and not for their careers. Other studies conducted in the Central Eurasian region related to women's leadership also noted this challenge. For example, women leaders in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Kakabadse et al., 2018; Kuzhabekova et al., 2018; Kuzhabekova & Almukhambetova, 2019) talked about the impact of long and inflexible work hours on their leadership. They also reflected how long hours and working on weekends caused the study participants to experience the feeling of guilt for not spending enough time with their families and children.

A few participants noted nepotism as another challenge women encountered in Azerbaijani public sector organizations. They referred to nepotism as a practice of favoring relatives or friends, especially by hiring them into positions in the organizations they work for. Nepotism was also mentioned as a challenge in Kakabadse et al.'s (2018) study of women's leadership development in Kazakhstan. It was considered a leftover practice from the Soviet period of time in which leadership positions in Central Eurasian countries were obtained through family or friendship ties. In this study, the women who experienced nepotism in certain public sector organizations decided to leave those organizations and applied for leadership positions in other public sector organizations.

The findings of this study revealed that although in Azerbaijan legally women are guaranteed equal opportunities with men (Asian Development Bank, 2019; Gureyeva, 2010; Heyat, 2006; Najafizadeh, 2003; Tohidi, 2000; UNFPA, 2018, UNDP, 2014), there are challenges with the implementation of these laws given gender-based socio-cultural norms of the country. As was the case in Kuzhabekova et al.'s (2019) study of women leadership development in Kazakhstan, women faced barriers to their leadership development due to societal expectations that focused on their family responsibilities and masculine views of leadership.

In summary, the study revealed that Azerbaijani culture and public sector context had a unique impact on women's leadership identity development. Although the findings of this study are in alignment with the findings from the studies conducted in Western contexts, the unique aspect of the Azerbaijani socio-cultural norms as well as of the public sector context heightened the challenges experienced by women leaders during their leadership identity development and brought a different meaning to them. Despite

these challenges, all the participants in this study persevered by seeking out opportunities, continuously developing their knowledge, skills, and abilities as leaders, and strengthening their self-efficacy that led to the development of their leadership identities.

Implications for Research

This section discusses the implications of the study findings for future research, which will help other scholars interested in researching women's leadership identity development in Azerbaijan or similar contexts.

This study focused on women leaders in public sector organizations in Azerbaijan, revealing unique challenges for women leaders working in this sector, such as hindering women's independence and innovation because the culture of public sector organizations is traditional and not open to independence and innovation. Future research should include other sectors, particularly the private sector, which is rapidly developing in Azerbaijan and may create different opportunities and pose different challenges for women leaders in this sector.

Given the historical background of Azerbaijan, particularly related to the transitioning from the Soviet system to an independent country system in the past 30 years, studying the leadership identity development of Generation Z women is recommended. Also, a new generation is exposed to different ways of thinking either through education abroad or through the educational events held by foreign professors and consultants. Thus, it is crucial to explore the leadership identity development of Generation Z in the future.

The findings of this study revealed that gender role expectations in Azerbaijani culture influenced the development of the leadership identity of the women participating

in this study. Given that there are no studies conducted about the leadership identity development of men in Azerbaijan, a comparative study of leadership identity development of men and women would provide insight into similarities and differences in their development. Considering the lifespan approach of leadership identity development that emerged from this study, longitudinal studies of women's leadership identity development would provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

Given the cultural and historical similarities and differences among Central Eurasian countries, replicating this study in the countries of this region would allow for country comparisons of women's leadership identity development. These studies would also allow the development of region model of women's leadership identity development.

Conducting research in a non-Western country always has its own challenges. Based on the experience of conducting research in Azerbaijan, the following recommendations may help other researchers in their research planning process. Recruiting participants for a qualitative study in countries such as Azerbaijan, where qualitative research is not well-known, is very challenging. In order to recruit and gain the trust of potential participants, the researchers have to develop relationships with professionals who can refer the participants to them. In this context, if a person whom you trust would ask you to participate in a study conducted by a researcher, the probability that a person will contact the researcher and volunteer to participate in the study is higher. That is why snowball sampling is highly recommended.

Another challenge in the process of data collection is the approach to time in different cultures. Setting specific dates and times is very challenging in cultures where

dates and times are fluid and could be changed at any moment by the participant. Thus, flexibility and patience during this process are crucial.

In Azerbaijan and in other countries of the Central Eurasian region, people think of an interview in journalistic terms, such as being interviewed for a journal or a newspaper article. Taking in consideration this perception, researchers have to explain the nature of the qualitative research interview. Sharing ahead of time interview questions, explaining to the participants the importance of in-depth interviews for research purposes, and ensuring the participants of the confidentiality of the interviews are critical in this process. Thus, although ensuring confidentiality is important in any country, the focus on building trust and ensuring confidentiality in a study is heightened in countries such as Azerbaijan.

Another approach to collecting qualitative data in non-Western contexts such as the Azerbaijani one would be the collection of stories instead of responses to interview questions. For example, in the context of Azerbaijan, storytelling is a major way in which people learn informally in their everyday lives. Thus, using stories instead of interview questions will allow the participants to have a deeper understanding of the qualitative research process and will increase their readiness to participate in qualitative research studies.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study inform the practices of both women leaders who are in similar positions as the participants in this study and human resource development professionals responsible for the learning and leadership development of women in their organizations. The findings are also significant for educators in schools and universities

developing leadership development programs. Finally, the findings are significant for leaders to establish organizational structures, policies, and processes to support women's leadership identity development in Azerbaijan or other Central Eurasian countries which share cultural and historical similarities with Azerbaijan.

Based on the findings of this study, women leaders or women who are interested in becoming leaders should develop support systems both in their families and outside of their families, look for opportunities both inside and outside their organizations to continuously develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities, which can lead to their development of leadership self-efficacy. Women leaders should also serve other women who aspire to become leaders and create opportunities for both men and women through mentoring and support groups to share their challenges encountered in leadership positions. Given that childhood experiences were significant in the participating women's leadership identity development, women should encourage their daughters to engage in leadership opportunities from early on in their lives.

It was also emphasized by the study participants that parents needed to give freedom to their children, particularly daughters, to make their decision from an early age. The participants believe that allowing girls to make their own decisions will help them make better decisions in the future, contributing to their leadership success. In addition, families, particularly parents, should also be aware of their role as models for their female children in encouraging their education and development of leadership capabilities.

Husbands also had a significant role in supporting their wives' leadership. Thus, husbands of women who aspire to become leaders must be aware of the importance of

providing psychological support to their wives and assisting them with sharing life responsibilities to better focus on developing themselves.

Regarding educators' practices, the study shows the importance of curricular and non-curricular leadership experiences in schools and universities for the development of leadership identity. These experiences could contribute to the self-confidence and self-efficacy of the students. Programs should also incorporate opportunities for reflection. This is recommended based on the researcher's observations about the interviews. The researcher noticed that while the participants took time to reflect on their experiences to answer interview questions, they could bring valuable information. Reflection is not a common practice in Azerbaijan, and people are not usually taught reflection as a competency at school. Thus, since this study was one of first nature, the researcher observed how women were given the opportunity to reflect on these experiences, make meaning of their journey, and be aware of how they developed their leadership identity. Thus, reflection has been added as a recommendation for practice in Azerbaijan based on the researcher's observation with those participants. This can be done in various ways. For example, journaling as part of classroom assignments will allow students to reflect on their learning and experiences and lead to the knowing of the self and others. Also, considering the positive impact of role models on their leadership identity development, successful women leaders should be invited to classrooms to share their experiences with students. Educators should also design programs geared towards families and the importance of education and leadership about the significant role of family context in encouraging leadership in women since childhood.

Educators should also bring awareness to explicit and implicit gender discrimination in leadership contexts and develop programs that support understanding leadership as not a gender-neutral phenomenon. It is also crucial to keep in mind that only educating female students about these topics is insufficient to get the desired results because they work with their male colleagues. Thus, it is equally important to educate male students on these issues. Students of both genders must be educated about how leadership is manifested in the context of Azerbaijan.

Education institutions should partner with organizations in preparing training programs to ensure a smooth transition of graduating students into the workforce. It is especially critical in Azerbaijan because, in Azerbaijan, one of the major issues in the education system is a big gap between education students receive in education institutions and knowledge and skills that are needed from them at the workplace. In other words, at schools, students are primarily taught theories and knowledge about the subject matter. So, when they graduate and look for jobs, they do not have the necessary competencies to get a job or perform well at their jobs. Although there have been improvements in recent years, there is still much room for improvement. There is a need for partnership between education institutions and organizations in designing the curriculum and making sure the curriculum responds to the needs of the workplace.

All participants in the study mentioned the lack of leadership training programs and succession planning practices in their organizations. Thus, human resource development professionals should design programs tailored to the needs of existing and potential women leaders in Azerbaijani public sector organizations. Human resource

development professionals should also include male colleagues in the programs so that men learn how to support women in developing leadership identity.

Since several women discussed the discriminatory behavior they experienced at the workplace because of their gender, the leadership programs should include case studies that focus on real-life situations in the Azerbaijani context. Human resource development professionals should be prepared to facilitate the discussions and reflections on those cases to help participants gain new perspectives and challenge their assumptions. Since reflection is not part of the formal education experiences of students in Azerbaijan, using reflective practices in organizations is very important in helping women understand the challenges they face in organizations and navigate those challenges.

The findings of this study highlighted the importance of experiences in the development of women's leadership identity. Thus, opportunities for experiential learning should be included in the design of leadership development courses and programs. This could be achieved done through internships or rotations in different parts of the organization. Several participants shared their experiences of holding various roles inside the organization, which gave them a comprehensive view of how the organization operates and contributed to their leadership development.

The study also revealed the benefit of being involved in communities of practice for women leaders' identity development. The participants referred to communities of practice as communities of people with similar interests who shared ideas and solutions to the problems that they encountered. Based on these findings, human resource development professionals should create opportunities for communities of practice to

emerge and should support these communities as a space where leaders can share their experiences and learn from each other.

Another practice shared by the participants in this study that was helpful for their leadership identity development was mentoring. Human resource development professionals should develop mentorship programs in their organizations in order to guide and support women's leadership development.

In order to ensure equitable working environments in organizations for both women and men, organizational leaders should create organizational cultures that welcome both genders and value mutual respect between genders. In this respect, organizational leaders can create policies and procedures that reflect their values by being role models. It is equally important to educate people in the organizations on these policies and procedures.

Finally, the study's findings revealed that although progressive and gender-friendly laws are present to ensure equality and prevent gender-based discrimination, the implementation of those laws depends on the leaders who implement them and sometimes are lacking. Therefore, attention should be given to ensuring the quality of the implementation and monitoring the implementation process. Equally important is the involvement of women leaders in making decisions about those laws and their implementation in order for men to be able to hear women's voices as they relate to their experiences and challenges in organizations. As Hussein Javid (1911), a prominent Azerbaijani poet of the early 20th century, said in his famous poem:

Qadın gülərsə, bu ıssız mühitimiz güləcək,

Sürüklənən bəşəriyyət qadınla yüksələcək

[All the desolated world will shine when the women smiling,

The desperate mankind will revive with the women rising.]

References

Amit, K., Popper, M., Gal, R., Mamane-Levy, T., & Lisak, A. (2009). Leadership-shaping experiences: A comparative study of leaders and non-leaders. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 30*(4), 302-318. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730910961658

Asian Development Bank (2019). *Azerbaijan, 2019–2023: Promoting diversified and inclusive growth.* Retrieved from https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/510266/cps-aze-2019-2023.pdf

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy—The exercise of control.* Freeman.

Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G. W. (2010). *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches.* SAGE.

Brue, K. L., & Brue, S. A. (2018). Leadership Role Identity Construction in Women's Leadership Development Programs. *Journal of Leadership Education, 17*(1), 7-27. https://doi.org/10.12806/V17/I1/C2

Carroll, B., & Levy, L. (2010). Leadership development as identity construction. *Management Communication Quarterly, 24(2).* https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318909358725

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. SAGE.

Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the grounds: The grounded theory in the 21st century. In J. M. Morse, B. J. Bowers, K. Charmaz, J. Corbin, A.E. Clarke., & P. N. Stern.

(Eds.), *Developing grounded theory: The second generation* (pp. 125-140). Routledge.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory.* SAGE.

Chui, S. L. M. (2016). *Leader identity construction at social enterprises: Effects of social feedback, identity level, work role salience and organizational context.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Durham University Business School.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches.* SAGE.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* SAGE

Cseh, M. (2020). Views from the top and views of the valley: the paths of dissertation literature reviews. In K. Townsend, M. N. K. Saunders, R. Loudoun, & E. A. Morrison (Eds.), *How to keep your doctorate on track*. (pp. 55-64). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788975636.00015

Day, D. V., & Harrison, M. M. (2007). A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership development. *Human Resource Management Review*, *17*(4), 360-373. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2007.08.007

Day, D. V., Harrison, M. M., & Halpin, S. M. (2009). *An integrative approach to leader development: Connecting adult development, identity, and expertise.* Psychology Press.

Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Sturm, R. E., & McKee, R. A. (2014). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *Leadership Quarterly*, *25*(1), 63-82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.11.004

Deaux, K., & Stewart, A. J. (2001). Framing gendered identities. In R. Unger (Ed.), *Handbook of the psychology of women and gender.* (pp. 85-97). Wiley.

Denzine, G. (1999). Personal and collective efficacy: Essential components of college students' leadership development. *Concepts & Connections*, *8*(1), 1.

DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, *35*(4), 627-647. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2010.53503267

DeRue, D. Scott, Ashford, Susan J., & Cotton, Natalie C. (2009). Assuming the mantle: Unpacking the process by which individuals internalize a leader identity. In L. M. Roberts & J. E. Dutton (Eds.), *Exploring positive identities and organizations: Building a theoretical and research foundation* (pp. 217–236). Taylor & Francis.

Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2004). Women and men as leaders. In J. Antonakis, R. J. Sternberg, & A. T. Cianciolo (Eds.), *The nature of leadership*, (pp. 279-301). SAGE.

Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership. *Harvard Business Review, 85*(9), 147–162.

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review, 109*(3), 573. https://doi.org/10.1037//0033-295X.109.3.573

Eagly, A. H., Wood, W., & Diekman, A. B. (2000). Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: a current appraisal In T. Eckes & H. M. Trautman (Eds.), *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender* (pp. 123–173). Erlbaum.

Ely, R., & Padavic, I. (2007). A feminist analysis of organizational research on sex differences. *Academy of Management Review, 32*(4), 1121-1143. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.26585842

Ely, J., Ibarra, H., & Kolb, D. (2011). Taking gender into account: Theory and design for women's leadership development programs. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 10*(3), 474-493. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2010.0046

Epitropaki, O., Kark, R., Mainemelis, C., & Lord, R. G. (2017). Leadership and followership identity processes: A multilevel review. *The Leadership Quarterly, 28*(1), 104–129. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.10.003

European Commission (2019). *Report on equality between women and men 2014*. Retrieved from https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f3dd1274-7788-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/

Floyd, A., & Fuller, C. (2016). Leadership identity in a small island developing state: The Jamaican context. *Compare: A journal of comparative and International Education, 46*(2), 251-271. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2014.936365

Gecas, V. (1982). The self-concept. *Annual Review of Sociology, 8*, 1–33.

Gibson, D. M., Dollarhide, C. T., Moss, J. M., Aras, Y., & Mitchell, T. (2018). Examining leadership with American Counseling Association presidents: A grounded theory of leadership identity development. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 96*(4), 361-371. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12219

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine.

Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Ectj, 29*(2), 75-91. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02766777

Gureyeva, Y. A. (2010). Policy Attitudes towards women in Azerbaijan: Is equality part of the agenda?. *Caucasus Analytical Digest, 21*, 5-7. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12323/2267

Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(4), 657-674. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00234

Heyat, F. (2006). Globalization and changing gender norms in Azerbaijan. *International Feminist Journal of Politics, 8*(3), 394-412. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740600793010

Hiller, N. J. (2005). *Understanding leadership beliefs and leadership self-identity: Constructs, correlates, and outcomes.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Pennsylvania State University.

Hogg, M. A. (2001). A social identity theory of leadership. *Personality And Social Psychology Review, 5*(3), 184-200. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0503_1

Ibarra, H. (2004). *Working identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career*. Harvard Business Press.

Ibarra, H. (2015). *Act like a leader, think like a leader*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Ibarra, H., Ely, R., & Kolb, D. (2013). Women rising: The unseen barriers. *Harvard Business Review*, *91*(9), 60-66.

Ibarra, H., Snook, S., & Ramo, L. G. (2010). Identity-based leader development. In N. Nohria & R. Khurana (Eds.), *Handbook of leadership theory and practice* (pp. 657–678). Harvard Business School.

Ismail, K. M., & Ford, D. L. (2010). Organizational leadership in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Research considerations and directions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, *27*(2), 321-340. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-008-9130-3

Javid, H. (1911). *Qadın [Woman]*.https://qadin.net/muxtelif/edebi_gushe/poeziya_defteri/93640-hseyn-cavidin-get-v-qadn-eirlri.html

Josselson, R. (1987). *Finding herself: Pathways to identity development in women.* Jossey-Bass.

Kakabadse, N. K., Tatli, A., Nicolopoulou, K., Tankibayeva, A., & Mouraviev, N. (2018). A gender perspective on entrepreneurial leadership: Female leaders in Kazakhstan. *European Management Review, 15*(2), 155-170. https://doi.org/ 10.1111/emre.12125

Karelaia, N., & Guillén, L. (2014). Me, a woman and a leader: Positive social identity and identity conflict. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *125*(2), 204-219. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2014.08.002

Karp, T., & Helgø, T. (2009). Leadership as identity construction: The act of leading people in organizations: A perspective from the complexity sciences. *Journal of Management Development, 28*(10), 880-896. https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710911000659

Katz, K. (2001). *Gender, work and wages in the Soviet Union: A legacy of discrimination.* Palgrave.

Kempster, S., & Parry, K. W. (2011). Grounded theory and leadership research: A critical realist perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*(1), 106-120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.010

Kerschreiter, R. (2013). Eine neue Sichtweise der Führungsaufgabe: Führung als Identitätsmanagement. [A new look at what leaders need to do: leadership as identity management] (pp. 137-159). In S. Litzcke & K. Häring (Hrsg.), *Führen lernen - Standortbestimmung, Kompetenzen, Entwicklung [Learning how to lead: Position-fixing, competencies, and development]*. Schäffer-Poeschel.

Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.* Prentice-Hall Inc.

Kolb, S. M. (2012). Grounded theory and the constant comparative method: Valid research strategies for educators. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies, 3*, 83-86. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC135409

Komives, S. R., & Dugan, J. P. (2014). Student leadership development: Theory, research, and practice. In D. V. Day (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of leadership and organizations* (pp. 805–831). Oxford University Press.

Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*(6), 593-611. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2005.0061

Kuzhabekova, A., & Almukhambetova, A. (2019). Women's progression through the leadership pipeline in the universities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 42(6).1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2019.1599820

Kwok, N., Hanig, S., Brown, D. J., & Shen, W. (2018). How leader role identity influences the process of leader emergence: A social network analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *29*(6), 648-662. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.04.003

Le Ber, M. J., LaValley, J. B., Devnew, L. E., Austin, A. M. B., Elbert, C. D., Sulpizio, L. L., & Tremaine, M. (2017). Tracing developmental precursors of leadership during childhood and adolescence: A collaborative autoethnographic study of women's leader identity development. In J. Storberg-Walker & P. Haber-Curran (Eds.), *Theorizing women & leadership: New insights & contributions from multiple perspectives.* (pp. 225-249). Information Age Publishing.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). The only generalization is: There is no generalization. *Case Study Method*, 27-44. In R. Gomm & M. Hammersley (Eds.), *Case study method: Key issues, key texts* (pp. 27-45). SAGE.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* SAGE.

Lomnitz, L. A. (1988). Informal Exchange Networks in Formal Systems: A Theoretical Model. *American Anthropologist 90*(1): 42–55. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1988.90.1.02a00030

Lord, R. G., & Brown, D. J. (2001). Leadership, values, and subordinate self-concepts. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *12*(2), 133-152. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(01)00072-8

Lord, R. G., & Brown, D. J. (2004). *Leadership processes and follower self-identity (*Organization and management series). *Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers*.

Lord, R. G., Brown, D. J., & Freiberg, S. J. (1999). Understanding the dynamics of leadership: The role of follower self-concepts in the leader/follower relationship. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *78*(3), 167-203. https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.1999.2832

Lord, R., & Hall, R. (2005). Identity, deep structure, and the development of leadership skill. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 591-615. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.06.003

Luhrmann, T., & Eberl, P. (2007). Leadership and identity construction: Reframing the leader-follower interaction from an identity theory perspective. *Leadership*, *3*, 115–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715007073070

Mammadova, S., Guliyev, F., Wallwork, L., & Azimli, N. (2016). Human capital development in Azerbaijan. *Caucasus Analytical Digest (CAD)*, *90*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-a- 010819104

Marchiondo, L. A., Myers, C. G., & Kopelman, S. (2015). The relational nature of leadership identity construction: How and when it influences perceived leadership

and decision-making. *The Leadership Quarterly, 25*(5), 892-908. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.06.006

Martin, P. Y., & Turner, B. A. (1986). Grounded theory and organizational research. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 22*(2), 141-157. https://doi.org/10.1177/002188638602200207

McKibben, W. B., Umstead, L. K., & Borders, L. D. (2017). Identifying dynamics of counseling leadership: A content analysis study. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 95*, 192–202. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12131

Middleton, E. D., Walker, D. O., & Reichard, R. J. (2019). Developmental trajectories of leader identity: Role of learning goal orientation. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 26*(4), 495-509. https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051818781818

Moorosi, P. (2014). Constructing a leader's identity through a leadership development program: An intersectional analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 42*(6), 792-807. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213494888

Muir, D. (2014). Mentoring and leader identity development: A case study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 25*(3), 349-379. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21194

Murphy, S. E., & Johnson, S. K. (2011). The benefits of a long-lens approach to leader development: Understanding the seeds of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*, 459–470. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.04.004

Najafizadeh, M. (2003). Women's empowering care work in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Gender & Society, 17*(2), 293-304. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243202250850

Nuriyev, E. (2008). Azerbaijan and the European Union: New landmarks of strategic partnership in the South Caucasus–Caspian basin. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, 8*(2), 155-167. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683850802117773

Owens, T. J., Robinson, D. T., & Smith-Lovin, L. (2010). Three faces of identity. *Annual Review of Sociology, 36*, 477-499. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134725

Pascall, G., & Manning, N. (2000). Gender and social policy: Comparing welfare states in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. *Journal of European Social Policy, 10*(3), 240-266. https://doi.org/10.1177/a013497

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Paulovich, N. (2016). A breadwinner or a housewife?. *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia 3*(2), 120-140.

Pearlmutter, S. (1999). Leadership for change: The role of self-efficacy. A publication of the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. *Concepts & Connections, 8*(1), 6-8.

Petriglieri, G., & Stein, M. (2012). The unwanted self: Projective identification in leaders' identity work. *Organization Studies, 33*(9), 1217-1235. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840612448158

Petriglieri, J. L. (2011). Under threat: Responses to and the consequences of threats to individuals' identities. *Academy of Management Review*, *36*(4), 641-662. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2009.0087

Rappe, C., & Zwick, T. (2007). Developing leadership competence of production unit managers. *Journal of Management Development, 26*(4), 312-330. https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710710740084

Ricks-Scott, H. I., Yeager, K. L., Storberg-Walker, J., Gick, L. M., Haber-Curran, P., & Bauer, D. (2017). Theorizing leadership identity development in girlhood through collaborative autoethnography and women's ways of knowing. In J. Storberg-Walker & P. Haber-Curran (Eds.), *Theorizing women & leadership: New insights & contributions from multiple perspectives.* (pp. 265-291). Information Age Publishing.

Romero, G. V. (2018). *Women in Azerbaijan: Leading the way for the Muslim world and beyond.* Retrieved from https://foreignpolicynews.org/2018/03/07/women-azerbaijan-leading-way-muslim-world-beyond/

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* SAGE

Sealy, R. H. V., & Singh, V. (2010). The importance of role models and demographic context for senior women's work identity development. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 12*, 284–299. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00262.x

Selvarajah, C., & Meyer, D. (2008). One nation, three cultures: Exploring dimensions that relate to leadership in Malaysia. *Leadership & Organization*

Development Journal, *29*(8), 693-712. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730810916640

Skinner, S. (2014). Understanding the importance of gender and leader identity formation in executive coaching for senior women. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, *7*(2), 102-114. https://doi/org/10.1080/17521882.2014.915864

Smith, M. L., & Roysircar, G. (2010). African American male leaders in counseling: Interviews with five AMCD past presidents. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *38*(4), 242-256. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2010.tb00134.x

Snow, D. A., & Anderson, L. (1987). Identity work among the homeless: The verbal construction and avowal of personal identities. *American Journal of Sociology*, *92*(6), 1336-1371.

Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2005). New directions in identity control theory. In S. R. Thye & E. J. Lawler (Eds.). *Social identification in groups* (pp. 43-64). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

Swietochowski, T. (2004). *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The shaping of a national identity in a Muslim community*. Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.

The State Statistics Committee of Azerbaijan Republic (2018). *Labour Market, 2018*. Retrieved from www.stat.gov.az.

The World Bank. (2018). *Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate).* Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS

The World Bank. (2018). *Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate).* Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS

Tohidi, N. (1996, January). Soviet in public, Azeri in private: Gender, Islam, and nationality in Soviet and post-Soviet Azerbaijan. *Women's Studies International Forum, 19*(1-2), 111-123. https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(95)00074-7

Tohidi, N. (2000). Gender and national identity in post-Soviet Azerbaijan: A regional perspective. In F. Acar and A. Gunes-Ayata (Eds.), *Gender and identity construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey* (pp. 249–304). Boston, MA: Brill.

United Nations Population Fund. (2018). *Gender equality and gender relations in Azerbaijan: Current trends and opportunities. Findings from the Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES).* Retrieved from https://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub- pdf/gender%20equality-en.pdf

United Nations Azerbaijan. (2017, June). *Ghulam M. Isaczai's speech at the SDGs panel discussion on 'women and development'.* Retrieved from https://unazerbaijan.org/en/2017/06/

United Nations Development Program. (2014). *Human development report*. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2014

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2009). *Azerbaijan: Analysis of gaps in the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs)*. FOREWORD (unhcr.org)

Van Knippenberg, D., Van Knippenberg, B., De Cremer, D., & Hogg, M. A. (2004). Leadership, self, and identity: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *15*(6), 825-856. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.09.002

Vinas, K. L. (2017). *Narratives of women's leadership identity development: An assessment of senior-level information technology (IT) leaders following participation in a women-only training program* [Doctoral dissertation]. Boston University.

Yeager, K. L., & Callahan, J. L. (2016). Learning to lead: Foundations of emerging leader identity development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *18*(3), 286-300. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316645510

Yeagley, E. E., Subich, L. M., & Tokar, D. M. (2010). Modeling college women's perceptions of elite leadership positions with Social Cognitive Career Theory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *77*(1), 30-38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.02.003

Zhao, J., & Jones, K. (2017). Women and leadership in higher education in China: Discourse and the discursive construction of identity. *Administrative Sciences, 7*(3), 21. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci7030021

Appendices

Appendix A—Recruitment Email (English Version)

Dear_____,

My name is Chilanay Safarli. I am a doctoral candidate at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., USA. I am conducting my dissertation research to understand how women who hold leadership positions in the public sector in Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study if you meet the following criteria:

1. Women leaders who hold leadership positions in Grade 10-18 with a prior experience in a formal leadership position for at least 5 years. Grade 10-18 includes middle and senior level leadership positions in accordance with the Unified Tariff and Specialty Classification Handbook, approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population of the Azerbaijan Republic in 2005.
2. Women leaders who work in public sector organizations located in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

Understanding your experiences as well as the experiences of other participants can help leaders and human resource development professionals to establish organizational structures, policies, and processes that will support women's leadership identity

development. It can also serve as a roadmap for women who aspire to hold leadership roles in the public sector.

I would also ask you to forward this invitation to women leaders in your network who may fit these criteria and ask them to contact me at **chilanaysafarli@gwu.edu** if they are interested in participating in this study. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am looking forward to hearing from you!

Best Regards,

Chilanay Safarli

Appendix B—Recruitment Email (Azerbaijani Version)

Əziz ___,

Mənim adım Çilənaydır. Mən Amerikanın Kolumbiya əyalətinin Vaşinqton şəhərində yerləşən Corc Vaşinqton Üniversitetində doktorantura namizədiyəm. Mən Azərbaycanda ictimai sektorda qadınların liderlik kimliyini necə işkişaf etdirdiklərini araşdıran tədqiqat işi yazıram. Məhz bu səbəbdən əgər aşağıda qeyd olunan kriteriyalar sizə aiddirsə, size mənim tədqiqat işimdə iştirak etməyə dəvət edirəm:

1. 2005-ci ildə Azərbaycan Respublikasının Əmək və Sosial Müdafiə Nazirliyinin təsdiq etdiyi Vahid Tarif və İxtisas Klassifikasiyası Kitabçası ilə nəzərdə tutulmuş ictimai sektorda 10-18 dərəcələrdə orta və ya yuxarı səviyyədə liderlik vəzifəsində ən azı son 5 ildir fəaliyyət göstərən qadın liderlər.
2. Azərbaycanın paytaxtı Bakı şəhərində yerləşən ictimai sektor təşkilatlarında çalışan qadın liderlər.

İntervyu Skype, WhatsApp, və ya Zoom vasitəsilə 60-90 dəqiqə çəkəcək. Həm sizin, həm də digər iştirakşıların təcrübələrini anlamaq Azərbaycanda şirkət liderlərinə və insan resursları mütəxəssislərinə kömək edəcək ki, onlar qadınların liderliyinin inkişaf etdirilməsi üçün şirkət daxilində lazımi strukturları, qərarları və prosesləri yaratsınlar. Sizin təcrübələriniz eyni zamanda
ictimai sektorda rəhbər vəzifə tutmaq istəyən qadınlara da yol göstərəcək.

Zəhmət olmasa bu elektron məktubu ətrafınızda tanıdığınız və yuxarıda qeyd olunmuş kriteriyalara cavab verən qadınlara da göndərin və bildirin ki, bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etmək istəyirlərsə mənə **chilanaysafarli@gwu.edu** elektron ünvanına məktub göndərsinlər. Vaxt ayırdığınıza və bu təklifi dəyərləndirdiyinizə görə əvvəlcədən minnətdaram. Sizdən cavab gözləyəcəm.

Hörmətlə,

Çilənay Səfərli

Appendix C—Interview Guide (English Version)

Interviewee: Location:

Date/Time:

Thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in this study. I am grateful to you for your time today. You have been asked to participate in this interview because you are an Azerbaijani woman who holds a leadership position in Grade 10-18 in the public sector in Azerbaijan. The purpose of my study is to understand how Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector of Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity. If everything is clear, let's start with our questions.

- First, can you please tell me about your current position.
    - Is this your first leadership role?
        - If not, please tell me about your previous experiences as a leader.
- What does leadership mean to you?
- When did you start to think of yourself as a leader?
- Can you please describe any experiences that impacted your development as a leader over your lifetime?
    - **Probes:**
        - What were some of the factors that facilitated your development as a leader?
        - What were some of the factors that impeded your development as a leader?

    - Who were the people who helped you develop as a leader?
    - Who were the people who impeded your leadership development?
- Now let's discuss how your gender has impacted your leadership identity development.
    - What does it mean to be a woman-leader in Azerbaijani society?
    - Does being a woman affect how you lead in the context of your organization? How?
    - Have you ever experienced conflict between your gender and leadership identities, especially as it relates to work-life balance?
- How did you find that social and cultural norms impacted your leadership development at all?
- What would be your advice to women who aspire to hold leadership roles in the public sector?
- What would be your advice to government or organizational leaders and human resource development professionals in Azerbaijan to do in this regard in their organizations?
- Is there anything else about your experiences as a woman leader that we did not discuss?

Thank you again for participating in this interview. Your time and responses are highly appreciated!

Appendix D—Interview Guide (Azerbaijani Version)

İştirakçı: Ünvan: Tarix/Saat:

Bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etməklə bağlı təklifimi qəbul etdiyiniz və mənə zaman ayırdığınız üçün sizə təşəkkür edirəm. Siz bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etmək üçün dəvət olunmusunuz çünki, Azərbaycanda ictimai sektorda 10-18 dərəcələrdə rəhbər vəzifəsini tutan qadınsınız. Bu tədqiqat işinin əsas məqsədi Azərbaycanda ictimai sektorda rəhbər vəzifə tutan qadınlarda liderlik kimliyinin necə inkişaf etdirilməsini araşdırmaqdır. Əgər hər şey aydındırsa intervyumuza başlayaq.

- İlk olaraq zəhmət olamasa indi tutduğunuz vəzifə və onun öhdəlikləri haqqında məlumat vererdiniz.
    - Bu sizin ilk rəhbər vəzifənizdir?
    - Elə deyilsə, əvvəlki rəhbər vəzifələriniz barədə də ümumi məlumat verərdiniz.
- Liderlik sizin üçün nə ifadə edir?
- Siz özünüzü ilk dəfə nə vaxt lider olaraq görməyə başladınız?
- Həyatınızda indiyə qədər yaşadıqlarınızın sizin lider olaraq inkişaf etməyinizə necə təsiri olub?
    - **Cavab verilmədiyi halda soruşulacaq əlavə suallar:**
        - Hansi faktorlar sizin lider kimi inkişaf etməyinizə kömək edib?
        - Hansi faktorlar sizin lider kimi inkişaf etməyinizə mane olub?

- Hansi insanlar sizin lider kimi inkişaf etməyinizə kömək edib?
- Hansi insanlar sizin lider kimi inkişaf etməyinizə mane olub?

- İndi isə gəlin sizin qadin olmağınızın sizin lider olaraq formalaşmağınıza necə təsir etdiyindən danışaq.
  - Azərbaycan cəmiyyətində qadın lider olmaq nə deməkdir?
  - Qadın olmağınız çalışdığınız qurumda tutduğunuz liderlik etməyinizə təsir edibmi? Edibsə, necə?
  - Qadın və lider kimliyiniz arasında hər hansı bir konflikt yaşamısınızmı, əsasən iş-ailə həyatınızı balanslaşdırmaqla bağlı?
- Azerbaycan cəmiyyetinde movcud olan sosial-mədəni dəyərlər sizin rəhbər vəzifəyə yüksəlməyinizə hər hansi təsir edibmi? Edibsə necə?
- Siz ictimai və ictimai sektorda rəhbər vəzifə tutmaq istəyən qadınlara nə kimi məsləhət verərdiniz?
- Sizcə ictimai qurumlarda bu prosesə dəstək olmaq üçün nələr etmək lazımdır?
- Sizin lider kimi inkişafınızla bağlı bizim müzakirə etmədiyimiz amma sizin əlavə etmək istədiyiniz başqa məsələ varmı?

Bu intervyuda iştirak etdiyinizə görə bir daha təşəkkür edirəm. Vaxt ayırdığınız və sualları cavablandırdığınız üçün minnətdaram!

Appendix E—Consent Form (English Version)

Title of Study:	Women's Leadership Identity Development in the Public Sector in Azerbaijan: A Grounded Theory Study
Principal Investigator:	Maria Cseh, Ph.D., E-mail: cseh@gwu.edu; tel. (202) 994-8649
Co-Investigator:	Chilanay Safarli, E-mail: chilanaysafarli@gwu.edu; tel. (202) 676-7007

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study conducted by Chilanay Safarli, doctoral candidate
under the direction of Dr. Maria Cseh of the Department of Human and Organizational Learning
in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GSEHD) at The George Washington University (GWU). The purpose of this study is to understand how Azerbaijani women who hold leadership positions in the public sector of Azerbaijan develop their leadership identity. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

The Study

If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to share your experiences of developing your leadership identity in a 60-90-minute interview that will be conducted via

WhatsApp, Skype, or Zoom. If you agree to participate, you may decide not to answer any of the questions. The interview will be recorded with your permission. The transcripts will be used solely for data analysis.

Risks and Confidentiality

You will not be exposed to any risks that exceed what you encounter in the daily conduct of your

work. The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal. While every effort will be

made in order to keep your information confidential, this cannot be guaranteed. The following

steps will be taken to preserve your confidentiality:

- You will be asked to provide a pseudonym of your choice at the time of the interview, and your real name will never be used in this study. Any mention of real names will be deleted from the transcript and replaced with pseudonyms. Please refrain from using any pseudonyms that are related to your name, date of birth, or email address in order to maintain your confidentiality.
- All data collected in this study will be presented in aggregate form, and your name or any names that you have mentioned in the interview will not be included in any reports, publications, or presentations created as a result of this study.
- The digital audiotape files with the interviews will be encrypted, password-protected, and saved on a password-protected computer, and any handwritten notes will be kept in a locked cabinet. All these files and notes will be

permanently removed from the computer and destroyed after six months following the completion of this study.

Benefits to Taking Part in the Study

Although the findings of this study will not benefit you directly, the benefits of the knowledge

gained are expected to help leaders and human resource development professionals to establish organizational structures, policies, and processes that will support women's leadership identity development. It can also serve as a roadmap for women who aspire to hold leadership roles in the public sector. Given a lack of research on the Azerbaijani women's leadership identity development, this study will also contribute to the theories of women leadership identity development.

Costs and Compensations

There are no costs to you for participating in the study. You will not receive any compensation for participating.

Problems or Questions

Research specific questions should be addressed to the Principal Investigator, Dr. Maria Cseh at

E-mail: cseh@gwu.edu or telephone number (202) 994-8649. The GWU's Office of Human

Research at telephone number (202) 994-2715 can provide further information about your rights

as a research participant. To ensure confidentiality, your signature is not required. Your willingness to participate in this research study is implied if you proceed.

Appendix F—Consent Form (Azerbaijani Version)

Tədqiqatın adı:	Azərbaycanda ictimai sektorda rəhbər vəzifə tutan qadınların liderlik kimliyinin inkişafı: Əsaslı Nəzəriyyə Tədqiqatı (IRB Nömrəsi: NCR202809)
Əsas Tədqiqatçı:	Maria Cseh, Ph.D., Elektron ünvan: cseh@gwu.edu; tel. (202) 994-8649
Ortaq Tədqiqatçı:	Çilənay Səfərli, elektron ünvan: chilanaysafarli@gwu.edu; tel. (202) 676-7007

Giriş

Siz Corc Vaşinqton Üniversitetində Təhsil və İnsan İnkişafı Məktəbində İnsan və Şirkət daxili İnkişaf departamentindən olan Dr. Maria Cseh-nin nəzarəti altında doktorantura namizədi Çilənay Səfərlinin həyata keçirdiyi tədqiqat işində iştirak etməyə dəvət olunmusuz. Bu tədqiqat işinin əsas məqsədi Azərbaycanda ictimai sektorda rəhbər vəzifə tutan qadınlarda liderlik kimliyinin necə inkişaf etdirilməsini araşdırmaqdır. Bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etmək tamamilə könüllüdür. Əgər iştirak etmək qərarına gəlsəniz bu tədqiqat işindən istədiyiniz vaxt geri çəkilə bilərsiniz.

Tədqiqat İşi

Əgər bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etsəniz, WhatsApp, Skype, və ya Zoom vasitəsilə keçirilən 60-90 dəqiqəlik intervyuda sizdən liderlik kimliyinizin inkişafı ilə bağlı təcrübələrinizi paylaşmağınızı xahiş edəcəm. Əgər iştirak etməyə qərar versəniz, istədiyiniz suallara

cavab verməkdən imtina edə bilərsiniz. İntervyu sizin icazənizlə qeydə alınacaq. Intervyu transkripti sadəcə data analizi üçün istifadə olunacaq.

Mövcüd Risklər və Məxfilik

Siz gündəlik iş fəaliyyətinizdə qarşılaşdığınız durumlardan əlavə heç bir riskə məruz qalmayacaqsınız. Bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etməyin riskləri çox azdır. Baxmayaraq ki, məxfiliyinizin qorunması üçün bütün tədbirlər göruləcək, risk hər zaman var. Məhz bu səbəbdən də ola biləcək risklərin qarşısını almaq üçün aşağıdakı tədbirlər görüləcək:

- İntervyu zamanı sizdən xahiş olunacaq ki, hər hansı bir təxəllüs seçəsiniz və öz adlarınızı heç vaxt intervyu müddətində istifadə etməyəsiniz. Əgər sizin adınız intervyu müddətində qeyd olunarsa transkriptdən silinəcək və seçdiyiniz təxəllüs ilə əvəz olunacaq. Zəhmət olmasa adınızı, doğum gününüzü, elektron unvanınızı və s. bildirən təxəllüslər seçməyin ki, sizin kimliyiniz məxfi saxlanılsın.
- Bu tədqiqat işində toplanmış bütün datalar məcmu halında təqdim olunacaq və nə sizin adınız, nə də intervyuda qeyd etdiyiniz şəxslərin adı hər hansı bir reportda, dərcdə və ya prezentasiyada qeyd olunmayacaq.
- İntervyuların rəqəmsal səs qeydləri şifrələnəcək, parol qoyulacaq və parolu olan kompyuterdə saxlanılacaq. Əl yazıları isə açar ilə bağlanmış kabinetdə saxlanılacaq. Bu tədqiqat işini bitirdikdən 6 ay sonra bütün fayllar və əl yazıları kompyuterdən birdəfəlik silinəcək və bütün əl yazıları şred aparatında kəsiləcək.

Bu Tədqiqat Işində Iştirak Etməyin Faydaları

Baxmayaraq ki, bu tədqiqatın nəticələri sizə birbaşa fayda verməyəcək, sizin sayənizdə əldə olunan biliklər və təcrübələr Azərbaycanda şirkət liderlərinə və insan resursları mütəxəssislərinə kömək edəcək ki, onlar qadınların liderliyinin inkişaf etdirilməsi üçün

şirkət daxilində lazımi strukturları, qərarları və prosesləri yaratsınlar. Sizin təcrübələriniz eyni zamanda ictimai sektorda rəhbər vəzifə tutmaq istəyən qadınlara da yol göstərəcək. Azərbaycanda rəhbər vəzifə tutan qadınların liderlik kimliyinin inkişafı ilə bağlı tədqiqatın yoxluğunu nəzərə alsaq, bu tədqiqat işi qadınların liderlik kimliyinin inkişafı ilə bağlı mövcüd olan nəzəriyyələrə bir töhvə verəcək.

Xərc və Kompensasiya

Bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etmək sizdən hər hansi xərc tələb etmir. Siz iştirakınıza görə kompensasiya almayacaqsınız.

Problemlər və Suallar

Tədqiqatla bağlı suallar əsas tədqiqatçı olan Dr. Maria Cseh-ə aşağıdaki elektron ünvan və ya telefon nomrəsi vasitəsilə ünvanlanmalıdır: cseh@gwu.edu və (202) 994-8649. Corc Vaşinqton Üniversitetinin İnsanlarla bağlı Tədqiqat Ofisi də sizə tədqiqat iştirakçısı olaraq hüquqlarınız barədə məlumat verə bilər: (202) 994-2715. Sizin məxfiliyinizin qorunması məqsədilə bu məktubu imzalamağınıza gərək yoxdur. Əgər bu tədqiqat işində iştirak etməyə razı olarsanız bu bizə kifayətdir.

Appendix G—GW IRB Exempt Registration Memo

Date: November 05, 2020
To: Cseh, Maria, PhD
From: The George Washington University Committee on Human Research, Institutional Review Board (IRB), FWA00005945
Subject: IRB# NCR202809 , "Women's Leadership Identity Development in the Public Sector in Azerbaijan: A Grounded Theory Study"

Exempt Determination Date: November 05, 2020

The request for an exemption determination for the above-referenced study has been completed. The study was determined to be research that is exempt from IRB review under DHHS regulatory **Category 2**. The project as described in the application may proceed without further oversight by the OHR.

The exemption determination applies only to the project described in your IRB Application. Any changes that may alter in any way the risks to participants, type of information to be accessed, addition of new populations, or change in PI may not be instituted without submission of a Modification within the iRIS system and further review by the OHR prior to implementation of the changes.

Refer to posted OHR guidance for requirements regarding in-person research interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Questions or concerns regarding the exemption determination made for the study should be directed to the OHR staff at ohrirb@gwu.edu.